



*ASI with
It Is Written*

HEALTH & WHOLENESS

20 LESSONS

New Beginnings

HEALTH & BIBLE STUDY GUIDES



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LESSON 1

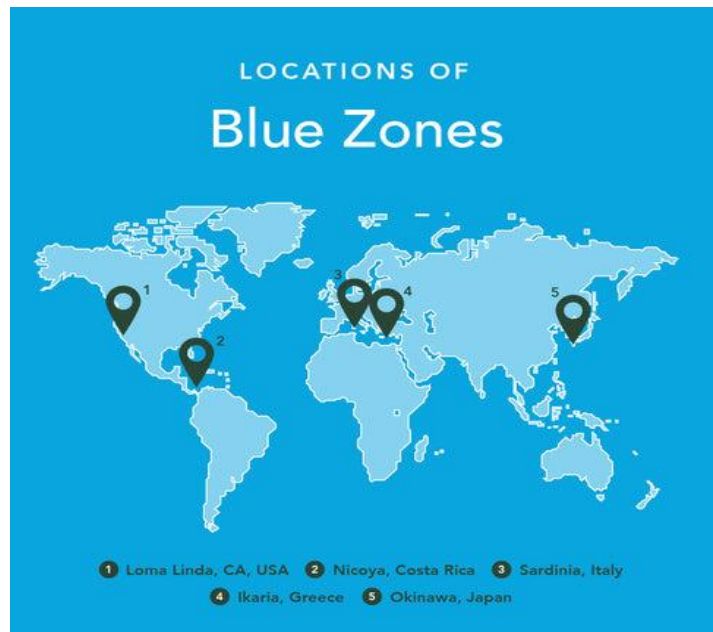
A GOD WHO CARES



Hulda Crooks was an American mountaineer. She successfully scaled 14,505- foot Mount Whitney 23 times between the ages of 65 and 91. Additionally, she climbed 97 other peaks around the world. A 1990 Act of Congress renamed the Day Needle peak enroute to the Mount Whitney summit "Crooks Peak" in her honor. At the age of 91, she became the oldest woman to climb Mount Fuji in Japan (pictured above). She was a long-time resident of Loma Linda, California, and was a vegetarian. She died in 1997 at the age of 101. We mention Loma Linda because it is among the Blue Zones first coined in 2004 by journalist and National Geographic Explorer and Fellow Dan Buettner.

What are Blue Zones?

Blue Zones are areas with a high concentration of active centenarians who enjoy extraordinary longevity. The food they consume in common include legumes, fruit, grains, vegetables, nuts, and seeds. If they eat meat at all, they do so mainly on holidays. Even then, meat isn't a prominent feature on their plates. Blue Zone regions include Sardinia in Italy, Okinawa in Japan, and you guessed it—Loma Linda, California.



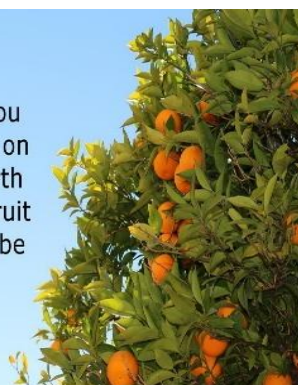
**Diet is a controversial subject, and unbiased information is hard to find.
Where can we get reliable information?**

There are many credible sources of information on what constitutes a healthy diet. Medical journals and nutrition literature are some of the best resources to guide our food choices.

Results from a 2017 study published in the medical journal Lancet were covered in a 2019 CNN news article entitled, "What we AREN'T eating is killing us, global study finds." Now if that title doesn't grab your attention, I'm not sure what will.

Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food."

Genesis 1:29



It turns out that we are not eating enough whole grains, vegetables, seeds, fruits, and nuts in moderation. To avoid confusion, we use a framework for analyzing foods based on nutritional studies into their potential for being either healthful or unhealthy. Based on the results of these studies, we divide foods into three categories: **green box foods**, **yellow box foods**, and **red box foods**.

		
HEALTHFUL: • Whole grains • Legumes • Fruits • Vegetables • Nuts • Seeds	DEBATABLE: • Poultry • Eggs • Dairy • Fish	UNHEALTHFUL: • Refined grains • Added sugar • Ultra-processed foods • Red Meat • Processed meat

A food is categorized as a red box food when there is broad consensus and evidence that these foods promote harm and it is difficult to find a study that refutes this. A food is categorized as a yellow box food when studies have had mixed results when compared to red box foods. A food is categorized as a green box food when there is broad consensus and evidence that these foods promote health and it is

hard to find a study that refutes this. Green box foods are plant-based foods. (We will learn more about them in future study guides.)

Does God really care what I eat?

God loves us so much that He shared His wishes for us regarding health.

John 10:10 says, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” And 3 John 1:2 says, “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers!”



Today's Bible lesson will tell us more about a God who loves us enough not only to look out for our health, but also for every other aspect of our lives.

BIBLE STUDY: A GOD WHO CARES

As true as it is that God wants us to receive the gift of eternal life, He also wants us to get the most out of our lives on this earth. While not everyone can live to 100 years of age, many of us can avoid the numerous lifestyle diseases that plaque the world today.

1. What is God truly like?

“He who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:8).

We are familiar with the idea of someone loving. But the Bible says that God is love. What could that possibly mean?

“The Lord...is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

It is God's desire that every person should come to faith in Him. God wants no one to live less than a fulfilled and meaningful life. He wants everyone to accept the gift of everlasting life.

2. A woman climbs mountains into her nineties and passes away at age 101. Around the world there are places where people routinely live long lives. What does this say about God?

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11).

“Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore, with loving-kindness I have drawn you” (Jeremiah 31:3).

“If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you” (Exodus 15:26).

God promised His people that, if they cooperated with the principles He gave them, He would prosper their lives and keep them from illness.

God has only the very best intentions for people today. He wishes to bless and prosper His children in every way. His primary goal is to lead people to accept the gift of everlasting life.

3. How does creation reveal the heart of God towards the human family?

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1).

“So God created man in His Own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27).

“Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth” (Genesis 1:26).

God not only created the human family, but He also created men and women in His image! He then gave Adam and Eve authority over the world and everything in it. God's purpose was that humanity would flourish. Humans were intentionally created by a loving God who wanted the very best for the people of this earth.

“I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well” (Psalm 139:14).

Cooperating with God's plans for our lives—whether physically or spiritually—brings significant benefits. Partnering with God brings blessings God wants us to experience.

4. What does the death of Jesus on the cross tell us about God?

“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. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16, 17).

The death of Jesus on the cross demonstrates the depth of the love God has for the human family.

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

Jesus died for a sinful world. More than 700 years before Jesus came to this world, the prophet Isaiah foretold his rejection.

“He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him” (Isaiah 53:3).

God has displayed His intentions for every person alive. Jesus sacrificed His Own life so that every person could have the opportunity to have everlasting life. God is love.

5. What does God want people to experience?

“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

We see that God wants people to live an abundant life. God wants people to thrive in this world while enjoying eternity in the world to Come.

Life is short. James describes life as “a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (James 4:14).

6. What is God's assurance to people who face challenging times?

“[L]o, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

“I will never leave you or forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

“You will show me the path of life. In Your presence is fullness of joy. At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11).

“Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

God assures His children that He is with them even in the most difficult times. The presence of challenges in a life does not suggest the absence of God's blessing. God pledges to be with His people demonstrating compassion, care, and fatherly love.

“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned nor shall the flame scorch you.” (Isaiah 43:2).

7. What evidence is there to suggest that God really exists?

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead” (Romans 1:20).

“He has made the earth by His power, He has established the world by His wisdom, and stretched out the heaven by His understanding” (Jeremiah 51:15).

“For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them” (Exodus 20:11).

The world around us—including the world in which we live, the solar system our planet inhabits, and the universe beyond—were all created by God. Our planet is not the result of a cosmic accident. Human beings were intentionally designed by a loving God who is doing all He can to encourage people to accept His gift of everlasting life. In creating the world, God demonstrated that He is love.

8. If God is in heaven, how is He able to interact with people on earth?

“However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16:13).

“I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you” (John 14:18)

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of what the Bible refers to as the “Godhead” (see Colossians 2:9; Acts 17:29). The Holy Spirit brings the personal presence of God to human hearts. Through the Holy Spirit God communicates and is present with people all over the world. It is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that changes hearts and lives, enabling people to live lives of integrity and purity. God

loves the world so much that He is willing to inhabit human lives and transform and prepare them for everlasting life.

9. What is God's desire for you?

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

God invites us to Come to Him in faith, knowing that He will bear our burdens and give us peace and assurance.

“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37).

Jesus invites sinners to come to Him with confidence, knowing they will find acceptance and security in His loving and gracious heart.

“I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

Jesus promises that He will bless and keep all who believe in Him and trust Him.

GOD is.....

- ☞ Faithful (1 Corinthians 1:9)
- ☞ Patient (2 Peter 3:9)
- ☞ Good (Psalm 86:5)
- ☞ Forgiving (1 John 1:9)
- ☞ Gracious (1 Peter 2:3)
- ☞ Merciful (Psalm 103:8)
- ☞ Kind (Jeremiah 31:3)
- ☞ Eternal (Romans 1:20)
- ☞ Unchanging (Malachi 3:6)
- ☞ All-Knowing (Isaiah 46:9, 10)
- ☞ Holy (Isaiah 6:3)
- ☞ Love (1 John 4:8, 16)

Although there is great trouble in the world, we can know that God is good and that He loves the people of this world.

The question may be asked, “If God is love, why is there so much sin and suffering in the world?” We will answer that question in Lesson 3 on the great war in heaven and why sin was permitted.

What a blessing it is to know that there exists a kind and loving God who intentionally created the world for the purpose of preparing people for everlasting life.

Are you willing to welcome this loving God into your life today?

LESSON 2

TEN DAYS TO PROPHETIC WISDOM



The first chapter in The Book of Daniel tells of the captivity of the children of Israel by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Certain captives, including Daniel and his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were “gifted” in wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand” (Daniel 1:4).

They were chosen to live according to the practices of the king at that time, including drinking his wine and eating his meat. But Daniel had another idea.

“Please test your servants for ten days and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink,” he requested. “Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants” (Daniel 1:12,13). His request was granted.

At the end of the ten-day trial, Daniel and his friends were found to be in excellent health. Later, when brought before

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink,
or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31



Nebuchadnezzar, he found that “among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah.... And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm” (Daniel 1:19,20).

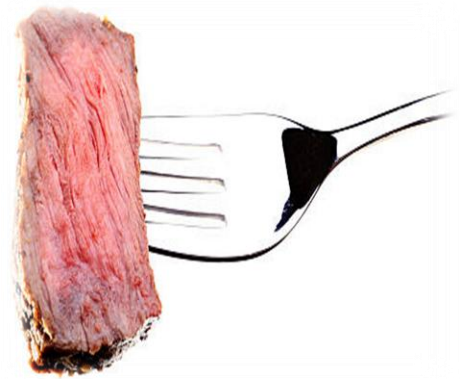
Does ten days of not eating meat really make that dramatic of a difference?

A brilliant young meat-eating physician was convinced by one of his vegetarian colleagues to try a plant-based diet for one week. After the week, the physician observed that his mind was clear like never before.

Research reveals that every fat-laden meal causes an inflammatory storm within our arteries that lasts for hours. A single fatty meal, such as a double cheeseburger with fries, has been shown to impair the ability of the arteries to dilate for up to five hours. Meat and other animal protein products like dairy and processed foods impair important chemicals in the lining of our arteries that allow blood vessels to increase blood flow when needed. This lack of adequate blood flow causes brain fog and lack of clarity.

Does eating meat have long-term effects?

In the late 1970s, research studies of mortality rates among a group of people who were vegetarians living in Loma Linda, California, revealed lower death rates resulting from major types of cancer than among the general California population. Death from heart attacks and heart vessel blockages were significantly lower among vegetarian males in the study group than in their non-vegetarian counterparts. A researcher from Oxford University in England



designed a prospective study from The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition comparing heart disease and cancer rates among 6,000 vegetarians and 5,000 non-vegetarians. He found that those who did not eat meat had 25 to 30% fewer heart attacks and deaths from heart disease.

Is that why red meat is categorized as a red box food?

That is correct! In fact, in 2005 red meat emerged as a public health concern in the United States. This was based on extensive studies published in exceptionally credible journals.

Daniel was mightily used by God to communicate complex historical and prophetic events that would prepare us for the future. He would need a keen mind to fulfill his calling. Our Bible study reveals more about his story.

BIBLE STUDY: TEN DAYS TO PROPHETIC WISDOM

A group of high school students were on a class trip in a foreign country. One of the boys bought a bottle of perfume for his mother that would have been very expensive back home. He paid what he thought was a good price and looked forward to seeing the look on his mother's face when she opened his thoughtful gift. When he returned home and opened the perfume box, however, he made a disappointing discovery. The perfume bottle was empty. He had been swindled. Worse than his discovery was the disappointment over not having a gift for his mother. Again and again he thought to himself, I trusted the person who sold me the perfume!



It isn't always easy to know who to trust. The Bible speaks about a God of love, an eternal God who invites all people to receive everlasting life through faith in Jesus. The Bible is a significant document made up of 66 books that, combined, contain 1,189 chapters. If we want to believe in God, it would be prudent to make sure the Bible can be trusted.

1. What does the Bible say about trusting God?

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12).

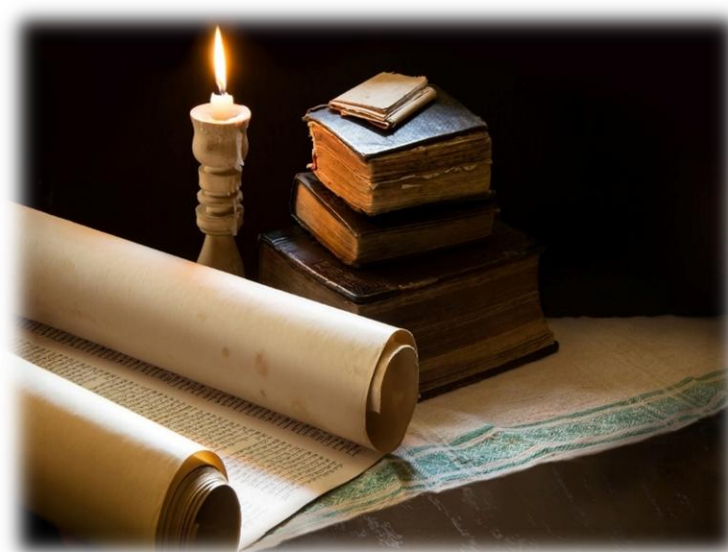
“Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Peter 1:23).

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Bible makes strong claims about itself. It claims to be “living and powerful” and “given by inspiration of God” Is there any way we can validate those claims, or should they simply be accepted on blind faith?

2. What type of books are in the Bible?

The Bible is comprised of several different types of literature, including books of history such as Genesis, Exodus, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel and others that tell the story and record the history of the early followers of God.



Books of the Bible such as Ecclesiastes, Psalms, Proverbs, Job and Song of Solomon are books of poetry.

Many books of the Bible are books of prophecy including Revelation, Daniel, Micah, Habakkuk, Zechariah, and Haggai. There are also books such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel that include both history and prophecy.

Some of the prophecies found in the Bible are predictive-that is, they speak to events that had not yet happened at the time the books were written. One of those books is The Book of Daniel. Daniel contains both history and prophecy. Of all the predictive prophecies found in Daniel, one particular chapter demonstrates that the Bible can be trusted with confidence.

3. What is the background to The Book of Daniel?

“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god” (Daniel 1:1, 2).

Around 600 years before the birth of Jesus, Jerusalem was attacked by the mighty Kingdom of Babylon. As well as accomplishing the destruction of the city, Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar captured many young people and brought them to his capital city.

4. What became of the young people Nebuchadnezzar captured?

“Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom there was no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans” (Daniel 1:3, 4).

It is said of Daniel and his three friends that:

“In all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm” (Daniel 1:20).

This set the stage for one of the most remarkable prophecies in the Bible—one that demonstrates without a doubt that the Bible can be trusted.



5. How did a crisis develop for Daniel and his faithful friends?

“Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him. Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king” (Daniel 2:1, 2).



It was not uncommon for rulers in ancient times to believe that the gods spoke to them through dreams. Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar was highly motivated to understand the meaning of his dream. He ordered his wise explain to him not only what the dream meant, but also what the dream was.

6. How did the wise men respond to the king's demands?

“Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic, 'O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation'” (Daniel 2:4).

“The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, 'My decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap’” (Daniel 2:5).

This implicated Daniel and his close friends. Although they were faithful followers of the God of heaven, King Nebuchadnezzar had included them in his council of wise men. Nebuchadnezzar's sentence fell upon Daniel and his three friends.

7. How did Daniel and his friends respond to the king's decree?

“Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven” (Daniel 2:17-19).

Daniel and his friends prayed, and God answered their prayer by revealing the king's dream to Daniel.

8. How did Daniel reveal the dream to King Nubuchadnezzar?

“You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image's

head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay” (Daniel 2:31-33).



King Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of an image constructed from various metals. As the king was an idol worshiper, it is not surprising that God would choose this figure through which to communicate with the Babylonian monarch.

Daniel went on to describe the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream as being completely destroyed by a “stone... cut out without hands” (Daniel 2:34, 35).

9. Now that Daniel had explained to the king what his dream was, how did he explain the meaning of the dream?

“You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all you are this head of gold” (Daniel 2:37, 38).

Daniel explained to King Nebuchadnezzar that the head of gold on the statue in his dream represented Nebuchadnezzar's own Kingdom of Babylon.

What we see unfolding in the king's dream is the rise and fall of powerful nations. Keep in mind that Nebuchadnezzar had this dream around 600 BC. Daniel's interpretation of the dream stretches down to the return of Jesus, a time span of more than 2,500 years.

If ever a passage of the Bible could be examined for its truthfulness and reliability, this is it! Daniel speaks to issues that stretch more than two millennia into the future. If they did not happen as God said they would, it could not be said that the Bible is a reliable document or that God can be trusted.

10. After the kingdom of Babylon, what would happen next?



“But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth” (Daniel 2:39)

Babylon was an extremely powerful kingdom. It began its rule in the year 605 BC, and there was little reason to believe it would ever be overthrown. But in harmony with the prediction made by God Himself, Babylon was conquered in 539 BC by the

joint kingdom of Medo-Persia (see Daniel 5:25-31). Medo-Persia was represented in Nebuchadnezzar's dream by the statue's chest and arms of silver.

Following Medo-Persia's eventual downfall came the Kingdom of Greece, led initially by Alexander the Great. Greece assumed power in 331 BC and ruled until 168 BC. Greece is mentioned by name in Daniel 8:21, represented by the figure of a male goat.

11. What kingdom was represented by the legs of iron?

“And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others” (Daniel 2:40).

Following Greece, Rome ruled as a mighty global power until the year 476 AD. In that time, Rome grew to occupy territory from Great Britain across Europe and North Africa to the Red Sea.

12. What did God say would become of the Roman Empire?

“Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay” (Daniel 2:41).

The Roman Empire disintegrated into numerous nations following its demise in the fifth century AD.

13. As Daniel looked into the future, what momentous event did he predict would take place?

“And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Daniel 2:44).

The “stone...cut out without hands” represents Jesus who, at His return, will sweep away the kingdoms of this world.

Looking into the future, God, through Daniel, predicted the rise and fall of four powerful kingdoms. History and archaeology attest to the accuracy of those predictions. Following the dissolution of the Roman Empire, nations would arise that would then be destroyed at the return of Jesus and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom.

In this remarkable prophecy, God predicts the future. History reveals that God's predictions have so far been fulfilled in every detail. Therefore, we should have no doubt that the final part of this prophecy which is yet to be fulfilled-the return of Jesus-will come to pass just as every other detail of the prophecy has so far.

Micah 5:2 predicted that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem.

Isaiah 7:14 said Jesus would be born of a virgin.





Zechariah 11:12 foresaw that Jesus would be sold for thirty pieces of silver.

Isaiah 45:1 identifies Cyrus as the one who would enable God's people to return to their homeland. In fact, Isaiah named Cyrus approximately 200 years before Cyrus was born!

Numerous other fulfilled prophecies indicate that the Bible can indeed be trusted and that God, therefore, can likewise be trusted.

When you read the Bible, you are reading a document that truly is “given by

inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Bible can be trusted. God can be trusted.

Are you willing to trust Him today?

LESSON 3

SEEDS THAT STARTED A WAR



In 1993, the Harvard School of Public Health and the European office for the World Health Organization introduced a new diet pyramid to familiarize people with the healthy Mediterranean lifestyle common in Greece, Crete, and Southern Italy. People from those regions had significant things in common including low access to healthcare, low incidence of chronic disease, and longer average life expectancy. Even more significant was their common dietary patterns. Numerous large studies were conducted examining those patterns. A scoring system was developed that awarded points for eating grains, seeds, nuts, beans, fruits, vegetables, olive oil, and fish while losing points for eating dairy, poultry, and red meat.

Then God said,
Let the earth
bring forth grass,
the herb that
yields seed, and
the fruit tree
that yields fruit
according to its
kind, whose seed
is in itself, on
the earth; and it
was so" GENESIS
1:29

What do seeds and nuts have to do with health?

There are numerous health benefits to eating a wide variety of seeds including flaxseeds, chia seeds, and quinoa. Duke Health and the Harvard University School of Medicine have both published information describing the benefits of seeds.

The seed is the part of a plant that contains the embryo of a future plant. It provides the embryo with a reliable source of energy and contains stored nutrients and oils that make the seed high in fiber, vitamins, and monounsaturated fats.

Nuts are flavorful little packages of healthy unsaturated fats, protein, fiber, and other nutrients. For example, peanuts and pecans are great sources of B vitamins; almonds are rich in calcium and vitamin D: and walnuts have plenty of folate, vitamin E, and omega-3 fatty acids. Pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, and sesame seeds are very nutritious, reliable sources of fiber, protein, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. All nuts have magnesium.

Who should not eat seeds or nuts?

Many physicians have heard concerns about seeds and nuts raised by patients who have had certain intestinal diseases such as diverticulitis or diverticulosis. The patients are worried that they cannot eat seeds or nuts because they might worsen those conditions.

In the past doctors recommended that people with diverticulosis avoid seeds and nuts, as these particles could lodge in the diverticula (small pouches in the gut lining) and cause inflammation (diverticulitis). We can take heart that while it was once believed that nut and seed consumption could result in intestinal problems, that causal link remains unproven. In fact, nuts and seeds are rich in fiber and are especially important for gut health. They're known to help keep people "regular."

Is there a limit to how many seeds or nuts one should eat?

The recommended intake of seeds and nuts is about one quarter of a cup daily. They can be eaten as a snack or sprinkled on salads, sauces, or vegetables. While many seeds are beneficial, some like apple seeds, lychee seeds, and castor beans are harmful and should be avoided.

This lesson will teach us about seeds planted in heaven that have resulted in profound consequences to the entire human race.

BIBLE STUDY: SEEDS THAT STARTED A WAR

The Bible says that "God is love" (1 John 4:8). Yet there are times in the Bible that people face extraordinarily difficult circumstances. While the Bible speaks extensively of God's goodness, God's people were confronted by famine, death and warfare.

The question is often asked, "If God is so good, why do people suffer, and why is there so much trouble in the world?"

1. Where did sin originate?

"And war broke out in heaven: fought with the heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought" (Revelation 12:7).

Sin originated in heaven. It began with Satan who, before his rebellion, was a beautiful angel who dwelled in the presence of God.

2. Why did Satan rebel against God?

"For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High' (Isaiah 14:13, 14).

For reasons that cannot be adequately explained, Satan wanted the honor that belongs only to God. Satan evidently became envious of God's stature and wanted to "be like the Most High." Satan wanted to occupy God's place. He wanted to receive worship.

Why a created being who lived in heaven would feel envy toward God is not something that can be easily comprehended. However, we can see that people today often make self-destructive choices that don't make any logical sense either.

3. Why did God simply not prevent Satan from rebelling in heaven?

"[Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

Toward the end of his life, Joshua, Israel's leader, appealed to Israel to turn away from all false gods and serve the God of heaven. Joshua did not compel the people to serve God. Instead, he invited them to make a decision based on their own free will.

When Jesus revealed to the crowds of people that He was "the bread of life" (John 6:48), He was addressing a group of people who shortly before had wanted to make Him Israel's king (see John 6:15). But in revealing to them that His mission was not political or military, the hopes of many were disappointed. They wanted a messiah who would restore Israel to national greatness, but they were less inclined to follow a messiah whose primary aim was to give people a new heart. John 6:66 says, "From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more."

Not even Jesus would compel a person's conscience. God has given people freedom of choice. He does everything He can to convince us to choose to follow Him, but He never forces or coerces a person to do God's will.

In the same way, Satan and the rest of the angels in heaven were given free will. While Satan had no reason to bend his will away from God, he chose to do so in pursuit of selfishness. In order for God to prevent Satan from rebelling, He would have had to force Satan to obey Him. He would have had to remove Satan's freedom of choice.

4. How many angels sided with Satan in his great rebellion?

"His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth" (Revelation 12:4).

"So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth and his angels were cast out with him" (Revelation 12:9).

One third of the angels in heaven chose to follow Satan and participate in his rebellion.

5. How did sin become established on planet Earth?

"Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden"?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the

fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die." Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil!' So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate" (Genesis 3:1-6).

Having been warned by God not to eat the fruit that grew on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve did so anyway. Tempted by Satan, who appeared in the form of a serpent, Eve chose to disobey the plainly stated word of God. She chose to place her own will above the will of God, just as Lucifer had done in heaven long before.

6. What is sin?

"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4).

The King James Version of the Bible says that sin "is the transgression of the law" Placing one's own will above the will of God leads to breaking the principles God has given to safeguard our lives.

Romans 14:23 says that "whatever is not of faith is sin."

Faith can be defined as trusting implicitly in the word of God. When someone steps out of trusting God's word and seeks to fulfill their own desires rather than the will of God, that lack of faith inevitably leads to sin.

7. Who is responsible for the trials that can severely impact a person's life?

"Another parable He put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, "Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?" He said to them, "An enemy has done this"' (Matthew 13:24-28).

Jesus clearly identified the cause of sin in the world. "An enemy has done this," He said.

When a child is born with a life-threatening illness; when a drunk driver runs a red light and causes a terrible accident; when a natural disaster leaves tremendous damage and loss in its wake, an enemy has done this.

God is not to blame for the troubles facing the world today. Sin was introduced by a jealous devil, determined to receive worship and to rob God of the honor and glory He is due.

8. How has sin impacted the world since its introduction?

Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day" (Genesis 1:31).

Following creation, the world was "very good" There was no sin. There was no death. There was no suffering. Everything was 'very good'

"For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now" (Romans 8:22).

The effect of sin on this world is clearly seen. Pollution, decay, and death are visible in the natural world, and all are a result of sin.

"Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying.

"You shall not eat of it": Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return"" (Genesis 3:17-19).

The dramatic effects of sin are witnessed in the world around us, Until the first sin in the Garden of Eden, there had never been so much as a leaf falling from a tree and decaying.

9. How does the devil work in the world today?

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Satan is determined to lead people away from faith in God.

"He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).

Today, the devil is just what he was in Jesus' day. He is a liar who seeks to lead people into sin.

"For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain" (1 Thessalonians 3:5).

Satan is described in the Bible as "the tempter" His mission is to separate people from the safety of a committed relationship with Jesus.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

10. Is it fair that God has allowed Satan to cause so much pain and hardship?

"And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left" (Luke 23:33).

Now it was about the sixth hour. and there was darkness Over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, "into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breathed His last" (Luke 23:44-46).

Heaven has suffered more because of sin than anywhere else. Sin caused the death of Jesus on the cross. Because of sin, God not only witnessed the suffering of His own Son but also has continued to witness the suffering endured by His children: since Adam and Eve sinned in Eden.

11. In a world filled with sin and suffering, what invitation does God make to all people?

The Lord Shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul" (Psalm 121:7).

"Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

"The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them" (Psalm 34:7).

God invites you to trust that He will preserve you in the midst of a sinful world. There is power in God to keep any person from the power of sin. Faith in God will safely guide anyone through the hazards of this sinful world.

12. In view of the sin in this world, what promises has God made to the human family?

"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" (Revelation 21:4).

There is a time coming when there will be no more sin. In fact, there will be no more trace of sin. One day soon, sin and its effects will be completely eradicated.

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3).

When Jesus returns, all who have surrendered their lives to Him will be taken to heaven where there will be no sin or suffering of any kind.

The existence of sin in the world has long perplexed people who see sin as a manifestation of the injustice of God. But, far from sin reflecting negatively on God, His manner of dealing with sin-the death of Jesus on the cross-demonstrates that He truly is love.

"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).

Are you willing to trust your life to the God of heaven, believing He will one day deliver you from this sinful world?

LESSON 4

JESUS THE PROMISED MESSIAH



A single nutrient has been reported to slash the risk of developing at least sixteen different types of cancer including pancreatic, lung, ovarian, colorectal, and prostate cancers. That important nutrient is essential for healthy immune function and decreased risk of autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis, Hashimoto's disease, and type 1 diabetes. It affects our blood pressure and reduces the risk of heart disease, stroke, and infectious diseases-from influenza to tuberculosis.

It improves mood and prevents dementia, depression, insomnia, muscle weakness, joint pain, fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoporosis, and psoriasis. It helps us sleep and age better, and it promotes a healthy gut. Sunshine is a key source of that nutrient.

What vitamin is produced when sunlight hits our skin?

If we're deficient in vitamin D, then we are more susceptible to all the Conditions and diseases listed above. We are quick to blame other causes while overlooking our more significant "sunshine deficiency"

Vitamin D plays an enormous role in keeping us healthy, yet vitamin D deficiency reportedly affects 1 billion men, women, and children worldwide. Some estimates

say that 70% of Americans have vitamin D levels low enough to be associated with poor health outcomes. At least 40% of Americans are considered vitamin D deficient. Among the elderly, that number is 61%, partly because the skin of a person in their 70s produces roughly 25% of the vitamin D3 produced by a person in their 20s.

A 2021 study reported in the Annals of Medicine and Surgery found that lower Vitamin D levels were associated with higher rates of hospital admission and death due to COVID-19 pneumonia.

Is vitamin D deficiency primarily a problem in the United States and Scandinavian countries?

Vitamin D deficiency is a global problem even in areas of the world near the equator. Of the Saudi Arabian population, 60% reportedly have vitamin D deficiency. More than 80% of adults in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh have insufficient vitamin D levels. Other astounding reports assess insufficient vitamin D affecting 90% of people in Turkey and 67% in Iran.

"From the rising of the sun to its going down. The Lord's name is to be praised." - PSALM 113:3

How much sunshine do I need daily, and are vitamin D Supplements as effective as sunshine?

While vitamin D supplements are widely valuable, research indicates they are inferior to vitamin D from the sun in preventing some of the health problems associated with vitamin D insufficiency. It's not enough to rely on supplements, as helpful as they may be.

Daily exposure to sunlight is the most natural way to get enough vitamin D. In order to maintain healthy blood levels of vitamin D, aim to get about 10 to 30 minutes of midday sunlight several times per week.

Interestingly, people with darker skin may need even more time in the sun, Let the sun, in healthful amounts, shine on you.

Malachi 4:2 says, "But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings."

BIBLE STUDY: JESUS THE PROMISED MESSIAH

1. When did God first promise a Savior for the world?

“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15).

After Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, they were no longer in perfect unity with God and were therefore destined to be lost. Desiring to bring the human family back into union with Himself, God promised a Savior would come to the world to make it possible for Sinners to be reunited with Him.

Jesus is known as the "Messiah, which means 'deliverer' or 'Savior.'" In John 1:41, Andrew "first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah' (which is translated, the Christ)"

According to Isaiah 59:2, sin separates a person from God. A Savior was needed who could bridge that separation and bring sinners back into harmony with God.

2. How does the Bible portray Jesus as the Messiah?

"Then he dreamed, and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it" (Genesis 28:12).

"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture (John 10:9).

"And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

Jesus is represented in a variety of ways as the Savior of the world. He came to this earth to bridge the gap between heaven and earth. Depicted variously as a ladder connecting heaven and Earth, as the doorway to heaven, and as the bread of life, it is through Jesus that the lost can find eternal life.

3. How did prophecy point forward to the promised Messiah?

Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). The fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 is found in another passage:

"So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, God with us" (Matthew 1:22, 23).

The predicted birthplace of the Messiah is revealed as follows.

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).

The fulfillment of that prediction is found in the Book of Matthew in the chief priests' and scribes' reply to when King Herod asked about the newborn Messiah's location.

"So, they said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel'" (Matthew 2:5,6).

"He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised and we did not esteem Him" (Isaiah 53:3)

Isaiah predicted the suffering and death of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus life, ministry, and death on the cross, bore witness to the fulfillment of those statements

"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11), The birth of Jesus fulfilled numerous prophecies Jesus came to the world to be its Savior and Redeemer.

4. How does Jesus save people from their sin?



"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

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

Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so

through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life (Romans 5:18)

Jesus, who lived a perfect life died not only to bear the penalty for sins of the world, but also to offer sinners His own righteousness. As sin brought condemnation to the world the death of Jesus made His righteousness available to the entire human race. The righteousness of Jesus stands in place of a sinner's unrighteousness. The person who accepts Jesus as Savior receives the righteousness of Jesus as their own, and through faith in Jesus possesses everlasting life.

5. How can we be certain God will grant everlasting life?

"And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you" (Genesis 17:7).

"In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Genesis 22:18).

God established a covenant in which He promised everlasting life to all who would believe in Him and obey Him. This covenant was first made in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 3:15), then repeated to Abraham.

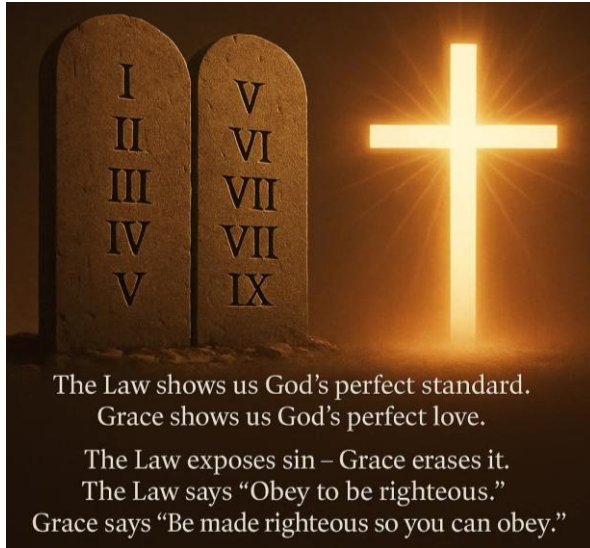


A covenant is a binding relationship between two parties, an agreement based upon certain terms. In this everlasting covenant, God pledges to be the God of His people. In return, He asks that His people agree to serve Him and obey His law.

God has pledged to be the God of His people. We can be assured that God will never alter the covenant He has made with us.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

“God is not a man, that He should lie” (Numbers 23:19)



6. What does God do under this covenant?

Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the

house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people (Jeremiah 31:31-33)

In the everlasting covenant made with the human family, God pledges to write His law 'on their hearts.

7. Where do we see this covenant expressed in the New Testament?

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Hebrews 8:10).

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord. I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them" (Hebrews 10:16).

Under the new covenant, God promises forgiveness for sin. He also promises grace to renew the sinful heart. Just as the Ten Commandments were engraved on tables of stone, the law of God is engraved in the believer's heart.

This covenant was ratified—made officially valid-by the shedding of the blood of Jesus.

8. What was the old covenant?

"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation' (Exodus 19:5, 6).

"You shall observe My judgments and keep My ordinances, to walk in them: I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 18:4, 5).



The old covenant was also based upon the law of God Although God's people responded to this covenant with no intention—"All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient (Exodus 24:7)—they were incapable of obeying God on their own They recognized their need for the Savior spoken of in the covenant established upon "better promises" (Hebrews 8:6). Those "better promises" were God's promises to write His law on their hearts and to be their God.

9. How does God keep His covenant with those who believe in Jesus?

"For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse?" (Hebrews 9:13, 14).

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).

Under the old covenant, God's people promised God that they would obey. Under the new covenant, faith in Jesus results in Jesus living out His life in the life of the believer The Holy Spirit writes God's law on the believer's heart

Rather than attempting to achieve their own righteousness, believers in Jesus accept the righteousness of Christ. The blood of Jesus atones for sin while His obedience is accepted. The human heart is made new and produces the fruit of the Spirit The grace of Christ brings a person more and more into obedience to the will and the law of God.

10. Under the new covenant, how does a believer experience transformation?

[F]or it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

Jesus promises to live His life in the life of every person who chooses to believe in Him. The power of the gospel liberates His followers from the power of sin. As a follower of Jesus grows in his grace, his or her life is remade more and more in the image of Jesus.

Jesus keeps the promises He makes to his people. All who are willing may receive a new heart and experience a new life. God promises He will be the God of all who choose to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Will God really do this work in your life? Yes, He will. He promises to do so. The God of heaven is a covenant-keeping God. He pledges to keep and sustain all who believe in Him. He promises to forgive and cleanse all who look to Jesus in faith.

Are you willing to receive new life from Jesus today?

LESSON 5

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS—GOD'S IMMUTABLE LAW



The Bible tells of many conversations that God had with people. In one instance, God said to Moses, "I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not (Exodus 16:6). In the morning, the children of Israel saw a small, round substance "as fine as frost" (Exodus 16:14) lying on the ground, and "they said to one another What is it? (Exodus 16:15). The King James Version records them as saying, "It is manna" Moses told the Israelites what God had said—that the mystery substance was bread from heaven." Let every man gather it according to each one's need...Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less [He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack' (Exodus 16:16-18)

It might seem as though God is teaching the children of Israel portion control! They were only to gather a certain amount of manna, and no more. It is important to know how much food you need to eat, as opposed to how much you want to eat. Some people require more food than others, and although it can be a struggle to

find this sweet spot, it is liberating when you do so. An essential key for optimal living is to eat what we need, rather than what we crave, like, or desire. Apart from causing weight gain, overeating is very damaging to one's health. Portion control is important for healthy living. While God has created so much wonderful food, wisdom and self-control are needed to maintain a healthy weight.

And there was something else God was teaching the children of Israel in giving the manna. God was developing their ability to trust Him for their daily needs. Every morning, they awoke to the assurance that God was the giver of all good gifts. Even as they slept, God had not forgotten them. They were the object of His special care, each dawning day revealing that they could count on God to do for them what they could not do for themselves. Many years after God "rained down manna on them to eat"(Psalm 78:24), Jesus likened Himself to manna. He told the people that if they were willing to eat the true bread from heaven, their soul hunger would be satisfied. "For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:33).

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is Sure, making wise the simple;" -Psalm 19:7

At Mount Sinai, God spoke for all to hear. The words He spoke that day were to provide spiritual nourishment for all of His people, for all time.

The Ten Commandments, Spoken by God from Mount Sinai, were given to guide and bless God's people. This is why David could write, "You are near, O Lord, and all Your commandments are truth" (Psalm 119:151)

BIBLE STUDY: THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

1. What does God say about the Ten Commandments?

"Great peace have those who love your and nothing causes them law, and to stumble" (Psalm 119:165).

God states that obedience to God brings "great peace" to the human heart, whereas sin separates a person from God (see Isaiah 59:2)

2. Do people receive salvation based on their obedience to God?

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

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

Salvation is received through faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation does not come as the result of obedience to the Ten Commandments. However, the Bible is clear that people who have surrendered to Jesus will see their lives come increasingly into harmony with the will of God.

3. What will characterize the life of a committed believer in Jesus?

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22, 23)

“Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). Those who have chosen Jesus as their Savior and Lord will experience a continual deepening in their relationship with Him. Their lives will be characterized by obedience to God.

4. How does obedience develop in the life of a believer in Jesus?

“That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).

“Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin” (Romans 6:6).

“Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

A relationship with Jesus sees Him live out His life in the life of the believer. The person who Comes to Jesus in faith looks away from the old life and yields his or

her life to Jesus, who dwells in that person to produce a "new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

As David wrote, "I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8).

5. What are the Ten Commandments?

1. *"You shall have no other gods before Me"(Exodus 20:3).*

⌘ The God who gave His Son for the world asks for loyalty from His people. Only the Creator has the right to be God in a person's life.

2. *"You shall not make for yourself a carved image-any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down to them nor serve them"(Exodus 20:4, 5).*

⌘ Idol worship reduces the great Creator to the level of the creation. Diminishing God results in diminishing the individual. God wants instead that people reach their true potential through oneness with the Creator of the universe.

3. *"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).*

⌘ Love for God results in respect for God. His name is not to be uttered in a common or disrespectful way. Also, those who call themselves Christians will not do so "in vain" they will wish to live up to the high calling of being a follower of Jesus.

4. *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God" (Exodus 20:8-10).*

⌘ Because God desires communion with His people, He has set aside sacred time for Us to spend with Him and with our human family. God is the God of relationships. Relationships can only be truly healthy when adequate time is taken to cultivate them.

5. *"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12).*

⌘ The family unit and appropriate parental authority are to be respected as family safeguards and societal building blocks.

6. *"You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13).*

☞ God insists that we honor and protect life. The taking of an innocent Life is a significant issue in the sight of God. God urges the human family to recognize and respect the value of human life.

7. *"You shall not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14).*

☞ God desires that families be safeguarded by love and fidelity. Faithfulness in the marriage relationship provides security to both adults and children, providing them with an environment in which they may develop into emotionally healthy members of society.

8. *"You shall not steal" (Exodus 20:15).*

☞ Respecting the property and rights of others is fundamental to faith in God.

9. *"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Exodus 20:16).*

☞ Honesty and integrity will be manifested in the lives of God's people.

10. *"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's" (Exodus 20:17).*

☞ While it is not inappropriate to desire nice possessions, inordinate desire for that to which you have no right is inconsistent with faith in God. It was covetousness that led Satan to desire the place of God in heaven (see Isaiah 14:12-14) and that led Eve to eat the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (see Genesis 3:6).

Clearly there is no fault in the Ten Commandments. They are a transcript of the goodness of God's character. They guide people in living a life that is not only pleasing to God, but also brings peace and freedom from sin.

6. Should people today observe feast days and conduct the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament?

The prophet Daniel indicated that the sacrificial system would come to an end. When Jesus died on the cross, the veil in the temple separating the Holy Place of the temple from the Most Holy Place was torn in two.

"[I]n the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering" (Daniel 9:27).

"And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mark 15:37, 38).

Which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ" (Colossians 2:17).

God was signifying that the system of sacrifices, types, and shadows had met its fulfillment in the death of Jesus. The ceremonial laws were a "shadow" pointing forward to Jesus the true Lamb of God. As Paul wrote:

"For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

7. What motivates people to want to observe the Ten Commandments?

"Love does no harm to a neighbor: therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:10).

"If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

Many scholars believe that John 14:15 is better translated, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments suggesting that love for God will motivate a person to wish to live in obedience to God's will.

Obedience is far more than requirement. Obedience to God is a privilege and a blessing. A sinner is not doomed to stay stuck in his or her sins. A lost person does not have to continue living the life of a lost person, through faith in Christ, God is able to transform every life.

8. What does God promise the surrendered believer in Jesus?

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1,2).

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

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it"(1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24).

God promises to do the work of growing the faith and developing the character of the person who believes in Him. He promises "that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

The Ten Commandments are. in essence, ten promises. When Jesus abides in the heart of a believer, that person "bears much fruit (John 15:5). The presence of Jesus will result in a complete transformation in a person's life.

9. What happens when a believer in Jesus falls into sin?

"The Holy Spirit] will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

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

The Bible records the stories of Peter, David, Solomon, and others so we can learn from their experience that God is a forgiving God. Those who feel sorrow for sin will, like the thief on the cross, be assured of God's forgiveness and grace (see Luke 23:43). The Bible says that God is "ready to forgive" (Psalm 86:5).

When a repentant believer comes to know the great love of God and discovers God's desire to live His life in the life of the believer, the power of God is unleashed in that person's life. The Holy Spirit will continue to grow and transform the life of anyone who believes in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Obedience to God becomes a joy even as sin becomes less and less attractive in light of the love and goodness of Jesus.

Are you willing to look to Jesus today and allow Him to live His life in you?

LESSON 6

COME REST A WHILE WITH ME



Inemuri is Japanese for "being present while asleep." In Japanese culture it is socially acceptable to sleep on park benches, in the office, in meetings, at dinner parties, and at work. Sleeping in public communicates the presence of a hardworking individual: who is so productive and whose work is so important that that person doesn't get enough sleep at night. In fact, Japan is included on the list of countries around the world whose citizens get the least amount of sleep. According to a 2010 study in the journal *Sleep Medicine*, children in Japan go to bed three hours later than children in New Zealand.

Electricity and modern lights have made it easier for us to use night-time hours to keep going indefinitely. Whether it's our to-do list, our home-work, or a screen that's got us hooked, we often shave hours off our sleep cycles. Sleep can seem unproductive, yet in reality it's probably the most important "activity" of the day.

Why is sleep so important?

Regardless of whether we realize it, we are accomplishing extremely important tasks during our unconscious hours. The first important task we accomplish when we sleep is memory consolidation, which is the process of filing away in our brains all the information we were exposed to in a given day for future retrieval. This allows us to access that information with clarity in the future. Individuals who sleep well at night score higher on tests the next day than those who don't. We make memories when we're awake, but we actively retain those memories while we're asleep.

A second valuable function of sleep is getting rid of mental and emotional "waste." Every brain has a "janitor" that cleans damaged parts of the brain during sleep. Think of a racecar crew that checks the oil, installs new tires, and ensures peak performance during every pitstop. Such tasks can only be performed when the race car is resting. The same is true with the brain. When we don't get enough sleep, we lose capacity to operate at peak performance. This can manifest as dementia or disease.

"Come to Me, all you who are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls"
Matthew 11:28

How does lack of sleep hurt the brain?

Lack of sleep can result in the accumulation of unhealthy proteins in the brain associated with dementia and Alzheimer's. Sleep is the only way for such proteins to be "cleaned out."

In addition, studies reveal that poor sleep can result in a shrunken, smaller brain, particularly in the frontal cortex. This can result in reduced capacity for memorizing, reasoning, planning, and problem solving.

Who is struggling to sleep?

It is estimated that 50 to 70 million people in the United States have ongoing sleep disorders. Women are 40% more likely to have insomnia than men, and according to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, more than 50% of adults report taking sleep aids.

Clearly, a significant portion of the population struggles to get quality sleep. They're trying, but it's just not happening-and it shows.

4 Keys to better sleep

A few simple strategies can lay the foundation for establishing a solid sleep pattern:

- ☞ Establish and stick to a consistent bedtime.
- ☞ Turn lights low in the evening, and refrain from screen time (phone, computer, and TV) for at least an hour before bedtime.
- ☞ Keep the temperature in your bedroom cool.
- ☞ Eliminate caffeine, as it can interfere with sleep quality.
- ☞ Engage in physical exercise to promote restful sleep.

God in His wisdom gave us an entire day to rest. Continue the study to find out more.

BIBLE STUDY: COME REST A WHILE WITH ME

1. How important is it to God that we get adequate rest?

"And He said to them, 'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.' For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat" (Mark 6:31).

Jesus made it clear we need to take time out. Even the most worthwhile projects should not be allowed to jeopardize our health. Jesus encouraged His friends to get adequate rest.

2. What kind of rest does God want us to experience?

'But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

God promises to renew the strength of those who "wait on the LORD."

Those who trust in Him and enter into a saving relationship with Him will find health and strength in Him.

'Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

In addition to physical rest, God wants His people to find spiritual rest. In connecting with Jesus, we may enter into a relationship with Jesus in which our burdens are lifted and our cares are lightened.

A yoke is a device used to connect working animals. That connection allows them to work together, their combined efforts achieving more than they could accomplish separately.

Faith in Jesus "yokes" believers together with Him. Surrendering to Him unites the will of believers with His presence and power. As you take His yoke upon you, Jesus power works in your life.

"Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:6, 7).

God has made provision that we experience rest from our cares.

Worry is unnecessary when we trust in the blessing of God.

3. How has God given the gift of rest to the human family?

"And He said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath'" (Mark 2:27).

The word Sabbath means "rest." The Sabbath was made by God for the benefit of humankind.

4. How important is God's gift of rest?

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8-11).

Sabbath rest is so important to God that it was mandated in the Ten Commandments! Along with "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3), "Honor your father and your mother" (Exodus 20:12), and "You shall not steal" (Exodus 20:15), God says, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

5. Why does God include Sabbath rest in the Ten Commandments?

"For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:11).

The Sabbath day functions as a memorial of God's creative power. It points back to Creation in the Garden of Eden, reminding people that they are the work of God's hands-intentionally designed to receive His blessings. The Sabbath day reveals that human beings were made for a special purpose.

"Moreover, I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them" (Ezekiel 20:12).

As well as directing the attention of the world to Creation, the Sabbath day was given by God to show that He is also the God of re-creation.

In pointing to God's power to create, the Sabbath also points to God's power to recreate sinners in the image of God and to restore what sin has taken away.

As David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalms 51:10).

Writing to the Corinthian church, Paul stated, "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:16).

6. When did God give the Sabbath?

"And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Genesis 2:2, 3).

The Sabbath was instituted at Creation. After making the world in six days, God rested on the seventh day. God didn't rest because He was tired. He ceased from His work and rested with Adam and Eve in the beauty of His completed creation.

7. How did Jesus relate to the Sabbath during His time on Earth?

"So, He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read" (Luke 4:16).

Jesus not only kept the Sabbath, but He also demonstrated that the Sabbath is to be a day of worship. There were also times when Jesus healed people on the Sabbath day.

"Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he did so, and his hand was restored" (Luke 6:6, 10).

The Sabbath today is a day of spiritual healing-a day set aside by God to spend special time with His people.

8. How did the Church in the book of Acts relate to the Sabbath?

"Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures" (Acts 17:2).

"And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there" (Acts 16:13).

"So, when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God" (Acts 13:42, 44).

Just as Jesus observed the Sabbath day during His lifetime, the early Christian church followed Jesus' example of faithfulness to God.

9. Which day of the week is the biblical Sabbath day?

"[T]he seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God" (Exodus 20:10).

"For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way, 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works'" (Hebrews 4:4).

The Sabbath of the Bible is the seventh day of the week, which is Saturday. Sunday is the first day of the week, while Monday is the second, Tuesday is the third, and so on. The Bible reveals that the Bible Sabbath is Saturday the seventh day of the week.

The weekly cycle continues today as it has since it was first instituted by God in the Garden of Eden. The week we enjoy today has been handed down to us

unbroken from previous generations. The day we call the seventh day today has been recognized as the seventh day for thousands of years.

In 1793, France instituted a ten-day week. In 1929, the Soviet Union began observing a five-day week. These experiments failed, and before long both nations reverted to the seven-day week.

"This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. That day was the preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment. Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared" (Luke 23:52-24:1).

In his account of the death of Jesus, Luke carefully points out that Jesus died on the Preparation Day (the day before the Sabbath), and that He rose from the dead on the first day of the week (Sunday.) The day in-between was, according to Luke, the Sabbath day. The day between Friday and Sunday is Saturday, the Sabbath day.

10. Did the Sabbath day change after Jesus died on the cross?

"And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath (Matthew 24:20).

Before He died, Jesus foresaw the time in AD 70 when Jerusalem would be destroyed. The counsel He gave his disciples reveals that Jesus never made a change to the seventh-day Sabbath.

As we have already seen, the early Christian church kept the seventh day as the Sabbath and encouraged others to do the same (see Acts 17:2; 16:13; and 13:42-44).

When Jesus died, the ceremonial law became obsolete. No longer were animal sacrifices required or accepted. Observance of the annual feast days also came to an end. When Jesus died, the veil in the temple that separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place was torn in two by an unseen hand, indicating that the temple services were no longer to be observed (see Mark 15:38).

The "handwriting of ordinances" (Colossians 2:14), the shadows of "things to come" (Colossians 2:17), were not to be binding on believers in Jesus. The true Lamb of God (John 1:29), the true Passover sacrifice (1 Corinthians 5:7), had given His life for the world. The sacrifices and symbols pointing to Jesus had been fulfilled in Him.

11. What makes the Sabbath day special?

- ⌘ It is a day of rest (Exodus 20:8-11; Ezekiel 46:1).
- ⌘ It is a memorial of creation and recreation (Exodus 20:11; Ezekiel 20:12).
- ⌘ It is a time to especially focus on the things of heaven (Isaiah 58:13).
- ⌘ It is a day of joy (Isaiah 58:14).
- ⌘ It is a day for worship (Luke 4:16; Acts 13:44).

The Sabbath is a day of time spent with God. In a busy world, God invites His children to step back from the demands of the world and spend uninterrupted time with Him.

The Sabbath day will be kept for all eternity. Even in heaven the Sabbath will be kept.

"For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me," says the LORD, 'So shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,' says the LORD" (Isaiah 66:22, 23).

12. Why would we choose to keep the Sabbath day holy?

"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

"We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

"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' death on the cross calls for a loving response from every human heart. He wants to spend eternity with you. He wants you to allow heaven to lead you in His footsteps. Calvary shows there was no sacrifice too great for God to make so that you might have eternal life. Choosing to keep the Sabbath day holy is a loving response to God's great love for you.

13. How is love for God expressed in the life of those who believe in Jesus?

"If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

"Love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10).

Love for God leads to an ever-deepening surrender to God. Surrendered to Him, God's children desire that His will be done in their lives.

God pictures His people in earth's last days when He says, "[H]ere are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

Are you willing to accept Jesus' death on the cross for you, and allow God's will to be done in your life?

LESSON 7

WHAT'S IN A DAY?



An attending physician was conducting her hospital rounds one day when a resident—a recent graduate from medical school—met her outside the room of a 29-year-old diabetic about to lose his leg below the knee because of poorly controlled diabetes. The resident wanted to speak about an urgent matter before the attending physician entered the room.

What was the urgent matter? The patient wanted to eat fruit. The new doctor had informed the patient that fruit was not appropriate for him due to his diabetes because it would increase his blood sugar level. The attending physician invited the resident to join her at the patient's bedside to get to the truth of the matter

God's dietary prescription

Can diabetics eat fruit? Yes, they can. It was long thought that diabetics should not eat fruit because it raises blood sugar levels. In Genesis, we read that God prescribed a diet of fruit, seeds, herbs, and plant-based foods that were designed not only for all humanity, but also for "every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food" (Genesis 1:30). This original diet was for all: every race, every nation, and every tongue with no exceptions. It was designed to promote health.

Unfortunately, many of us have chosen diets that promote harm and disease.

Why does blood sugar increase after eating fruit?

Insulin resistance is a condition that occurs when there is too much fat built up in muscle and liver cells that prevents insulin from doing its work inside the cells. This fat buildup consists of adipose (fatty) tissue.

Sadly, we know that most type 2 diabetics have higher-than-optimal weight levels. So how does fruit affect the blood sugar level of a type 2 diabetic?

Consider the following scenario:

Let's say that a type 2 diabetic who is also overweight eats a banana. That person's blood sugar goes up and we blame the banana. Is this the banana's fault? No!

Fat buildup in cells inhibits production of GLUT-4, a protein needed to attach to the cell surface which then brings glucose inside the cells.

“He shall be like
a tree Planted by
the rivers of
water, That
brings forth its
fruit in its
season, Whose
leaf also shall
not wither; And
whatever he
does shall
prosper.” Psalm
1:3

Does science agree with diabetics eating fruit?

Fresh vegetables have long been part of a diabetic diet. Fruit has been considered suspect. One compelling study related to fruit consumption began in 2004 on two groups in China over a seven-year period. The first group already had diabetes at the beginning of the study, and the second group had no history of diabetes. This study was the first of its kind to examine the long-term impact of fresh fruit consumption on either developing diabetes or developing complications of diabetes. Half a million people were recruited as study participants.

Participants who ate a high concentration of fresh fruit during the study exhibited a significantly lower risk of developing diabetes. Those who already had diabetes exhibited a much lower chance of developing complications of diabetes such as kidney disease, lost limbs, and lost sight.

As such, the attending physician in our story told the diabetic patient, "Sir, you can have all the fruit you want."

The devil has told many lies. The diet that God prescribed in Eden was for everyone for all time. It will be the diet in heaven. Could it be that he would also lie about the true day of worship? We will discover the answer as we progress through our Bible study.

BIBLE STUDY: WHAT'S IN A DAY?

1. What has Jesus said about the Ten Commandments?

"If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).

Jesus spoke of obedience as the natural outflowing of love for God in the heart. John 14:15 might better be translated, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

David was able to say in Psalm 40:8, "I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart." When the heart is surrendered to Jesus, obedience becomes the tenor of the life.

2. Has God clearly identified the biblical Sabbath?

"[T]he seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God" (Exodus 20:10).

"[H]allow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God" (Ezekiel 20:20).

"Therefore, the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28).

According to the Bible, the Sabbath day is the seventh day of the week, the day known in English as Saturday and in Spanish as Sabado.

This was the day that God blessed and sanctified (see Genesis 2:3).

The word Sabbath means "rest." The Sabbath was given to the human family at creation as a memorial of God's power to create and recreate. Knowing people would need rest, God gave the Sabbath to ensure we would have a day away from the pressures of life—a day set aside and dedicated to Him for worship and communion.

3. How did the Bible Sabbath fall out of favor with many in the world today?

"He (Satan through the beast power) shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times

and law. Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time" (Daniel 7:25).

"Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4).

Bible prophecy predicted there would be an intentional campaign waged against the seventh-day Sabbath. Given in the Garden of Eden—one of only two divinely—ordained institutions to come out of the Garden of Eden (the other being marriage)—Satan intended to weaken the Sabbath and therefore obscure the memorial to God's creative power.

Jesus' position as Creator gives God authority to rule in the universe.

You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created" (Revelation 4:11)

Determined to receive the worship due only to God, Satan said in heaven, "I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14). Unsuccessful in receiving worship in heaven, Satan came to the earth determined to rob God of the worship He deserves. Attacking the Sabbath was intended to turn people away from faithfulness to God.

4. How successful has Satan been in turning people from true worship?

"All who dwell on the earth will worship him [the beast], whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

Not only have many people abandoned the sign of God's creative power, the Bible also says that in the earth's final days humanity will be influenced to worship the creature rather than the Creator.

5. How common was Sabbath worship in the New Testament church?

"So, He (Jesus) came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read" (Luke 4:16).

'So, when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God" (Acts 13:42, 44).

"And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 16:13, 14).

"Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures" (Acts 17:2).

Not only did Jesus worship on the Sabbath when He was on the earth, but the early Christian church also kept the commandments of God, including the fourth commandment. Long after Jesus died on the cross, His people were observing the Sabbath of the Bible.

6. Is Sunday worship Biblical?

"[T]he seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God" (Exodus 20:10).

"Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

The worship of God is to be according to the word of God. There are numerous good reasons to worship in one manner or another, but for the believer the word of God is the final and ultimate authority.

Ezekiel 46:1 refers to "the six working days." Clearly it was not in God's plan for any day other than the seventh day to be the Sabbath. Only one day was blessed and sanctified, and that was the seventh-day Sabbath (see Genesis 2:3).

7. Where did Sunday worship originate?

As we have seen, Christians worshiped God on the Bible Sabbath following the death and ascension of Jesus. Over time, Christianity was influenced by paganism. When Constantine was the emperor of Rome, he passed laws declaring Sunday to be the day of worship for Christians.

Referencing Sunday, the Encyclopedia Britannica states, "The Roman emperor Constantine I (died 337), a convert to Christianity, introduced the first civil legislation concerning Sunday in 321, when he decreed that all work should cease on that day, except that farmers could work if necessary. That law, aimed at providing time for worship, was followed later in the same century and in subsequent centuries by further restrictions on Sunday activities." Constantine's law decreed, 'On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed.'

The Catholic Church determined that Sunday should be the day of worship for Christians in honor of Christ's resurrection. Over time, Sunday worship became established in Christianity, shifting from a civil requirement to a religious observance.

Sunday, named in honor of the sun, became the day commonly accepted by Christians as the biblical day of worship. There is no biblical basis for Sunday worship. It was introduced as a tradition and became established in Christianity over a period of many years.

8. Is Sunday worship an acceptable substitute for the seventh-day Sabbath?

"But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men'" (Acts 5:29).

An event in the life of Israel's first king helps us to see the importance of worshipping God according to His word. The story is found in 1 Samuel 15.

To safeguard the future and the survival of Israel, God, through the prophet Samuel, commanded King Saul to "utterly destroy" Amalek (see 1 Samuel 15:3), a nomadic people who inhabited the desert regions between Israel and Egypt.

When Saul and the armies of Israel returned from battle, King Saul confidently proclaimed, "I have performed the commandment of the LORD" (1 Samuel 15:13).

But in defiance of the command of God, "Saul and the people [had] spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed" (1 Samuel 15:9).

King Saul had an explanation for the disappointed prophet Samuel "And Saul said, 'They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of

the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the LORD your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed" (1 Samuel 15:15).

Confronting Saul, Samuel said, "Now the LORD sent you on a mission, and said, 'Go, and utterly destroy the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD?" (1 Samuel 15:18-19).

Israel's king presumed to think that altering God's express command concerning worship would be acceptable in God's sight. Saul's transgression of the will of God was so significant that it led to the end of his reign over the children of Israel. "Because you have rejected the word of the LORD," Samuel said, "He also has rejected you from being king" (1 Samuel 15:23).

King Saul attempted to justify his actions by claiming that what he did, while outside the will of God, was for the purpose of worship. Clearly, worship does not excuse disobedience.

As the prophet Samuel stated, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Samuel 15:22, 23).

Then King Saul admitted, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD" (1 Samuel 15:24).

The heart that is given to God will find its highest delight in doing God's will. No reason will ever be offered to excuse faithfulness to God.

9. Does God indicate the Sabbath will be important in the earth's last days?

"But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath" (Matthew 24:19,20).

Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Revelation 14:7).

"Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

In Matthew 24, Jesus stated that, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, the Bible Sabbath would still be important in the sight of God. Jerusalem was

destroyed in AD 70, almost 40 years after Jesus' death, illustrating that the Sabbath was still observed years after Jesus died on the cross. God states plainly that His "saints" in the end of time will "keep the commandments of God" and that, in the final days of earth's history, the world will be called to worship the Creator-"Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Revelation 14:7).

10. What can motivate a person to desire to honor and obey God?

"He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for them-selves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:15).

[T]he Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

Jesus' life was lived to serve and bless others. Those who come to Him in faith "should live no longer for themselves" (2 Corinthians 5:15)

Instead, the desire of the believer in Jesus is to "keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22).

Out of love for God, are you willing to "keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight?" Are you willing to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy?

LESSON 8

THE SANCTUARY AND THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION



Most of the human body is made up of water-on average about 65% in males and 55% in females. Bodies with a higher percentage of body fat tend to have a lower percentage of" water.

All organs and parts of the body contain water. Water accouris for 75% of brain mass. Clear thinking, memory, attention, and good rod are dependent on being well hydrated.

Are juices, sodas, and coffee equally as hydrating to our bodies as pure water?

A 12-ounce can of Sprite contains 38 grams of sugar. There are approximately 4 grams of sugar in a teaspoon. This means that nearly 10 teaspoons of sugar are dissolved in that 12-ounce can. These drinks not only are harmful in and of themselves, but also can preclude adequate hydration necessary for all the body's organs. The answer to the question is a resounding no. Juice, soda, and coffee are not equally as hydrating as pure water. Not only is water much more hydrating than those other drinks, but it also is free from chemicals and added sugars.

Pure water hydrates you at a cellular level and more effectively than any other beverage. As nature's universal solvent and most powerful cleansing agent, water can do for you what nothing else can. It has the capacity to dissolve, disperse, and eliminate concentrated substances and transport them elsewhere. This is extremely valuable, because high concentrations of sodium and fructose in the blood turn our fat switch on. Additionally, gallstones and kidney stones are more common with insufficient water intake.

What other benefits are there to drinking pure, clean water?

Water is essential for detoxification. The process of detoxification in our bodies involves conversion of toxic contaminants into substances that dissolve in water so they can be eliminated through stool, urine, breath, or sweat. Water provides hydroelectric power in the cell and maintains an optimal environment for every biological process. Water is necessary to each of the body's systems and assists in resistance to disease. Water even lubricates your joints and spinal cord.

The Bible tells the story of Jesus asking for a drink of water from a socially ostracized woman at a well. Racial prejudice is nothing new. Indifference and even disdain based on social, economic, or educational standing has existed throughout the ages.

The woman was shocked that Jesus would give her the time of day, much less ask for a drink of water. Jesus said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" (John 4:10).

“... but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life”-

Just as our physical bodies need water to thrive, so do our "spiritual bodies" need living water to quench our inner thirst. There is something in living water that you can't find anywhere else. God has a plan to cleanse us from sin. Let us explore that plan more fully as we continue our study.

BIBLE STUDY: THE SANCTUARY AND THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION

1. How did God choose to live among His people in Old Testament times?

"And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Exodus 25:8).

When Israel departed from Egypt, God asked Moses to build a sanctuary—a dwelling place—where He could be present with His people. Through the services associated with this sanctuary, God would teach His people about the plan of salvation.

2. How did Moses design this special sanctuary?

"According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it" (Exodus 25:9).

"And see to it that you make them according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain" (Exodus 25:40).

The sanctuary constructed under Moses's guidance was patterned after the sanctuary in heaven. The temple of God in heaven is the great original on which the design of the earthly sanctuary was based. God was willing to dwell in a small, human-made structure so that He could be with His people while they journeyed toward the Promised Land.

3. What important items were in the earthly sanctuary?

"Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first part, in which was the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which were the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail" (Hebrews 9:1-5).

The sanctuary was comprised of two rooms. The first was the Holy Place, which was approximately 15 feet wide and 30 feet deep, while the second was the Most Holy Place, which was approximately 15 feet by 15 feet. The sanctuary was enclosed in a courtyard, which was around 75 by 150 feet square, bordered by a

fence made from fine linen and supported by 60 pillars made from brass (see Exodus 27:9-16).

THE HOLY PLACE CONTAINED...

- ⌘ The seven-branched candlestick, representing Jesus, the light of the world (Exodus 40:24; John 8:12).
- ⌘ The table of showbread, representing Jesus, the bread of life (Exodus 25:30; John 6:48).
- ⌘ The altar of incense, representing prayer ascending to the throne of God (Exodus 3:1-3; Exodus 40:26; Revelation 8:3,4).

In the Book of Revelation, John saw both the seven-branched candlestick (see Revelation 4:5) and the altar of incense (see Revelation 8:3) in the Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary.

THE MOST HOLY PLACE CONTAINED...

- ⌘ The ark of the covenant, in which were the Ten Commandments (Exodus 26:33; Revelation 11:19).
- ⌘ The mercy seat, which rested on the ark of the covenant and above which the presence of God was manifested (Exodus 25:17, 21; Exodus 25:22).
- ⌘ Two golden cherubim, representing the angels who participate in the plan of salvation (Exodus 37:7-9).

Writing in Revelation, John said He saw the ark of the covenant in the heavenly temple, indicating there is a Most Holy Place in the sanctuary in heaven (see Revelation 11:19).

In the earthly sanctuary, sacrifices were offered for the sins of the people. They pointed to the sacrifice that would be made by Jesus when He died on the cross.

Many sacrifices would be offered at the altar of burnt offering. The sinner would confess his sins over the offering, transferring the sins from the sinner to the animal sacrifice. The blood of the animal sacrifice would then be taken into the sanctuary where it would be ministered by the priest in the Holy Place (see Leviticus 1:4,5). On the Day of Atonement, the sanctuary would be cleansed in a special ceremony during which the high priest entered the Most Holy Place (see Leviticus 23:27).

Through these services, God revealed important principles regarding the plan of salvation. Through confession, sin is transferred to the sacrifice. Through the

4. When did the earthly sanctuary services become obsolete?

blood of the sacrifice, sin is then transferred to the sanctuary. During a special ceremony, the record of sin is blotted out.

"And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mark 15:37,38).

"For Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

"Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:14).

"But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering" (Daniel 9:27).

When Jesus died on the cross, the sacrificial system was no longer necessary. The sacrifices had pointed to Jesus who "was sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7). The sacrificial system was "nailed ... to the cross" (Colossians 2:14). At the death of Jesus, the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom, exposing the Most Holy Place. God was signaling that the system of sacrifices and ceremonies had played its role and was no longer needed. In the middle of the final week of the seventy-week prophecy of Daniel 9, Jesus brought "an end to sacrifice and offering" (Daniel 9:27).

5. What services take place in the heavenly sanctuary?

"Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man" (Hebrews 8:1, 2).

"For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24).

After His ascension to heaven, Jesus entered into His role as heavenly priest to intercede for his people. Unlike the earthly priests who presented to God the blood of an animal sacrifice, Jesus presents the merits of His own shed blood for the sins of His people. As human priests were mediators in the earthly sanctuary services, Jesus is our Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary.

6. What does it mean that Jesus is our Mediator?

"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me'" (John 14:6).

Sin has separated the human family from God (see Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23.) The only means in the entire universe by which humans can be restored to a relationship with God is the blood of Jesus. Now, as high priest in heaven, Jesus presents His blood to His Father for the sins of the world.

"By His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

7. How may lives be impacted by Jesus being humanity's high priest in heaven?

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Knowing Jesus is compassionate and understands what it is to be tempted, all are invited to come boldly (confidently) to Him. Doing so, we receive grace and mercy from the Savior of the world.

8. Will God really forgive sin?

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

"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

Jesus "died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3). The Bible assures us that God not only will forgive us for the sins we have committed, but will also cleanse us of our sin. It is only as we are unwilling to come to Jesus for forgiveness that we are not

made whole. As Jesus said, "But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:40). Those who come to Him in faith are always accepted by Him.

9. How was Satan implicated in the sanctuary

"Then Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the LORD and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat on which the LORD's lot fell, and offer it as a sin offering. But the goat on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as the scapegoat into the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:8-10).

After the sanctuary was cleansed, two goats were offered as sacrifices. One was "for the Lord," which was a sacrifice for the sins of the world. The other was the scapegoat, which represented Satan.

"And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:20-22).

The scapegoat was not a sacrifice for the sins of the people. After the "end of atoning," sin was placed upon the scapegoat to represent Satan finally bearing responsibility for the sins he caused. By introducing sin into the world, Satan bears responsibility for every sin ever committed. Just as the scapegoat was sent into the wilderness, Satan will be punished and ultimately banished for all eternity. Sin will finally and forever be done away with.

"All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you; you have become a horror and shall be no more forever" (Ezekiel 28:19).

The sanctuary service unfolds the plan of salvation. The Lamb of God died to take away the sins of the world (see John 1:29). Just as sin will one day be blotted out, God wishes to cleanse every human heart from sin. Satan, the originator of sin, will be destroyed.

The services carried out on earth represented the ministry that would take place in the heavenly sanctuary. After Jesus returned to heaven, He became our High

Priest where today He intercedes for all who want to be cleansed from sin and prepared for eternal life.

10. How does the Bible describe Jesus our High Priest?

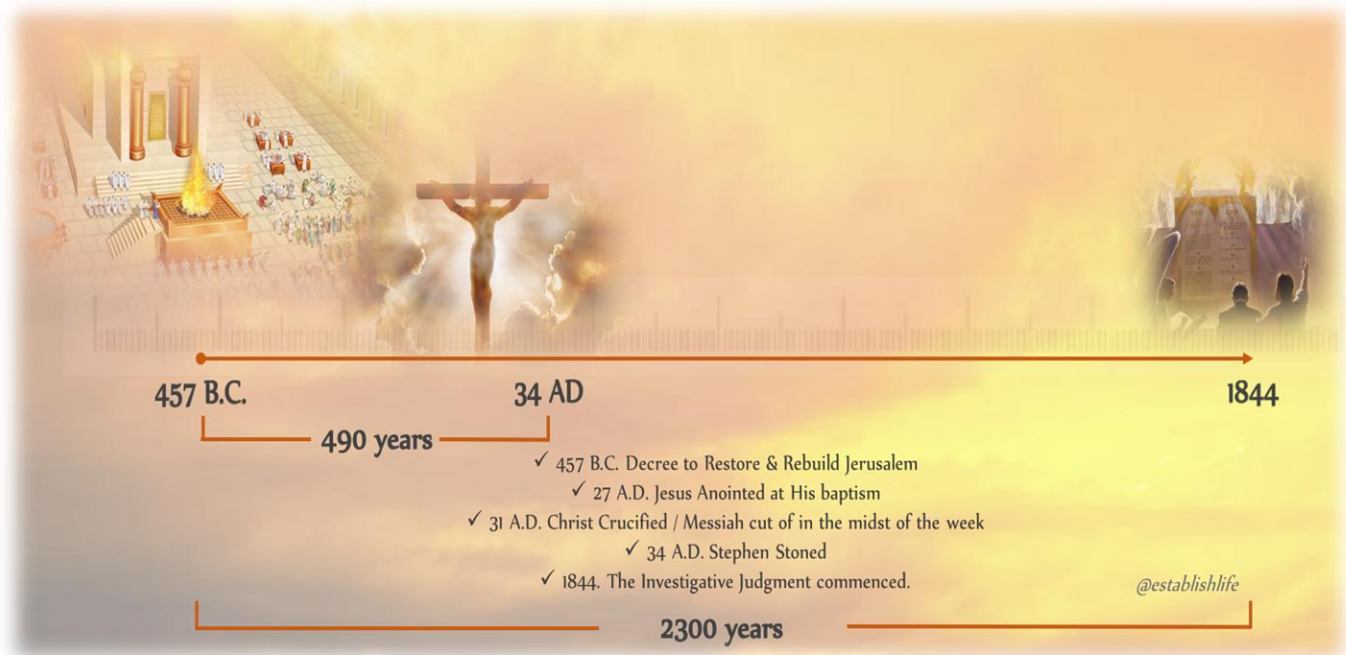
"Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17)

In the plan of salvation, those who believe in Jesus can be confident that he is a "merciful and faithful High Priest." All who come to Him in faith can be certain they will receive, through Jesus, the gift of everlasting life.

Do you want Jesus to be your sin-pardoning High Priest?

LESSON 9

UNLOCKING OUR PLACE IN TIME



Here is an interesting fact: There are trillions of microbes (such as bacteria) in the gut. The diet we consume impacts what kind of microbes live in our guts either to cause harm or to promote health.

How does what we eat affect the bacteria that live in our intestines?

It turns out that long-term eating habits cause diverse types of bacteria to grow and multiply in our intestines. Eating a plant-based diet that does not include dairy fosters the proliferation of healthy organisms in the intestine. On the other hand, eating a diet of eggs, meat, and cheese allows harmful types of bacteria to grow. In people who have a daily diet of dairy, eggs, and fish, a protein called phosphatidylcholine is produced. A habitual diet high in red meat produces L-carnitine. Studies published in the New England Journal of Medicine in 2013 and 2014, and in the journal, Circulation in 2017, have shown that regular consumption of foods that produce these two proteins causes growth of harmful bacteria in the intestine. These proteins are metabolized by the bacteria into a toxic substance known as trimethylamine N-oxide (TMAO), which causes accelerated disease of the arteries that can result in stroke, heart attack, and death. The point is that both

what we eat and how that food interacts with the bacteria in the intestine can cause disease. Meat and dairy foods cause inflammatory bacteria to increase, and these inflammatory bacteria produce the toxin TMAO.

Does meat have any effect on diabetes?

The diet consumed by a diabetic has a direct impact on the health of that individual. We often think that "carbs" cause diabetes. Interestingly, numerous credible studies have shown that the greatest challenge with blood sugar and diabetes control, particularly in a type 2 diabetic, is consumption of red meat.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."-JEREMIAH 29:11

In a healthy person, the pancreas produces insulin whenever there is excess glucose in the blood-stream. When insulin gets into the bloodstream, it attaches to a receptor on cells that allows them to "open their doors" and let glucose in. Insulin is the key that unlocks the door to let glucose into the cells. Meat diets are high in fat, often resulting in obesity. Fascinating research using CT scanning has shown that, if there is excess fat in the diet resulting in obesity, the fat impairs the mechanism that allows the glucose doors to open.

If I do not eat meat, where will I get protein?

Using the framework of green box, yellow box, and red box foods, we find an abundance of foods from which we can derive protein. These include foods like lentils, chickpeas, quinoa, and tofu. Plants are rich in all the nutrients we need. They help cultivate a healthy gut microbiome and protect us from chronic diseases.

We are living in a special time in earth's history. What we eat can impact our ability to comprehend the truth for this time.

BIBLE STUDY: UNLOCKING OUR PLACE IN TIME

In March of 1925, a bill passed in the Tennessee House of Representatives that prohibited the teaching of theories denying the Biblical teaching of creation. City leaders in Dayton, Tennessee, approached a young teacher named John Scopes and asked whether he would be willing to be indicted for teaching prohibited

theories, allowing the ensuing trial to bring publicity to the town. The Scopes Monkey Trial, as it became known, focused the attention of the world on a single courtroom.

According to the Bible, the attention of the universe will one day be focused on another trial of global importance. All of creation will stand before the Creator with eternity in the balance.

1. Will the world ever face God in judgment?

"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (Romans 14:10).

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The Bible tells us that all people will one day stand in judgment before the God of the universe.

2. What is the significance of this judgment?

"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people—saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water'" (Revelation 14:6, 7).

An angel speaking with "a loud voice" is portrayed as heralding the arrival of the judgment. The message goes to the entire world, indicating it is of utmost importance. This global message draws the attention of the world to the solemn reality that judgment time "has come."

3. Does an angel actually fly in the heavens, shouting a message to the world?

The angel mentioned in Revelation 14:6,7 represents a messenger. God's people are the messengers sharing the gospel with the world. They are represented by an angel "in the midst of heaven" speaking with "a loud voice," because this message to the world in earth's last days is of greatest importance and will be heard by all. Everyone will have the opportunity to hear and learn about the vital spiritual issues facing the world.

4. On what basis will people be judged in earth's final judgment?

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14).

"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books" (Revelation 20:12).

Every detail of a person's life will come in review before God during the time of the judgment. The Bible says we will be judged by our works- the deeds we have done.

5. If salvation is by grace, why will people be judged by their works?

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

"But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect?" (James 2:18, 20-22).

Salvation is a gift given by God that can neither be earned nor deserved. However, the reality of one's faith is demonstrated by the way that person lives his or her life. A person's works reveal the genuineness of their faith experience. In this way, we can be judged by our works while being saved only by grace, through faith.

6. When will the judgment take place?

"Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come" (Revelation 14:7).

"And he said to me, 'For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed'" (Daniel 8:14).

The sanctuary Daniel refers to is the sanctuary in heaven (see Lesson 8.) The judgment referred to by John would commence at the end of Daniel's 2300 day prophecy. The cleansing of the earthly sanctuary took place on the Day of Atonement, when faithful followers of God confessed and forsook their sins. As

the earthly sanctuary was cleansed every year, the heavenly sanctuary must also be cleansed. God's people will also confess and forsake their sin during this time.

7. When did the 2300 days prophecy commence?

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times" (Daniel 9:25).

The starting point of the 2300 days was the command to restore and build Jerusalem. The actual decree to rebuild the city is found in Ezra 7:13-26. Issued by King Artaxerxes, the decree permitted the Jewish people to return to Jerusalem, reestablish their society, and reconstruct their ruined city.

8. If the time period connected with the day of judgment is found in Daniel chapter 8, why look to a time period in Daniel 9 to understand its meaning?

"Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man" (Daniel 8:15).

"And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king's business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it" (Daniel 8:27).

"O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision" (Daniel 9:22, 23).

When Daniel received the vision concerning judgment in Daniel 8, he did not understand it. Daniel 9 reveals that God sent the angel Gabriel to give Daniel understanding.

9. What essential information did Gabriel give Daniel about the 2300-day vision?

"Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city" (Daniel 9:24).

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks

and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times" (Daniel 9:25).

"And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. the end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined. Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering" (Daniel 9:26, 27).

Gabriel stated that 70 weeks should be determined-or "cut off"-in regard to this prophecy. The 2300 days would begin with a period of 70 weeks.

10. How are the time periods in Daniel to be understood?

"After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year" (Numbers 14:34, KJV).

"I have laid on you a day for each year" (Ezekiel 4:6).

In Bible prophecy, a day is a symbol that represents a year. Therefore, when Daniel wrote about 2300 days, he was referencing 2300 years, which is why Gabriel could say that the 2300-day/year prophecy received by Daniel more than 550 years before the birth of Jesus "refers to the time of the end" (Daniel 8:17).

As the 2300 days represent 2300 years, the 70 weeks of Daniel 9 represent 490 years (70 weeks is 490 days, which represent 490 years).

11. What important details are included in the seventy weeks prophecy?

A. The starting point of the prophecy is 457 BC. (The decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem was issued in the year 457 BC.)

B. A period of 69 weeks (483 years) would stretch from the issuing of the decree to the appearance of "Messiah the Prince" (Daniel 9:25). The year AD 27-the very year Jesus was anointed as the Messiah-was 483 years after 457 BC. Jesus was baptized by John in the "fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (see Luke 3:1, 21), which history reveals to be the year AD 27

C. Jesus would be cut off-crucified-after this time period. In the "middle of the week," Jesus would "bring an end to sacrifice and offering" (Daniel 9:27). The mid-point of the seventieth week was the year AD 31, the year in which Jesus died on the cross and ended the system of sacrifices and offerings. When Jesus died, "the

veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mark 15:38), indicating the sacrificial system had become obsolete.

D. The seventy weeks ended in AD 34, at which time the gospel was shared with the Gentiles as well as the Jews.

12. When did the 2300 day/year prophecy conclude?

Beginning in 457 BC, the 2300 day/year prophecy ended in 1844. (Remember, when calculating this on a calculator that there is no year zero. Time went from 1 BC directly to AD 1. Taking into account the missing zero year will account for what may appear to be a discrepancy.)

13. What is the significance of the prophecy expiring in the year 1844?

"Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come" (Revelation 14:7).

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Since 1844, the final judgment has been taking place heaven. Those whose names have been entered into the Book of Life are coming in review before God. God will review the record of their lives and will determine who will be "counted worthy to obtain that age" (Luke 20:35).

14. How can any person have hope in heaven's judgment?

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

"We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Hebrews 8:1).

"And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

The Bible says that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). However, Jesus represents sinful people as their "merciful and faithful High Priest" (Hebrews 2:17). Those who accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior have their sins forgiven and receive His perfect righteousness.

No one can earn or deserve the love and mercy of God. Yet, by virtue of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, all may receive His life and be accounted righteous in the sight of God. The love of God is so great that all may freely receive His blessing and forgiveness.

Are you willing to receive Jesus as your High Priest and face the judgment with confidence?

LESSON 10

WHEN A GRAIN OF WHEAT DIES...



Discussions on diet and nutrition can be vigorous and at times heated. "What diet should I choose?" we ask. Should it be paleo, keto, Atkins, Whole30, or some other popular option? Are carbohydrates as unhealthy as some say they are? In this study, we begin to address the issue of carbohydrates.

Are all carbs equal?

If we compare spinach with a 3 Musketeers® candy bar, we don't regard those two foods as equally nutritious. Similarly, if we compare fruit with Froot Loops®, we recognize a vast nutritional difference between the two. Foods commonly identified as "carbs" can be separated into two distinct groups: refined carbohydrates and whole carbohydrates. In this lesson, we focus on whole carbohydrates. (We discuss refined carbohydrates further in lesson 12.)

Whole carbohydrates are high in fiber, water, and antioxidants. They have plenty of minerals and vitamins and are minimally processed. Whole carbohydrate foods include beans, lentils, sweet potatoes, leafy greens, whole grains, whole-grain pastas, corn, and fruit.

Is bread good for you?

A grain consists of three parts: the bran that protects the seed, the germ that provides nourishment for the seed, and the endosperm that provides energy for the seed. Fiber, B vitamins, minerals, vitamin E, and healthy phytochemicals are all found in the bran and the germ. Stripped of the bran and the germ, the grain is a nutritionally depleted food.

When you see a loaf of bread at the store labeled "Made with unbleached enriched wheat flour," that is a marketing strategy. The first ingredient on the contents label should be, "whole grain."

Whole grains include whole wheat, oats, rye, corn, brown rice, barley, and pseudo-grains that botanically are seeds but function as whole grains. Pseudo-grains include quinoa and buckwheat.

Do whole grains provide other health benefits?

The answer is yes. In lesson 9, we observed that one of the most significant causes of diabetes or insulin resistance is the consumption of red and processed meats. Adding a daily serving of red meat to your diet increases risk for type 2 diabetes by more than 50%.

Conversely, one of the best ways to prevent diabetes is to consume whole grains. In fact, according to a 2017 study in the European Journal of Epidemiology, consumption of whole grains contributes to a 13% decreased risk of developing diabetes. Why? Whole grains lower the risk of diabetes because they contain something called "cereal fiber."

Cereal fiber stimulates insulin release and increases the body's insulin sensitivity. Further, cereal fiber from whole grains is metabolized by gut bacteria to form life-changing fatty acids called short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs). SCFAs are crucial to gut health and maintenance of a healthy immune system. Cereal fiber also increases the growth of healthy bacteria to protect your body from proliferation of inflammatory and pathogenic bacteria. In essence, whole grains give us life.

In the Gospel of John chapter 12, the story is told of a grain of wheat falling into the ground, dying, and producing much fruit. In the same passage, Jesus likens Himself to a grain of wheat that came to this earth to die for you and me so that we could have life everlasting.

"I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." -JOHN 6:35

BIBLE STUDY: WHEN A GRAIN OF WHEAT DIES—GETHSEMANE AND THE CROSS

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor" (John 12:24-26).

The cross is one of the best-known symbols of Christianity. Replicas or images of the cross are often seen on or inside churches. The cross is featured in religious art and logos and worn by Christians and non-Christians alike.

But what does the cross really mean to Christianity, and how might it impact our lives today?

1. How did Jesus describe the role of the cross in the life of His followers?

"Then He said to them all, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me'" (Luke 9:23).

Jesus spoke these words immediately after talking about His own imminent death on the cross. He spoke about the cross as being of central significance to the experience of His followers.

2. What did Jesus mean when He said His followers are to deny themselves?

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

"I am carnal, sold under sin For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells" (Romans 7:14, 18).

The problem confronting every human being is that the human heart is corrupt. Because of what happened in the Garden of Eden, human beings are born inherently selfish. This selfishness manifests itself in sinful attitudes and behavior, which human beings on their own cannot overcome.

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil" (Jeremiah 13:23).

3. How is the human heart to be made new?

"Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness" (Ephesians, 4:22-24).

The Bible speaks of two separate phases of the Christian experience when it describes the "old man" and the "new man." The person who has not been renewed by the grace of God is the "old man." The person who has been impacted by the presence of Jesus and has been remade by the goodness of God is the "new man."

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

Christianity is an experience in which God makes a person new. A sinner becomes a saint. Old desires are replaced with new desires. The old person is renewed.

4. How does this renewal become a reality in the life of a person?

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

As German theologian and gospel minister Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, "When God calls a man, He bids him to come and die." In accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, a believer enters into a relationship with God where the will is surrendered to Jesus, the old person dies, and anew creation comes into being.

"Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (Romans 6:6).

5. How often is a believer to experience this death to sin and self?

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God' ... 'You must be born again'" (John 3:3, 7).

The privilege of the gospel is that sinners can be so transformed by the grace of God that they die and are born again. God's forgiveness and mercy result in the complete re-creation of the sinner.

"I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31).

The apostle Paul experienced a daily dying to sin and self. He described this in Galatians 2:20, where he stated that he lived his life by faith in Jesus, being crucified with Jesus. This is the experience of daily taking up the cross of Jesus and living by faith in Him.

6. How did Jesus describe the experience of fully surrendering to the will of God?

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (John 12:24).

A seed that is planted in the ground dies and brings forth new fruit. God's will for the life of the sinner is that the sinner lives a new, fruitful life. Instead of selfishness, there is unselfishness. Instead of anger there is peace. Instead of bitterness towards others, there is forgiveness. This radical change in the life of a person is made possible through an entire surrender of the will to God, which allows Jesus to live His life in that individual.

"For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (Romans 6:5, 6).

When Adam and Eve chose not to surrender to the will of God, human beings became the servants of sin. The gospel allows for our complete recovery from the power of evil. The believer who allows Jesus into his or her heart is "crucified with Him" and lives to serve God rather than self.

7. Does this mean that struggles with sin and selfishness end when we surrender our lives to Jesus?

"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. Though he falls, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds him with His hand" (Psalm 37:23, 24).

It is not reasonable to expect that a person who surrenders his or her life to Jesus immediately begins to live a life of total obedience. There may be a lifetime of sin and sinful habits to wrestle with. There may be weaknesses inherited from parents or even grandparents. When someone who has chosen Jesus as Savior falls into sin, that person can know that God is gracious and ready to forgive (see Psalm 86:5).

As Paul wrote to the Roman believers:

'But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Romans 5:20).

8. Did Jesus wrestle with surrendering to the will of God?

While Jesus never committed sin, there was at least one occasion when He struggled to accept His Father's will. The night before He died, Jesus, recognizing that He was in the shadow of the cross, wrestled in His humanity with the idea of suffering at the hands of His tormentors.

"And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done'" (Luke 22:41, 42).

The anguish Jesus experienced in that moment was greater than any human can imagine.

"And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44).

There was never a time that Jesus was not willing to follow heaven's plan for His life on earth. Yet the intensity of the spiritual battle in which He found Himself was real. Jesus "bore our sins in His own body" (1 Peter 2:24) when He went to the cross.

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

9. How strengthened was Jesus for His hour of greatest trial?

"And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed" (Luke 22:41).

Gethsemane means "oil press." In an oil press, the oil of an olive is separated from the meat of the olive. Immense pressure is exerted on the olive to remove the oil it contains. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus "began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed" (Matthew 26:37). He said to Peter, James, and John, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death" (Matthew 26:38). Jesus would ultimately give His life as the sins of the world were placed upon Him. The Gethsemane experience Jesus endured, though extraordinarily difficult to bear, brought forth something special. The death of Jesus resulted in salvation for all who would receive it.

Yet Jesus was willing to pray to His Father and say "nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matthew 26:39). A second time He prayed and said, "Your will be done" (Matthew 26:42). And Jesus "prayed the third time, saying the same words" (Matthew 26:44).

This was Jesus fully surrendering to the will of God. This was the seed falling into the ground and dying that it might bring forth much fruit.

"[F]or the joy that was set before Him [Jesus] endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (John 12:24).

The death of Jesus on the cross has brought forth "much grain" as people all over the world have responded in faith to His death.

10. After choosing to take up the cross of Jesus, how may a person continue to live a life of faith in Jesus?

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me" (John 15:4).

To "abide" in Jesus is to "dwell" or "remain" in Him-that is, to maintain a vital connection with Him. Jesus describes Himself as a vine to which believers in Him maintain union as branches.

"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. Jesus spoke about a seed being planted, then dying, and then producing "much grain." In John 15, He makes a similar statement, declaring that those who remain connected with Jesus bear "much fruit."

Similarly, disconnected from Jesus a person can "do nothing." "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples" (John 15:7, 8).

The person who dies a death to the old life is like a seed that dies and brings forth "much grain." That is the person who abides in Jesus. Jesus says that such a person is His disciple and will "bear much fruit."

On the cross at Calvary, surrendered to the will of heaven, Jesus died that His death might bring many people to a saving relationship with the God of heaven. The follower of Jesus chooses to carry his or her own cross, dying to sin and self and yielding the whole heart to the will of God. By this, as happened in the death of Jesus, God's followers live fruitful lives.

Knowledge of the death of Jesus on the cross, in conjunction with the experience of living in view of the cross, results in a life transformed and lived for the glory of God.

Is it your desire to abide in Jesus and, by dying to self, to allow God to remake your life for His glory?

LESSON 11

THE SECOND COMING



I don't know about you, but when I exercise I like to have a destination. I want to have the goal of a designated location, like the end of the trail, a specified distance or a certain amount of time so I can pump myself up, know when and where it will end, and pace myself. It also motivates me to focus on my reasons for exercising.

What are the benefits of exercise?

Humans are undeniably designed to move. There is not a function in the human body that is not improved with exercise. If you want a healthier heart, exercise. If you want better digestion or better sleep, exercise. If you want to fight fatigue and increase your level of energy, exercise. If you want to live longer, age better, prevent cancer, reduce stress, eliminate depression or anxiety, prevent or fight type 2 diabetes, or improve arthritic pain, exercise. It's phenomenal how powerful and healing physical activity is.

Is improved physical health the only advantage from a physically active life?

No. One amazing benefit of exercise not often considered is the effect it has on the brain. Regular exercise has positive effects on brain health, enhancing brain function and improving cognitive skills.

How does exercise have a positive impact on the brain?

Exercise increases endorphins—your feel-good, pain-reducing hormones. While they positively impact your state of mind, there are other hormones that are also responsible for making your brain work better—all stimulated by exercise.

More recently, science shows how exercise increases levels of the hormone irisin, which improves cognition and protects brain cells. Muscles in motion secrete irisin. When researchers eliminated the ability of mice to produce irisin, their brain function declined. But when the researchers elevated irisin levels in the mice's bloodstreams, they saw improved cognitive function and reduced neuroinflammation in mouse models of Alzheimer's disease. Irisin protects against neuroinflammation by acting directly on certain brain cells that protect neurons. Neuroinflammation is perhaps the biggest killer of brain neurons as we age. It is present in Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other neurodegenerative diseases. Exercise combats these disease processes by increasing irisin levels.

"Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers." -3 JOHN 1:2

Brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) is another hormone that increases in response to exercise. It's been nick-named the "Miracle of the brain, acting like a fertilizer that supports learning, brain plasticity, and growth.

It used to be commonly believed that once you killed brain cells you couldn't do anything to produce new ones. That is no longer considered true. Can you guess what stimulates the birth of new brain cells? Exercise!

What impact does physical exercise have on our faith walk?

"To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding" (Proverbs 1:2) is a vital part of the Christian walk. A clear-thinking, healthy mind is needed to discern and know wisdom and instruction. This is how exercising your body can support you spiritually. Remember the words of the Apostle Paul:

"And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore, I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus, I fight: not as one who beats the air" (1 Corinthians 9:25, 26).

In short, know why you are running. Have a purpose and a designated destination in mind. Don't stop running until you see Jesus come to take us all home.

BIBLE STUDY: THE SECOND COMING

1. What great promise did Jesus make to believers of all ages?

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

The Bible repeatedly emphasizes the promise of the return of Jesus. In a world facing serious difficulties, Jesus urges people not to be 'troubled.' There is a better day coming.

2. What can we expect life to be like after the return of Jesus?

"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" (Revelation 21:4).

After the return of Jesus, there will be no more tears shed. No one will ever die. There will be neither sadness nor pain, as the former world will no longer exist.

"Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

3. Will Jesus Himself literally return for His people?

"This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11).

Jesus said, "I will come again" (John 14:3). An assurance was given to Jesus' disciples by an angel that Jesus Himself will return to the earth to gather His people (see Acts 1).

4. Is it possible to know when the return of Jesus will happen?

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36).

Jesus made clear that it is not possible for any person to know when He will return to this world.

5. Is it possible to know when the return of Jesus is near?

"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So, you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near-at the doors!" (Matthew 24:32, 33).

Jesus also made it clear that it is possible to know when the day of His return is getting near. However, it is important to realize that "near" is a relative term. A second, an hour, a day, a year, or even fifty years can all be "near" depending on the context. Yet Jesus was clear that we may know when His return is near.

6. How can we know the return of Jesus is near?

"Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'" (Matthew 24:3).

In response, Jesus mentioned signs that would indicate the nearness of His return. In Matthew 24, Jesus mentioned:

- ☞ Deceivers who would speak in his name (verse 5)
- ☞ Wars and rumors of wars (verse 6)
- ☞ Famines, pestilences, and earthquakes (verse 7)
- ☞ False christs and an abundance of false prophets (verses 11, 24)
- ☞ The gospel going to the world (verse 14)
- ☞ The darkening of the sun and moon (verse 29)
- ☞ Stars falling from heaven (verse 29)

The only one of these signs that has not yet been fulfilled is the gospel going to the world. There are still many people who have yet to heard the good news of salvation through Jesus.

Two of the signs Jesus gave have met a striking fulfillment. On May 19, 1780, an unusual darkness spread over the New England states in America. Darkness arrived by the middle of the day. Some wondered whether the world was ending. Scientists still do not have an explanation for the darkness that descended.

On November 13, 1833, an extraordinary meteor shower caused many to fear the world was about to end. "Some came down in a straight line, others took a zig-zag course, and some described the arch of a circle. From 3 to 5 o'clock, the scene was truly magnificent-thousands and thousands were darting about in all directions without an instant's cessation. It was so light, that upon first awaking, many thought that the city was on fire. Some thought that the world was about to be destroyed" (The Natchez Weekly Courier, November 15, 1833).

"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37-39).

Jesus said that, immediately prior to His return, the world would be like it was in the days of Noah when "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5).

7. What wonderful promise is connected with the return of Jesus?

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

When Jesus returns, those who have died while having faith in Him will be resurrected.

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this

corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory'" (1 Corinthians 15:51-54).

One of the great promises of the Bible is that death need not be final and forever. While death separates friends and family members on this earth, the promise of God is that there will one day be a wonderful reunion when those who have bid farewell to loved ones will see them again. Death will never again separate friends and loved ones.

8. What will the second coming of Jesus be like?

"Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place" (Revelation 6:14).

"Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him" (Revelation 1:7).

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16).

"Our God shall come, and shall not keep silent; a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous all around Him" (Psalm 50:3).

The return of Jesus to this world will be a glorious event. Jesus will be seen in the sky as He returns. Not only will there be signs in the sky above, but the return of Jesus will also be something everyone sees and hears.

9. Is it possible that the second coming of Jesus could happen secretly?

Based on what we have just read, the return of Jesus cannot possibly be secret. The Bible makes that clear in numerous places.

"For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:27).

"Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:30).

The return of Jesus will be witnessed by people all over the world. It will not be possible to miss the magnificence and glory of the greatest event since the birth of Jesus.

10. Why do some people believe in a secret rapture?

The teaching of the secret rapture is believed by many sincere Christians. The final week of the seventy weeks prophecy of Daniel chapter nine is said to be a period of seven years of tribulation in the last days of earth's history. Some believe that Jesus will secretly return to the world at the beginning of, in the midst of, or after that seven year period, at which time He will "rapture" His followers out of the world and take them to heaven. As heartwarming as it is to think Jesus is going to return for His children, there is nothing in the bible that indicates His return will take place in that way.

11. When Jesus returns, will He set up a kingdom on this earth?

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3).

Although the redeemed will eventually inhabit a renewed earth, when Jesus first returns He will take us to heaven. Indeed, speaking of His return to the world, Jesus said:

"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore, if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; or 'Look, He is in the inner rooms!' do not believe it" (Matthew 24:23, 26).

Jesus was unequivocal. He will return to gather the redeemed and take them away from the earth. At the second coming, Jesus will not personally walk on the earth. As Paul wrote, those "who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

12. How can a person be ready for the return of Jesus to this world?

"He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God,

that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:12, 13)

"And it will be said in that day: 'Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation'"

When Jesus returns, those who have accepted Him as Lord and Savior will welcome His return with confidence and assurance.

By receiving Jesus into your heart and life, you may know that the gift of everlasting life is yours. The return of Jesus is referred to in the Bible as "the blessed hope" (Titus 2:13)

"[Jesus] gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14).

The apostle Paul looked forward with hope to the return of Jesus.

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:7,8).

The return of Jesus is the long-awaited desire of the world. On the day when Jesus returns, the dead in Christ will rise, the kingdoms of the earth will be swept away, and Jesus' eternal kingdom will be established and will never pass away (see Daniel 2:44, 45).

When Jesus returns, all who hope in Him will receive immortality and will begin an uninterrupted eternal life. Sin and sorrow will be no more. Death will be forever banished.

The last prayer in the Bible is a prayer for the return of Jesus. At the conclusion of the book of Revelation, John wrote, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20).

Do you choose to look with confidence to the return of Jesus?

LESSON 12

NEW LIFESTYLE—NEW LIFE



A physician was shopping in the canned bean section in a grocery store when an elderly woman approached her expressing confusion about the wide variety of options. The woman had been told by her primary care provider to reduce her salt intake. The woman didn't have high blood pressure, but she did have diabetes. The physician helped the woman identify canned beans selections that fit the bill for her unique condition, and then they told each other goodbye. Not five minutes later the two of them met up together again-this time in the cereal aisle. You guessed it, the woman wanted to know what type of cereal to buy.

The cereal aisle is even more fraught with danger than the canned beans aisle! In fact, it's just about as dangerous as the candy aisle. Children are heavily marketed to in the cereal aisle, and they often hold their parents' dietary choices hostage to their less-than-nutritional whims. The cereal aisle is full of colors, cartoon characters, and grandiose nutritional promises. So, what's the truth?

What is wrong with the cereal?

It is amazing how much sugar is added to most cereals, not to mention to many other processed and pre-prepared foods. Added sugars include all sugars added to sugar-sweetened beverages, grain-based desserts, fruit drinks, dairy desserts, candy, boxed cereals, and even many "fruit juices."

One extensive study published in 2014, examined a significant portion of the United States population to determine whether there is any association between sugar consumption and death by cardiovascular disease. The study revealed that most adults get 10% or more of their calories from added sugar. Additionally, approximately 10% consume 25% or more of their calories from added sugar. Not surprisingly, the risk of death from cardiovascular disease increases exponentially in accordance with increased consumption of added sugar.

How does added sugar contribute to heart disease?

Cholesterol is a type of lipid or fat that plays an important role in many of the body's organs, including the heart. Consumption of added sugar reduces good cholesterol and increases bad cholesterol.

There is broad agreement on the value of whole-grain and high-fiber foods in preventing chronic disease, including heart disease. On the other hand, poor-quality carbohydrate foods low in fiber and high in refined grains contribute to a high glycemic index. (The glycemic index measures how quickly various foods affect blood sugar levels.)

"Pleasant words
are like a
honeycomb,
Sweetness to
the soul and
health to the
bones." -
PROVERBS 16:24

Fruit, which contains natural sugars, does not dramatically increase blood sugar levels. Refined grains, however, do tend to spike sugar levels, adversely affecting lipids and potentially contributing to heart disease

How much added sugar should we should eat?

The American Heart Association recommends a maximum of six tea-spoons of added sugar per day for women, and nine teaspoons for men.

The whole point of good nutrition is so that our minds can be open, clear, and ready to receive the Word of God. The Apostle Paul tells us, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that

you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2).

When our minds are renewed, we naturally want to respond to all that God has done for us.

BIBLE STUDY: NEW LIFESTYLE—NEW LIFE

When a student graduates from high school or college, there often is a ceremony to mark that milestone. The student might wear a robe and a mortar board. The ceremony marks that person's entry into a new phase of education or life.

What should happen in the life of a person who has graduated from the old life of sin and into a new life as a follower of Jesus?

1. What is God's counsel for those who have chosen Jesus as their personal Savior?

"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

God encourages those who have chosen to follow Jesus and have turned away from their old life of sin to be baptized.

2. What is the example given to us in the Bible?

In the pagan city of Philippi, Paul and Silas baptized the jail keeper who only hours before had had them beaten and imprisoned. His family members were baptized along with him. The example given us in the Bible is that believers are to be baptized.

"And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' So they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.' Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house And immediately he and all his family were baptized" (Acts 16:30-33).

3. What does baptism represent?

The person who comes to Jesus, having died to the old life of sin is said to have been "born again." Jesus told Nicodemus, who member of the national council was

a man of great importance, that he needed to be born again. Jesus explained to him that he should be born "of water and the Spirit."

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God'" (John 3:3, 5).

4. What does it mean to be born of water and the Spirit?

To be born of water is to be baptized. To be born of the Spirit is to experience conversion where the Holy Spirit enters your heart and brings transformation. No longer are you the servant of sin. Instead, your heart beats in harmony with the heart of God.

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

In this passage, Paul is describing someone who is born again. That person, wanting to follow Jesus, will choose to be baptized.

5. Does being baptized mean that you are now in a saving relationship with Jesus?

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

"The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Salvation is not earned by baptism. The gift of salvation is given freely by Jesus and is received by faith. The person who accepts Jesus as Savior and Lord receives the gift of eternal life. Baptism is a sign that a person is in a saving relationship with Jesus and has chosen to accept Him and follow His will.

6. If baptism doesn't save a person, why is it so important to be baptized?

"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

"But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works dead?... You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:20, 24).

While baptism does not bring salvation, baptism is a sign of faith in God—a sign that a person has surrendered the will to Jesus. Baptism is obedience to the will of God, demonstrating that the believer genuinely desires God's will to be done in his or her life. Baptism is a sign of love for God.

"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41).

The one who gladly receives the word of God will wish to be baptized.

7. What is the biblical method of baptism?

"When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:16, 17).

"Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?' Then Philip said, 'If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God'" (Acts 8:36, 37).

"So, he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:38, 39).

Both Jesus and the man from Ethiopia came up out of the water, representing resurrection into a new life. The word "baptize" comes from the Greek word baptizo, meaning "to dip" or "to immerse." The meaning of the word indicates that biblical baptism can only be by immersion. Any other method would not have been referred to as "baptism." The correct mode of baptism then, as now, is baptism by immersion.

"Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to [John the Baptist], and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matthew 3:5, 6).

John baptized in the Jordan River because, as John 3:23 says, "there was much water there."

For both Jesus and the man from Ethiopia, baptism was attended by great joy. At Jesus' baptism, the Father was heard from heaven saying He was "well pleased." After the Ethiopian was baptized, he "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39).

8. What is represented by being baptized by immersion in water?

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3, 4).

Bible baptism is symbolic of the death and burial of the old life of sin followed by resurrection into a new life in Jesus Christ.

"Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (Romans 6:6).

Baptism by any method other than immersion destroys this deep, important meaning.

9. How should a person live after they have been baptized?

"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20).

"[I]t is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

The person who accepts Jesus as Savior and Lord surrenders to Him and lives by faith. Trusting in Jesus for forgiveness of sin and leaning on Jesus for strength, the Christian lives a new life in Him.

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

10. Will I still make mistakes after I am baptized? If so, what do I do?

"And He said, 'The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head'" (Mark 4:26, 28).

Baptism is not a sign that a person no longer makes mistakes. It represents one's recognition of the need of complete dependence on Jesus. A person who comes to Jesus in faith is said to have been "born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). No

child was ever born fully matured. There is a growth process in Christianity, and the person who comes to Jesus in faith will continue to grow in faith. This is not to say that a person is condemned to sin. Jesus desires not only to forgive sin, but also to cleanse from sin (see 1 John 1:9). With every temptation, God makes a way of escape (see 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Jesus is your Helper in the face of temptation.

"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

11. Is it permissible to be baptized more than once?

"And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?' So they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' So they said, 'Into John's baptism. Then Paul said, John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:1-5).

While this group of believers in Ephesus had already been baptized, they evidently had little understanding of the ministry and baptism of the Holy Spirit. Having learned significant new light, it was appropriate for these disciples to be baptized again. This does not suggest a person should be baptized frequently. In situations where a person embraces a meaningfully new experience with Jesus, or if a person has fallen away from Jesus and returned to Him, rebaptism-while not compulsory-may be entered into.

12. What was Jesus' instruction to the leaders of the early church?

"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.' Amen' (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Jesus was clear that His disciples should be disciple makers, encouraging others to follow His teachings. He was clear that people should be baptized.

Baptism unites a believer with Jesus as well as with the church.

"For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free-and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

"And [Christ] is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the pre-eminence" (Colossians 1:18).

Is it your desire to live a new life through faith in Jesus? If you have not been baptized, are you willing to make the decision to surrender your life to Jesus in baptism?

LESSON 13

THE FIRST GREAT DECEPTION



In 2015, the World Health Organization announced that processed meat is a group 1 carcinogen. Based on the media response, you might have thought it was the end of the world.

Time magazine ran a cover story entitled "The War on Delicious." Numerous other news outlets ran versions of the "dreadful news" as well, including CNN, NBC, and The Washington Post.

What is processed meat?

Processed meat is any meat that has been cured, smoked, or fermented, or that has added preservatives. Such meats include bacon, hot dogs, bologna, sausage, salami, pepperoni, ham, cold cuts, deli slices, and yes, chicken nuggets.

What is a group 1 carcinogen?

Carcinogens are categorized into four groups based on their likelihood to cause cancer. Based on extensive research, group 1 carcinogens are known to cause cancer, whereas group 2A carcinogens are known to "probably cause" cancer, and group 2B carcinogens are known to "possibly cause" cancer.

Group 1 carcinogens include smoking, salami, bacon, sausages, hotdogs, and other processed meat. Group 2 includes red meats such as pork, beef, and lamb. It does not include chicken or fish. (Notice that pork is a red meat. This is because red meat is defined as any mammalian muscle meat. Scientifically, pork is not "the other white meat!")

"If you are obedient, You shall eat the good of the land" GENESIS 1:29

Are you saying that chicken nugget salami, and pepperoni are as bad for you as smoking a cigarette?

We are not saying that eating two slices of ham is as dangerous as smoking continually. What we are saying is that the evidence for processed meat consumption causing cancer is as strong as the evidence for cigarette smoking causing cancer. Cancers associated with processed meat consumption include colorectal cancer, pancreatic cancer, and, new evidence suggests, breast cancer.

Can you explain the mechanism by which processed meat causes this much harm?

In the treatment process that includes curing, smoking, and fermenting, numerous carcinogens are produced. During processing, nitrate salts are formed which then produce nitrosamines which are major carcinogens. Heme iron is also found in many meats and is a pro-oxidant that potentially causes cancer. Heterocyclic amines (HCAs) are carcinogens and mutagens that occur when meat is heated to high temperatures while barbecuing, frying, or grilling.

Are there other diseases associated with processed meat?

Yes, there are. Eating processed meat increases risk of type 2 diabetes by 37%. A variety of carcinogenic compounds result from meat processing including increased saturated fatty acids, nitrosamines, phosphatidylcholine, and L-carnitine. Trimethylamine N-oxide (TMAO), mentioned in a previous lesson, is also a factor resulting in increased insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes. Finally, processed meat consumption is a major contributing factor to cardiovascular disease.

The devil is a wily foe. "Wily" is defined by the New Oxford American Dictionary as "skilled at gaining an advantage, especially deceitfully". He has created so many deceptions around nutrition. He has tempted us to eat things that cause our taste buds to desire things that don't result in the abundant life Christ wants us to have.

Satan's first great deception is recorded in the third chapter of Genesis. That deception was over food and the trustworthiness of God's word regarding death. Could it be that Satan has continued to mislead the world about other important things?

BIBLE STUDY: THE FIRST GREAT DECEPTION

In 1922, more than 3,000 years after his death, the tomb of Tutankhamun was discovered in an area known as the Valley of the Kings, across the Nile River from the city of Luxor, in Egypt.

Another remarkable discovery had previously been made in 1799 when a French military officer discovered in Egypt, the Rosetta Stone, which became the key to understanding ancient Egyptian texts.

Yet greater discoveries are awaiting to be made in the Bible. As we study the subject of death, we learn that the truth, as given by God, is clearer, more reliable, and more trustworthy than any teaching on the subject that does not originate in the Bible.

1. When is death first mentioned in the Bible?

"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17).

God warned Adam and Eve that disobedience would lead to death. As Paul would write millennia later, "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

2. How did Satan counter what God had said?

"Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'" (Genesis 3:4).

Although God had spoken clearly, Satan directly contradicted the word of God. He promised Eve that doubting God would be to her great advantage.

3. What remarkable discovery do we make when we study what the Bible says about death?

"Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha Therefore, the sisters sent to Him, saying, 'Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick'" (John 11:1, 3).

In the story of Lazarus, Jesus receives word that His friend Lazarus is unwell and discusses the matter with his disciples.

"These things He said, and after that He said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up.' Then His disciples said, 'Lord, if he sleeps he will get well.' However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus said to them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead'" (John 11:11-14)

According to Jesus, Lazarus was asleep-although he was not sleeping the sleep of a tired person at the end of a long workday. Jesus taught that death is a sleep.

4. Was Jesus speaking figuratively when He said Lazarus was sleeping?

"So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David" (1 Kings 2:10, KJV).

"Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day

For David did not ascend into the heavens" (Acts 2:29, 34).

What Jesus said about Lazarus is consistent with what the Bible says from Genesis to Revelation. Death is a dreamless sleep between life on earth and the life which is to come. As Peter preached at Pentecost, King David was in his grave and not in heaven. David himself understood that death was a sleep when he wrote, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness" (Psalm 17:15).

5. Do any other Bible verses clearly state that death is a sleep?

"So, man lies down and does not rise. Till the heavens are no more, they will not awake nor be roused from their sleep" (Job 14:12).

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Daniel 12:2).

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed- in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:3)

"Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death" (Psalm 13:3).

The Bible is consistent in teaching that death is a sleep.

6. Did the family of Lazarus understand death as being like sleep?

"Now Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You' Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.'

Martha said to Him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day'" (John 11:21-24).

Martha, the sister of Lazarus, understood her brother was sleeping in death, awaiting the resurrection that would take place "at the last day."

7. How did Jesus address Lazarus in the tomb?

"Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come forth!' And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Loose him, and let him go'" (John 11:43, 44).

The sleeping Lazarus was awakened from the dead by the voice of Jesus. He said nothing about the glories of heaven, nor did he bear a testimony about the horrors of hell, because he had been to neither place. Lazarus, in death, had been sleeping.

8. It is possible that the soul of Lazarus had been in heaven while his body was in the grave?

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7, KJV).

At creation, humans were not given a soul. Adam was created to be "a living soul." The combination of body plus breath-the dust of the ground and the breath of life-formed a soul. Adam did not have a soul. Adam was a soul.

9. Does anyone today possess a soul?

"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:41).

"And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea" (Revelation 16:3, KJV).

In Acts 2, three thousand people are referred to as three thousand souls. In Revelation 16, "every living soul" in the sea died. This refers to living creatures, as some translations state.

Many Bible verses do speak of the soul.

Jesus said, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful" (Matthew 26:38). Jesus is referring to Himself as if to say, "I am exceedingly sorrowful." Paul expressed the same thought when he wrote to the Romans, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities" (Romans 13:1). His intent was to say, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities."

Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica, "ow may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Paul is speaking to the completeness of the saving work God wishes to do in a life, stating that we should be sanctified in our thoughts, emotions, and body. Rather than commenting on the nature of humanity, Paul is urging his friends to be committed to God in every area of their lives.

10. How long do the dead sleep in the grave?

"For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18).

"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth-those who have done good, to the resurrection

of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28, 29).

The dead sleep until the second coming of Jesus. When Jesus returns, "the dead in Christ will rise." Until then, the dead sleep, awaiting the resurrection.

11. Of how much are the dead aware while they sleep in death?

"For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing" (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

"The dead do not praise the Lord, nor any who go down into silence" (Psalm 115:17).

The dead are aware of nothing while they sleep the sleep of death. They do not praise the Lord. They "go down into silence." If the dead went directly to heaven or hell upon death, there would be no need for a resurrection. It would make no sense for the Bible to speak repeatedly of a resurrection if people died and went straight to heaven. There is need for a resurrection so that the dead can be raised from their places of rest.

12. Doesn't the Bible say that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord?

"We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

In that verse, Paul says he would rather be "absent from the body and present with the Lord," speaking of what he will experience after he dies and is resurrected. Nowhere in the Bible does it state that a saved person who dies goes directly to heaven.

In a prior passage, Paul speaks of his desire to receive a new body, his "habitation which is from heaven" (2 Corinthians 5:2).

13. What about the thief on the cross?

"Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise'" (Luke 23:42, 43).

One brief passage should never negate what the rest of the Bible says on a given subject. When the Bible was written, it was written entirely without punctuation.

Punctuation was added by translators who made judgment calls about where the punctuation should go. Shift the comma slightly, and Jesus' words to the thief on the cross now harmonize with the rest of Scripture: "Assuredly, I say to you today, you will be with Me in Paradise." This is consistent with what the Bible teaches on what happens when a person dies.

14. What does Jesus want us to remember in view of the certainty of death?

"Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believe in Me, though he may die, he shall live'" (John 11:25).

Jesus says, "I am the resurrection and the life." Without Jesus, there is no hope beyond death. The grave would keep us captive forever.

Through faith in Jesus, however, there is hope beyond the grave. Jesus, who died for the sins of the world, freely gives us everlasting life through faith in Him. Those who believe in Jesus and accept Him as Lord and Savior receive His righteousness. Through faith in Jesus, any sinner may be accounted worthy of everlasting life.

Do you wish to have faith in Jesus, the resurrection, and the life?

LESSON 14

THE MILLENNIUM AND HELL



Much misinformation exists when it comes to health and nutrition. One lady was overheard saying to another, "I know I am going to get diabetes because my mother had it and my grandmother had it." That isn't necessarily true.

Is diabetes hereditary?

There are two major types of diabetes: type 1 and type 2. Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease that generally occurs in childhood and tends to be very severe. It is estimated that 5 to 10% of the relatives of a type 1 diabetic might also contract the same disease. Type 1 diabetics have little or no insulin production in the pancreas, yet their bodies' cells are sensitive to the action of insulin. They are generally thin (only 20 to 25% of type 1 diabetics are overweight).

Type 2 diabetes, on the other hand, generally occurs after puberty and is not an autoimmune disease. It is associated with obesity in 80% of those who contract it. Statistically, 75 to 90% of type 2 diabetics have relatives with the same condition.

Can type 2 diabetes be prevented?

As we noted, 80% of those who have type 2 diabetes are obese. Their bodies' cells, because of too much fatty tissue, are insulin resistant. Among those with increased

genetic risk for type 2 diabetes, environmental factors play the major role in its development. Neal Bernard in a 2009 published report in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition demonstrated that the primary contributing factors to type 2 diabetes are obesity and living a sedentary lifestyle, both of which can be prevented.

What is my best defense to prevent not only type 2 diabetes but other chronic diseases?

A fascinating study was conducted comparing the impacts of both a plant-based diet and a conventional diet on type 2 diabetics. It was found that a low-fat, plant-based diet improved blood sugar and blood lipid levels more than a conventional diet did. The plant-based diet consisted of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts, beans, and legumes.

Many other studies have since revealed that high-fiber, high-carbohydrate, and low-fat diets improve blood sugar controls as well as prevent type 2 diabetes generally. In a 2019 report, the American Association of Clinical Endocrinology recommended a largely plant-based diet for type 2 diabetics.

That diet was shown to result in a 34% decrease in the risk of type 2 diabetes among its adherents in the United States.

“.....we shall
always be with
the Lord.
Therefore
comfort one
another with
these words.”-1
THESSALONIANS
4:17,18

Where does protein come from in a plant-based diet?

The question for many is how to get enough protein on a plant-based diet. It is a stubborn myth that protein can only come from meat. Fortunately, green box foods include a plethora of rich protein sources. Legumes, whole grains, nuts, and seeds are all healthy sources of all the complete protein a body needs.

Soybeans are especially rich sources of protein. They also contain isoflavones that have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. They reduce systolic blood pressure in people with high blood pressure. They also improve endothelial function, which leads to increased blood flow. A link has even been shown between soybean consumption and reduced risk of cancer.

Just as the devil has provided misinformation about nutrition, he has also misrepresented God concerning the eternal destiny of sinners. Our Bible study explores this important topic.

BIBLE STUDY: THE MILLENNIUM AND HELL

Just as many do not realize that food can cause serious disease and even death, vast numbers of people fail to realize that our daily decisions can cause spiritual death as well. Thankfully, Jesus has made a way for all people to avoid spiritual death and to instead enjoy everlasting life.

1. Where does Jesus take the saved after He returns to the earth at His second coming?

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2,3).

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

After the second coming, Jesus takes the saved to heaven.

2. How long will the saved be in heaven after the return of Jesus?

"And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4).

The saved will spend a millennium in heaven with Jesus.

3. What will God's people do in heaven during the millennium?

"And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them" (Revelation 20:4).

"Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?... Do you not know that we shall judge angels?" (1 Corinthians 6:2, 3).

During the millennium, the saved of all ages will participate in Christ's work of judgment. By that time, the case of every person who has ever lived will have been decided. The saved in heaven, along with Jesus, will review judgment.

4. If the saved are in heaven, where are the lost during the millennium?

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10).

"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left" (Matthew 24:37-41).

"He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still. And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work" (Revelation 22:11, 12).

The lost people living on the earth when Jesus comes back are destroyed by the glory of His return. No one is left to live on the devastated earth during the millennium. When Jesus returns, the saved are finally delivered, while the lost are finally and forever lost.

5. What happens at the end of the millennium?

"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them" (Revelation 20:7-9).

Satan has been confined to the earth for a thousand years. He has been "bound" during the millennium by circumstances that prevent him from leaving the earth (see Revelation 20:1,2). Forced to consider the death and destruction he has caused, Satan is released from his proverbial prison when the second resurrection takes place. With the resurrection of the wicked, Satan again has people to tempt and deceive.

'Gog and Magog' are, simply put, the enemies of God. In other words, they are the lost who, along with Satan, array themselves against God at the end of the millennium. As in Ezekiel 38 and 39 Gog and Magog were in opposition to God, so in Revelation 20/Cog and Magog" refer to the lost people who are in defiance of God.

'Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation' (John 5:28, 29).

The second resurrection, the "resurrection of damnation," (John 5:29 KJV) takes place at the end of the thousand years of Revelation 20.

The lost are raised from the dead to receive their final punishment. It is at that time that fire comes "down from devours the wicked (see Revelation 20:9).

6. Is hell real?

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28).

Jesus believed there was a hell. It is important to understand what hell will really be like.

A. Where is hell?

"They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them" (Revelation 30:9)

Hell takes place on the earth itself. As fire comes "down from God out of heaven," Planet Earth is transformed into an enormous lake of fire. All that humanity has created to glorify itself is destroyed, and those who have not accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior will be blotted out of existence.

B. When does hell take place?

"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea" (Revelation 20:7,8).

Hell takes place at the end of the millennium. In other words, the destruction of the lost occurs one thousand years after the second coming of Jesus.

C. How many people are in hell right now?

The answer must be zero! No one is experiencing the destruction of hell at the present time. Hell does not burn until after the millennium, which begins when Jesus returns.

D. How long does hell last?

"And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them" (Revelation 20:9).

"'You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,' says the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 4:3).

While we cannot know precisely how long the cleansing fires of hell will burn, what is clear in scripture is that hell will eventually stop burning. Once it has done its work of destroying the wicked and cleansing the earth, hell will no longer burn.

"And that servant who knew his masters will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:47, 48).

We cannot know with any accuracy how long it will take for the fires of hell to destroy sinful people. It would be fair to assume it would not take long. The Bible indicates that some may burn longer than others (see Luke 12:47,48). This likely depends on the amount of light a person rejected in choosing to ignore the gift of salvation. It would seem that Satan will suffer longer than anyone else in the destruction caused by the lake of fire.

7. What is the purpose of hell?

"Affliction will not rise up a second time" (Nahum 1:9).

"But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:37).

Just as the flood in Noah's day rid the earth of sin and sinners, hell will do the same thing. While the cleansing of the world in Noah's day was temporary with sin

quickly reestablishing its hold on the world, this time sin and sinners will be gone forever.

It is not God's intention to reserve a corner of the universe in which sinners will burn for all eternity. The concept of an eternally burning hell has appalled and frightened multitudes of people. While God is a God of justice, He is not a God of cruelty. Torturing people for eternity would surely horrify even the saved who would derive no joy from knowing that, while they were living in a perfect world, their loved ones were in agony in an horrific place called hell. The teaching of an eternally burning hell has been used to motivate people to accept Jesus out of fear. It has successfully caused many people to consider God to be a cold, callous tyrant-which is, in reality, what Satan by corrupting the teaching of hell, Satan has caused people to view God as though God were a devil.

8. Why would God raise the wicked from the dead only to destroy them?

"As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Romans 14:11).

In the end, even those who are ultimately eternally destroyed acknowledge the justice of God and confess that Jesus is Lord. They join with the redeemed in declaring, "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!" (Revelation 15:3). The lost have an opportunity to acknowledge the justice of their own demise. They testify that, although they are lost forever, their destiny is deserved and appropriate.

9. If the wicked are destroyed and do not burn forever, why does the Bible use the term "forever and ever" in referring to the destruction of the wicked?

"And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name" (Revelation 14:11).

"The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" Revelation 30:10).

The Bible does not state that the wicked will burn forever, but that the effect of their punishment will last forever. Malachi, David, and Ezekiel all state that the

lost will cease to be, with Ezekiel writing that even the devil will be reduced to ashes (see Malachi 4:1-3; Psalm 37:20 and Ezekiel 28:18).

The Bible says that "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). It does not say the wages of sin is eternal life in hell. Revelation calls hell "the second death" (Revelation 20:14).

Hell will rid the world of every trace of sin.

10. After hell fire burns upon the earth, what happens to the planet?

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also, there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 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'" (Revelation 21:1-3).

The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, comes down from heaven and rests upon a now cleansed and restored earth. God's great wish is finally realized: the "tabernacle of God is with men" (Revelation 21:3). Just as God dwelled in midst of His people when the earthly sanctuary was built (see Exodus 25:8), God again dwells with His people. The eternal home of the saved is a restored planet earth, with God dwelling in the midst of His people for as long as time shall last.

11. How can any person live in the assurance of eternal life?

"For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved" (Romans 10:13).

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37).

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Salvation is granted as a gift to anyone who wishes to receive it. By recognizing your sin and by accepting Jesus and receiving His righteousness, you may live in the assurance that the gift of eternal life is yours.

Is it your desire to live with God and the redeemed throughout all eternity?

LESSON 15

THE FIRST ANGEL'S MESSAGE



The Tsimane tribe from deep in the Bolivian jungle has an incredibly low rate of heart disease compared to Western nations. In 2014, the American College of Cardiology began a year-long study on the tribe that involved coronary calcium screening, an exceptionally good predictor of coronary artery disease. They discovered that 85% of the Tsimane population had a calcium score of 0 indicating no risk for coronary artery disease. Another 13% were low risk with only 2% at moderate risk for the disease. Even among those 75 years or older, 65% had calcium scores of 0. Only 8% in the older group had calcium scores indicating severe risk.

In comparison, only 14% of Americans studied at the same time exhibited no risk for coronary artery disease. What makes the difference?

The Tsimane diet consists of 75% high-fiber, complex carbohydrates with only 14% of calories coming from protein and 14% from fat.

Is the Tsimane diet healthy for the long term?

The answer is yes. Suboptimal dietary choices factor more prominently in chronic diseases than anything else. We do not fully appreciate the magnitude of our food choices on our health. The green box-yellow box-red box foods framework from

Lesson 1 can be helpful in determining how to prioritize calories for optimal health.

Most of us tend to prioritize red and yellow box foods. Unfortunately, those foods are associated with cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance, diabetes, cancer, and obesity.

What's so bad about the American diet?

The average American diet generally comes from five sources. The number one source of calories for Americans is refined desserts such as cake, cookies, doughnuts and pies. The second main source of calories is refined grains such as white bread, bagels, and mixed-grain bread. The number three source is the most interesting one. It's chicken! Statistics indicate that nearly 25 million chickens are eaten each day in the United States. That's more than one million chickens every hour!

		
HEALTHFUL: • Whole grains • Legumes • Fruits • Vegetables • Nuts • Seeds	DEBATABLE: • Poultry • Eggs • Dairy • Fish	UNHEALTHFUL: • Refined grains • Added sugar • Ultra-processed foods • Red Meat • Processed meat

At number four is soda and energy drinks or sweetened bottled water. You will not believe number five. It is in a category all by itself. PIZZA! How would you categorize these foods?

What is a plant-based diet?

A plant-based diet is one where 80 to 100% of daily calories come from health-promoting, plant-based green box foods.

How long has this diet been around?

The book of Genesis tells us that, after God created humans, He said, "See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food" (Genesis 1:29). This diet has been around for a very long time.

There is good reason why God gave us this wonderful "green box" diet plan. He has designed us for worship, which requires clear minds through which we glorify Him. "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Yet another verse says, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

Our Bible study will bring us some of the best news we have ever heard-the everlasting gospel!

BIBLE STUDY: THE FIRST ANGEL'S MESSAGE

Physicians did all they could to save the life of American President George Washington before he died on December 14, 1799. In addition to having him gargle with a mixture of molasses, butter, and vinegar, his throat was swabbed with a preparation of dried beetles. At the 67-year-old president's request, doctors "bled" the Virginia native, draining 40% of his blood from his body.

Today, medical professionals no longer bleed their patients, nor do they utilize dried beetles in their treatments. Scientific knowledge has advanced to the stage where many illnesses that once would have taken lives can now be treated successfully.

In the same way, God has caused spiritual knowledge to increase in recent times. His final message of mercy to the world is filled with light that will lead people to experience total transformation in preparation for everlasting life.

1. Who is to hear the message of the first angel of Revelation 14?

"Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth-to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6).

The message of the first angel is addressed to every person in the world. God wants all people to hear and respond to His end-time message.

2. How important is the message of the first angel of Revelation 14?

The angel is portrayed as flying "in the midst of heaven," in full view of the people of the world. At the same time, the angel speaks with a "loud voice." Clearly, God wants all people not only to hear, but also to act on the message of the first angel.

"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near" (Revelation 1:3).

Along with reading and hearing, it is important that people "keep" or "observe" the things written in the book of Revelation, particularly as we see the day of Jesus' return drawing nearer.

3. Why are angels giving the final message of mercy and warning to the world?

The word translated "angel" also means "messenger." God's messengers today are His people.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19).

"'You are My witnesses,' says the LORD, 'And My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me'" (Isaiah 43:10).

"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2).

God has committed the sharing of the gospel to His people. The angels in Revelation 14 are symbolic of His people who share the gospel with the world.

4. What is the gospel message that is to go to the world?

"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you-unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1-3).

The English word "gospel" is translated from a Greek word meaning "good news"-the good news of the plan of salvation.

"Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people" (Matthew 9:35).

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said the gospel was the good news that salvation has come to the world because Jesus died for the sins of the world, was buried, and rose again on the third day. Because of what Jesus has done for the world, people can freely receive the gift of everlasting life (see John 3:16).

5. Why does Revelation call the messages of the three angels the "everlasting gospel?"

The "everlasting" or "eternal" gospel is the final, comprehensive gospel message to go to the world before Jesus returns, calling people everywhere to faith in Jesus and repentance from sin. The everlasting gospel, which is now going to the world, is designed by God to alert all people to the times in which we live. With the return of Jesus fast approaching, God desires that people respond to the appeal of the Holy Spirit and surrender their lives to Him.

6. Why does the first angel's message say that people are to fear God?

"Fear God and give glory to Him" (Revelation 14:7).

In Genesis, when Abraham was about to sacrifice his son Isaac, the angel of the Lord spoke to him and said, "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" (Genesis 22:12).

Later, Joseph spoke to his brothers and said, "Do this and live, for I fear God" (Genesis 42:18). In both cases, the idea conveyed is not fear in the sense of terror, but rather something closer to awe leading to a deep respect for God and His will.

Solomon wrote, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13, KJV). The fear of God leads to obedience to God.

7. What does it mean to "give glory" to God?

"Fear God and give glory to Him" (Revelation 14:7).

To give glory to God is to live in a way that brings honor to Him.

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

"Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God" (Psalm 50:23).

In His final message of mercy and judgment, God is calling His people to decide for Him while there is still time. His call is similar to Elijah's proclamation on Mount Carmel.

"How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21)

8. Why is the message of the first angel especially urgent?

"Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come" (Revelation 14:7).

As we saw in a previous study, we are now living in the time of the final judgment. Unlike any other era in history, this is a time of decision for the inhabitants of Planet Earth. Decisions made today for or against God are weighted with eternal consequences. Soon, the judgment will conclude and Jesus will return.

During this time of judgment, Jesus, our "High Priest" (Hebrews 8:1), is interceding before His Father in heaven (see Hebrews 4:14-16 and 1 Timothy 2:5). Those who are surrendering their hearts to Jesus and repenting of sin will have their sins "blotted out" (Acts 3:19). Those who choose not to surrender their lives to Jesus will have their names blotted out of the Book of Life and will not be saved (see Revelation 3:5).

9. What special call is made to the world in the first angel's message?

"And worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Revelation 14:7).

The call to worship Jesus as the earth's Creator (see John 1:3 and Colossians 1:16, 17) is especially relevant at a time when the world is being prepared to worship the beast power (see Revelation 13:3-8).

Revelation depicts a time when people will be confronted with a choice to worship either the creature or the Creator.

10. What does it mean to worship Jesus as the Creator?

The book of Revelation contains many quotes from or allusions to the Old Testament. When John wrote, "worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Revelation 14:7), he was quoting from the Old Testament where Moses wrote the actual words of God Himself. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8, 11).

John was making it clear that God's will for His people today is to keep all of His commandments, including keeping the Sabbath day holy. The New Testament is far from silent on the will of God regarding the seventh-day Sabbath. At a time in which the world has been offered Sunday as a counterfeit sabbath, enshrined in the final gospel message to the world is a clarion call to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy.

11. What will characterize the lives of those who fear God

"Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

The message of the first angel, along with those of the second and third angels, are the messages that go to the entire world in earth's last days to prepare people for eternity. These messages produce a group of believers who, out of love for Jesus, "keep the commandments of God," having accepted salvation through faith in Jesus.

12. What will characterize the lives of those who fear God

"We love him because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8).

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

The love of God for undeserving people is so great that every heart may be touched and every life impacted. The same Jesus who "laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16) invites us to come to Him that we "may have life" (John 5:40).

Jesus promises to "forgive us our sins" (1 John 1:9) and to give every repentant person a "new heart" (Ezekiel 36:26).

13. Will Jesus really accept all who come to Him in faith?

"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37).

David, Solomon, Manasseh, the woman at the well, Peter, James, and John were all sinful people. Zacchaeus was dishonest, Paul persecuted the church, and the man on the cross saved at Calvary was "an evildoer" (John 18:30).

Christ will save all who come to Him in faith. The message of the first angel is an urgent call to come to faith in Jesus without delay and to allow His will to be done in preparation for everlasting life.

Do you wish to allow Jesus to be the Lord of your life?

LESSON 16

THE SECOND ANGEL'S MESSAGE



On October 22, 2019, an alarming paper was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), entitled "Can Plant-Based Meat Alternatives Be Part of a Sustainable Diet?" The paper addressed the health implications of two specific meat alternatives: The Impossible TM Burger and Beyond Meat®.

Are meat alternatives “health food?”

Although meat substitutes may be better alternatives to meat especially red meat- they generally are ultra-processed, scientifically engineered, and industrially produced, landing them squarely in the red box foods category. Calorie-dense meat substitutes are highly palatable.

They keep people coming back for more, but they are not whole foods. All the heavy processing leads to loss of nutrients and phytochemicals that naturally are present in whole plant foods.

What is potentially harmful about the Impossible Burger?

Meatless burgers are often prepared the same way as regular burgers and consumed in fast-food settings. The Impossible Burger contains excessive amounts of heme (an iron-containing molecule) from soy plants added to enhance the product's meaty flavor and appearance. Higher intake of heme iron has been associated with increased body iron stores and elevated risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Unfortunately, Americans consume 70% of their calories from processed and ultra-processed foods with 58% coming from ultra-processed foods specifically.

How can we determine which plant-based foods are and aren't healthy?

Not all plant-based foods are equal. Just because something is plant-based doesn't mean it's healthy plant-based. The Harvard School of Public Health has done extensive research into what constitutes a healthy plant-based diet as well as on the benefits of such a diet.

Healthy plant-based foods include whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes, seeds, and vegetable oils. Unhealthy plant-based foods include juices, sweetened beverages, refined grains, mashed potatoes, French fries, chips, sweets, and desserts. Lumping all plant-based food together without dividing them into healthy versus unhealthy blunts any potential improvement in cardiovascular health. The distinction is an important one. Healthy plant-based eating decreases the risk of heart disease by 25%, whereas unhealthy plant-based eating increases the risk of coronary heart disease by 32%.

“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”
John 10:10

What should be our daily intake of fruits and vegetables?

We should aim to eat at least 2.5 servings daily of fruits and vegetables to decrease the risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, and death (one apple, a serving of broccoli, and a small banana would constitute 2.5 servings, for example).

Eating up to 10 servings daily of these healthy plant-based foods quadruples the potential benefit. That means you get a four times greater benefit by eating 10 servings of fruits and vegetables as compared to eating 2.5 servings.

There is so much confusion in the world today about what we should eat. In the Bible, the word “Babylon” means “Confusion.” That is what this lesson is about.

BIBLE STUDY: THE SECOND ANGEL’S MESSAGE

While president of Iraq, Saddam Hussein set out to rebuild the ancient city of Babylon, which is located about 60 miles southwest of Baghdad. He intended to build a replica of Nebuchadnezzar's palace on top of the ruins of the original. Like Nebuchadnezzar, he had his name stamped on many of the bricks used in the building project.

Saddam was attempting the impossible, however. According to God, Babylon would never be rebuilt. So why is Babylon featured so prominently in the Bible's depiction of the end of the world?

1. How powerful was ancient Babylon?

“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god” (Daniel 1:1, 2).

Babylon was a powerful kingdom that dominated the ancient world. Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and conquered and enslaved Judah.

2. What does the Bible predict about the rise and fall of Babylon?

“You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor was excellent, stood before you; and its form was awesome. This image's head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay” (Daniel 2:31-33).

“And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it. And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear” (Daniel 7:3-5).

In both Daniel 2 and Daniel 7, God foretold the might and power of Babylon. Represented by the figures of a head of gold and a lion with eagle's wings, Babylon, initially under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar, would profoundly affect God's people. However, Babylon's rule would come to an end. In Daniel 2, the head of gold was succeeded by the chest and arms of silver. In Daniel 7, the lion was followed by a bear.

Babylon ruled from 605 BC to 539 BC, at which time it was conquered by Medo-Persia.

3. What happened to cause ancient Babylon to fall?

"Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords. And drank wine in the presence of the thousand. While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone" (Daniel 5:1-4).

At a drunken party, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson, King Belshazzar, ordered that the holy worship vessels taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem be used in false worship.

4. How did God react to the king's blasphemous actions?

"But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this... Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians... That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old" (Daniel 5:22, 30, 31).

When Belshazzar used God's holy worship vessels for an unholy, blasphemous purpose, God moved against the kingdom of Babylon, and it fell. Even though he was familiar with how God had worked, Belshazzar persisted in rebellion until God could no longer tolerate his blasphemous actions.

5. What did God say would become of Babylon after it fell?

“For out of the north a nation comes up against her, which shall make her land desolate, and no one shall dwell therein. They shall move, they shall depart, both man and beast... She shall not be inhabited, but she shall be wholly desolate” (Jeremiah 50:3, 13).

“Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them.. And Babylon... will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited, nor will it be settled from generation to generation; nor will the Arabian pitch tents there, nor will the shepherds make their sheepfolds there” (Isaiah 13:17, 19-20).

Not only would Babylon be destroyed, it would also forever be uninhabited, abandoned, and deserted.

6. Although the Old Testament predicts Babylon would never be inhabited, how does the book of Revelation describe Babylon?

“And great Babylon was remembered before God” (Revelation 16:19).

“BABYLON THE GREAT” (Revelation 17:5).

“[T]he great city Babylon” (Revelation 18:21).

The city God said would never again exist is featured prominently in the last book of the Bible.

7. How is Babylon described in the New Testament?

“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.’ So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement” (Revelation 17:1-6).

In the book of Revelation "Babylon" does not refer to a literal city or nation. Babylon is described as:

- ⌘ A woman (verses 1 and 5)
- ⌘ A great harlot (verse 1)
- ⌘ Having made the inhabitants of the earth drunk with her wine (verse 2)
- ⌘ Seated upon a beast (verse 3)
- ⌘ Clothed with purple and scarlet (verse 4)
- ⌘ Having a name on her forehead (verse 5)
- ⌘ The mother of harlots (verse 5)
- ⌘ Responsible for the deaths of martyrs (verse 6)

In prophecy, a Woman is often used to symbolize a church. In this case, Babylon is represented as a harlot or impure Woman, indicating she represents a church that is not teaching the true Word of God. The Babylon of the New Testament is not a literal city, but rather a religious system causing spiritual confusion in the world.

8. What is the wine of Babylon?

"[T]he inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication" (Revelation 17:2).

Wine intoxicates, and Babylon is intoxicating the world with its false teachings. Two major teachings have caused widespread confusion in the Christian world. While the Bible clearly teaches that "the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God" (Exodus 20:10), the vast majority of Christian churches teach that the Sabbath given by God should not be kept. Instead, Sunday has been accepted by Christianity as God's day, despite there being no Biblical rationale for Sunday observance. Jesus kept the Sabbath (see Luke 4:16), as did the early Christian church (see Matthew 24:20 and Acts 13:42-44). There is not a single verse in the Bible stating that the Sabbath day should be changed. Disobedience to God has replaced faith that works by love.

The first lie ever recorded in the Bible forms the basis for the second major deception impacting people of faith. Satan told Eve she would "not surely die" (Genesis 3:4) if she disobeyed the will of God.

The Bible teaches that death is a sleep rather than an immediate departure to God's presence. Jesus described Lazarus as sleeping in death (John 11:11). At the resurrection of Jesus, "many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were

raised" (Matthew 27:52). The false teaching regarding death has opened the door to other errors such as purgatory and an eternally burning hell.

These two untruths—about Sabbath and death—have caused great confusion in the church and in the world. Both are part of the wine of Babylon.

9. What is meant by Babylon being a "mother?"

“And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH” (Revelation 17:5).

The daughters of Babylon are, like the mother, churches that have departed from the plainly revealed truths of the Bible. The mother church—the church of Rome—has given her false teachings to the world. Rather than rejecting them, the daughter churches have chosen to teach as true the great errors of Babylon. The mother church and the daughter churches constitute Babylon.

10. What is God's message concerning Babylon?

“And another angel followed, saying, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication’” (Revelation 14:8).

Babylon is said to be fallen because she has persistently rejected the teachings of the Bible. Ancient Babylon fell when it knowingly took that which was holy to God and used it in an unholy way. Babylon and her daughters have knowingly rejected the teachings of the Bible, going so far as to take something holy to God—the Sabbath day—and treat it as something common and unholy.

11. What is God's call to people who are in Babylon?

“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues’” (Revelation 18:4).

Knowing He has many, many faithful people in the churches comprising Babylon, God calls to His children and urges them to come out of Babylon—to leave behind the false teachings that have no basis in Scripture and follow the true teachings of the Bible.

12. What is Jesus' invitation to all people?

“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd....My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (John 10:16, 27).

In earth's final days, with many voices demanding attention, it is important for those who follow Jesus to respond to His voice and follow His leading. The deceptions and confusion impacting Christianity are evidence that Satan "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). The Bible says the devil is angry with the church and is making war with it (Revelation 12:17).

God is looking for those who are willing to Surrender to Him and allow His Word to be their guide. Are you willing to Surrender your life fully to Jesus?

LESSON 17

THE THIRD ANGEL'S MESSAGE



In Lesson 2, we looked at the story of Daniel as recorded in the Bible. Daniel, along with other captives from the land of Israel, were taken to Babylon by King Nebuchadnezzar. Certain captives gifted in wisdom, possessing vast knowledge, and quick to understand were expected to live according to the King's practices at the time, including drinking his wine. Daniel and his friends requested vegetables to eat and water to drink for a trial period of ten days, after which they would be examined for their mental acuity.

At the end of the ten days, the king found them "ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm" in all areas of "wisdom and understanding" about which they were examined (Daniel 1:20).

Would it have been better for them to drink wine and not rock the boat?

Many believe that wine is not that bad because of its reported benefits. Health benefits of moderate wine consumption have been studied in recent decades, first in observational studies and more recently in experimental settings and randomized controlled studies. It has been suggested that wine is an antioxidant, that it lowers lipids, and that it possesses anti-inflammatory properties. It was further believed that drinking wine protected against cardiovascular disease as

well as type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and even some cancers. Some articles suggested that red wine actually be recommended to patients.

Daniel and his friends knew better.

What are the effects of wine on the brain?

Clearly, alcohol affects the brain. Many impairments are detectable after only one or two drinks including blurred vision, slurred speech, slowed reaction times, and impaired memory. Women are more vulnerable than men to the ill effects of alcohol even in small amounts. Excessive drinking is linked to increased risk of dementia, but decades of reliable studies indicate that even moderate drinking (as little as five ounces of wine daily, defined as no more than one drink per day for women and two for men) has ill effects. In a 2017 paper published in the British Medical Journal, "moderate" drinking, defined as five ounces of wine daily, was found to be associated with shrinkage of the hippocampus, an area in the brain associated with memory, cognition, learning, and reasoning. A 2017 Harvard Medical School study showed greater brain volume shrinkage among moderate drinkers as compared to people who do not drink at all.

What substance in wine potentially benefits people but is also available from other sources?

The substance that gives health benefits to wine is resveratrol, a powerful antioxidant that provides protective benefits for the heart, brain, and body.

Do you need to uncork a bottle of wine to access this healthy substance? No. Not only can you find it in peanuts, blueberries, and cranberries, but it is also especially abundant in the skin of grapes and natural grape juice. Red wine is fermented with grape skins, hence the presence of resveratrol. It protects against brain and heart inflammation as well as protecting the lining of the blood vessels. It also has potential neuroprotective qualities that help preserve memory and brain function.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”¹
Peter 5:8

Is wine part of the Mediterranean diet?

While it is true that wine is part of the Mediterranean diet, when researchers deconstructed the data it became clear that it was not the wine, olive oil, or fish

but rather the whole grains and plant-based foods that provided the benefits from that diet.

In the Bible, wine is mentioned several times, generally not in a positive light. In this lesson, we will see that the effects of wine represent the very sad consequences of sin and the rejection of God's way of operating.

BIBLE STUDY: THE THIRD ANGEL'S MESSAGE

The entire human family is embroiled in a life and death struggle. Not only do illness and disease threaten to cut short our earthly existence, but dark forces threaten to rob us of the eternal life promised by God. When "the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground" (Genesis 2:7), His intent was that people would live forever. But when "sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men" (Romans 5:12), humans were no longer in possession of the gift of eternal life.

The story of the Bible from the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to the return of Jesus in the latter chapters of Revelation is the story of God seeking to give eternal life to His children.

1. How does the Bible describe the spiritual battle involving the entire human family?

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12).

"And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17).

Every person in the world is caught in a spiritual battle. This is a conflict with eternal consequences, as God does all He can to give men, women, boys, and girls the gift of everlasting life.

2. How does the Bible describe humanity's enemy in this conflict?

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

“So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:9).

Satan, described by Jesus as "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31; John 14:30), is aggressively seeking to turn people away from faith in God. John stated that the devil-the "dragon" makes war with those who in earth's final days seek to follow, love, and obey God.

3. What caused Satan to fall from his exalted position while he was still in heaven?

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:12-14).

“You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you... Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor” (Ezekiel 28:15, 17).

For reasons we cannot understand, Satan—who in heaven was a perfect angel named Lucifer living in the presence of God—desired to be worshiped as God. He wanted to "be like the Most High" The created being wanted to sit in the place of the Creator.

4. Why is God worthy to receive worship?

"You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created" (Revelation 4:11).

God is worthy of worship by virtue of being the Creator of the universe. God is the life giver. All creation owes its existence to God. Satan, however, is seeking to receive worship. When he approached Jesus in the wilderness, he 'showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, 'Al these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me" (Matt 4:8,9). Today, Satan is still seeking worship.

5. What special sign of His Creatorship did God give to the world?

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:8-11).

The seventh-day Sabbath is "the seal of the living God" (Revelation 7:2). As the sign of God's creative power, the Sabbath commandment identifies God as the Creator and, therefore, as worthy of worship. Any attempt to undermine the Sabbath undermines God as Creator and Redeemer.

6. What is the mark of the beast?

Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation'" (Revelation 14:9-6).

Clearly, those who do not receive the mark of the beast are those who keep the commandments of God. Revelation tells us, "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

If those who keep the commandments of God do not receive the mark of the beast, it follows that those who receive the mark of the beast are those who do not keep the commandments of God.

7. How can we identify the beast whose mark is spoken of in Revelation?

The beast mentioned in Revelation 14 is the same power described in Revelation 13:1-8.

- ⌘ It rises out of the sea, representing a populated area of the world (see Revelation 17:1, 15).
- ⌘ It was given authority by a non-religious power, the Roman Empire (Revelation 13:2).
- ⌘ It suffered a deadly wound in 1798, when the armies of Napoleon invaded the Vatican and imprisoned Pope Pius VI, ending the Vatican's dominance in European political affairs.

- ⌘ It ruled for “42 months,” expressed in Revelation 12:6 as “1260 days,” In prophecy, a day represents a year (Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34). The Vatican reigned from 538 AD to 1798, when Pope Pius VI was captured, a time period of 1260 years.
- ⌘ Revelation 13:5, 6 states the first beast of Revelation 13 speaks “blasphemies.” The Vatican, claiming to forgive sin, claiming that Mary and the saints intercede for sinners (even though they are dead, sleeping in their graves) and dispensing grace through its system of sacraments, is guilty before God of ‘blasphemy’.

This brief summary of Revelation 13:1-8 demonstrates that the Vatican is represented by the first beast of Revelation 13, and the beast of Revelation 14:9-11.

8. What has the Roman Catholic Church done to affect the commandments of God, especially as they relate to worship?

Q. Which is the Sabbath day?

A. Saturday is the Sabbath day.

Q. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.

—The Convert’s Catechism of Catholic Doctrine, Rev. Peter Geiermann (1937, 12th ed, p. 50).

“Fundamentalists meet for worship on Sunday, yet there is no evidence in the Bible that corporate worship was to be made on Sundays. The Jewish Sabbath, or day of rest, was, of course, Saturday. It was the Catholic Church that decided Sunday should be the day of worship for Christians, in honor of the resurrection”

—Catholicism & Fundamentalism:

The Attack on “Romanism” by “Bible Christians,”
Karl Keating (1998, p. 38).

At the end of the first week of this world’s existence, God gave to the human family a day of rest during which God’s people might spend special time with Him while acknowledging Him as the Creator. For thousands of years, the seventh-day Sabbath was observed by God’s children as an expression of their love for Him.

Early in the fourth century, the Roman Emperor Constantine introduced the Christian world to Sunday worship. Then, when the bishops of Rome stepped into the power vacuum left by the emperors of Rome, they incorporated Sunday worship into the practice of the church. Over centuries, Sunday worship became deeply ingrained in the Christian church in spite of never having been sanctioned or even suggested by God. Even though the "Sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27).

Sunday, a day set aside by humans and not by God, became the established day of worship for many Christians. The change was made by the Roman Catholic Church, which freely and openly acknowledges that it altered the law of God.

9. What appeal does God make to His people concerning worship?

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

"If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

"But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Jesus says that a surrendered heart will find its highest delight in doing the will of God. The Bible is very clear that the Sabbath of the Bible is the seventh day of the week, the day called, in the English-speaking world, Saturday.

The prophet Samuel declares that "to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22). Obedience to God gives evidence of the reality of the faith of the believer. While believers in Jesus are saved "by grace...through faith" (Ephesians 2:8), James wrote that "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20).

10. What about those who do not know what the Bible says about this subject?

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

Although one purpose of the Holy Spirit is to guide people "into all truth" (John 16:13), God is gracious and does not expect people to understand what they have never learned. Instead, He reveals His Word and brings conviction at the time people are best able to follow Him in faith. This is why the Holy Spirit says in

Hebrews 3:8, "Do not harden your hearts." When God calls, He does so knowing that the best time has come for a person to follow Him in faith.

11. How do we surrender fully to Jesus during the spiritual battle confronting Planet Earth?

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Just as Jesus surrendered to His Father's will in the Garden of Gethsemane as the sins of the world were being placed up on Him, He calls to His followers to surrender their will to the God of heaven. As Paul wrote, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5).

The God of heaven offers an eternal future to all who would accept Jesus and follow in His footsteps.

12. What principle should govern the lives of all who are looking to experience eternal life?

"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30).

When Jesus chose to come to this world as the Savior, He did so knowing that He would die a cruel death on the cross. Foremost in His mind was the salvation of the human family. Jesus knew that by accepting His mission He would bear the sins of the world. Although it would cost Him His life, Jesus was willing to come to the earth that you might be saved. Jesus died for you, and He offers you the privilege of living for Him.

As the prophet wrote, "He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11). Looking down through the stream of time, Jesus—knowing what awaited Him on this earth—willingly came to die for you. Knowing everything that was at stake, Jesus was "satisfied" to be the Messiah knowing you would have the opportunity to decide for Him.

Is it your desire to faithfully follow Jesus according to His word?

LESSON 18

AMERICA IN PROPHECY



A gentleman was referred to a teaching hospital for severe and poorly controlled diabetes. He had previously been hospitalized the month before at another hospital in a different town. He presented with blood sugars extremely elevated to about 500-a very high number.

After examining the gentleman, taking a careful history, going over his laboratory work, making a diagnosis, and creating a medical treatment plan, the attending physician asked the gentleman to tell her a little bit about his diet. He revealed that at the prior hospital he had been prescribed a diet high in red meat. After being released, he went out and promptly bought all the steak he could and filled his freezer with it. This was shocking to his new team of physicians.

What do you think of the advice given him?

As we've seen in previous lessons, most Americans tend to prioritize calories from the red box and yellow box food categories. Many fail to appreciate the huge impact their food choices have on their health.

Our taste buds have been corrupted over time. Additionally, nutrition studies can be overwhelming and often change from decade to decade, or even year to year. When a new study comes out in the news or literature, it adds to our confusion. Each study is like a new building added to an already complicated skyline of

information. Not all studies hold equal weight. How do we determine the significance and credibility of each study? We decide based on truth, and we stay alert for deception.

What nutritional intervention would be best in this situation?

A Bible verse alludes to the counsel given the 40-year-old diabetic by his new team of doctors.

“Another parable He put forth to them, saying: The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. So the servants of the owner came and said to him, “Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?” He said to them, “An enemy has done this” (Matthew 13:24-28).

“The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge, for the ears of the wise seek it out.” Proverbs 18:15 (NIV)

Nutrition studies can sometimes be slanted toward popular taste preferences. While in the beginning God provided us with the dietary prescription for health, our taste buds have been cultivated to appreciate things that are harmful for us. We have only to compare the life expectancy of Methuselah who lived 969 years to that of Joseph who lived to 110 to see the truth of God's word. A major difference was a change in diet that took place after the flood.

It is certainly important to appreciate God's handiwork when it comes to our dietary choices. The primary food that promotes health and decreases risk of diabetes is whole grains. As such, the diabetic's new physicians prescribed him a whole-grain, plant-based diet instead of the meat diet that filled his freezer.

As we've progressed through these lessons, we've seen how God's carefully-designed nutritional plans have been altered by humans based on changing taste preferences. These changes have gone largely undetected.

Many other things in the world have gradually and undetectably changed as well. Could it be that this was predicted in the Bible? The Bible has definitive answers for us.

BIBLE STUDY: THE AMERICA IN PROPHECY

In the previous parable, Jesus spoke of a wheat field that had been the target of a secret, devious attack. While the owner of the field slept, a man planted weeds in the same field. As the wheat and weeds grew together, it was virtually impossible to distinguish between them, as the weeds closely resembled the wheat. It wasn't until both had reached maturity that it was possible to pull out the weeds without also destroying the wheat. The weeds that grew among the wheat adversely affected the crop of wheat. When the landowner's servants asked where the weeds had come from, he replied, "An enemy has done this."

For thousands of years, Satan-the enemy of righteousness-has been sowing weeds among God's wheat. He introduced sin into the Garden of Eden, brought about the death of Jesus, and caused problems in both the church and the world throughout its history. Some years ago, Satan launched an attack with direct implications on what takes place in earth's last days.

1. What is the identity of the second beast in Revelation 13?

"Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon" (Revelation 13:11).

Remember that in Bible prophecy the word "beast" is not necessarily a derogatory term. It is a symbol that represents a kingdom or nation.

"Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth" (Daniel 7:17).

"Thus, he said: The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces" (Daniel 7:23).

2. How is the second beast in Revelation described?

"Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed" (Revelation 13:11-12).

This second nation comes "up out of the earth" Unlike the first, it does not come up out of the water. In Bible prophecy, water represents multitudes of people.

“The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues” (Revelation 17:15).

As waters represent people, the earth represents a comparatively unpopulated area.

This new nation also has “two horns like a lamb” The word lamb appears 26 times in the Book of Revelation. Every time the word occurs, it represents Jesus-except for on this occasion. The words like a lamb indicate that the new nation is not Christ Himself but appears to be Christ-like.

However, it “spoke like a dragon.” Revelation speaks of “that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan” (Revelation 12:9). The prophecy is telling us that, while the nation of Revelation 3 will appear Christ-like it will speak like the devil.

This new nation “exercises all the authority of the first beast.” It will use its power to promote the supremacy of the first beast, which is the papacy of the Roman Catholic Church.

It “causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast.” In other words, the second nation of Revelation 13 enforces the mark of the beast.

3. What nation is represented by the second beast of Revelation 13?

Consider the following identifying characteristics:

- ☞ It arises in a part of the world that is comparatively uninhabited.
- ☞ It comes into being just as the first beast of Revelation 13 is declining in power (see Revelation 13:10).
- ☞ It is a relatively young nation.
- ☞ It embodies certain characteristics of Jesus.
- ☞ It occupies a position of worldwide power and influence.

The only nation in the world that embodies all of these identifying marks is the United States of America.

This does not mean that the United States is an evil power. Far from it. When the United States arose, it was known as the New World, a haven for those who were escaping religious persecution. But just as he did in the Garden of Eden, Satan has attempted to undermine God's purposes. The United States, used by God to advance freedom of religion, has experienced a major spiritual drift in recent years. Fewer people than ever attend church or identify as Christian. Immorality

and social unrest are increasing. How did this happen? “An enemy has done this” (Matthew 13:28).

4. What does the Bible mean when it says the second nation of Revelation 13 will speak 'as a dragon'?

“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon” (Revelation 13:11).

A nation speaks through its laws. Oppressive regimes can be identified by the laws that govern their citizens. The Bible says the United States will one day speak as a dragon” While appearing to embody Christian principles, a change takes place at the heart of the nation causing it to reject its long-cherished belief in freedom of religion and to pass laws enforcing the mark of the beast.

5. Why will there be restrictions on buying and selling?

“He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” (Revelation 13:16-17).

The second nation of Revelation 13 will be at the forefront of enforcing the mark of the beast. Those who do not choose to receive the mark of the beast will not be allowed to buy or sell. Such restrictions will be intended to coerce people who otherwise would not do so to receive the mark of the beast. Those who cannot buy or sell will face significant challenges.

6. How will people be prevented from buying and selling?

The Bible does not say. In a world in which commerce has become increasingly electronic, it is not hard to imagine a scenario in which buying and selling can be easily controlled. However, a modern financial system is not necessary to prevent people from transacting commerce. Any person who cannot access their bank accounts will only be able to buy and sell for as long as they have cash. If cash is not being used, that person can no longer buy and sell.

It should be remembered that conjecture and speculation are not helpful in ascertaining how people will be prevented from buying and selling. We are not told what the mechanism will be that brings this about. What we can know, however, is that it is certainly possible for restrictions on buying and selling to be enacted.

7. Is the prohibition on buying and selling the same as the mark of the beast?

No. The mark of the beast is a separate issue. The mark of the beast, as discussed in Lesson 17, is Sunday sacredness enforced by law. It is the first power of Revelation 13—the Vatican City, the governing power of the Roman Catholic Church—substituting its own self-made Sabbath day in the place of the Sabbath given by God at creation. The mark of the beast is the creature exalting itself above the Creator, attempting to eradicate the seal of the living God.

According to Revelation 14:9, people receive the mark of the beast in either their forehead or their hand. Receiving it in the forehead indicates a decision has been made in the mind to receive the mark. Receiving the mark of the beast in the hand does not suggest a willing decision but rather Compliance. Perhaps some might unwillingly go along with the mandate to receive the mark of the beast. Some will receive the mark gladly, believing the man-made Sabbath to be something desirable. Others will not willingly receive the mark of the beast but will be coerced or influenced to do so.

The prohibition on buying and selling is not the mark of the beast. It is a means of coercing people to receive the mark of the beast. Whatever form that prohibition takes—and Scripture is silent on this—will not be the mark of the beast, but rather a mechanism for enforcing the mark of the beast.

8. Why is there such confusion on this subject?

An enemy has done this" (Matthew 13:28).

"Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many" (Matthew 24:11).

"You are of your father the devil... for he is a liar and the father of it (John 8:44).

Satan certainly knows that "the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Just as he was able to deceive one third of all the angels of heaven (see Revelation 12:4); just as "the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness" (2 Corinthians 11:3); and just as he "deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast" (Revelation 13:14), Satan is committed to deceiving the world in earth's final days. He will deceive the world into thinking they are honoring God when they are, in fact, disobeying Him.

The Bible plainly says that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord. As one of the Ten Commandments, it was given by God as a clear revelation of His will. Yet

human beings have attempted to eradicate the true Sabbath, which points to God as Creator and re-Creator, and to replace it with a tradition. The Sabbath speaks to the intimate relationship God desires to have with His children.

The attack on the Sabbath is an attack not only on God, but on Christian faith.

9. Is there any Biblical precedent for what is soon to come upon the world?

“He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed” (Revelation 13:15).

“Then a herald cried aloud: “To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, that at the time you hear the sound of... music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace” (Daniel 3:4-6).

In the time of Daniel, his three friends were summoned to the Plain of Dura and commanded to worship a golden image constructed by Nebuchadnezzar in defiance against God (see Daniel 2.) The people were forced into false worship on pain of death.

History will repeat itself in earth's last days when powerful leaders will command false worship in defiance of the express will of God. In Daniel 3, the young men who stood faithfully for God were delivered in the midst of the flames. Nebuchadnezzar said, “I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God” (Daniel 3:25). God did not abandon His children.

10. What is God's encouragement for His people today?

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession” (Hebrews 4:14).

“[L]o, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

The follower of Jesus can always have the assurance of His presence. At this moment in earth's history, God is calling to His people to have faith in Him, to consider the death of Jesus on the cross, and to live in the hope of His soon return.

Will you choose to surrender your life to Jesus and follow where He leads?

LESSON 19

HEAVEN IS REAL



Breathing is the act of inhaling Oxygen and expelling carbon dioxide from the body. The quality of air we breathe significantly affects our physical and mental health. Not only are we bringing in what the body needs—oxygen—but we're also inhaling whatever else is in the air.

What is fresh air?

Fresh air typically refers to outside air as opposed to inside air. We think of fresh air as being cleaner, meaning it has fewer harmful or dangerous particulates in it.

Is outdoor air always cleaner air?

Not always. Sadly, even outdoor air can become stale and harmful. I grew up in a valley where you could see the air at certain times of the year. Public health officials would tell the community to stay indoors during those times.

Indoor air, however, can become contaminated from what is referred to as off-gassing from furniture, floors, and refuse. Polluted indoor air contributes far more to poor health than we realize.

Can polluted air be cleaned up?

Yes. Nature is tirelessly at work detoxifying the environment, including the air. Trees, plants, moss, and fungi all transform polluted air into clean air, making it

fresh once again. Indoor air can be vitalized by opening windows and by the presence of house-plants. In the same way, grass, trees, and shrubs in city parks help clean urban air. Some reports state that plants in city parks clean more than 7 billion tons of toxins from the air annually. In some German cities, walls of moss are intentionally being placed as Sustainable filters to restore fresh air. The moss binds to environmental toxicants while simultaneously producing oxygen.

The Bible says,
"The heavens
declare the glory
of God; And the
firmament shows
His handiwork"
(Psalms 19:1).

How does fresh air positively affect humans?

Fresh air is not just about what isn't in it. Bringing nature into cities has profoundly impacted both the physical and psychological well-being of urban residents, not only because plants remove pollutants from the air, but also because they add vitalizing compounds to the air. When you walk into a forest and smell the "fresh air" you are breathing in phytoncides—one of the medicinal qualities of a forest. Phytoncides are chemical compounds that trees release to protect themselves and other plants from bacterial, fungal, and insect attacks. It turns out that they support our body's natural cells that destroy disease-causing agents. Phytoncides have also been found to improve skin health, reduce stress levels and depression, encourage better sleep, support healthier blood glucose levels, and reduce inflammation. They're medicine in a breath!

Fresh air is literally charged with negative ions—which is a positive thing. When inhaled, these tiny, electrified particles support lung health. They improve blood oxygen content and brain wave function, promoting a more tranquil, relaxed state of mind and increased energy production. There may be two or three million ions in each breath of excellent fresh air—much more than in a breath of recycled, second-hand indoor air.

What kind of air are you breathing?

Throwing open your windows and bringing plants into your home is a great way to freshen your indoor air, but the most exhilarating air will be found in the great outdoors. Spending time in nature recharges us mentally, physically, and spiritually. We become more in tune with the Designer and Author of all that is beautiful and good.

The Bible says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalms 19:1). The word firmament means the heavens or the sky. It contains the air we breathe. "Indeed, heaven and the highest heavens belong to the Lord your God, also the earth with all that is in it" (Deuteronomy 10:14). It is the air of the highest heavens that I want to breathe someday. Don't you?

BIBLE STUDY: HEAVEN IS REAL

1. What did Jesus say about life beyond this world?

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

Jesus connected belief in God with the certainty of life beyond this world. He spoke of a definite destination—"My Father's house"—and said that there are "many mansions" or dwelling places. "Let not your heart be troubled" Jesus said. Knowing heaven awaits should fill the human heart with hope.

2. When will people go to heaven?

"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17).

"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice" (John 5:28, 29).

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Corinthians 15:51-53).

When Jesus returns to the earth, the dead in Christ will be resurrected and taken to heaven, along with the faithful followers of God who are alive on the earth.

3. Is heaven a real place, or simply a symbol of something else?

"After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven...Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne" (Revelation 4:1-2).

"Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple" (Revelation 11:19).

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

According to the writers of the Bible, heaven is very much a real place. John, who wrote Revelation, was shown heaven, as were Daniel (see Daniel 7:9, 10) and Paul (see 2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

4. Apart from angels, is anyone in heaven right now?

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him" (Matthew 17:1-3).

Although the vast majority of those who died in faith are sleeping in their graves awaiting the resurrection, both Moses and Elijah were taken to heaven. Moses was resurrected from the dead (see Jude 9) and represents those who will go to heaven after dying and being resurrected. Elijah did not die but was translated without seeing death (see 2 Kings 2:11) and represents all who will be taken to heaven without seeing death.

Enoch was also translated without seeing death.

"So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (Genesis 5:23, 24).

When Jesus rose from the dead, a group of people were raised from the dead and appeared to many in Jerusalem (see Matthew 27:53). It is believed that this group were also taken to heaven.

"Therefore, He says: When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive ["He led a host of captives" ESV], and gave gifts to men" (Ephesians 4:8).

Other than these individuals along with angels, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we know of no others who are currently in heaven. They are either living on earth or unconsciously awaiting the resurrection.

5. What is Jesus doing in heaven?

"We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the Sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man" (Hebrews 8:1,2).

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession... Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14, 16).

"Therefore, He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

Jesus is in heaven, interceding as High Priest on behalf of sinners. Jesus provides forgiveness and grace, cleansing for sin committed, and power to live a righteous life. As Hebrews 9:24 says, Jesus has entered "into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us"

6. Why does the Bible say there will be a "new heaven?"

"For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind" (Isaiah 65:17).

"Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Peter 3:13).

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea" (Revelation 21:1).

After the earth has been cleansed from sin (see Revelation 20:9). God will recreate the earth. Throughout eternity there will be no evidence of the existence of sin apart from the wounds in Jesus' body (see Zechariah 13:6). In addition to referring to God's dwelling place, "heaven" also refers to where birds fly (see Jeremiah 4:25) and to outer space (see Genesis 22:17). These will be cleansed and made new, ensuring no trace of sin will exist throughout eternity.

7. Will the redeemed live in heaven or on the recreated earth?

Both! The saved are taken to heaven with Jesus at the time of the second coming. After spending a thousand years in heaven, they return to the earth, which will be recreated and made perfect for eternity.

"In My Father's house are many mansions... I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2,3).

"And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4).

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city,

8. Will there be animals in heaven?

New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband" (Revelation 21:1, 2).

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together: and a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6).

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain' says the Lord" (Isaiah 65:25).

"The creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:21),

Humans will enjoy the companionship of animals throughout eternity. While the return of Jesus forever frees the saved from the presence of sin, it also liberates creation from the curse of sin and sees it returned to perfection.

9. What will people do throughout eternity?

 **We will celebrate.**

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready... Then he said to me, Write: "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" (Revelation 19:7,9).

There will be much for the redeemed to celebrate having left a sinful world to experience the blessings of eternity.

 **There will be a great reunion.**

"I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29).

"Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Along with being in the presence of Jesus, the saved will be able to see family, friends, and loved ones they were separated from on earth.

 **We will serve God.**

"[He] has made us kings and priests to His God and Father" (Revelation 1:6).

“And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him” (Revelation 22:3).

☞ **Heaven will be a place of activity.**

“They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.” (Isaiah 65:21).

☞ **Heaven will be even better than we can imagine!**

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

10. How can a person have the assurance that they will go to heaven?

He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12).

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

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (John 5:24).

Jesus died to bear the sins of the world, meaning sinners need not experience condemnation even though they have sinned. Jesus assumed the burden of that condemnation and offers everyone the gift of everlasting life. It cannot be earned. It cannot be purchased. Through faith in what Jesus did at Calvary, a person may receive everlasting life. Surrendering your heart to Jesus means He will live His life in you, and you can live in the full assurance of eternal life.

Is it your desire to be with Jesus forever and to enjoy heaven and earth made new?

LESSON 20

THE TRUE CHURCH



A stunning sunrise is an amazing sight. There is so much beauty, hope, and comfort in seeing the most powerful object in our solar system gently awaken our part of the world.

How does morning sunlight affect us?

Morning sunlight sets our circadian rhythm, the natural 24-hour rhythm of the body. Our eyes contain special, strategically-placed cells activated by wavelengths of light that occur at low solar angles—such as when the sun is rising or setting. These specialized eye cells have nothing to do with vision. Instead, they relay light information to a gland in the brain that houses our body's master clock. This gland is in charge of circadian rhythm.

Just as winding an old-fashioned clock was necessary for accurate time-keeping, so morning sunlight communicates what time it is to the master clock. This may not seem all that important until you realize that all of our body functions operate in sync with body rhythm. For example, during the day certain active functions occur, while restorative processes such as detoxification occur at night.

Does morning sunlight have health benefits?

Definitely. We need a lot of bright light exposure early in the day to activate what is called the cortisol pulse. This is the secretion of an important hormone that helps us have focus, mental clarity, and improved learning and memory.

Morning sunlight enhances the health and vitality of every cell in your body. It also stimulates a healthy immune system. Many functions of our bodies are controlled by light.

What happens when our body clocks are desynchronized and our rhythm is off?

When our body clocks are no longer keeping accurate time, we become more vulnerable to diseases like type 2 diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disease. Suppression of very important hormones such as dopamine also occurs, leading to poor mood, depression, and defects in learning and memory. A disrupted circadian clock causes disturbances in our physiology, mood, and behavior. Thankfully, our disrupted, out-of-sync rhythm can begin to be recalibrated tomorrow morning.

How can we best take advantage of morning sunlight?

Scripture tells us, "Truly the light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to behold the sun" (Ecclesiastes 11:7).

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light."
1 Peter 2:9

Exposure to morning sunlight boosts serotonin production, which not only improves sleep at night; it enhances mood throughout the day.

Without looking directly into the sun, expose yourself to gradually increasing bright light within an hour of waking up. Optimally, expose yourself to outdoor light, but sunlight through a window will work as well. Avoid light from computer or phone screens first thing in the morning as this disrupts healthy brain wave transitioning and heightens the stress response for the day.

It's fascinating how our bodies are wired to respond to our environment, including the path of the sun. Intentionally getting morning sunlight is one of the most health-enhancing things you can do for yourself.

This lesson will show us how, like the dawn, the true church of God has advanced in truth throughout history, following ever-increasing light. "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

BIBLE STUDY: THE TRUE CHURCH

1. What does the Bible say about attending church?

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

The Bible urges believers to assemble together. While Hebrews 10 does not mention church specifically, it does encourage fellowship and Christian communion.

2. How did early Christians understand the concept of church?

"Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans" (Colossians 4:16).

Likewise greet the church that is in their house" (Romans 16:5).

In addition to "the church" representing the general body of believers, it also represents congregations that existed in various locations. In Revelation, Jesus addresses seven churches in Asia Minor, saying to John, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea" (Revelation 1:11).

3. Did Jesus say that He would have a church?

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

Jesus' church would be built upon Himself, the great "Rock" of the Bible (see 1 Corinthians 10:4). The Greek word translated into "Peter" in Matthew 16:18 is "petros" meaning 'a stone.' By comparison, Jesus is represented as the rock from which water flowed in the wilderness (see Exodus 17:6).

4. How would Jesus' church be organized?

The church sent out missionaries and gospel workers.

"Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barnabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren" (Acts 15:22).

The gifts of the Spirit operated in the church.

"And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues" (1 Corinthians 12:28).

The church was organized with deacons and elders (lay leaders).

"And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them" (Acts 6:5-6).

"From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church" (Acts 20:17).

The church was organized for service, and for taking the gospel to the world. Church organization is intended to facilitate the smooth running of the church and enable effectiveness in ministry

5. Paul wrote that God had appointed prophets in the early Christian church (see 1 Corinthians 12:28). Is the gift of prophecy intended for the church in the last days?

"And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17).

"The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Revelation 19:10). According to the book of Revelation, the testimony of Jesus—the spiritual gift of prophecy—would be resident in the "remnant" God's church in the time before the return of Jesus.

6. Why would God give the gift of prophecy?

"Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).

Prior to major events in salvation history, God gave the gift of prophecy. Before the flood, God spoke through Noah (see 2 Peter 2:5). Before Jesus began His work,

God gave the gift of prophecy through John the Baptist (see John 1:29). In both instances, the gift of prophecy was given to encourage people to prepare for great events. It is to be expected that God would give the gift of prophecy prior to the second coming of Jesus to encourage His people to prepare His return.

7. Is the gift of prophecy intended to replace the Bible or to function as an additional Bible?

"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

The Bible is the rule of faith and practice for the believer in Jesus and should not be added to or taken away from (see Revelation 22:18, 19). The ministry of Paul, Agabus (see Acts 21:10), and Philip's four daughters (see Acts 21:9) did not detract in any way from Scripture. While the church is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself [is] the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20).

8. How did God raise up the spiritual gift of prophecy in His end-time church?

God placed His hand upon the life of Ellen White when she was seventeen years of age. Born in 1827 and raised in Maine, Ellen White received counsel from God, which she shared with the church and the world. Her books have been translated into more languages than any other female author. She wrote about salvation, the teachings of Jesus, and prophecy. Along with personally encouraging countless individuals to grow in their faith in God, she was used by God to provide guidance for a young church as it grew into a movement that would take the gospel to the world. The church she was part of, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is today in more countries of the world than any other Protestant church.

Books she authored such as Steps to Christ, The Great Controversy, The Desire of Ages, Christ's Object Lessons, and many more have helped countless people come to faith in Jesus and have encouraged people around the world to grow in their faith in God.

9. How is the church to relate to the word of God?

"I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

10. What message would be proclaimed by God's church in earth's last days?

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6).

God has a specific message that will be proclaimed to the whole world before Jesus returns. The messages of the three angels are God's messages of hope to a dying world.

The first angel of Revelation 14 calls the world to the gospel—the message of a crucified, risen, and soon-returning Savior who offers salvation as a gift to all who will receive it. It cannot be earned.

Salvation is received, not achieved. It is given to undeserving sinners (see Romans 5:8) who are given the opportunity to respond to God's grace (see Romans 5:20) and surrender their lives to Him (see Revelation 3:20)

11. What does the first angel go on to proclaim?

"Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come" (Revelation 14:7).

1844 marked the beginning of the time of heaven's final judgment. With the return of Jesus imminent, the world is called to fully surrender and allow Him to live His life in each believer.

"And worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Revelation 14:7).

The first of the three angels calls God's people to worship Jesus as the Creator. While the creation story of the Bible is widely disputed, God calls to the world to look to Jesus as Creator (see John 1:1-3) and re-Creator (see John 3:3-5).

12. What is the message of the second angel?

"And another angel followed, saying, 'Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication'" (Revelation 14:8).

In a time of great spiritual confusion, God warns the world that Babylon—a system of religious confusion and error—is fallen. Her teachings have corrupted the church, and her connection with the governments of the world (see Revelation 17:3) have afforded her undeserved power and influence.

13. What does the third angel warn against?

"Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, 'If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation'" (Revelation 14:9, 10).

The third angel warns against receiving the mark of the beast, encouraging people to be faithful to Jesus and accept His word as their guide. At a time when the majority of people in the world will be deceived by the beast power of Revelation 13, God invites all who are willing to find their refuge in Jesus.

"The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe" (Proverbs 18:10).

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me (John 15:4).

With little time left for humanity, the God of heaven invites men and women, boys and girls, to Surrender fully to Him and to receive His righteousness. In the days immediately preceding the return of Jesus, the world will receive either the seal of God or the mark of the beast (see Lesson 17).

14. What additional message does God give to His church?

"And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4).

God calls His people to come out of Babylon. Because He wants all for whom Jesus died to be saved, God calls them away from error and confusion and into the light of the truth of His word.

15. If God is calling people out of Babylon, what is He calling people into?

"And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17).

"Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

God has preserved remnant in the end of time that can be distinguished by several identifying characteristics:

- ☞ God's end-time church would be a worldwide movement.
- ☞ It takes the gospel "to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people (Revelation 14:6).
- ☞ It proclaims the gospel of salvation by grace through faith (Revelation 14:6).
- ☞ It announces the judgment taking place in heaven (Revelation 14:7).
- ☞ It calls the world to keep holy the seventh-day Sabbath (Revelation 14:7).
- ☞ It calls people to come out of Babylon (Revelation 14:8; Revelation 18:1-4).
- ☞ It sounds the warning about the mark of the beast (Revelation 14:9-11).
- ☞ It invites people to keep all ten of the commandments of God (Revelation 14:12).

The only church on earth that fulfills each of these identifying marks is the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Formed in 1863, it continues to carry forward the truths of the Bible, working towards completing the Reformation that was begun centuries ago. This does not mean that people who are not currently part of the remnant may not be saved (see Acts 17:30). Many who love God simply have not yet heard the Bible message for this time. Those who hear the word of God are called to surrender to Jesus, obey His word, and follow the teachings of the Bible.

16. Who may be part of God's church today?

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27).

"Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

"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).

God invites all who are willing to join those who not only believe but also wish to share with others the gospel message for these times.

The church is "the body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27), and just as parts of the body are different yet form a complete whole, the diverse people that make up the church function together under the leadership of Jesus, "the head of the body, the church (Colossians 1:18).

Surrendering to Jesus makes Him the Lord of your life. Not only does He take away your sin, but He also cleanses you of sin, freeing you from its penalty and its power (see 1 John 1:9). Jesus then "works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

Are you willing to invite Jesus to be the Lord of your life?

Do you choose to be part of His end-time church-the Seventh-day Adventist Church?