

God's Plan of Salvation



**Children's Bible Studies
Volume Four**

God's Plan of Salvation

Children's Bible Studies Volume Four



R. B. THIEME, JR., BIBLE MINISTRIES
HOUSTON, TEXAS

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A Doctrinal Bible Studies Catalogue will be provided upon request.

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Preface

Before you begin your Bible study, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, be sure you have named your sins privately to God the Father.

If we confess our [known] sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our [known] sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [unknown or forgotten sins]. (1 John 1:9)

You will then be in fellowship with God, filled with the Holy Spirit, and ready to learn Bible doctrine from the Word of God.

“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in [the filling of the] spirit and [biblical] truth.” (John 4:24)

If you have never personally believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the issue is not naming your sins. The issue is faith alone in Christ alone.

“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey [the command to believe in] the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)

THE WORD OF GOD is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, and of the joints and the marrow, and is a critic of thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb. 4:12)

All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God might be mature, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Tim. 3:16–17)

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim. 2:15)

History of *Children's Bible Studies*

Children's Bible Studies were originally published in the 1960s as the *Doctrinal Bible Studies*, a compilation of Bible lessons taught to children in Berachah Church Sunday School. Affectionately referred to as "The Quarterlies," the series comprised thirty-two books addressing eight age levels. Each level was divided into the Quarterlies: Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer. The series begins with basic doctrines for the very young child and progresses toward more advanced doctrines for the older child.

In 1972, Pastor R. B. Thieme, Jr., replaced Berachah Church Sunday School with Prep School and a new system of teaching. From the Bible doctrine resident in their souls, teachers would prepare their own Bible lessons to teach the children. However, the Quarterlies have remained a treasure-trove of ideas for parents and teachers looking for ways to communicate Bible doctrine at a child's level of understanding. When complete, *Children's Bible Studies* will contain all of the original material in eight volumes: *What God Wants Me to Know*; *What Is God Like?*; *The Persons of the Godhead*; *God's Plan of Salvation*; *The Christian Way of Life*; *The Life of Moses*; *The Mental Attitudes*; and *The Dispensations*.

Children's Bible Studies complement the lesson formats and research guide from *Train Up a Child...Children's Bible Studies Source Book*. The lessons are organized into chapters with an overview outlining the subject, titles of the lessons, story objective, vocabulary and doctrinal concepts, *Source Book* keywords, and activities. New visual aids pertinent to the lessons are included in the back of the book for use in making training aids. The lessons in the *Children's Bible Studies* are easily incorporated into the extensive curriculum found in the *Source Book* enabling parents and teachers to master lesson preparation while providing creative ways to teach Bible doctrine.

God's Plan of Salvation, the fourth volume in the series, is an intensified look at the entire scope of soteriology, teaching the necessity, plan, and purpose of salvation. A thorough knowledge of salvation is essential for the child's spiritual growth and orientation to grace in the plan of God. This series also includes a fascinating study on the subject of angels: scriptural documentation to their reality and purpose in the plan of God, the types of angels, and what roles they play. The final chapters of the book teach the story of Jonah to provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of God's love and grace toward sinners, so that the child may see his own place and responsibility within the plan of God.

To the Parents

God mandates you, the parent, to study and learn Bible doctrine. With Bible doctrine in your soul, you are the best teacher in the world for your children. From your own doctrinal frame of reference, personality, and approach, you can then fulfill your responsibility to God to teach your children the Word of God.

“And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.” (Deut. 6:6–7)

Teach your children Bible doctrine the way you teach them to play ball, to make a bed, to wash their hands, to use table manners. Teach them over and over. Then, check them. Repeat and repeat, until they know Bible doctrine as readily as they know their own name. When the time comes for them to leave home, you can rest confidently in God’s promise:

Train up a child in the way he should go,
Even when he is old he will not depart from it.
(Prov. 22:6)

Consider how much time you already spend training your children how to live as well-mannered, responsible citizens. How much more time are you willing to spend to ensure that they know how to live as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who reflect the glory of God? You have the privilege of teaching your children that learning and applying Bible doctrine is the most wonderful blessing in life. In fact, Bible doctrine is the most valuable heritage you can give your children.

I was very glad to find *some* of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment *to do* from the Father. (2 John 4)

How to Use This Book

Teaching the Word of God requires careful preparation. You cannot teach what you do not know. To facilitate your preparation, each chapter of the *Children's Bible Studies* begins with an Overview, the plan for developing the subject of that particular chapter. The Overview provides a solid foundation on which you can build your own lesson plans, tailored to your setting, teaching style, and the children's age levels.

THE CHAPTER OVERVIEW:

Subject: The chapter title summarizes the primary doctrinal emphasis and the biblical reference upon which each story is based.

Lesson Titles: The lesson titles reflect a further delineation of the doctrinal concepts taught in each story.

Story Objective: The story objective is a synopsis, from an adult frame of reference, of the doctrines to be taught in each chapter. Each primary doctrine is documented with Scripture references. The story objective includes teaching pointers regarding specifics for presentation of the doctrine in that particular chapter.

Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts: Each chapter has a list of specific, technical vocabulary words that are used in the stories. It is important that the child understand the definitions of these words as the story progresses. The list of doctrinal concepts extrapolated from the stories is provided with Scripture references for preparation.

Source Book Keywords: Keywords provide a link to the corresponding subject in the Research Guide in *Train Up a Child...Children's Bible Studies Source Book*. The Research Guide provides Scripture references, book titles, and audio recordings on keyword subjects taught by R. B. Thieme, Jr. These resources are available upon request at no charge from R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 5139 West Alabama, Houston, Texas 77056, USA.

Activities: A list of suggested activities is provided to enhance and reinforce the biblical concepts of the lesson. For a comprehensive list of teaching aids and resources, consult the *Source Book*.

Suggested Visuals: Most of the lessons have diagrams that illustrate the doctrinal concepts in the story as it unfolds. These diagrams may be used in any number of applications, including flannel boards, worksheets, craft projects. The visuals used in assembling these diagrams are located in the back of this book. They may be copied, traced, or scanned and are intended to be colored, glued, or glittered, used for models or mobiles, or backed with flannel fabric for use on a flannel board (a piece of board covered with flannel fabric).

Games, Songs, Worksheets: Any or all of these activities can be utilized to enhance the doctrinal concepts in the lessons. Many memory type games can be modified to challenge recall of doctrinal principles and vocabulary. Singing doctrinal lyrics fitted to familiar tunes reinforces biblical concepts. Worksheets provide an effective way to review the key points of each lesson.

Memory Verse: A Scripture verse pertinent to the subject is woven throughout the entire chapter and is for review at the end of each lesson.

Opening and Closing Prayer: Each lesson must begin with the private confession of sin (1 John 1:9). Opening prayer is time for soul preparation, time to request help from God the Holy Spirit for concentration and understanding of the Bible lesson to be taught. Each lesson should end with closing prayer, thanking God for His Son and His gift of our so-great salvation, thanking Him for the opportunity to learn His Word, and asking Him to challenge us in the application of His Word in our lives.

THE LESSONS:

Learning comes by repetition. Teach these lessons repeatedly, drawing the many different applications for the child from them. The lessons are organized so that doctrine is built upon doctrine, from the basic concepts to the more complex. Each lesson has three sections: The Story, What God Wants Me to Know, and the Lesson Review.

The Story illustrates how Bible doctrine can be learned, stored, and applied. The story is presented for a child's frame of reference and can be adjusted to any age level. Each story incorporates the chapter memory verse, weaving it throughout and tying it to the story objective.

What God Wants Me to Know gives the application of the doctrinal concepts to the child's life. In this section, the Gospel is also presented. That a child is saved cannot be taken for granted. Therefore, the need for and the way of salvation can never be presented too often.

Lesson Reviews are specifically designed for a categorical review of the doctrinal concepts, vocabulary words, and memory verse presented in each story. Utilizing the review not only ensures that the key points of the lesson are covered, but leaves the children with something to anticipate in the next lesson.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS:

Whether you teach in the classroom or in the home, formally or informally, with complex lessons and many activities or with simple, concise presentations, always make learning Bible doctrine enjoyable for the children. Never bore your children with the Word of God. Remember, "The word of God is alive and powerful" (Heb. 4:12)! Captivate their imaginations with God's truth. Hold their attention so that they eagerly look forward to learning more and more Bible doctrine. Let your children have an active part in the lessons. Encourage their natural curiosity, individual thought, expressions, and questions. For the effective communication of God's Word, the following guidance is provided for your consideration.

Reinforce the lesson subject in different ways. Use whatever methods are comfortable for you and effective with your children: sing songs, use puppets, play games, have surprises, use a variety of teaching aids. Many different teaching aids are readily available such as flannel graph stories, coloring books, recordings, CDs, and storybooks found in Bible bookstores and toy stores. Stores that provide materials for schoolteachers are also an excellent source of teaching aids. Chalk or dry erase boards, worksheets, puppets, or craft projects for your children to make can all be adapted to enhance any lesson. Do not limit yourself to your classroom; go on a picnic or to the zoo, or visit a museum.

Begin each lesson with the private confession of sin. Teach the children that the only way to approach the Word of God is after restoration of fellowship with Him through the filling ministry of God the Holy Spirit. Remind them that the Holy Spirit is the real teacher of God's Word (John 14:26).

Devote part of each lesson to learning the memory verse. Then, make reference to it as it applies to the subject. Help the children look up the verse in the Bible and impress on their minds that God's written Word is the source of all truth. For younger children, paraphrase or shorten

verses for easier memorization. Most importantly, make memorizing verses a delightful part of the lesson.

Present the Gospel in every lesson. You never want to take the salvation of your children for granted. Even though you may feel certain your children are born again, repeat the Gospel. Find the opportunity to talk to each child individually about his eternal relationship with the Lord. Provide for those who want to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior the time and opportunity to make the decision.

Define the vocabulary words. Understanding the doctrinal concepts depends upon understanding the meaning of the technical vocabulary words. Never assume the child already knows the meaning of a word, or is necessarily hearing the word correctly. You need to enunciate the word clearly, and define it in terms of the child's frame of reference.

Review, review, review. The doctrinal concepts, vocabulary words, and memory verse all need to be reviewed, and then reviewed again. When asking questions, provide hints that will help the children to recall the correct answers. Encourage them to express, in their own vocabulary, what they have learned. Make the reviews enjoyable by playing games, singing songs, reviewing teaching aids, and having contests. Always leave your children with Bible doctrine to consider and Bible doctrine to anticipate.

Chapter One

The Need for Salvation

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: The Need for Salvation—Genesis 1—4

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: Results of the Fall of Man
2. Lesson Two: God’s Solution to the Penalty of Sin
3. Lesson Three: Cain and Abel

C. Story Objective:

One man’s disobedience brought sin and death to the entire human race (Rom. 5:12). Man would have been hopelessly lost and condemned forever were it not for God’s matchless grace, for “the wages of sin is [spiritual] death [separation from God]” (Rom. 6:23*a*). God decided in eternity past to deal with fallen humanity in grace by working out a plan of salvation (Eph. 2:8–9).

Only as a person realizes the reality and universality of sin, and comes face to face with his helpless condition, does he see his own personal need of salvation. He must see that for anyone who will trust in Him, the work of Jesus Christ on the cross provided for every disaster that accrues to man as a result of man’s sinful state and nature (Rom. 3:23). Where once stood the wall of sin that barred sinful man from holy God, now stands the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, an open door for all who will enter in by faith alone in Christ alone (John 10:9).

After the expulsion from the Garden and with the birth of children to Adam and Eve, God instituted the family. “He [Adam] became the father of *a son* in his own [sinful] likeness” (Gen. 5:3). The second generation, as with all following generations, must be told of their need of salvation,

taught of God’s promised Savior, and shown the only way into God’s presence.

And so “in the course of time,” Cain and Abel approached the Lord with their respective offerings (Gen. 4:3). Abel’s offering was accepted; Cain’s was rejected. Cain reacted in anger for not being allowed to come to God in his own way. His approach had a “form of godliness, although they have denied its power” (2 Tim. 3:5*a*), and thus religion was added to the downward progress of man. Cain ignored God’s specified sacrifice and refused God’s gracious offer of a substitutionary sin offering (Gen. 4:3–7). His volition could have gone either way. Cain made his decision. He rejected the only means of acceptability to God and committed the first murder. The human race, barely begun, was already headed for failure.

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: annihilation, bankrupt, condemned, countenance, deceived, image, imputation, inheritance, mediator, volition
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. The condition of man:
 - 1) Need for salvation through Jesus Christ (John 3:16; Acts 4:12)
 - 2) Creation of man (Gen. 1—2)
 - 3) Fall of man:
 - a) One prohibition (Gen. 2:16–17)
 - b) The temptation (Gen. 3:1–5)
 - c) The sin (negative volition)
 - 4) No salvation by man’s works (Gen. 3:7; Isa. 64:6; Titus 3:5*a*)

- b. God's judgment of sin:
 - 1) Penalty of spiritual death (Gen. 2:17b; Rom. 6:23a; 1 Cor. 15:22a; Eph. 2:1)
 - 2) Imputation of Adam's sin to the human race (Rom. 3:23; 4:8; 5:12–19)
 - 3) Sin nature inherited at birth (Gen. 5:1–3; Ps. 51:5; Rom. 5:12; 7:18; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9)
 - 4) Personal sins committed after birth because of the sin nature (Mark 7:20–23; Gal. 5:19–21)
- c. Faith alone in Christ alone (Rom. 5:10a; 2 Cor. 5:19, 21; Eph. 1:7; 1 Tim. 2:5)
- d. Birth of the first children (Gen. 4:1–2)
- e. Two offerings (Gen. 4:3–5):
 - 1) Abel's offering of the slain lamb was accepted (Heb. 11:4).
 - 2) Cain's offering of the fruit of his own hands was rejected (Prov. 14:12; Heb. 9:22).
- f. God's grace is always offered (Gen. 4:15; 2 Cor. 8:9; Eph. 2:8–9), yet some reject (Gen. 4:8; John 3:36).

E. *Source Book* Keywords: Adam and Eve, Adam's original sin, Cain and Abel, human good, imputations, salvation, sin

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: Abel's offering, Cain's offering, chain of negative volition, essence box, Trinity
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verses:
 - a. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." (Rom. 5:12)
 - b. "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rom. 6:23)
 - c. "The words of the LORD are pure words." (Ps. 12:6a)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE RESULTS OF THE FALL OF MAN

The great theme of the Bible centers around the plan of God, which is called "salvation." Salvation is a Bible word, and you will see it in your Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Turn to Acts 4:12: "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." What does the word "salvation" mean? The last word in this verse will give you a clue. Yes, it means to be saved from something. We understand what it means to save a person from drowning, or to rescue a lost person. Salvation is simply the noun form of the verb "to save." We could define it as deliverance, rescue, or preservation.

The Bible tells us that every man and woman, boy and girl, needs to be "saved" (Acts 16:31). We need to be saved from something far more serious than drowning or being lost from home. We are all hopelessly lost from God in sin and helpless to do anything about it ourselves. That is why God made a plan of salvation—to save us from our hopeless condition and make a way for us to find Him.

God's plan of salvation is a puzzle to most people. If you should pick any twenty people and ask them what salvation is, you would probably get twenty different answers. Now, if you tried to fit all these answers together to get a complete picture of salvation, all you would come up with is a jumbled hodgepodge. Instead of a perfect picture, it

would turn out something like two or three jigsaw puzzles all mixed together with half of the pieces missing. Do you know why? The pieces have not been put together from God's Word. People get their ideas of salvation from all kinds of places, or from their own imaginations. This is all a part of Satan's attempt to destroy God's plan and to twist it in the minds of people and confuse them (2 Cor. 4:3–4).

In the next few chapters we are going to gather together all the pieces from God's Word about the plan of God for salvation. We will fit them together just as you would a jigsaw puzzle, so that we can see the complete picture of God's plan of salvation for the human race.

The Beginning of Man, Genesis 1—2

Now, what made it necessary for God to make a plan of salvation? To answer this question, we must go back to the beginning of man as recorded in God's Word. What book of the Bible would that be? Yes, Genesis, the Book of Beginnings.

You have probably heard in school the ideas of many teachers and scientists as to where man came from and why he is here. Some say that life began to form all by itself and gradually grew from a tiny animal to a human being. Others say that God did begin life, but perhaps in the form

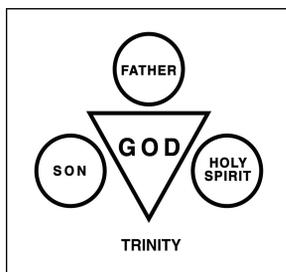
of a tiny cell, and this life gradually changed from an animal to a man. These ideas are called “theories of evolution.” A “theory” is simply an idea, not a fact, and when man forms ideas in his own mind without the facts revealed by God, he gets way off base.

What does the Bible say? The first two chapters in Genesis contain God’s truths about how life in general began, and your life in particular. You probably know Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” God, Jesus Christ, created the world, the heavens, and all life in them (Col. 1:16). In Genesis 1:24–28, two separate acts of creation are recorded. First, the animals were created. Then, when they were complete, God brought forth in an instant of time His last great act of creation—man.

Man was created perfect and complete. He never did look like some of the pictures you see in your school books—half man and half ape. In fact, the first man was created the most handsome and most physically perfect of any person who ever lived. Man has never had any relation to the animals except to rule over them. People who doubt that God could create everything in a perfect and complete state simply do not know who and what God is. If God is eternal life, life can come from Him. If He is omnipotent, He can do anything.

How God Created Man

There is a very special reason why man was never an animal. Look at Genesis 1:26a: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.’” Man was made in the image and likeness of God. The Bible never says this of the animals. Do you think that man looked like God? No, God is a spirit and does not have a body (John 4:24). It is true that God is a Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Three-in-One), and man was created a threefold being. We read in Genesis 2:7 that God formed man’s body out of the chemicals of the soil and breathed into his nostrils “the breath of life.” God gave man soul-life and spirit-life. Why did he need two kinds of life? His soul-life enabled him to understand the world he lived in, while his spirit-life allowed him to have fellowship with and understanding of God.



Adam was made after the likeness of God in his soul-life. God does not have a soul, but He gave man a soul into

which He might stamp His own image. Let us look into the soul and see what it is made up of. The soul has (1) Self-consciousness (Acts 20:10). This means that you know you are alive; you can understand the things about you. (2) Mentality or thinking (Luke 12:19). This means that you can form thoughts in your mind. (3) Volition or free will (Acts 3:23). This is your decider by which you make choices. Now, although God has volition, He cannot sin. Man was created sinless, but with free will. He could sin, and he did sin. (4) Conscience (Acts 24:16; Rom. 2:15). This means that you know the difference between right and wrong.

Animals have what you might call an animal soul, but it was never said to be patterned after God. What is more, animals do not have “spirit-life.” The Bible makes a distinct difference between the soul and the spirit (1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12). Man must have all three—body, soul, and spirit—to have a relationship with God.

The Fall of Man

What happened to man? It is difficult to imagine something going wrong in the Garden of Eden, the beautiful setting into which God placed the first man. Genesis 2:8–10 describes his lovely home in which everything was provided. Man was given a job of tending the Garden (Gen. 2:15), a most enjoyable occupation. When God saw that man was lonely for a companion like himself, He gave Adam a lovely wife, Eve (Gen. 2:21–25). Best of all, the Lord God Himself walked and talked with Adam and Eve every evening and taught them Bible doctrine (Gen. 3:8a). But in spite of the perfect surroundings, their little world fell all apart.

Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Now, maybe you wonder why this is so bad. Doesn’t everyone disobey at some time or other? Yes, and this is the very reason why their disobedience was so terrible. Let’s read Genesis 2:16–17: “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die [literally, “dying, you shall die”].’” God clearly warned that Adam’s disobedience would result in spiritual death, and that Adam would lose his relationship with God. There are many, many ways in which you can sin, but Adam and Eve had only one way, and that was to eat of one certain tree in the Garden. At first, this was not much of a temptation, since they had any number of trees from which they might choose their food. There was nothing at all unfair in giving Adam and Eve this one rule, and this command was not hard to obey.

Why did God forbid this one thing? You will remember that in their souls, as in your soul, they had what we call volition, or a decider. God gave them the freedom to obey or disobey Him. If they were to have volition, they must have something upon which to decide, something to which

they could say, “Yes, I will,” or “No, I won’t.” The rule not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a test of their volition so that they could decide for or against God. God will not force anyone to love and serve Him. He wants those who will love and serve Him to do so of their own choice.

The Temptation

All went well until a third party, the serpent, was introduced into the scene (Gen. 3:1). From the way he is described, he seems to have been the most beautiful and clever of all the animals in the Garden, as well as Eve’s favorite. Speaking in a voice inside the serpent, the words came from the real tempter, the enemy of God and God’s plan, Satan.

The great fallen angel was just waiting for an opportunity to get back at God through His newly created, perfect, sinless beings. Why did God allow Satan to come at all to tempt this perfect, new creation? Man must have an alternative. Satan will present his ideas so that man can choose which he will have—God’s way or Satan’s way.

So now Satan, speaking through the serpent, caused Eve to wonder if God was really good and if He was really fair (Gen. 3:1*b*). Was it fair for God to deny them a tree which was so lovely to look at as well as good for food (Gen. 3:6)? To show you how clever Satan is, he purposely made his suggestions to Eve rather than to Adam. Adam was the ruler; he knew doctrine and may have recognized that Satan was twisting God’s Word. Adam was also the authority over Eve and if Satan had successfully tempted Adam to disobey, Eve would have had to obey her husband. Thus Satan’s target was Eve, who was evidently a little short on doctrine and who lived more by her emotions. “If the tree looks good and it would make us wise—why not?” she reasoned. “Besides, the serpent said that we would not really die if we ate of it. God is just jealous and does not want us to be like Him.”

Surely Eve must have known that they were already created in the image and likeness of God. But she was carried away by the beautiful serpent, with Satan’s smooth voice and the delightful suggestion that eating from the forbidden tree would make her smarter. What was the result? She ate the fruit and immediately became a sinner. Eve was deceived by Satan. When she ate the forbidden fruit, she became spiritually dead, totally separated from God and with no relationship with Him. When Adam came back to Eve, she gave him the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:6). There he stood, the ruler of the world, the original perfect man created by God, with Bible doctrine in his soul and a decision to make. Would he choose perfection with God in the Garden, or would he choose spiritual death with Eve outside the Garden?

Which way did Adam choose? Yes, against God. He followed Eve instead of obeying God. He actually wanted Eve more than he wanted God. He knew exactly what he

was doing. Adam deliberately sinned, though Eve was deceived.

Did they become as wise as God, as Satan had promised? Look at Genesis 3:7: “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.” Their eyes were opened, but what did they see? They saw what it was like to be a sinner. They did not become like God; they became sinners and lost their relationship with God! Once they had been innocent; they knew nothing of sin. Now their eyes were opened and they were conscious of sin for the first time.

If we were to say, “My conscience hurts me,” what would we mean? We know what is right, but we are not doing it. Our conscience is our knowledge of good and evil and the way we judge what is right and what is wrong. But you know, even though everybody has a conscience with some standard for right and wrong, a conscience does not bring anyone to God. Only your positive volition to God’s plan of salvation can give you a relationship with God. Usually a conscience just makes you feel guilty for something you did wrong. And that is just what a conscience did for Adam and Eve. Now they knew right and wrong, and they felt guilty and hid from God. They even tried to hide their nakedness. Knowing they were naked means that they knew they were in a sinful or fallen condition. Perhaps they said to each other, “We can’t let God see us like this. Let us make ourselves a covering.” Fig leaves seemed to be the best kind to put together for clothes, and with these they “made themselves loin coverings” (Gen. 3:7).

What God Wants Me to Know

What a sad change had come over Adam and Eve. Where once they had enjoyed perfect fellowship with God, now they were hiding from Him and trying to do something for themselves by which they might make themselves acceptable to Him. Ever since the Garden, man has been trying to do something good enough for salvation. What are some of these “fig leaves” of works by which man tries to get right with God?

People try to make themselves ‘respectable’ to each other; that is, they put on a good front when they are around other people, and they think this will get them somewhere with God. But God looks on the “heart [soul]” and He is not fooled by this fig leaf (Jer. 17:10). Many people think that if they pile up enough good deeds, such as going to church regularly, giving money to the church, helping the poor, or praying, these will add up to enough goodness to get to heaven. What does God say to these people? “All our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment” (Isa. 64:6). Like Adam and Eve, they are simply putting together fig leaves that God will rip away, only to show what they really are—lost sinners.

They need God’s plan for salvation. Since Adam and Eve could not come to God, He came to them and showed

them the way back to Him. For the first time, an animal was killed. Never before had there ever been death or suffering in this new creation. God showed the two sinners that someone would take their place and suffer and die for them. Their own works would not save them. There must be a blood sacrifice. Who was the One who would take their place and die for their sins? The Lord Jesus Christ, who would one day be the Savior of the world. Because Adam and Eve believed what God showed them about the Savior, He clothed them in coats of skins made from the slain animal.

Instead of “fig leaves” of human good, we, too, need God’s clothing of righteousness in order to have eternal life and go to heaven. Our covering is not animal skins, but the righteousness of God given to us when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior (2 Cor. 5:21; Rev. 19:8). Everyone in the world needs God’s salvation because we have all disobeyed; we have all sinned. Will you obey God’s Word and believe in the Savior, Jesus Christ (1 John 3:23)?

Lesson Review

As I read the following sentences, you fill in the blanks:

1. According to the theory of evolution, man was an (animal) before he became man.

2. Man could not have been an animal first because he was created in the (image) of God.
3. Man was like God in his (soul) life.
4. Spirit-life was given Adam so that he might have (fellowship) with God.
5. Adam and Eve were given one rule in order to test their (volition).
6. The serpent was more (clever and beautiful) than any of the other animals.
7. Eve took the fruit because she thought it would make her (wise; like God).
8. Man did not become like God, but became a (sinner).
9. Adam deliberately sinned, but Eve was (deceived).
10. Adam and Eve took the fruit in disobedience to God’s will; now they must believe in the (Savior) in obedience to God’s will.

Memory Verse

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.” (Rom. 5:12)

LESSON TWO GOD’S SOLUTION TO THE PENALTY OF SIN

It is not easy to admit to something you have done wrong and take your punishment, is it? When we are caught in the act, we more often try to ‘pass the buck’ and blame somebody else for our actions. Many times we can fool our parents or our teachers, but we can never fool God. He knows who is to blame when a sin or wrong has been committed, and He wants us to own up to our sin. This is what God wanted Adam and Eve to do when He came down in the Garden and sought them out.

Spiritual Death, Genesis 3

Did God know what happened down in the Garden of Eden? Of course. He is omniscient and omnipresent. Adam and Eve did not deserve to ever see God again. But God does not treat us the way we deserve (Ps. 103:10). He always treats us in grace. What is grace? Grace is God doing

something for us which we cannot earn, do not deserve, and can never work for. God came to the Garden and called first to Adam, who was the ruler of his house and the responsible one: “Where are you [why are you where you are hiding]?” (Gen. 3:9b).

Do you know why Adam and Eve were hiding? They had lost their ability to fellowship with God. Why could they no longer have a relationship with Him? Do you remember what God said would be their punishment if they ate of the forbidden tree? “You shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17b; Rom. 6:23a). We know that Adam and Eve did not fall over dead the minute they sinned; in fact, Adam was more than 900 years old when he died (Gen. 5:5). But they did die as soon as they sinned. They died spiritually.

Sin caused their human spirits to die, and their human spirits were that part of them which allowed them to have fellowship with God. Where they had originally been a

threefold being—body, soul, and spirit—they were now a twofold being, having only a body and a soul. Spiritual death is separation from God in time (while you are alive in this life). Spiritual death is far worse than physical death. Without a human spirit, no one can come into God's presence, either in life or in eternity. And if you die physically without a human spirit, you have nothing but the second death to look forward to.

The Second Death

All death is a separation. While spiritual death separates man from God in time, the second death separates all unbelievers from God for all eternity. Sin brought with it the same penalty which Satan received—separation from God forever in the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41). One thing you must remember is that the lake of fire, or the second death, does not mean annihilation or destruction. The soul of the unbeliever will live on forever in intense misery in the lake of fire. Where will your soul live?

Physical Death

In the Garden, Adam had endless life, but after his sin his body became one which could die. While he died spiritually right away, his body began to slowly age and deteriorate until he eventually died physically. At physical death his soul and spirit were separated from his body. His body went to the grave; his soul and spirit to Paradise, the place for Old Testament believers at that time. Both physical death and the second death are results of spiritual death. You can begin to see the terrible effects of this one act of disobedience.

God's Promise

Adam answered God's call and began to make excuses. Does this sound like you when your mother asks, "Who did this?" Do you answer, "Well, I was scared, so I didn't tell you about it"? That is just what Adam said: "I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself" (Gen. 3:10*b*). God then asked Adam point-blank, "Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" (Gen. 3:11*b*). Adam did just what boys and girls—yes, and men and women—have been doing ever since: he shifted the blame to someone else. Adam said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate [she made me do it]" (Gen. 3:12). So God turned to Eve and asked her what she had done. And of course, Eve in turn put the blame on the serpent: "The serpent deceived me, and I ate" (Gen. 3:13*b*). Finally, God turned to the serpent and condemned it to crawling in the dust for the rest of its life. You see, the serpent let himself be used by Satan, and so he must be punished.

Next, God spoke to Satan: "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed" (Gen. 3:15*a*). Enmity means a strong feeling of hatred.

Satan's "seed" is all fallen angels and all unbelieving mankind. "Her seed" refers to the Lord Jesus Christ who will redeem or pay the penalty of sin for all mankind. When anyone believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, he will become the seed of Christ. This is God's promise of salvation to man.

God then tells Adam and Eve about His plan of salvation. Through the woman, by childbearing, a Savior would be born (Gen. 3:16). He would have to go to the cross and die for sin (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:21). Before God judged Adam and Eve, He offered them the way to be saved. God never judges anyone without first giving him an opportunity to be saved.

We know that Adam and Eve accepted God's offer and believed His promise to send a Savior to die for their sins. How do we know? They were given coats of skins, a picture of being clothed in God's righteousness. However, there were still some things that God must do because of their disobedience. Satan made disobedience look very pleasant and very attractive, but sin always brings sorrow. From then on, Adam and Eve would have to work hard; they would know pain and sorrow and trouble. Even nature shared in the punishment of sin. It would grow bad things, such as weeds and thorns. Animals would become ferocious and afraid of man. Adam would no longer rule over animals and creation as effortlessly as he had done before (Gen. 3:16–19*a*). And finally, their bodies would go back to the dust from which they were made (Gen. 3:19*b*).

The theory of evolution says that human beings have improved over time. In fact, it is just the opposite—Adam and Eve were physically perfect at creation. They had all the beauty and glory that we could imagine, but out of their disobedience came death and decay to the human race.

Imputation of Sin

As soon as God began to ask those in the Garden why they disobeyed, each one began to blame the other. Who should have taken the blame for the disobedience as soon as God found them out? Perhaps you are thinking that Satan should have. But remember, Adam and Eve were given a free will to decide for themselves. They could have said no to Satan as well as yes. Look up and read Romans 5:12, our memory verse, and tell me what God says about it. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned." "Through one man"—Adam—sin came into the world. Adam, as the head of the human race, and the head of his home, was held responsible for the sin. Not only was he held responsible, but through him all of us became sinners. God said that because Adam sinned, we are all sinners. Is this fair of God to declare everyone a sinner just because Adam sinned? Well, if you remember what God is like, God's divine essence, you know that God cannot be unfair. He is perfect righteousness and justice.

Think of it this way: If your father lost all of his money, his business, his home, his car, and became totally bankrupt,

you, as well as the rest of your family, would be bankrupt too. You stand or fall with him because he is the head of your home. So, too, we stood or fell with Adam because he was the father of the whole human family. We are said to have sinned when he sinned because we are part of his family. God *imputed* Adam’s sin to us. I am sure this is a new word to you, but let’s look at it like this: im-PUT-ed. “Put” is the main part of the word. God *put* Adam’s sin on us.

Sin Nature Inherited

Not only did sin come into the world, but Adam left us an inheritance. It is very nice to inherit money or something else of value from your father, but what a terrible inheritance Adam left his children! Do you know what it was? A sin nature, a sinful way that is inside of every person born into the world. Although Adam was created in the likeness of God (Gen. 5:1), his children were born in his likeness and after his image (Gen. 5:3). Just as you inherit your parents’ characteristics—brown hair, blue eyes, long legs, and pug nose, you also inherit the sin nature from Adam. It is sometimes called “the old man” because it came from the oldest man in the world (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9, KJV). Adam *became* a sinner, but the rest of the human race are *born* sinners because we are born with a sin nature (Ps. 51:5).

Adam’s sin destroyed his relationship with God. How was Adam made in God’s likeness? Yes, in his soul. All the parts of Adam’s soul—his self-consciousness, his mentality, his volition, and his conscience—were affected, because he chose to sin. What was Adam’s soul like now?

ADAM’S SOUL	BEFORE THE FALL	AFTER THE FALL
Self-consciousness	Lord first in his life	Eve first in his life
Mentality	Thought God’s thoughts	Thought his own thoughts
Volition	Positive to Bible doctrine	Negative to Bible doctrine
Conscience	Adam did not know good or bad	Adam knew he was wrong

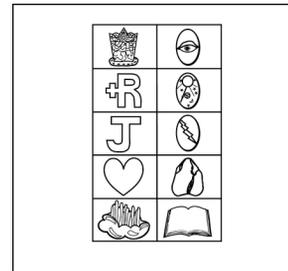
Personal Sins

Along with your inherited sin nature comes temptation to personal acts of sin. Personal sins are the sins you choose to commit. The subject of what sin is has been argued for centuries. People have many different ideas of the definition of sin. Some things just about everybody will agree are sin, such as murder and stealing. But people disagree about other things. Who would be the one to say what sin is? Why, the One who has never sinned—God!

We have already seen that disobedience to God was the first sin. Anything that God says not to do is sin. There was only one way in which Adam could disobey, but God has

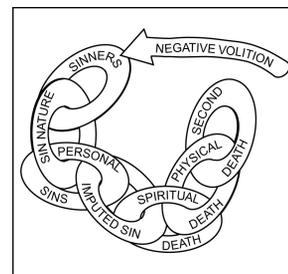
written down many things for us in our Bibles that He does not want us to do. The longer sin is in the world, the more evil it becomes and the more things man finds to do in disobedience to God. So God has had to warn us about many, many things.

The simplest definition of sin goes back to Romans 3:23, to “fall short of the glory of God.” What is God’s glory? It is His perfect essence. He is absolutely holy; He is perfect righteousness; He is perfect justice; He is perfect love; He is absolute truth, sovereignty, eternal life, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, and immutability. He is the perfect standard or measuring stick. To disobey God is sin. Anything that does not come up to His perfect standard is sin in God’s eyes, even if we don’t think it is very bad. To fall just one tiny bit short in thought or actions is sinful to God.



What God Wants Me to Know

Well, man’s negative volition caused a chain reaction. One thing led to another. Saying “no” to God’s rule made Adam and Eve sinners; they received a sin nature, and from that came sinful thoughts and deeds. Adam’s sin was passed down or imputed to the entire human race. The penalty promised for sin resulted in death. One death brought another and another: Spiritual death resulted in physical death, and these two together meant eternal death, the second death, which is separation from God for all eternity. All this adds up to a pretty grim figure for mankind—total bankruptcy. This means that boys and girls, men and women, have nothing spiritually or physically by which they can come to God or please God. In fact, you might say that the chain reaction became chains to keep man from God. There was no way by which man could come to God on his own.



When two people cannot reach each other, sometimes a third person can act as a go-between and bring the two together. God’s plan of salvation provided for just such a

go-between: "For there is one God, *and* one mediator also between God and men, *the* man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). What is our go-between called? A mediator. And what is His name? Jesus Christ, the God-man. Our mediator was God, so that He could be on God's side. And He was man, so that He could be on our side and bring us together.

As man, Jesus Christ suffered everything that man in his fallen state suffers: Man became a sinner (Rom. 3:23); on the cross, Jesus became sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). We were cursed and condemned (John 3:18, KJV; Gal. 3:10); Jesus was cursed and condemned in our place (Luke 24:20, KJV; Gal. 3:13). We died spiritually (Gen. 3:6; Rom. 6:23a; Eph. 2:1); on the cross Christ died spiritually by bearing our sins and being separated from God in our place (Matt. 27:46; 1 Pet. 2:24). We die physically (Gen. 5:5); Christ died physically (John 19:30). We return to dust (Gen. 3:19); Christ was put in the dust when He was buried (Ps. 22:15). He was brought out of the dust when He rose from the dead in a resurrection body just as we, too, will rise in a resurrection body, at the Rapture (John 5:29; 1 Thess. 4:16).

All that we needed for salvation because of the Fall was done for us by our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ. He broke the chains of sin and death so that we might have blessing for now and eternity. How? "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

Things would have been very different if Eve had not listened to false doctrine. You, as a believer, should be very careful about what you listen to. If anyone ever puts a doubt in your mind about God, about His goodness or fairness, about His way of salvation, you should close your ears right away. No matter how lovely or great the person is who says it, if it does not line up with God's Word, have nothing to do with it. These are the devil's lies, and to listen to them can ruin your whole Christian life (2 Cor. 11:3, 13-15).

Lesson Review

By way of review, let's chart in one column the terrible results of the fall of man, and in the opposite column the provision of the Lord Jesus Christ for each disaster.

RESULTS OF THE FALL OF MAN	PROVISIONS OF CHRIST
(1) God put Adam's sin on us (imputation) (Rom. 3:23; 4:8)	(1) He was made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21)
(2) Mankind was cursed (Gal. 3:10) and condemned (John 3:18, KJV)	(2) He was cursed (Gal. 3:13) and condemned for us (Luke 24:20, KJV)
(3) Sin nature was inherited from Adam (Rom. 5:12)	(3) He freed believers from the chains of sin (Rom. 6:6)
(4) Man commits personal sins (Mark 7:20-23)	(4) He died for all sins of all people (1 Cor. 15:3)
(5) Spiritual death; separation from God (Rom. 6:23a)	(5) He died spiritually for us (Matt. 27:46; 1 Pet. 2:24)
(6) Physical death of our bodies (Gen. 5:5)	(6) He died physically (John 19:30)
(7) Bodies decay and return to dust at death (Gen. 3:19)	(7) He was raised from dust at death (Ps. 22:15; 1 Cor. 15:4)
(8) Second death; eternal separation from God for unbelievers (Heb. 9:27; Rev. 20:14)	(8) He provided salvation and eternal life (Rom. 6:23b; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 20:6)

Memory Verse

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

LESSON THREE CAIN AND ABEL

Now, with all these terrible things resting on Adam, can he as an imperfect man stay in a perfect Garden? No, God must drive him out (Gen. 3:24). There was another tree in the Garden, called the "tree of life." Man was not forbidden to eat of this tree. So, if he stayed in the Garden as a sinner and spiritually dead, he could eat of this tree and live forever in a sinful state without God. He would have no opportunity for salvation, no

way to make another choice. The tree of life could not provide forgiveness or righteousness. It would take another tree, a tree of death, to provide salvation for man. Man must be taken away from the tree of life so that the tree of death might be provided for him. What would the tree of death be? Right. The cross.

To live endlessly in a perfect Garden in a state of sin would be a terrible thing compared to living forever with

God in His home without sin. Sinful man cannot really enjoy a perfect place. Besides, no one would ever have a choice again. God wanted man to be able to choose whether he would live with God or live without Him. So God planned another tree, a wooden cross on which the Savior would die for sin. This tree would become the test of volition. Just as the first man must choose for or against God by eating or not eating of the tree in the Garden, so now we must choose for or against God by believing or not believing in what His Son did for us on the second tree.

That is why God sent Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. They, and we, are going to have something far better than the Garden by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Through salvation, we will have a higher and better position than anything Adam and Eve ever had in the Garden. In heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be perfect in a perfect place and will have the greatest happiness that is possible to have for all eternity.

The Birth of the First Children

So Adam and Eve were shut out of the Garden of Eden and had to make a new home in the cursed earth. At this time, God began family life so that the human race could multiply on the earth. Remember, God had told Eve that she would bear children, and from her children the Savior would be born. Eve kept this promise in mind and was overjoyed when her first child, a boy, was born. She called him Cain, meaning “acquired” because she said she had “gotten [acquired] a manchild” (Gen. 4:1b).

You can imagine Eve’s disappointment and sorrow when the first child turned out to be the first unbeliever. When her second child was born, she named him Abel, which means “nothingness.” Perhaps by this time she was discouraged because she saw what Cain was really like. But “Nothingness” turned out to be the one who believed the promise of the Savior. Adam and Eve had many other children (Gen. 5:4), but only three are mentioned by name: Cain, Abel, and Seth (Gen. 4:25).

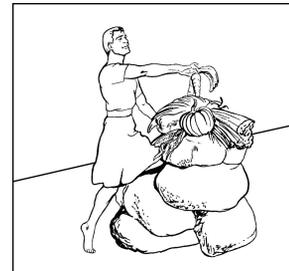
The Bible does not tell us much about these early people, but Adam surely must have had ‘Bible class’ in his home. How else would they have known that the Lord wanted them to worship Him with offerings, and how would they have known what kind of offerings and when or where to bring them? I am sure that Adam and Eve must have talked often of the Garden of Eden. They certainly must have explained to their children why they now must work so hard. Adam’s disobedience had brought sin and death and cursing into the world. Many times Cain and Abel had watched their father bring a lamb to the altar and offer it to God, a picture of his faith in the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, who would one day take away “the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The shed blood of the lamb was a picture of our Lord’s sacrifice on the cross.

As the boys grew up, they, too, had to work. They used the free will or volition God had given them to choose an

occupation. Cain became a farmer and Abel a shepherd. Now, as they grew older, they knew they must worship God for themselves. You, too, must come to the place where you make your decision about the Lord Jesus Christ. Just because your parents have taught you about Him and you have come to Bible class, does not mean your salvation is taken care of. You must decide for yourself whether or not you will believe in Jesus Christ.

The Two Offerings

Cain looked over his fields and was proud of the work of his hands. The beautiful fruit and vegetables he had grown would undoubtedly take first prize at any county fair. So when it came time for Cain to worship the Lord, he brought to the altar the fruit of the field. “Surely God will be pleased with what I have done,” Cain thought, as he placed his produce on the altar.



Abel brought “of the firstlings of his flock” (Gen. 4:4), the very best of his lambs, without any spot or blemish. Abel killed and prepared these lambs as he had been instructed. Perhaps you wonder how I know he killed them, since the Bible doesn’t say anywhere that they were dead. Verse 4 says that he put the “fat” upon the altar. Now, you know that you cannot put the fat of an animal on the altar without first killing it and taking out the fat.



Was God pleased with these offerings? He was pleased with Abel and his offering and accepted it. But with Cain and his offering, God was very displeased and would not accept it. Was God unfair to accept Abel’s offering but not Cain’s? Did He prefer Abel to Cain? Perhaps Abel was a better boy than Cain. No, the difference was in the two offerings. Abel came to God in God’s instructed way, but Cain tried to come to God in his own way. Sinful man has

added something else in his downward path. He has added religion. But isn't religion good? No! Religion is human good, the works of man, and human good is not good to God. Let's look at the differences between Abel and Cain's offerings.

ABEL'S OFFERING	CAIN'S OFFERING
Accepted by God; Abel believed and obeyed what God said (Heb. 11:4)	Rejected by God; Cain did not believe and disobeyed what God said (John 3:36)
Pleased the Lord; by the shed blood of the lamb (1 Pet. 1:19)	Displeased the Lord; no shedding of blood, no forgiveness (Heb. 9:22)
No works; brought to God in grace (Titus 3:5)	Brought to God by his own works; human good (Isa. 64:6)
Recognized his sinfulness and need of God's help (Rom. 3:23)	Did not recognize his sinfulness or its penalty (Rom. 6:23a)
Represented salvation (Acts 16:31)	Represented religion (Prov. 14:12; 2 Tim. 3:5)

Cain did not see his need of salvation. He didn't believe that he was a condemned sinner needing God's help to take his sin away. How did Cain act when God would not accept his offering? The Bible says that his "countenance [face] fell" (Gen. 4:5). I expect the corners of his mouth turned down, his eyes grew dark, and he became very angry. His thoughts were written all over his face.

This is like a lot of boys and girls. You may want people to think you are really great because of something you have done or because you are so good-looking. And if you do not get noticed or you do not get the attention you want, you sulk or pout. Then the next step is to do something foolish about it—either to show you don't care, or to try and get attention. A boy may start hitting other boys, or maybe just brag about something he didn't really do. A girl may cut up and act like a smart aleck. Why? To show she is a big shot and to get approval. But God wants you to look at yourself as He sees you. He sees a sin nature that wants "I, I, I" all the time—"look at *me*, look at *me*!"

Well, God looks at you, and He does not see anything good. He wants you to admit to Him that this attitude is sinful. This is when you rebound, or "confess" (name) your sin to God the Father (1 John 1:9), and then the Holy Spirit instantly fills you. God has graciously provided rebound as a means of restoring your fellowship with Him. The filling of the Holy Spirit is what makes you pleasing to God, as well as to other people. No matter how many times we sin, we must always rebound and be filled with the Spirit again.

What did God do about Cain? He gave Cain another chance to offer the right sacrifice. Cain did not deserve a second chance. He had been taught just like Abel. But remember, God always treats us in grace, giving us what we do not deserve. He wants us all to believe in Him, and He gives us every opportunity to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9).

God's Grace

So God said to Cain, "If you do well [come My way], you will be accepted. A sin offering is close by. Why not offer the slain lamb and show that you believe in the Savior to take away your sins? And if you do not do well," God went on, "you will be punished" (Gen. 4:6-7, paraphrased). As one of the punishments, Cain would be disinherited, which means he would no longer have the privileges that belong to the first son in a family. Abel would then take Cain's place as the family ruler. Of course, if Cain continued to refuse God's way, he would eventually be punished forever in the lake of fire. But as long as he lives, he will have the opportunity to believe in the Lord and be saved.

Cain had no excuse! He knew right from wrong. His conscience was working well. He quickly made his decision. He decided to try and avoid the punishment. Perhaps he said to himself, "So God said He would take away my rulership, did He? We'll see about that!" And Cain went out to find Abel. They talked awhile, perhaps as they did many times, but this time Cain suddenly grabbed the knife which Abel used for the sacrifice and killed his brother! Cain, jealous of his brother, intended to be first, regardless of the cost.

It didn't take long for the results of the disobedience of the first parents to show up in the human race, did it? What had this first son inherited? A sin nature. What does the sin nature produce? Both human good and sin. First came human good, as Cain tried to offer his own work for salvation. When that was rejected, next came sin: pride, anger, jealousy, and now the act of murder! Cain had not been willing to kill a lamb, but he was willing to kill his brother to get what he wanted. God knew what He was talking about when He said that "the heart [soul of fallen man] is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick" (Jer. 17:9a).

As when his parents sinned, so God sought out Cain after his terrible deed. God asked him where his brother was, and Cain lied—the first lie in the human race. There is no doubt whose seed Cain is. "You are of *your* father the devil" (John 8:44a), and the devil is the father of lies and murder. God knew all about the murder, but He asked Cain the question to get him to think about his lost condition and desperate need of salvation. But Cain did not respond to God's grace, so God must punish him as He had promised.

Did God take Cain's life? No, He graciously allowed Cain to go on living. But God makes the punishment fit the crime. Cain had always loved to plant the soil; now the ground would never grow anything for him again. He wanted to keep his important place in the family, but instead he must leave home and wander the earth. Cain complained bitterly about this punishment, but by now his heart was so hard, he did not worry or care about his sin. He even realized that he had no fellowship with God, for he said, "from Thy face I shall be hidden" (Gen. 4:14b). Yet Cain went right on down the path and left the presence of

the Lord (Gen. 4:16). Do you see why God could not allow man to eat of the tree of life and live forever in his sinful state? It would not be happiness for the sinner, nor would it be fair for those who wanted fellowship with God.

What God Wants Me to Know

Yet, as bad as Cain was, Abel was a sinner, too. In God's sight Abel's sin nature was just as wicked (condemning) as Cain's. "For all of us have become like one who is unclean" (Isa. 64:6a). Be sure you understand, though, that this does not mean that everyone is a terrible person, as evil as they can possibly be. If that were true, this world could not survive. There would be no kindness in the world, no one would help anyone else, and we would soon kill each other off. God has told people what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong, so that the human race can survive. To be a sinner means that we have come short of the glory of God; we have missed His perfect mark. Our sinful nature keeps us from coming up to God's standard. Our sin nature is capable of the worst kinds of sin and evil.

Both Cain and Abel had the same need of salvation. The difference was that Abel accepted God's plan of salvation and Cain did not. Abel shed the blood of the lamb; Cain did not.

When Abel killed the lamb, he cut its throat; the blood poured out and caused the animal to die. This was a picture of what the Savior would do for them and for us on the cross. However, you do realize that the Lord Jesus Christ did not have His throat cut, and He did not bleed to death. Before the Lord Jesus Christ came to die on the cross, the people needed to understand just how they would be saved. The cutting of the throat of an innocent animal and the shedding of its blood was a symbol or a picture that taught them that the Lord Jesus Christ would be judged for their sins.

On the cross, God the Father put all of our sins on Jesus Christ. He suffered the penalty for us. What was the penalty? Spiritual death—separation from God. Jesus Christ was separated from God the Father so that we need never be separated from Him again.

To do "good," to accept God's way of salvation, you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ just as Abel did. If you do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, like Cain, you will not be saved and will suffer the consequences of your unbelief. As long as you live, God's grace will continually be offered to you. But you must make your decision to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ while you live, because there will no longer be an opportunity after you die. Even while you live, there is no real peace, no real happiness or rest as long as you are unsaved (Isa. 48:22). You may try many things in place of God to give you happiness, but you will never find happiness without Him. Why not make sure of real peace and happiness and an eternal future with God right now? "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31a).

How do we know God will accept our faith? Remember the chart we made at the beginning of the lesson. We listed eight results of the fall of man and the provision of the Lord Jesus for each one. Now, let's add a third column and see what God does for us in place of them. Title this column "Results of Faith." Look up each Scripture and tell me what you think God has given the believer to offset the results of sin. These are all things that God has promised to those who are "in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). I hope that you are beginning to realize what a wonderful salvation God has provided, and you will want to learn all you can about God and His provisions.

RESULTS OF THE FALL	PROVISIONS OF CHRIST	RESULTS OF FAITH
(1) God put Adam's sin on us (imputation)	(1) He was made sin for us	(1) Imputation of righteousness (Rom. 4:5, 21)
(2) Mankind was cursed and condemned	(2) He was cursed and condemned	(2) No condemnation for believers (Rom. 8:1)
(3) Sin nature inherited from Adam	(3) He freed believers from the chains of sin	(3) Sin nature can be overcome (Rom. 6:14)
(4) Man commits personal sins	(4) He died for all sins of all people	(4) Rebound—naming your personal sins (1 John 1:9)
(5) Spiritual death	(5) He died spiritually for us	(5) Spiritual life given (1 Cor. 15:22)
(6) Physical death	(6) He died physically	(6) Victory over physical death (1 Cor. 15:57)
(7) Bodies returned to dust	(7) He was raised from the dust	(7) Resurrection (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16)
(8) Second death for unbelievers	(8) He provided salvation	(8) Eternal life forever (Rom. 6:23b)

Lesson Review

If you never committed even one tiny little sin, would you be saved? No. Why not? You were born with a sin nature. You cannot help being a sinner even before you do one sinful thing. In what three ways did man become a sinner? First, Adam's sin was imputed to the entire human race. What does "impute" mean? To put on. Second, man inherited Adam's sin nature. And third, from the sin nature come personal acts of sin. Was this fair of God to declare us sinners even before we commit one sin? Yes, God is always fair. We are related to Adam, and we must stand or fall with him.

What was Adam like before he sinned? A threefold being: body, soul, and spirit. What made him different from the animals? He was created in the image of God. Did Adam look like God? No, he was created like God in his

soul. Let us look at Adam's soul once more, as he came from the hand of God. Review our chart of Adam's soul before and after the Fall (page 7).

Why was Satan allowed to come into God's perfect creation, the Garden, and tempt Adam and Eve? This was a test of their volition. Did Adam and Eve know what would happen to them if they disobeyed God? Yes. What would happen? They would "surely die." We learned that there are three deaths which resulted from Adam's sin. Which death is the actual penalty for Adam's sin? Spiritual death. The other two come as a result of spiritual death. What are they? Physical death and the second or eternal death. Does death mean destruction or annihilation? No. What is death? A separation. What does spiritual death separate us from? God in time. Physical death? The soul and spirit separate from the body. Second death? Separation from God for all eternity.

What did God do about the penalty of sin? Jesus Christ paid the penalty (Rom. 6:23). How did He pay the penalty? He died spiritually as our substitute. What does that mean? He was separated from God the Father while bearing our sins. How may we avoid the penalty of sin? By faith in Jesus Christ. What is the result of believing in Christ? Salvation.

After Adam and Eve were sent away from the Garden and had children, what did one of their sons add to the downward path of mankind? Religion. What is religion? Man's attempt to gain salvation through works. In what way did believers in Adam's time show their faith in Christ? By the offering of a slain animal. What are some of the results of salvation to us? Imputation of God's righteousness, no condemnation, overcoming the sin nature, the opportunity for rebound, a spiritual life, victory over physical death, resurrection, eternal life.

Memory Verse

"The words of the LORD are pure words." (Ps. 12:6a)

Chapter Two

You Cannot Save Yourself

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: You Cannot Save Yourself—1 Samuel 18—20; 2 Samuel 4:4; 9

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: Good and Bad Deeds
2. Lesson Two: Mephibosheth

C. Story Objective:

The good deeds as well as the bad deeds which come from the sin nature were condemned by God along with the sin nature, and therefore there are no human works which can commend us to God for salvation. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He did the only good work which God the Father will accept. Until we accept Christ's work on the cross, God will not accept any of our good works. Man can do nothing to save himself, but the Lord Jesus Christ did everything necessary for man to be saved.

Now when anyone believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Father accepts that person the same as He accepts His own Son. Christ was rejected on the cross so that condemned sinners, rejected by God, might be "in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). God the Father gives the fallen sinner a place of sonship in His family, a position in heaven, and an eternal inheritance, and He prepares for him food to feed on every day. He has provided victory over the sin nature in daily experience through the use of rebound (1 John 1:9).

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: crippled, relationship
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. The good deeds of man:
 - 1) Are condemned (Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 3:10–12)

- 2) Come from the sin nature (Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:21–23; Rom. 7:18)
- 3) Add up to –R (minus righteousness, Isa. 64:6) and are unable to save (Rom. 4:4–5; Titus 3:5)
- b. The one good deed for salvation is Christ's work on the cross (1 Pet. 2:22–24).
- c. God's way through faith in Christ leads to eternal life (John 5:29a).
- d. Rejection of Christ leads to eternal punishment (John 5:29b).
- e. You cannot save yourself (Eph. 2:1–9). You are:
 - 1) Spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1)
 - 2) A helpless sinner (Eph. 2:5)
- f. At salvation, God's righteousness is imputed to us (Rom. 4:3, 5, 22) and we:
 - 1) Have a new position in Christ (1 Cor. 15:22; Eph. 2:6)
 - 2) Are sons of God (Gal. 3:26; 4:5)
 - 3) Have an eternal inheritance (John 17:24; 1 Pet. 1:4)
 - 4) Have access to Bible doctrine (Job 23:12; Jer. 15:16)
 - 5) Are able to confess personal sins to recover fellowship (1 John 1:9)

E. *Source Book* Keywords: the Great White Throne, human good, inheritance, righteousness (+R), righteousness (–R), royalty, sin nature

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: King David

2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift

- of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." (Eph. 2:8–9)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE GOOD AND BAD DEEDS

So far we have only discovered the first piece in our salvation puzzle—the need for salvation. Now we are going to have to hunt some more to find the second puzzle piece. Suppose someone should come up to you and say, "Oh, I'm not so bad. I've never done anything bad enough for God to send me to hell." What would you say? Well, you might ask him if he has ever stopped to wonder how good you have to be to be saved, or how bad to be lost? Let me tell you a true story to illustrate how good you have to be.

Many years ago in Scotland a ship ran aground near shore during one of the worst storms the people in that area had seen in many years. The fishermen on shore tried to get lifeboats out to the rescue, but the storm was too great. Next they tried a rocket apparatus to get a line on board the ship, but the wind was so strong it would blow away the line before it reached the ship. Finally, with the help of a rope fastened to an empty barrel, those on board succeeded in getting a line to shore and fastening it securely between ship and shore. This allowed the sailors to use the rescue cage, which was to be drawn along the rope to get those aboard ship safely to the shore.

The first man to enter the cage was just safely ashore when the strong tide suddenly swung the ship around, flung the ship against a reef of rock, and broke her back. This caused the rope holding the rescue cage to become tangled. It began to look as if no more would be rescued. One of the crewmen, a big, strong fellow, thought that he could make it to shore by climbing hand over hand along the rope. The captain of the ship told the man not to try. He felt that only the united help of all the crewmen and those on shore could save them. But the strong sailor was sure that if anyone could make it, he could. Out over the raging sea he went. The waves beat over him like falling rocks. He went only a little distance when he disappeared helplessly beneath the raging surf.

A few minutes after this happened, the bow of the ship lifted again and turned back around so that the rope untangled. Quickly all the rest on board got safely to shore. When the body of the sailor was found two days later, it

was discovered that the force of the waves had dislocated both of his shoulders, so of course he could no longer hold onto the rope. The captain of the ship cried when he saw his crewman's body. "He was the best man in the crew," he said. The sailor was a good sailor—the strongest—but he was lost. Why? Because he had tried to save himself. (Adapted from *100 Thrilling Tales: Gathered From Many Sources During Sixty Long Years*, by Hy. Pickering.)

Good and Bad Deeds

Have you discovered the second piece in the puzzle? It is that you cannot save yourself, no matter how hard you may try. Let's think about doing "good" for a few minutes. Turn to John 5:29; it begins "and [they] shall come forth." Our Lord is talking about people in a future time when He says "those who did the good *deeds* [will go] to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil *deeds* [will go] to a resurrection of judgment [eternal punishment]." This seems to say that if you do good deeds you will be saved and if you do bad deeds you will be punished forever. In Genesis 4:7 God told Cain that if he did "well," he would be accepted. What did God mean? If Cain would come God's way, he would be accepted. Correctly translated, John 5:29 should read, "they that have done *the good* [will go] to a resurrection of life, those who committed *the evil* [will go] to a resurrection of judgment." "The good" is God's way. "The evil" is your way, your own works for salvation.

Suppose you are convinced that your good deeds will get you somewhere with God. Perhaps you have always thought that at the end of your life if your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds, God will open the gates of heaven and let you in. Well, let's think of some good deeds you consider good enough for God to accept. Certainly prayer and giving and attending Bible class are good. Helping others, friendliness, and obeying your parents would also be considered good.

What would you consider bad deeds? Stealing, murder, and lies are very bad. Is that all you can think of? Don't you know that God considers mental attitude sins, those in the

mind, to be even worse, things like anger, hatred, bitterness, jealousy, and pride? In view of this, do you really think you have done more good than bad? Who is to know, except God Himself? The best you could do is to hope you have piled up more good things than bad at the end of your life. You would never be sure until it is too late.

Good Deeds from the Sin Nature

But suppose you actually did have more good than bad, would God let you into heaven on that basis? I wonder if you know where these good deeds come from? Well, think back a minute. What were you born with? A sin nature, inherited from Adam. Can any good come out of this? Yes, it can, because your sin nature has two sides. One side of your sin nature is weak; the other side is strong. Good deeds that come from the strong side of the sin nature are called “human good.”

What comes from the weak side of the sin nature? Evil or bad deeds. What are these bad deeds? They are all of the sins we have been talking about. You know that God condemned sin—but God also condemned human good. Neither sins nor human good are acceptable to God (Eccl. 7:20; Isa. 64:6). No matter how good your works are, no matter how many you do, they are not good enough to save you. Remember, Cain brought human good—the very best fruit and vegetables he grew himself—to sacrifice to God. But God would not accept them. What did God accept? The offering of shed blood of the sacrifice which his brother, Abel, brought. God has said that the price for salvation, the price of eternal life, is the shedding of blood, and nothing else is good enough. The shedding of blood meant that Someone, Jesus Christ, must die not just physically, but spiritually as our substitute, so that we can go to heaven.

Good Deeds Add Up to –R (Minus Righteousness)

Now, suppose you and your friend want to go to the circus. The price of admission is one dollar. Your friend has no money and you have fifty cents. Which one of you will stand a better chance of getting in? Neither! Your fifty cents won’t get you in any more than your friend. The price is one dollar. You are both short. When we add up all of our good deeds, they add up to –R (minus righteousness) and fall short of God’s divine good. God’s goodness is +R (plus righteousness), perfect righteousness all on the plus side. To live with God we must have God’s perfect goodness. No one can be as good as God is because everything we do is –R. God cannot accept anything less than +R. Our human good is –R; it is always –R.

The Good Deed

There is only one good deed that God will accept for salvation. When the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross,

He did the only good deed that was acceptable to God, because Jesus is the only man who ever lived since Adam’s fall without sin or a sin nature. Until you accept His good deed, His payment for our sins, God will not accept any of our good deeds.

So how do we accept His good deed? By believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. *This* is the good that we must do to have eternal life. If you do not accept His good deed, it is like trying to get to heaven on your “fifty cents.” Jesus Christ paid your “dollar”—you just take the paid ticket and walk in free.

What is “the evil” that we talked about in John 5:29 that will send you to eternal punishment? It is not our sins or our bad deeds. They were taken care of on the cross. There is just one bad deed that will keep you out of heaven: *rejection* of what Jesus did for you on the cross. “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).

The Great White Throne Judgment Revelation 20:11–15

Down at the end of time, just before eternity begins, the Lord Jesus Christ will sit on a great white throne and judge all unbelievers, every one from the beginning of time. And who was the first one? Yes, Cain. From Cain on, those who have rejected the good deed of the Lord Jesus will be brought before Him. When the Lord Jesus came to earth, He was judged for us. At the Great White Throne Judgment, He will be the Judge.

How will the Lord Jesus judge the unbelievers? He will order that the Book of Works be opened, where every good deed of every unbeliever has been recorded. Jimmy Jones’s name is called, and all his good deeds are read. Jimmy begins to feel very proud of himself. Then he hears that all his good deeds are not enough for salvation. What was he lacking? Faith in Jesus Christ. Then the Book of Life is opened to show him that when he died his name had been blotted out because he had not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then Jimmy and whoever else’s name is not found written in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire forever because they trusted their own good deeds rather than the good deed of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What God Wants Me to Know

Jesus Christ died to make us acceptable to God. Just as God imputed us with Adam’s sin, so God also imputes His goodness or righteousness (+R) to us when we believe in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:21). Turn to Romans 4:3, 5: “For what does the Scripture say? ‘ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.’ . . . But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness.” “Reckoned” means that God’s righteousness is *put*

on us. What kind of righteousness might we call this? Imputed righteousness. Do you have this kind of righteousness? You can have it so easily. Perhaps you would rather not work if you can get out of it. Well, here is one thing you can have without working one second for it.

Our memory verse says that salvation is “not as a result of works, that no one should boast.” If we could do something good enough for salvation, we would go around bragging about how great we are. But God is the great one. We are nothing. He receives the credit when we simply believe in what He has done. And this is as it should be. God must receive all the glory for everything.

In our next lesson I am going to tell you a story from the Old Testament that God put in His Word to teach us that we can do nothing to save ourselves.

Lesson Review

Listen to this statement and tell me whether it is right or wrong: All good children go to heaven; all bad children go to hell. When someone makes this statement, what are they usually talking about? Yes, good deeds and bad deeds. Can you be good enough to go to heaven? No! Can you be bad enough to go to hell? Again, the answer is no. How could this statement become true? If you have the goodness of God, you will go to heaven.

What is God's goodness? +R. How do you get God's righteousness? By accepting what Jesus Christ did for you on the cross. This is the only “good deed” God will accept for salvation. What about your bad deeds, or sins? Do they condemn you to hell? No! What is “the evil” for eternal punishment? Rejecting or refusing “the good,” the payment Jesus Christ made for your sin. Where will the unbelievers find out that their good deeds all added up to -R? At the Great White Throne Judgment.

Memory Verse

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.” (Eph. 2:8–9)

LESSON TWO MEPHIBOSHETH

I promised to tell you a story that shows us we have nothing in ourselves and can do nothing to be saved. How would you like to be invited to live and eat in a king's palace, to be treated like one of the family, to be made rich, and given many good things every day? This very thing happened to a boy in the Old Testament whose name was Mephibosheth (pronounced: meh-FIB-oh-sheth). But we must go back many years to see how this all came about.

King David's Kindness to Mephibosheth ***1 Samuel 18—20; 2 Samuel 4:4; 9:1–13***

David, the shepherd boy, had at one time been invited to stay in King Saul's palace, not as a prince, but as a musician to play music for the king. Later on, he became the king's own armorbearer and then commander of the army. While David was staying in the palace, he became very good friends with Jonathan, King Saul's son. Jonathan ad-

mired David's strength, along with his kindness and grace, and he loved him as himself (1 Sam. 18). Even though Jonathan was King Saul's son and next in line to be king, he did not become jealous of David when he learned that David had been chosen by God to be king of Israel instead of himself. They promised each other to always show kindness to one another.

As time passed, King Saul became jealous of David and many times tried to kill him. Eventually David was forced to flee from the presence of the king, and this meant that he and his dear friend, Jonathan, must part. Before David left, however, Jonathan made David promise him something else. Remember, they had already promised to be kind to one another. Now Jonathan made David promise that he would always show kindness to his children (1 Sam. 20:14–17). Jonathan knew that many times when new kings came into power, they, or their servants, would destroy the children of the former king so that none of them would try

to take the throne away. David promised that he would never do this to Jonathan's children when he became king.

Some years later both King Saul and his son Jonathan were killed in battle. There was great fear that the rest of King Saul's family would be murdered. Jonathan had a little five-year-old son whose name was Mephibosheth. When the nurse who was caring for Mephibosheth heard the news of his father's death, she picked the boy up and fled with him so that she might hide him. She was in such a hurry to get away, she dropped Mephibosheth, and he became crippled. In one day Mephibosheth lost all his family, his home, and for the rest of his life was crippled in his feet (2 Sam. 4:4). Now for many years Mephibosheth lived in Gilead, north of Jerusalem, in a town called Lo-debar, where he was brought up as an orphan.

After David became king and was settled in his duties, he remembered his promise to Jonathan. He inquired of his servants if there were any left, not just of Jonathan's children, but in the whole house of Saul. Someone knew of Ziba, a servant in the house of Saul. David sent for Ziba and asked him if he knew of anyone left in the house of Saul "to whom I may show the kindness of God" (2 Sam. 9:3a). Ziba told David that Jonathan had a son who was crippled. The king immediately sent for him. It was, of course, Mephibosheth, who had lived quietly all these years. What do you think Mephibosheth thought when word came to him that King David wanted to see him? Perhaps he was frightened. Why would the king wish to see him? To kill him? Or maybe to make him a servant? But what good would he be to the king since he was lame? Well, whatever he thought, he came to the palace as he was asked.



Why did David want Mephibosheth to come to the palace? To make him a servant? Oh no. He had something much better in mind than that. Mephibosheth fell on his face before the king. David spoke his name. Mephibosheth answered, "Here is your servant!" (2 Sam. 9:6b). David was a great king. Mephibosheth was no longer in a royal family. He must do anything the king required. But David told Mephibosheth not to be afraid. "And David said to him, 'I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall eat at my table regularly'" (2 Sam. 9:7). David wanted Mephibosheth to stay in the palace with him as one of the king's sons, not as a ser-

vant. Mephibosheth would eat every meal at David's table, and all of the land which Mephibosheth's grandfather, Saul, owned David would give back to him.

But Mephibosheth bowed himself low and answered, "What is your servant, that you should regard a dead dog like me?" (2 Sam. 9:8). In those days, dogs were generally viewed as contemptible and useless. Mephibosheth called himself a "dead dog" because he was a useless cripple. Mephibosheth knew he was not worthy of this great honor. He had done nothing to deserve it. And yet because of the great kindness of the king, he moved into the palace and lived as the king's son and was given great riches.

What God Wants Me to Know

Why did King David do all this for Mephibosheth? Because Mephibosheth was such a wonderful man, or because he had done so much for David? No. David himself said why: "Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" (2 Sam. 9:1). David brought Mephibosheth into the palace because of his love for Mephibosheth's father, Jonathan. David did it for the sake of another. Mephibosheth could have had none of these privileges on his own. Have you noticed how much this story is like our own? Listen as I tell you how you are like Mephibosheth. Let's chart the comparisons before and after salvation.

	MEPHIBOSHETH	YOU
B E F O R E	Father dead; family had no access to the palace	Born spiritually dead; no access to heaven
	Fell and was crippled	Fell in Adam and are crippled by the sin nature
	Helpless to come by himself to King David	Helpless to save yourself and come to God
	Lands, property, and wealth gone; no inheritance	Possess nothing of value; no spiritual inheritance
	Unworthy to receive riches and honor from David	Unworthy to receive God's gift of salvation
A F T E R	Accepted for Jonathan's sake; he came by faith	Accepted in the Beloved by faith in Christ
	Given a new position in palace	Given a new position in Christ
	Treated as a member of the royal family	Called royalty as a child of the heavenly King
	Inheritance restored	Given an eternal inheritance
	Seated at king's table every day to eat his food	Provided daily access to spiritual food (Bible doctrine)
Remained a cripple	Remain crippled by the sin nature	

Before David brought Mephibosheth to the palace, he was a nobody. His family had been rejected as the royal family. His father was dead, and he was no more than a “dead dog” himself. He was at the mercy of the new king, David. If it were not for David’s kindness, Mephibosheth could have been killed. Certainly, there was no way he would be allowed to come to the palace himself. Isn’t this like you and me? Because of Adam’s sin, we were born spiritually dead. We, too, are ‘dead dogs’ because we are completely unfit and unworthy to come into the presence of the heavenly King. The heavenly King had every right and reason to strike Adam dead for his rejection of God’s way, and we deserve no better. It is only because of God’s grace that we have been allowed to live.

Mephibosheth was a helpless cripple because of the fall he had taken in childhood. There was no way he could have walked to Jerusalem to see the king. He had to be brought by someone else. When Adam fell he received a sin nature which crippled him all of his life. We, too, are in a fallen state and are crippled by the sin nature. This is the sad condition that keeps us from coming to God or having a relationship with Him. We are helpless to save ourselves.

Mephibosheth lost something else when his father and grandfather died. Do you remember what it was? All of his lands and property. Kings usually have great wealth, and are entitled to certain lands and possessions. These assets are passed down to their children as their inheritance. But if the royal family goes out of power and another takes its place, the lands go to the new king. Mephibosheth had received no inheritance from his father. I am sure he was quite poor. Like Mephibosheth, we have inherited no assets, nothing of value, from our father Adam. In fact, we have found out that we are totally bankrupt spiritually.

Now, what David did for Mephibosheth, God wants to do for all of us. He wants us in His family, though we have never done anything to deserve it. In fact, we are far worse off than was poor Mephibosheth who was lame in both feet. Adam’s fall made all of us sinners. Sin is worse than physical lameness. A crippled person is only handicapped for life, but a sinner may be lost for all eternity. Mephibosheth was as unworthy as a dead dog to receive the honor he was given. We, too, are dead—dead in “trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1–3). A dead person cannot come to anybody or receive anything.

The Promise Made in Eternity Past

God did not forget us, nor did He forget His promise. You see, sometime in eternity past God the Father and God the Son made each other a promise. The Son said, “I will die for unworthy sinners.” The Father said, “I will bless them through Your sacrifice.” How much does God the Father love God the Son? His love is so great it cannot be measured. If anyone will trust in His beloved Son, the Father will love that person as He loves His own Son. He will forgive his sin and bring him into a relationship with Him.

Since helpless man, dead in sin, could not come to God, God sent His Son “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). It is hard to believe that holy God would want a relationship with such ‘dead dogs’ as we are. But it is not who or what we are—it is who and what God is! That is why your memory verse, Ephesians 2:8–9, says it is “by grace you have been saved,” not by what we do. He will forgive our sins and have a relationship with us because of Another. The Lord Jesus Christ kept His promise, too, and died on the cross. He paid the penalty for our sins and took the punishment we deserve. When we believe in Him, we are accepted “in the Beloved [Jesus Christ]” (Eph. 1:6).

Now you know, Mephibosheth might have said, “No, no. I’m too bad to become as your son, David. I could never live up to it. I could never be good enough.” Some people say the same thing when it comes to God’s offer of salvation. But like David, God says, “It is not up to you to be good enough. It’s all up to Me. I will make you good enough.” Or Mephibosheth might have said, “I’ll work real hard and try to deserve the honor of living in your palace and becoming a prince.” Men and women and boys and girls are saying that to God every day. God offers us salvation absolutely free, but people are still trying to work for salvation. They are trying to do enough good works so that God will let them enter right into heaven because they have prayed so much, they have gone to church every Sunday, they have put money in the collection plate, they have loved God, and they are so sincere in everything they do.

But God will not accept these sincere actions for salvation. Instead, He says, it is “by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast” (Eph. 2:8–9). Not of yourselves! “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy [kindness]” (Titus 3:5a). Jesus did the work for salvation—we just accept His gift. We can do nothing to save ourselves.

Just think what Mephibosheth would have missed if he had refused David’s invitation because he was too unworthy, or if he had tried to work for the position. You will miss even more than Mephibosheth would have if you refuse God’s gracious invitation to live with Him. He wants to make you His child and give you all that He has. He wants to give you His life so that you may live eternally with Him in His heavenly palace. Will you receive God’s gift? “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12).

After we are saved, we are given the same wonderful things that Mephibosheth received. I want you to see four of them. Remember, Mephibosheth was no longer in the royal family. From the time he was five years old, he was just an ordinary citizen. David brought him back to the palace and gave him a new position. What was his new position? He was to live with the king as a king’s son. David restored all of Mephibosheth’s grandfather’s lands to him

so that he at last had an inheritance. Then David said that Mephibosheth may eat at the king's table every day as one of the royal family.

Maybe you have never thought of it before, but if you have believed in the Lord Jesus, you too are given a new position in a royal family. You might be just an ordinary citizen of your country, but as far as God is concerned, you now have an extraordinary position. Where once you were "in Adam," part of Adam's fallen family, now you are "in Christ" and part of a new eternal family (1 Cor. 15:22). The four verses preceding your memory verse tell you about your new position. You are said to be seated "with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6). You may not think you are living in God's palace right now, but God says that you are!

What title do you have in God's palace? You are the heavenly King's son (Gal. 3:26). Do you have an inheritance? First Peter 1:4 says that you have "an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you." Death cannot take your inheritance away from you; no sin can take it away; nothing in this life can change what you inherit from God. In other words, yours is an eternal inheritance made up of all the wonderful riches of God.

And we, too, have the great honor and privilege of 'eating' with the King every day. I don't imagine Mephibosheth missed many meals, do you? I wonder how many meals you miss that your heavenly King has provided? What is the 'food' God has prepared for you? Matthew 4:4: "MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD." God's Word is our food. Jeremiah said, "Thy words were found and I ate them, And Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts" (Jer. 15:16). God's Word was a feast to Jeremiah every day. Is His Word a feast to you, or are you satisfied with 'crumbs'—feeding on God's Word only occasionally when your parents make you, or when you happen to remember? It should become to you "more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12b).

Sin Nature Overcome

Can you imagine how happy Mephibosheth must have been sitting with the king, feasting on all the good things at the table, and being treated just like a member of the royal family? Of course, he was still lame, but being a cripple didn't matter now. While sitting at the king's table his feet were hidden under the table. Just like Mephibosheth, we still have our sin nature to bother us and tempt us to sin, even though we are children of the heavenly King and have

a new position in the "heavenly places." But while we are taking in the Word and applying it, our sin nature is 'hidden.' We learn from 1 John 1:9 that if we acknowledge to God the Father the sins we do, then He will purify us, keeping the sin nature 'under the table.' That means the sin nature no longer controls your life, and you walk in fellowship with the Lord. Are you living as a true King's son, or do you go around as a cripple, out of fellowship, and spiritually poor?

Lesson Review

I am going to remind you about certain things in Mephibosheth's life, and I want you to tell me how his life is like ours.

1. Before deliverance:
 - a. His father was dead and he could no longer come to the palace. (We are born spiritually dead; we cannot go to heaven.)
 - b. He fell and became a cripple. (We fell in Adam and are crippled by the sin nature.)
 - c. He had no land or inheritance. (We have no spiritual assets or riches.)
 - d. He was unworthy to receive riches and honor from David. (We are unworthy to receive God's gift of salvation.)
2. After deliverance:
 - a. He was brought to the palace. (We are accepted in the Beloved—in Christ.)
 - b. Mephibosheth trusted David and moved into the palace. (We enter into heaven by faith.)
 - c. He had a new position in the palace. (We have a new position in Christ.)
 - d. He was treated as a king's son. (We are the children of the heavenly King.)
 - e. His inheritance was restored. (We are given an eternal inheritance in heaven.)
 - f. He was seated at the king's table. (We are provided with spiritual food—the Word of God.)
 - g. He was still a cripple. (We have the sin nature as long as we live.) How can we keep our sin nature 'under the table'? By using 1 John 1:9.

Memory Verse

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." (Eph. 2:8–9)

Chapter Three

How Salvation Was Provided

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: How Salvation Was Provided—Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 10:7–9

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: Panorama of the Grace Plan
2. Lesson Two: The Fulfillment of the Grace Plan

C. Story Objective:

Scripture declares in various terminology that all God’s acts are the result of a divine plan designed in eternity past. The “decree,” the “eternal purpose,” the “predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God,” His “divine will,” and many other terms indicate that God the Father is the Author and Planner of the universe and all that is in it (Ps. 2:7; Acts 2:23; Rom. 11:36; Eph. 3:11).

Other passages reveal that all three members of the Trinity were present during the discussion of the plan of salvation. Each has an integral part in it: the Father planned it, the Son executed it, the Holy Spirit reveals it to mankind and is the agent of regeneration (John 3:5; Titus 3:5).

The plan, which was the result of infinite wisdom (Acts 2:23) and is perfect, even as its Author is perfect, centered in a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. God conceived of the existence of man and of God revealing Himself to man. Knowing man would sin and turn against Him, God planned for the redemption and reconciliation of sinners through the death of a sinless substitute. The Second Person of the Trinity agreed to take the punishment for sinful man. The plan of grace is progressively revealed and unfolds throughout Scripture, first in shadow Christology (form) of the Old Testament, then in the reality in the New Testament, when

the “fulness of the time” (Gal. 4:4) came, and the Son of God was manifested to fulfill the Father’s plan.

Christ’s deaths were both spiritual and physical. The penalty of sin was spiritual death (Rom. 6:23a), or separation from God in time. His spiritual death, which occurred when the Father forsook Jesus on the cross, paid the penalty for our sins. His physical death paved the way for the realization of our own resurrection bodies (1 Cor. 15:3–4). Adam died first spiritually, then physically. Just so, Christ’s death provided first spiritual life, then resurrection life for our physical bodies. Thus resurrection is an essential part of salvation’s plan. The plan is one of grace (Eph. 2:4–9). Salvation is free to all who will accept Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24) and given apart from all human merit.

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: grace pipeline, shadow, Trinity
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. The conference in eternity past (Ps. 2:7a; 40:8; Acts 2:23; Eph. 1:4, 11; 3:11; Heb. 10:7–9; 1 Pet. 1:20):
 - 1) The discussion by the Trinity (Gen. 1:26; Ps. 2:7b; 110:1; John 3:32–34; 5:20; 8:26; 10:18b).
 - 2) The Father made the plan (Isa. 14:27; John 5:17; 1 Cor. 8:6a).
 - 3) The Son executed the plan (John 10:17–18; 1 Cor. 8:6b; Heb. 10:7–10).
 - 4) The Holy Spirit reveals the plan (John 16:8–11).
 - b. The plan for salvation:
 - 1) The policy is grace (Gen. 3:9; Eph. 2:8–9).

- 2) The message is the Gospel (1 Cor. 15:3–5; 1 Pet. 2:24).
- 3) The person of Christ is central (John 3:35; Eph. 1:4–7; 3:11; Heb. 1:1–5; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8).
- c. The fulfillment of the Grace Plan (Gal. 4:4–5; Heb. 2:9–10; 10:7–9; 1 John 3:5, 8).

E. *Source Book* Keywords: covenants, divine decree, Jewish race, salvation, Trinity

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: Abraham
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: “To make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” (Heb. 2:10b, KJV) (Note: Explanation of memory verse, Hebrews 2:10b: “To make the captain of their salvation [Jesus Christ] perfect [complete] through sufferings [the cross].”)
 4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE PANORAMA OF THE GRACE PLAN

Two hundred years ago a shipwreck meant almost certain death to all on board. Even if the wreck occurred within sight of shore, the passengers and crew had little hope of survival, for there was no means of rescue. There were no lifeboats, no lifesaving stations with proper equipment, and certainly no airplanes and helicopters as we have today to help rescue people in distress. Way back in 1789 a ship called the *Adventure* was stranded in a violent storm only 300 yards from shore near Newcastle, England. Hundreds of people watched helplessly as the crew was swept overboard, and all perished.

This disaster made the people of England realize that something must be done to help the shipwrecked. Finally a committee was formed and a meeting held to see what could be done. From this small meeting our modern methods of rescue were born. Many of these methods began on paper, as the first plans for a lifeboat were drawn up. Then lifeboat stations along the coast were established with all kinds of equipment: line-throwing guns, flags and signals, life preservers, and many kinds of boats. Finally, the government revealed its plans for the coast guard, a wonderfully organized rescue unit, so that today comparatively few lives are lost at sea.

All this did not happen overnight. It took many years with hundreds of people working to bring rescue procedures about. Every few years new devices were revealed, until today, we see the great plans for rescue in operation all over the world, with many people being saved from disaster.

Our “Rescue” from Sin and Death

Did you know that a far greater rescue plan than this is in operation? Sometime in eternity past, perhaps billions and billions of years ago, a meeting was held in heaven with this plan in mind. Who do you suppose attended that meeting? A committee of three—the three members of the

Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They talked about many things: about God’s Son who would be called the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 1:21); about the angels they would create, about the world, and about the people who would live in it, and yes, even about you and me (Eph. 1:4).

God knew all along that the people He would create would decide against Him and disobey Him. Man would become a sinner and die, just as surely as would a shipwrecked person in the days when there was no means of rescue, unless someone provided the way of salvation. So God the Father presented His plan, which we call the “Grace Plan.”

He decided that if someone who was absolutely perfect and free from sin would be willing to take the sinner’s place and be punished for him, then God could forgive the sinner and save him from the penalty of sin. God the Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, said, “I will go. I will take the punishment man deserves” (John 10:17–18, paraphrased). The sinner would not deserve such a plan, nor would he have to do anything to earn it. Salvation would be a gift, free for the taking. That is why salvation is called the Grace Plan, because grace is something freely given and undeserved. God would do all the ‘doing,’ and man would do all the ‘receiving.’

The plan would take many years to reveal and develop. Salvation was put into writing in the Bible so that we might know about God’s gift. Have you ever heard that “coming events cast their shadows before them”? Before the plan of salvation became a reality, it was first only “a shadow of the good things to come” (Heb. 10:1). What makes a shadow? Light behind an object casts a shadow. The written Word was the ‘light’ that showed the people what the reality was. God gave the people many ‘objects’ which pictured or pointed to the real thing to come. He made it very clear that such things as the offerings and sacrifices, the

feast days and the Tabernacle, were pictures or shadows of the real salvation.

We are not going through the whole Bible today, but we will walk through it with seven-league boots, just hitting some of the high spots, to see how God provided for our rescue from sin and death, first in shadow form, and then in reality. See if you can think your way through God's "so great salvation" plan with me step by step (Heb. 2:3, KJV).

The Setting for the Plan

After the plan was made, the work could begin. Who was to do the work once the plan was finished? Jesus Christ, God the Son. First, He must do the work of creation: angels, then the world, and finally man. God's plan for man on earth has a beginning, continues for a certain period, and eventually comes to an end, yet God Himself continues on forever, without beginning, without end. He does not live by time or need time (2 Pet. 3:8). God invented time and ages so that He could better reveal to man His plan of grace.

We think in terms of time every day. In fact, we live by the hours and days, months and years. It is hard to imagine living without the passing of time for us who are so time-conscious. How much more time-conscious we should be when it comes to God's timetable for man! We do not know just when His plan of grace will be finished. But we do know that one day time will be over, and eternity will begin with no more opportunity for God's grace plan of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2).

God also made ages (Eph. 2:7; Heb. 11:3). With each age, God's plan moves another step, so that we know exactly where we are in God's plan. Without time and ages, we would not understand God's plan at all.

The First Great Revelation of the Grace Plan

As soon as man became a sinner, it was time for God to show him about His plan. I wonder if you can tell me the very first way in which God showed man that His plan was one of grace? Of course, you must be sure you understand what grace means: God giving to man something he does not deserve and cannot earn. When did God first do this for man? He came to the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve were hiding and sought them out. Could they not have come to God? No, they were spiritually dead to God because of their sin. A spiritually dead person cannot come to God. They could not have a relationship with Him. Sin puts a big wall between man and God.

In His grace God went to find Adam and Eve and show them His plan. He gave them the first object lesson that foreshadowed the central Person in the plan. Do you remember what that was? Yes, the slain animals that provided a covering for the two sinners. Of whom were the animals a shadow? Of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who would die, the innocent for the guilty, to take

away their sins and bring them back into a relationship with God.

God shed further light on His plan by teaching Adam to offer the slain animals upon an altar in order to worship and have fellowship with Him. Adam and Eve were to come to God through the shed blood of a sacrifice. Why was this? As a picture of their faith in the Savior. When they sacrificed the animals, this showed they believed that God would send the Savior, and that He would die for them.

The first great revelation of the Grace Plan was complete. Sin and the sinner were condemned, but God would always offer grace before punishment. The condemned person may always have a choice of accepting or rejecting God's grace.

What God Wants Me to Know

Unbelievers cannot understand the plan of God. There are several reasons for this. The spiritually dead are without a human spirit for understanding spiritual things. All that is left inside is the human soul, which can take in only the things of the world and can think only human thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9). Satan, the enemy of God, has taken over the world and puts his thoughts into man, blinding his mind to the Gospel (plan of salvation). Satan deceives man into thinking that religion is the way to God. Remember, in religion Satan wants man to think that he must work his way to heaven, or earn his way by doing enough good deeds. He does not want man to understand grace. How, then, can anyone understand God's plan of salvation and be saved?

God knew all about Satan's strategy from eternity past and made provision for this evil in His plan. This is the part that the Third Member of the Trinity plays in the plan of grace: The work of God the Holy Spirit is to reveal the plan to sinful man. In some way which we cannot fully understand, God the Holy Spirit makes us realize that we are sinners and need a Savior. He helps us to see that if we do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are eternally lost and condemned (John 16:8-11). Perhaps this is your time to see what the Holy Spirit is making clear to you about the Lord Jesus Christ. Will you believe in Jesus Christ right now?

In creation God the Father was the planner, God the Son did the work, and God the Holy Spirit restored the new earth. In salvation God the Father made the plan, the Son carried out the plan, and the Holy Spirit reveals the plan to man. The Holy Spirit keeps on teaching believers God's plan for their lives. How does He teach us? He makes His home in every believer so that He might guide our thoughts and actions.

There are two ways in which the Holy Spirit works in believers. First, He fills us when our sins are confessed. Second, He helps us to understand God's Word when we hear or study it. We said that God's plan was put down in writing for us. The Holy Spirit was the one who put God's Word into the minds of the men who wrote it down, and it

is the Holy Spirit who teaches us what God’s Word means. It is very important that you understand the work of the Holy Spirit so that you can best do God’s will for your life.

Lesson Review

What kind of a plan did God the Father make? The plan of grace. Why was it called a Grace Plan? It was free to undeserving sinners. When was the plan made? In eternity past. Who else knew about His plan? God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. What part did God the Son have in the plan? He did the work. What was the Holy Spirit to do? Reveal the plan to man.

How did God reveal His plan to man? In shadows or object lessons, and in writing. What was the first object lesson that foreshadowed the real thing? Slain animals; sacrifice.

The work of the Holy Spirit is different for believers and unbelievers. What does He do for unbelievers? He makes the Gospel clear to them. For believers? He fills us when we confess our sins, and He teaches us the Word.

Memory Verse

“To make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” (Heb. 2:10b, KJV)

LESSON TWO THE FULFILLMENT OF THE GRACE PLAN

Suppose a ship was wrecked at sea and all on board were certain to die unless they were rescued. At last a lifeboat arrived. The storm at sea was so violent, it looked as though even the lifeboat might capsize. Now the stranded passengers must make a decision. Shall we take our chances on the big ship or jump down to the little one? Shouldn’t be too hard to decide, should it? Yet some were known to be afraid to jump into the lifeboat.

But now suppose the captain went to all the passengers and said, “You can absolutely trust that lifeboat. Its design has been developed and perfected so that it is impossible to capsize or sink.” Surely, with this reassuring information, all the doomed passengers would hurry to its safety. In the same way, God says to the doomed sinner, “You can absolutely trust My plan. Salvation is perfect because salvation was made by a perfect Person.” A plan of grace must depend on who and what God is, not who and what man is.

Adam and Eve quickly learned about God’s sovereignty after they sinned. Satan was anxious to rule God’s new world and the people in it, but God overruled Satan by offering man a way back to Him. Satan still *tries* to do as he pleases, but God *does* as He pleases. God *is* sovereign, the Supreme Being of the universe, but He will let Satan be your sovereign if you choose him.

Next, Adam and Eve learned of God’s holiness. His holiness is made up of His righteousness and justice. To be true to His own righteous or sinless character, God could not have a relationship with sinful man. To be a just or fair

judge, God must pronounce a penalty on sin. Sin must be punished. The punishment for sin is spiritual death. Adam and Eve chose against God and received a just punishment. Why would God want to show His grace to someone who chose against Him? God is also a God of love. It is hard for us to understand why God would love someone who did not love Him, but He loved Adam and Eve because of who and what He is, not because of who and what they were. God’s grace is based on His righteousness, His justice, and His love.

But God’s holiness would not allow Him to pour out His love to man, for man is sinful. So God in His righteousness and justice planned the cross. God the Father would put all of our sins on His Son as He hung upon the cross. The Son would be judged for us. If anyone would accept God’s Son as his own substitute and sin-bearer, then God’s love could come through the grace pipeline. That means God’s love could come freely to man. Why? The Lord Jesus paid the penalty, and both the Father’s justice and righteousness were satisfied because our Substitute was absolute righteousness and without sin.

This is why God can offer grace before judgment. His righteousness and justice no longer stand in the way, nor does our sin. The Lord Jesus Christ now stands there instead, ready to receive all who will accept His grace. Cain was given another chance to accept God’s way, as were his parents. And God is giving you the opportunity right now, while time lasts, for you to make a decision to believe in His Son.

Who but a wonderfully omniscient God, a God who knows all things and is wise beyond our understanding, could have made such a plan—so terrible for Himself, yet so wonderful for undeserving sinners? Who but a God of love would have been willing to give Himself for His enemies? Furthermore, when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, He puts us into the ‘lifeboat’ of eternal life. We are put “in Christ,” and Christ is eternal life (Eph. 2:6). This is a very important part of the plan of salvation. A plan to save a person for only a short time, only to be lost again, would not be much good, would it? But God’s plan is as permanent and eternal as He is.

The Abrahamic Covenant

So far we have taken three big steps with our seven-league boots to see how God provided for our salvation. We have seen that the three members of the Trinity all had a part in the plan. Then we saw that God showed the plan first by object lessons. After that, God began to teach man that He is able to carry out His plan.

Now let’s take another big step to see a man named Abraham, who was to be a very important part of God’s plan. First, Abraham had only but to believe in the Lord, and God would fulfill His promise of salvation. Did Abraham believe? Look at Genesis 15:6: “Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.” Yes, he did, and when he believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, God gave Abraham His righteousness.



When Abraham was living in his hometown of Ur, God made him a promise about the future. “Go forth from your country, And from your relatives And from your father’s house, To the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing; And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen. 12:1–3). From this, Abraham learned of God’s immutability, for God always keeps His promises.

Abraham was directed to leave his own land and go to the land which God promised to show him. He soon learned of the omnipresence of God, for God was with him wherever he went. He discovered the omnipotence of God when God gave him a son, even though he and his wife were too old to have children naturally (Gen. 17:1–2). Why

was Abraham so important in God’s plan? Because of Abraham’s faith in the Lord, God chose Abraham to be the founder of a new, special race of people—the Jewish race. Through Abraham, and the Jewish nation which would come from him, the Savior would be born.

The Davidic Covenant

The nation of Israel that came from Abraham grew and grew until there were thousands of Jewish people. Then God added something else—a kingdom. Israel was given a king, David. God made David a promise also (2 Sam. 7:8–16). The Savior would come through David’s royal family and would be a King who would one day rule the world forever.

Many of the Jewish people, remembering God’s promise to David, thought that when Jesus came the first time, He would become a king right then and begin to rule the world. They did not seem to understand that the promise to Abraham of a Savior must be kept before the promise to David of a King forever. First, the whole world must be blessed by the salvation provided through the cross of Christ. The Lord Jesus was crowned the first time He came, but with a crown of thorns. He was lifted up, not on a throne, but on a cross. All this was part of God’s perfect plan of salvation.

In the Millennium, the King will return and keep His promise to David to rule forever. But in the meantime, people are given all the information they need to trust in the One who was and is able to keep His Word. Could any Lifeboat be more secure? Should there be any excuse not to trust God’s Lifeboat and get in and be saved?

The Fulfillment of the Grace Plan

The “fulness of the time” had come at last (Gal. 4:4). What time was that? The perfect time for God’s Son to come down from heaven. The time for the shadows to become reality. How did God determine the perfect time? All through the years while God was revealing His plan, men were making up their own plans. Their plans were called religion. Have we heard this word before? Who started the first religion? Yes, Cain. From Cain on, men thought up all kinds of ways to save themselves. Yet they proved as foolish and hopeless as a shipwrecked person trying to swim a hundred miles to shore in a hurricane. As you know, there is only one way to be saved.

God waited while people tried everything they could imagine, and then He sent His Son, born through the virgin Mary, from the line of Abraham and David, to redeem lost, hopeless man, separated from God and spiritually dead in sin. Remember, in the conference held by the Trinity in eternity past, God the Son had said “I will go and take the punishment for sinful man.” What was the punishment? Spiritual death. So what must God the Son do? He must die spiritually if He is to pay the penalty. But how can God

die? He is eternal life. Eternal life cannot die. To die, Jesus Christ will have to become a person like you and me.

To become an angel would not do, for angels do not die either (Heb. 2:16–17). God the Son must become a real human being like you and me. And this is just what He did through a miracle. His body was formed within a human mother, same as in all human beings, but there was one difference. Do you know what that was? He had no human father; God was His Father. This part of the plan was very necessary, since the sin nature is passed down through the man (Rom. 5:12). Jesus Christ could not have a sin nature. To be our substitute and die for our sins, He must be without sin (2 Cor. 5:21).

The Lord Jesus followed God's plan perfectly (Heb. 10:7–9). He lived on earth perfect and sinless, but truly man. He performed many marvelous miracles so that all would know that He was truly God. By these miracles everyone should have known that He was the One promised by God. Everything that was foretold about Jesus Christ in the Old Testament came true, for God is absolute truth or veracity. Now the Lord Jesus was ready to complete the great plan of grace. The time had come for Jesus Christ to die for the sins of the world.

We have said that the Grace Plan was to be free to mankind. Man cannot work for salvation or pay for salvation. Mankind certainly does not deserve salvation. But please remember salvation is not cheap! It cost a great deal. Salvation cost God the Father terrible suffering as He turned His back and forsook the Son while He bore our sins on the cross. Jesus actually died two deaths (Isa. 53:9; in the original Hebrew "death" is plural). He died first spiritually as He was separated from God the Father and left to bear our sins on the cross. Jesus was being judged for every wrong thing every human being has ever done or ever will do. He felt the horrible weight of every sin in the world. This is much worse than physical death. Spiritual death caused Him to scream, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?" (Matt. 27:46).

When He had finished bearing our sins, He cried, "It is finished" (John 19:30), and died a second time, this time physically. Christ voluntarily gave up His own life, for death has no power over Him. Couldn't He have chosen to stay physically alive and come down from the cross when He had finished bearing our sins? No, because God the Father planned that man would have only a certain amount of time on earth, and this time must come to an end through either death or the Rapture. Jesus' physical death fulfilled God the Father's plan. Yet, even though death is the end of our time on earth, it is not the end of everything.

The Completion of the Gospel

God's plan has just reached its peak. You might think of it as a beautiful skyrocket. When you first light a rocket, it starts out rather slowly, then gathers speed, until at last it bursts into a great glory of light. The ribbons of fire then

begin to float downward in many directions from the brilliant burst at the top. So it was with God's plan of salvation. Salvation started out slowly in shadow form, giving more light of revelation as time went on. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). Until He came into the world, people saw only "a shadow of the good things to come" (Heb. 10:1). Then He came to earth, and with Him came the reality of our salvation when He died on the cross and three days later came forth from the grave in all His resurrection glory. He arose with new life and conquered physical death.

Just as the skyrocket drops slowly back to earth, so the results of our Lord Jesus Christ's death and resurrection have been coming down to man ever since. God's plan continues on in the lives of believers. Jesus said, "I came that they might have [eternal] life, and might have *it* abundantly" (John 10:10b). Jesus did not come just to give life after we get to heaven, but that we might have a life like His while we still live on this earth—a wonderful, fruitful life, lived for Him with freedom from Satan and the power of sin. Jesus Christ's resurrection guarantees we will rise and have new bodies like His body of glory (Phil. 3:21). These things are a preview of some of the things we are going to study about God's continuous plan for believers.

The whole Grace Plan of God depended on the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross (Heb. 2:9). He could not be crowned with "glory and honor" until after His death, nor could we. Hebrews 2:10 says that it pleased the Father, who made the plan in His perfect wisdom, to give believers a glorious new position in Christ and then bring them on up to heaven *after* the "captain of their salvation" was made "perfect" through suffering. Who is the Captain of our salvation? Jesus Christ. The word "perfect" in this verse really means "complete," for Christ was already perfect (1 John 3:5). How could Jesus be made complete through suffering? Jesus made the Father's plan of salvation complete through His suffering (death), resurrection, ascension back to heaven, and, finally, bringing to heaven all those who believe in Him.

What God Wants Me to Know

Have you helped to complete God's plan of salvation by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you one of those "many sons" He is bringing to glory (Heb. 2:10)? Jesus Christ suffered and died for you that He might bring you to God. He died twice so that you can be born twice. If you have been born only once, you will die twice—a physical death and then an eternal second death, separation from God in the lake of fire forever.

God's plan from eternity past is for all to be saved (2 Pet. 3:9). If God is sovereign and does as He pleases, why are not all saved? God allows people to choose for themselves whether they will be saved or not. If they will not, God's plan includes punishment forever in the lake of fire. But there is no need for any person to be lost. Christ

has provided a Lifeboat for everyone (unlimited atonement, 1 John 2:2). Jesus Christ wants to bring you with Him to glory. Would you like to be in God's plan of grace right now? "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Every ship must have an anchor. When a ship stops, the anchor is thrown overboard and catches hold of the earth to keep the ship firmly in place. Otherwise the ship would drift, possibly onto rocks, and be destroyed. Now that Jesus Christ has gone back to heaven, we have an anchor that is "sure and steadfast" (Heb. 6:19b). We are not drifting around in the sea of life with no purpose and no hope for the future. We are anchored securely to the Rock, Christ. Most anchors are fastened in the sea, but ours is anchored in heaven where Christ is. With such an anchor, you have no need to fear loss of salvation or death, for you are as secure as Christ Himself. You should be perfectly calm in all the storms and troubles of life.

Lesson Review

I am going to give you a sentence, and you fill in the words I leave out.

In eternity past a meeting was held in heaven by (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit). God the Father declared His (Grace) Plan. The plan called for a per-

fect Person to take the (punishment) for the sinner. God the (Son) said He would go. It was called the Grace Plan because man would not (deserve) it. The Grace Plan was first revealed after (Adam) sinned. God promised Adam and Eve a (Savior) who would take away their sins. God chose (Abraham) to begin a new race of people. The new race was called the (Jewish) race. The new nation was called (Israel). At just the right time in history, God fulfilled the plan of grace by sending (His Son). Jesus Christ died not only physically on the cross, but also (spiritually). Spiritual death came when God the Father (forsook) Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is called the (Captain) of our salvation. Our Captain died so that many sons may be brought into (glory). Our hope is anchored in (heaven).

Memory Verse

"To make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." (Heb. 2:10b, KJV)

Chapter Four

God's Word Shows Us How to Be Saved

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: God's Word Shows Us How to Be Saved—
John 4

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: Bible Word Pictures for Faith
2. Lesson Two: The Woman at the Well

C. Story Objective:

The very simplicity of the way of salvation, by grace through faith, is the focal point of Satan's attack in attempting to blind the minds of men to the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:4). God in His Word has explained faith by many different terms, so that the sincere student seeking the truth will be in no doubt. God has used the simple things we can all understand to describe the means of salvation, giving us word pictures such as believe, trust, look, receive, follow, come, enter in, eat, and drink, to clearly delineate the absence of human works. In fact, each word suggests that someone else has already done the work, and we simply have to accept it for salvation.

Believing as a means of appropriating salvation is not a blind faith, nor a faith in just anything man may arbitrarily decide upon. Saving faith is believing what God has revealed in His Word concerning His Son. But it is impossible to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation apart from the knowledge of who He is and what He did. God has given all the information necessary in His Word to show us how to believe and what to believe. And when we believe correctly, we are born again or saved.

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: anoint, homage, merit, monk, title

2. Doctrinal Concepts:

- a. Definition of faith (Heb. 11:1)
- b. Word pictures of faith:
 - 1) Believe (John 3:18; 20:31; Acts 16:31; Rom. 4:5)
 - 2) Trust and fear (Ps. 2:12, KJV)
 - 3) Receive (John 1:12)
 - 4) Look (Isa. 45:22, KJV)
 - 5) Follow (John 8:12)
 - 6) Come (John 6:35, 37)
 - 7) Enter (John 10:9)
 - 8) Eat (John 6:58)
 - 9) Drink (John 4:14; 7:37)
- c. Faith (believing), the only means of appropriating salvation (John 3:18; 20:31; Acts 16:31; Rom. 4:5)
- d. Object of faith, God's Son (John 3:16; 36; 1 John 5:12)
- e. Salvation specifics:
 - 1) Believe in the name of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:18; Acts 4:12; 1 John 3:23).
 - 2) Know what Jesus did to save us (1 Cor. 15:1-4; 1 Thess. 4:14).
- f. Drinking from the "springs of salvation" (Isa. 12:3; John 4)

E. *Source Book* Keywords: Christ (Samaritan woman), faith

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: the woman at the well

2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: "But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water

- that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." (John 4:14)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE

BIBLE WORD PICTURES FOR FAITH

Have you heard of Martin Luther? He lived in Germany long ago and exposed the evils into which his church had fallen. He led a great revival back to biblical Christianity. As a boy, Martin was very interested in religion, but he had never heard the Bible way of salvation. People in those days seldom read the Bible, for it had been translated only into Latin. As he grew older, he worried more and more about God, for God seemed so far away.

Then one day something happened that began to change his life. His very dear friend was found murdered! "Suppose that had been me," he thought over and over. He knew he was not prepared for death. Soon after, he was caught in a severe thunderstorm. Suddenly, lightning struck a tree near him, knocking him to the ground. In great fear, he called to Saint Anna to help him. His mother had taught him to be very superstitious and to believe that dead 'saints' could help him. Because he believed Saint Anna had come to his rescue, he promised her he would become a monk. Surely he could find salvation within the 'holy' walls of the church.

As a monk, Martin was expected to be very religious. Religion, you remember, is doing things to get God's approval. Martin was put in a bare room, as he must live a very quiet and lonely life. He must go barefooted, pray most of the day, and obey the many, many rules of his church. Martin was willing to endure anything if only he could find salvation. And oh, how he worked at it! Yet no matter how much he prayed and went without food and tortured his body, he had no peace. His sins were a terrible burden to him, and his fears grew even greater. "My sins, oh, my sins," he would cry. Some monks laughed at him; others tried to comfort him. Why should he be so worried? He was doing exactly what his church taught for salvation.

If Martin Luther could only find Acts 16:31! "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved." Finally, one day as he was reading his Bible he saw Romans 1:17, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." The word "faith" leaped out from the page at him. Wasn't faith just believing that what God said, He would do? Could it be that salva-

tion was a free gift of God, and that no works were necessary at all? He began to study his Bible twice as hard.

A short time later Martin was in Rome on a special mission. One of the most popular places in Rome was the Sancta Sanctorum, which had a stairway of 28 steps said to have been taken from the judgment hall of Pilate in Jerusalem. Pope Leo IV in the ninth century promised that whoever would climb the stairs on his hands and knees, saying his prayers as he went, would have his sins forgiven. Martin Luther did not want to miss anything that might help atone for his sins, so he climbed the stairs—no once, but three times!

On the way up the third time, the words of the Bible, "THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH," pierced his mind again. Oh, how stupid he had been! He stood up and walked back down the stairway. "Jesus has already done the work for me," he thought. He quit trying to work for his salvation and, taking God at His word, believed in Jesus Christ alone to take away his sins. The heavy burden of his sins left him once and for all. He knew now that salvation was by faith and faith alone.

Definition of Faith

What did Martin Luther discover the meaning of faith was? Just believing that what God says, He will do. God knew that Satan would try to blind our minds as to the way to be saved and that he would make it hard for us to understand simple faith. So, God has given us in His Word many word pictures to explain faith, and today we will study some of them.

We will see that these words are very simple and easy things. Anyone can do them. This is so we will know that the very young as well as the very old, and the very slow as well as the very quick, may be saved. Then we will see that there is really no work involved in any of these words, for no amount of work can save us. And you certainly wouldn't expect a merit badge or a reward for doing any of them. Who would reward you for taking a drink of water or

for walking through a door? Salvation is not a reward or a payment for doing well.

In fact, each word suggests that someone else has already done the work; you simply look at it, or follow it, or receive it, or eat it. Now, I have just told you what some of these words are. Would you like to see them in your Bible?

Bible Word Pictures for Faith

The first and most common word for faith is *believe*. To believe is to count something as true, to be convinced that it is true. God has told us the way of salvation. Are you convinced it is true? Yes? Then you believe it. “God said it, Jesus did it, I believe it, that settles it,” someone once said. Let’s look up and underline four verses that tell us without a doubt that to believe is the only way of salvation: John 3:18; John 20:31; Acts 16:31; Romans 4:5. Believing is the only possible way we could have salvation if it is going to be *by grace*. This is the only way God could give us salvation without our working for it or earning it.

Trust is probably the next most common word for faith in the Bible. This word, along with the word “fear,” which also means trust, is used particularly in the Old Testament for faith. In the Hebrew language, the word for trust means “to lean upon, to hide in, or to take refuge in.” When you lean on someone, who does the work—you? No, the one holding you up.

Some people mistakenly think that in the Old Testament people were saved by keeping the Mosaic Law, but there is never any word used when speaking of salvation in the Old Testament other than a word meaning trust or believe. From Adam down to the last man who will ever live, everyone is saved the same way—by faith. For their salvation, the Old Testament people leaned completely on the One who could hold them up. They were safe in the “Rock” of their salvation, Jesus Christ (2 Sam. 22:3).

Of the many verses in the Old Testament, let’s look at just one—Psalm 2:12: “Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry, and you perish *in* the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!” “Do homage” means to honor or to respect the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do not want His wrath, His just condemnation, you must be rightly related to Jesus Christ by faith in Him. Unbelievers will receive God’s condemnation. Believers will be blessed with eternal life.

The third word is *receive*—John 1:12: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name.” This pictures faith as a gift. Can you say Romans 6:23? “For the wages of sin is [spiritual] death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” What do you do when someone gives you a gift—promise to work for it? If you worked for it, it would no longer be a gift, but a payment. “The wages of sin is death,” but eternal life is free for the taking. A gift may be very expensive for the one who bought it. If a gift is offered to you, you are simply to

receive it. Not to receive the gift or to try to pay for it would insult the giver. Anyone who tries to pay money to get to heaven or who refuses to accept salvation as a free gift insults God.

Isaiah 45:22 (KJV) says, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.” Can you find the word picture for faith in this verse? That’s right, *look*. Is there any work to looking? No, the simple “look” of faith will save. One time God told all the Israelites who were dying of a poisonous snakebite to look at the brass serpent on the pole and they would be healed. Those who believed what God said looked and were saved. Jesus said many years later, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent [on a pole] in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up [on the cross]; that whosoever believes [the “look” of faith] may in Him have eternal life” (John 3:14–15).

Now see if you can find the picture for faith in the next three passages. “Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life’” (John 8:12). *Follow*. “Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. . . . All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out’” (John 6:35, 37). *Come*. “I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture” (John 10:9). *Enter*. I think these word pictures for faith show us how easy it is to be saved. Even children can follow or come to someone or go through a door. There is no work in these words. When you hear Jesus say through His Word, “follow,” or “come,” or “enter,” He is asking you if you will be saved. And you can say so easily, “Yes, I believe Jesus died to save me.”

There are two more word pictures we want to look at, though this is not the complete list in the Bible. “He who eats this bread shall live forever” (John 6:58b). *Eat*. “But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life. . . . If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink” (John 4:14; 7:37b). *Drink*. These two words, “eat” and “drink,” are used for faith because everyone has the ability to eat and drink. We do not earn or deserve the right to be able to eat or drink. Bad people, good people, poor people, rich people, or mean people are all able to eat and drink. God wants us to understand that everybody has the ability to believe and be saved.

There is another reason why these two words are used for faith: Every day we get hungry and thirsty, and the only way to satisfy our hunger and thirst is to eat and drink. The food we eat and the water we drink go down inside our bodies and become a part of us. People also have spiritual hunger and thirst that crave salvation. When we believe and are saved, our souls are satisfied. And just as food and

water become a part of us, so the Lord Jesus Christ becomes a part of us when we believe in Him.

What God Wants Me to Know

Why should God save us and give us eternal life just for believing? Because the work has already been done. God the Father planned it, and God the Son did it. God knew that we could not do the work necessary for salvation because a sinner cannot save a sinner. So Jesus Christ, who was without sin, did everything for us. Some people think it is not right for a God of love to allow anyone to go to eternal punishment. But if they could understand just how much God the Father gave and how much Jesus Christ did to keep them from going to the lake of fire, and how gracious God is to offer salvation so free, they would see why rejection of God's plan could only bring His eternal judgment down upon them.

When your mother works hard preparing a good meal and then calls you to come and eat, what does she expect? That you will sit down and eat it and enjoy it. It would not make her very happy, would it, for you to look at the food and say, "This looks terrible, I'd rather fix my own food"?

When anyone gives you a gift or does something for you at great cost to himself, you should accept it with thankfulness. Have you accepted God's precious gift of salvation? God has done so much for you, and yet He asks for so little—only your faith.

Lesson Review

What are each of the words in our lesson used to picture *faith*? Believe, trust, receive, look, follow, come, enter, eat, drink.

Memory Verse

"But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." (John 4:14)

LESSON TWO THE WOMAN AT THE WELL

In our day, more than ever before, people are looking for something for nothing. They want free handouts and no work. Yet when God offers them eternal life absolutely free for the taking and is able to give salvation to them, they would rather work for that. They cannot believe that they can go to heaven without trying to be good or doing something to earn it. They think that this salvation is too easy, yet they have everything all backwards. God says we must work for a living but receive salvation as a free gift. I want to tell you the story of a woman who worked hard, but found out she had to *do* nothing for salvation. This story is found in John 4.

Palestine in Jesus' day was divided into three parts: Judea in the south, Samaria in the middle, and Galilee in the north. Jesus and His disciples walked up and down Palestine many times. The Jews had hated the Samaritans, who were a mixture of Assyrian and Jew, ever since they had tried to stop the rebuilding of the Temple in Ezra's day. For this reason the Jews always walked around Samaria instead of going through that country. They were supposed to be witnesses, telling all people about salvation, but they would not even speak to the Samaritans.

Some of the Jews thought that they were the only ones who deserved to be saved. They did not know that "God so loved the *world*, that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16a, italics added). One day when Jesus and His disciples were walking from Judea to Galilee, Jesus informed them that He must go through Samaria. There were many people in Samaria who were thirsty for salvation. Jesus loved them just as much as He loved the Jews, so He needed to go through their country to tell them the good news of salvation.

When Jesus and the disciples arrived near the town of Sychar, Jesus sat down on Jacob's well to rest (John 4:5–6). He was tired from the journey. Remember, Jesus had a human body like ours, and He became tired and thirsty just as we do. But He had a more important reason for stopping here. Jesus knew that a woman was coming to draw water from the well who needed what He had to give her. He also knew that if she saw all the Jewish disciples at the well, she would be afraid to come near. So Jesus sent the disciples into the town to buy lunch. Very shortly a woman carrying a water pot came to the well. Jesus asked her for a drink of water. He spoke kindly to the woman. Probably not many

people spoke kindly to her, for all the town knew that she was a sinful woman and looked down on her. God always treats us in grace, even though none of us deserve it. Jesus came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10b), and He speaks to the sinner first. He sought out Adam and Eve after they sinned and spoke first to them. Today, when we want to know about God, the Holy Spirit seeks us out and reveals to us the gospel message.



How surprised the Samaritan woman was that Jesus, being a Jew, would speak kindly to a Samaritan (John 4:9)! But Jesus did not discuss the argument between the Jews and Samaritans. He knew her desperate need for cleansing from sin, and He said, “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). Notice how Jesus used this natural, everyday event to show her the way of salvation. Just as she could give Him natural water to drink, He could give her the living water of salvation. You see, He did not have anything with which to draw the water out of the well, and she had nothing with which to get salvation.

However, the woman did not understand Jesus at all. She said, “Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water? You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?” (John 4:11–12).

Drinking from the Well of Salvation ***Isaiah 12:3 (KJV)***

Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life” (John 4:13–14).

Oh, didn’t the woman want some of this water! How nice it would be not to have to come to this well every day and draw water! It was hard work (John 4:15). Perhaps she thought that Jesus had a magic formula or a new invention like turning on a faucet. So it became necessary for Jesus to show the woman her need of salvation before she could understand what He was talking about, for she could only think in terms of natural water. He changed the subject and

began to show her she was a sinner and needed cleansing. He said, “Go, call your husband” (John 4:16b).

Now He hit a sore spot—her sin. She admitted to Jesus that she had no husband. He reminded her that she had broken the marriage laws and lived illegally, or wrongly, with five men. Remember, Jesus is God and therefore omniscient (John 4:18). He knows all about us. We do not like to hear about our sins. Many people do not like to read the Bible because it tells them they are sinners. The Samaritan woman did not like her sins revealed either, so she changed the subject. She decided that Jesus was a prophet, and began to talk about worship (John 4:19–20). She mentioned how Jews and Samaritans argued about where to worship. Jesus told her it does not matter where you worship, but how you worship. No one can worship without the Holy Spirit and without knowing the Truth, the Word of God (John 4:23–24). By this He meant that you must be saved to worship.

Then the woman said that the Samaritans were looking for the Messiah. Of whom was she speaking? The Jews had always called the Savior, whom God had promised, the “Messiah.” Messiah means “the Anointed One,” or the One chosen as King. The promised Savior was also to be their King. “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us,” the woman said (John 4:25). Remember, we said that you cannot believe something until you are persuaded that it is true. We are not to have a “blind faith”; God gives us all the facts in His Word. When you discover the facts and see that they are true, it is not hard to believe.

Jesus knew that all this woman needed were the true facts. She had a great hunger and thirst to have her sins forgiven. But she needed to know how. Jesus now tells her the truth about Himself: “I who speak to you am *He* [I am the Messiah]” (John 4:26). No one can be saved unless he knows the truth about who the Lord Jesus Christ is. The Jews knew from the Old Testament that the Messiah would be God. Now they must know for sure that Jesus Christ was the Messiah.

Wasn’t the Samaritan woman surprised to find out she had been talking with the Messiah! Now something clicked. She thought about how He had read her mind and her past. Only God could do that. Of course! He had to be the Messiah! And right there she drank of the living water Jesus had been talking about. She believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and received salvation. She had no good works to show. There was no other way she could have been saved. She knew now why Jesus told her to drink of the water He could give her. Salvation is a free gift and as easy to receive as a drink of water (Isa. 12:3, KJV). In her great excitement of being saved, she ran to tell the good news to the other people in her town, and many of them also believed in Jesus.

What God Wants Me to Know

I have heard boys and girls say, “But I don’t know how to believe.” Perhaps this is because you do not really know

what to believe. Just having a blind faith will not save you. Nor is believing in anything or in any way you want to the true way to salvation. Faith must have an object. That means you must have something definite to believe in. All the faith in the world will not get you anything from God, but one little grain of a mustard seed of faith in Christ will get you salvation. Saving faith is believing what God tells you to believe about His Son.

But it is impossible to believe in His Son unless you know who He is and what He did for you. Only through the information about Jesus Christ found in the Word of God can we know how to believe and what to believe (John 4:42). And when we believe correctly, we are born again or saved. That is why God's Word says we are born again by the Word of God (James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23).

Acts 4:12 gives us a clue in knowing just what we should believe. "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." We have the same idea in John 3:18: "Because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." What word in these verses is the clue? *Name*. What is so important in the *name* of Jesus that we must believe in it? It is His name that tells us who He is and why He came, and if we know what His name means, we know what to believe. What is His name? The Lord Jesus Christ.

We are going to look up some verses that tell us what His name means. The first part of His name is "Lord" (John 20:28). What would you say this part of His name means? It means that He is God. Lord is His name for deity. Deity means "God." Thomas recognized Jesus as his God. Jesus answered him, "Blessed *are* they who did not see, and *yet* believed" (John 20:29b).

"Son of God" is a title for the Lord that means He is God, the Second Person of the Trinity. Jesus once asked a blind man, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" The blind man answered, "Lord, I believe" (John 9:35-38, KJV). This is very important. We must believe that He is God. Jesus said, "For unless you believe that I am *He*, you shall die in your sins" (John 8:24b).

NAME	MEANING	SCRIPTURE
LORD	Deity, God	Luke 1:35; John 1:34; 20:28
JESUS	Savior	Matthew 1:21; Luke 19:10; Acts 13:23
CHRIST	Messiah	John 1:41, 49; 4:25

The second word in His name is Jesus. Matthew 1:21 will give you a clue as to its meaning: "And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins." What does Jesus mean? Savior. Paul tells us that we must believe in Jesus as our Savior: "Because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers"

(1 Tim. 4:10b). This part of His name also tells us that He is a *true man*: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). His title as the "Son of Man" means that He was born into the world and became a human being.

This name, Jesus, also tells us why He came. The three verses tell us that as Savior He came to seek and to save the lost. How did Jesus actually do this? Did His miracles save us? Did His perfect, sinless life save us? Did His good deeds save us? First Corinthians 15:3 tells us what He did to save us: He died for our sins. You just cannot be saved unless you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, died for your sins.

The last word in His name, Christ, means Messiah. You learned this word in our story of the woman at the well. This was the Jews' special name for Christ. The Jews were His chosen people. It was most important for them to believe that He was the one promised, and this part of His name identified Him with the nation Israel. They looked for Him to be their King, but they did not understand that He must first go to the cross and be their Savior. After all those who will believe in Him are saved, He will come back to earth to be their King and our King and to rule over us in a perfect world.

What are the facts to believe? The Lord Jesus is the God-man-Savior who took the punishment for our sins on the cross. God has given you all the facts in His Word and has made salvation so simple and easy that there will be no excuse for not believing. But it is up to you to decide. He has also made it very clear as to what will happen to those who do not believe in Jesus Christ. He has given you the ability to believe, but He will never force you to believe. Will you not drink of the living water by *faith* and have eternal life?

Lesson Review

When the Bible says that you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, do you know how to believe? You must know *who* He is and *what* He did. "Blind" faith will not save you. You must know what to believe. When you see the Lord Jesus called "Son of God" in the Bible, what does that mean? That He is truly God, the Second Person of the Trinity. What does "Son of Man" mean? That Jesus is truly a man.

Memory Verse

"But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." (John 4:14)

Chapter Five

Kept Saved by God's Power

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Kept Saved by God's Power—Genesis 6—8

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: Safe in Christ
2. Lesson Two: Noah in the Security of the Ark

C. Story Objective:

The often asked question, “Can a believer, once saved, lose his salvation?” has been the subject of more discussion and disagreement than almost any other doctrine in the Bible. Yet the Word of God leaves no doubt concerning this issue: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1). Once a person has put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man-Savior, he is eternally saved, and under no condition can he be lost or separated from God (Rom. 8:38–39).

As in salvation, eternal security is also based solely upon (1) the power of God (1 Pet. 1:5); (2) the promises of God (John 10:28); (3) the Word of God (Num. 23:19); and (4) the work of God (Phil. 1:6). Some of the works of God in connection with the security of the believer are listed in the outline and will be discussed briefly in the lesson. The emphasis, however, will be on the believer's position “in Christ.” The moment a person believes and is saved, the Holy Spirit puts him positionally “in Christ,” a position from which he can never be removed (1 Cor. 15:22). The believer's life is once and for all “hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3).

Until the issue of a believer's eternal security is settled in his own mind, he cannot grow in his Christian life, nor can he have the peace and blessing promised to all those

who are in Christ. Although the young child responds easily to salvation, doubts may form quickly in his mind, and therefore it is extremely vital that he has the assurance of his salvation at an early age.

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: illustration, verb tense
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Eternal security is a work of God (Phil. 1:6).
 - 1) Expressions of time:
 - a) Eternal life now (John 5:24)
 - b) Saved once and for all (Acts 16:31)
 - c) Saved in the past with results forever (Eph. 2:8–9)
 - 2) God is faithful to do what He promised (2 Tim. 2:12–13).
 - 3) God puts us in His family and we are related to Him forever (John 1:12).
 - 4) God makes us a part of the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12, 21).
 - 5) God keeps us saved by His power (John 10:28; 2 Tim. 1:12; 1 Pet. 1:5).
 - 6) The Holy Spirit puts us in Christ and seals us (Eph. 1:13).
 - b. Assurances in God's Word (Num. 23:19; Deut. 33:27; Eccl. 3:14; 1 John 5:13)
 - c. The ark is an illustration of Jesus Christ's work.

E. *Source Book* Keywords: essence of God (eternal life, omnipotence), eternal life, eternal security, faithfulness

of God, God the Holy Spirit (sealing, union with Christ), Noah

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: cross with open door, Noah and

the ark, Noah and his family

2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:1)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE SAFE IN CHRIST

If you are traveling and become lost, you usually try to find someone who can direct you to the right way. Suppose you ask directions to such and such a town, and the person scratches his head, and looks one way, then the other, and finally says he thinks you go to the right, and he hopes that way will take you where you want to go. Will his "think so" and "hope so" be any help to you? Not one bit. You are as confused as ever, and possibly more worried. What you need is a map. The Bible is our 'road map' to heaven. God's Word tells us the right way, so we can go on our way with absolute assurance that we will get there.

Many people never know for sure whether they will get to heaven or not. Some churches teach that you can lose your salvation. Others teach that if you do not live in the manner according to their prescribed standards, you never truly believed. Do you think it is possible to be saved one day and lost the next? Will you never know whether or not you are really going to heaven until you get there? Well, you know, we often start something and do not finish it, but God never does (Phil. 1:6). When we believed in Jesus Christ, He put us on the road to heaven, and He has promised to get us there.

Salvation was all the work of God, and keeping us saved is His work, too. You can no more keep yourself saved than you could save yourself in the first place. The Bible tells us about the work of God in keeping us saved. This is often called the "eternal security" of the believer. There are many ways by which we can know we are saved forever, and we are going to study some of those today. If you will listen and believe what God's Word says, it will save you many doubts and uncertainties in the years to come.

Expressions of Time

When you believed in Christ you were promised *eternal life*. How long is eternal? Forever! But some people think that means you will have eternal life *if* you do not do any-

thing in the meantime to lose your salvation. How do you know for sure that eternal life is not a hope-so, off-in-the-future, if-you-happen-to-make-it, sort of thing? God has given us a way to tell exactly when eternal life begins and how long it will last. You see, He knew some people would not believe that the word eternal means "eternal."

Do you know what a verb tense is? The tense shows the time of a verb's action. If you say, "He has it," you mean "He has it now." If you say, "He will have it," you mean "He will have it later, sometime in the future." You can say the same verb in different ways to explain what time something takes place. God used the verb tense to tell us the exact time we are given eternal life. When is that? Turn to John 5:24a: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, *has* eternal life" (italics added). When does this say we have eternal life? Right now. "Has" means now, not later. The moment we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we have eternal life.

Now if you could read the New Testament in the Greek language in which it was originally written, you would see something even more interesting about these verbs. There is a verb tense in the Greek that tells us something takes place "once and for all." One of our favorite verses on salvation, Acts 16:31, has this verb tense, so that it really says, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved *once and for all*." Does this sound like you could lose your salvation? Of course not!

Further, there is one other tense that shows that the time of our salvation keeps going like an eternal clock. Once you start the action of the verb, it keeps on running. Remember, we said that God does not start something He doesn't finish. In Ephesians 2:8, we have the verb "saved": "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God." This verb tense really says, "For by grace you have been saved *in the past, with the result that you keep on being saved forever* through faith." You have salvation now, and you will always have salvation.

Faithfulness of God

Now, you might have heard it said that there is an exception to every rule. Perhaps you are thinking to yourself, "I can think of one horrible thing you can do that would certainly stop the clock of salvation—even worse than murder or suicide. You could quit believing." Do you remember a man in the Bible who changed his mind one day about belonging to Jesus? Three times he denied he ever knew the Lord. The third time he even began to curse and swear to try and prove he did not belong to the Lord.

Well, perhaps Peter (did you guess who it was?) was not really saved after all! Listen to what Peter had said sometime before this: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16b). There was no doubt that Peter had believed in Jesus. He was positive that he knew the Lord. Later, Jesus even told Peter that he would deny Him. But Peter spoke up again: "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You" (Matt. 26:35a).

After Jesus rose from the dead, He was careful to show Peter and the other disciples that Peter had not lost his salvation (John 21:15–17). What was Peter's trouble? He had lost his *fellowship* through sin, but he had not lost his eternal *relationship* with God. Though Peter was faithless to the Lord, the Lord remained faithful to Peter. Jesus Christ had promised him eternal life, and no matter what Peter did, Jesus Christ would not go back on His word. "If we are faithless [do not believe], He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2:13).

Family of God and Body of Christ

Would your parents ever say to you, "You are no longer my child"? They may feel like it sometimes, but they can never deny the fact that you are related to them by birth, and they cannot change that. We are related to the Lord Jesus Christ by the second birth, and God cannot say it is not true. Why? Because we are also a part of His Body (1 Cor. 12:12). He is the head of the Body, and all believers are members of His body. If He ever said that we did not belong to Him anymore, He would be saying that He did not have a Body.

A lady who was very certain of her eternal security was once asked by a friend who was not sure, "Suppose God lets you slip through His fingers?" "That could never happen," she replied, "because I am one of the fingers." The head of the Body (Christ) cannot say to the foot (a believer), "I have no need of you" (1 Cor. 12:21). No one would cut off his foot just because he stubbed his toe and it hurt. Nor will God cut you off from salvation whenever you hurt another believer through sin. He does however have other ways of taking care of sin (discipline and 1 John 1:9).

Able to Keep

Not only will God never cast us out (John 6:37), but He has the power to keep us forever. The Lord described His

keeping power in John 10:28: "And I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand." God's hand is a picture of His power to keep and hold us. One of the characteristics of God is eternal life, which means He has no beginning and no end. He always was and always will be. Is Jesus Christ eternal? Yes, for as a member of the Godhead, He has the same characteristics as the Father and the Spirit. Jesus promised that He will give believers His kind of life—eternal life—a life that will never end, with no strings, ifs, ands, or buts attached.

Another of Jesus Christ's characteristics, immutability, guarantees He will keep this promise. Furthermore, since God is omnipotent (all-powerful), we have the assurance that He is able to do what He has promised (2 Tim. 1:12). With Christ's omnipotent hand He "measured the waters [created the world]" (Isa. 40:12), "and in Him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). Surely, anyone who could do this could hold us securely in His hand!

Jesus also said that we are held by the Father's hand (John 10:29). Then He added, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). "I am God, too," Jesus was saying. You are held in two omnipotent hands, which makes you doubly secure. A little fellow was walking beside his father, trying to keep up with him, when he fell down. "Here, let me hold your hand," his father said, picking him up. They walked swiftly down the street, over curbs and rough places, up hills and down hills. Every once in a while the boy's feet would fly out from under him, or he would stumble, but never once did he fall because his father's strong hand held him tightly.

Nothing can take you out of God's hand. What about Satan? No, not angels or people. Not even the worst sin you can imagine can take you out of the Lord's hand. If your sin could undo God's salvation, it would mean that something you can do is stronger than Almighty God. There is no power, either good or bad, that is stronger than the power of God, and it is His power that keeps us secure (1 Pet. 1:5). Our "life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). Do you think you could get out of that? Absolutely not!

In Union with Christ and Sealed by the Spirit

Now I want to tell you about a work of God that guarantees you can never, ever lose your salvation. At the moment you believe in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit puts you into union with Christ and then seals you so that you cannot get out. One time a boy caught a little garden snake and put it into a jar. In no time at all that little snake climbed out of the jar. So the boy went in the house and asked his mother for a lid. With this he sealed the jar tight. Of course, he put a few holes in the lid so the snake could get air, but it could not get out with that lid sealed securely. Long ago, God put eight believers into a boat, sealed it tightly, and kept them safe while everyone else drowned. Do you know who they were? Noah and his family. But we will have to wait until our next lesson to hear about them.

What God Wants Me to Know

There have been some people who were so worried about losing their salvation they could not sleep. A man once told how, ever since he was just a young boy in the fourth grade, he dreamt of the terrors of hell every time he went to bed. His church taught that he could lose his salvation, and he always dreaded going to sleep for fear of waking up in hell. Every time he closed his eyes he felt like he was falling through endless space.

He was ashamed to tell anyone about his fear of thinking his salvation would not last. It was not until he was a grown man that he was relieved from his awful fear. One day while he was walking through a little country churchyard, his eyes caught some words on a gravestone: "Underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33:27). That night, for the first time in many years, his mind was at ease, for when the earth seemed to be dropping away from him as always, in a flash he saw his security. He rested on the promise of God's Word that the eternal God was holding him up.

What gave him that security? The Word of God. If you have ever had any doubts as to whether you will really go to heaven or not, even knowing you have accepted Christ as your Savior, it is because you either do not know or do not believe the Word of God. You have depended on your own tricky feelings, or perhaps you have listened to the imaginations and ideas of other people instead of seeing what the Word of God says. If you have trusted the Word of God for your salvation, then surely you can trust God's Word for your safekeeping (Num. 23:19; Ps. 119:89; 1 John 5:13).

Lesson Review

Answer the following questions:

1. How long is eternal? (forever)
2. What does a verb tense tell us? (the time of a verb's action)
3. When does salvation begin—now or when we get to heaven? (now)
4. One verb tense tells us that we are saved "once and for" what? (all)
5. Even if we as believers stop trusting the Lord and are untrue to Him, what is He? (faithful)
6. As believers in the family of God, we are also members of what? (the Body of Christ)
7. If we hurt Christ's Body (another believer) through sin, how does He take care of that? (discipline)
8. What is God's hand a picture of? (His power to keep and hold us)
9. Do we hold onto God's hand, or does He hold onto ours? (He holds onto ours)
10. When we believe, the Holy Spirit puts us "in union with" whom? (Christ)
11. If you think you can lose your salvation, it is because you are ignorant of what? (Bible doctrine)

Memory Verse

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:1)

LESSON TWO NOAH IN THE SECURITY OF THE ARK

If we are caught in a storm, we always look for shelter. As soon as we see the first streak of lightning and hear that loud clap of thunder, we scurry for the safety of our homes, or some place to shield us from any possible danger. There are some kinds of storms where man-made shelters are not secure enough. A tornado can level great buildings as if they were matchsticks. A hurricane can blow so hard and dump so much water on a building that it collapses. You need to make very sure your shelter is secure in a storm like this.

During the worst storm in the history of mankind, only eight people found a safe shelter. This story in the Bible is very familiar, but I want you to listen carefully, as I am going to tell you some things about it you have not heard before.

The people in Noah's day had become exceedingly wicked (Gen. 6:5). In the midst of the sin and violence, God found only one man who pleased Him (Gen. 6:8). What did God see in Noah? "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God" (Gen. 6:9b). Was Noah such a nice fellow that God just had to notice

him? No, Noah and his family were the only believers God was able to find upon the earth. God always knows His own, and His plans always center around His own people.

God could not let the evil and wickedness continue on the earth. Soon there would be no believers, and then God's promises to Adam and Eve, and later to Abraham and David, could not be kept. So He said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth" (Gen. 6:13). God always lets believers know about His plans, and if they will listen to His Word, they will be prepared for whatever comes and have no need to worry or fear.

As for Noah, God instructed him to build an ark (boat) so that he and his family would have a safe place when the storm hit, for God planned to send a flood to destroy all life on the earth. Noah's ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. All those who believe in Jesus Christ are put "in Christ," into the ark, and are safe from the judgment which falls on unbelievers (1 Cor. 15:22).

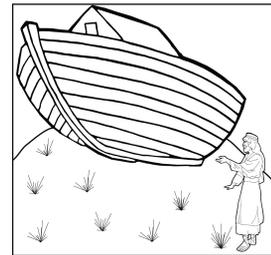
Since Noah had never seen rain or floods and did not live on the seashore, he perhaps had never seen a boat. Certainly, he would not know how to build one. So God gave Noah very careful instructions. Now if the ark was to be a picture of Christ, we would expect it to be a most unusual boat, and indeed it was. It was to be made of wood, which of course had to be cut from trees. This illustrates to us right away that the first work of Christ for keeping us safe is the wooden cross on which He would die (1 Pet. 2:24). There can be no salvation without His death upon the cross for the sins of the world.

The ark had three floors—that is, it was three stories high. The salvation work of Christ was threefold: His death, burial, and resurrection. All three were necessary in the plan of God for our salvation. Then God said for Noah to line the ark "inside and out with pitch" (Gen. 6:14) What would this do for the ark? Lining the ark with pitch would seal it tight and make it waterproof. Neither will there be any leaks in our salvation. Nothing can get in to weaken the security of salvation. Once in Christ, we are eternally secure.

Besides the family of Noah, there were to be many, many animals kept in the ark to be preserved for the 'cleansed earth' in which they would live. With all these animals to load into the ark, surely it would need many doors. But no, God said to put only *one door* on the side. Since the ark is a picture of Christ, we can understand why it must have only one door, for there is just *one way* of salvation. Jesus said, "I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved" (John 10:9).

Also, there would be just one window in the ark—in the roof, looking up toward heaven. Those in the ark could not look out and see the awful judgment; they could only look up in fellowship with God. We, too, have a window of fellowship with Him. We are not to look at our sin and think we have lost our salvation. If we sin, there is one way back

into fellowship, and that is through rebound (1 John 1:9). We are not cast out of the ark when we sin; we just use our 'skylight.'



Now we know that God never sends judgment without first offering His grace. Unbelievers as well as believers are given every chance to hear God's plans. How long would God offer His grace to Noah's people? He would give them 120 years, and during that time the Holy Spirit would do His part to get them to believe God (Gen. 6:3). It took Noah 120 years to build the ark, and all the time he was building it, he preached to the people (2 Pet. 2:5). He warned them of the coming flood. He warned them of God's eternal judgment for rejecting God's way of salvation. He pleaded with them to believe in the Lord and be saved. But in all those years of faithful preaching, not one person, except his own family, turned to Christ. Do you think you would have become a little discouraged if you preached that long without a soul heeding your message? Not Noah! He kept right on, even while the people laughed and mocked at such a crazy person who would build a boat when there was no apparent need for one.

At last the ark was completed. Now was the time for all the believers to enter the ark. Out of the thousands of people on the earth, how many believers were there? Only eight—Noah and his wife, their three sons, and their wives. God invited them to come into the ark (Gen. 7:1). God's invitation was still open to all the people, just as He continues today to invite everyone to believe in Christ for salvation. But the time will come when the door to salvation will be shut. When will that be? When your life on this earth is over. If you have been born only once, you will die twice—a physical death and then an eternal or second death, separation from God in the lake of fire forever. Noah and his family were allowed to enter the ark because they were righteous (Gen. 7:1), not because of good works of righteousness which they had done (Titus 3:5), but "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe" (Rom. 3:22). The righteousness God gives us when we believe is the only righteousness which will get us in the Ark, Christ Jesus.

As Noah and his family entered into the ark, we see a picture of the Holy Spirit putting us in Christ. After everyone was in, nothing happened for seven days. These seven days were probably such beautiful, cloudless days, no one else could even begin to see the necessity of getting into

the ark. But Noah and his family saw by faith the need for going in. They believed God's Word.



The rest of the people were trying to reason it out, and they saw no reason to go in. They thought Noah was just a lunatic. Nevertheless, God gave them seven more days of grace to be saved. Sometimes, we may wonder why Jesus does not come back for us right now. Remember, there are still many unbelievers whom God is giving a chance to accept Jesus Christ. He is "not wishing for any to perish," but that all should be saved (2 Pet. 3:9).

But one day, just as God has said in His Word, Jesus Christ will come back in the air, and all those who are "in Christ" will be taken safely up into heaven with Him at the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:17). God will not yet destroy all unbelievers, but will give them seven more years to accept Jesus Christ before He judges them, just as He gave the people in Noah's day seven more days. These seven years are called the Tribulation, a time of bloody wars and terrible famine and disease. But those who believe in Christ will still be put safely in Christ. At the end of the seven years, the door of salvation will suddenly be shut. Jesus Christ will come back to earth and remove all unbelievers from the earth until the Great White Throne Judgment, when He will throw them into the lake of fire. When that day comes, which side of the door will you be on—the inside or outside?

At the end of the week of waiting, God Himself shut the door of the ark (Gen. 7:16). After the Holy Spirit puts us "in Christ," He shuts the door, or seals us tight, so that we are safe until God brings us up to heaven. Can you imagine the utter surprise of the unbelievers on the outside of the ark when the dark clouds rolled over and drops began to fall? Perhaps some even went to the ark and pounded on the door. "Noah, Noah, let us in. Looks like you were right after all!" But Noah could not open the door; God had sealed it shut.

Faster and faster came the rain. Water even began bubbling up from the ground. The people on the outside fled to higher ground. They stood in horror as the water rose up to the highest mountains. For forty days and nights the water came from above and below (Gen. 7:11–12). Not until "every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky . . . were blotted out from the earth," did the flood cease (Gen. 7:23). But what about those in the ark? They simply sat safely in the ark, while the sturdy boat took all

the pounding rain for them. I can imagine that as the waters flooded up from the deep and they felt the ark rise and begin to float, that Noah and his family sent up a shout of praise to God for His faithfulness. When God pours out His judgment upon unbelievers one day, we will sit securely in the knowledge that "there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

Many times, even now, God miraculously saves believers from certain destruction when He is judging unbelievers. It may be that some day an enemy will come in and destroy our country. Are you frightened and upset just thinking about that? You shouldn't be, for you are in Christ Jesus, and nothing can happen to you that God does not allow. Even if you are called upon to give up your life, is this terrible and disastrous? Why no, for you are secure in Christ and will be safely carried up into His presence. Should you not send up a shout of praise once in a while for God's faithfulness to you?

After the waters had subsided, more than a year later, God brought the eight believers out on dry ground, safe and sound, just as He had promised. God's timing is perfect. They could not leave the ark until God knew it was safe. Once we are saved, God keeps on caring for us. The results of our salvation keep going on forever! After Noah left the ark, he built an altar and offered a sacrifice in worship, praise, and thankfulness to God. God then put a rainbow in the heavens (Gen. 9:11–17) as a sign of His promise that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood. He has put many rainbows of promise in His Word that those in Christ will never come to judgment.

What God Wants Me to Know

Suppose some of those in the ark became afraid when the rain began to fall and said to Noah, "Are you sure you built this boat well? It is awfully loaded and heavy. What will keep it afloat when the water is high?" Would their fear make them any less secure? No, whether one's faith is great or weak does not make any difference as to how secure he is. But if you know the faithfulness of God through His Word, you know that the work of Christ, the power of the Spirit, and the love of the Father for you can keep you absolutely safe through all the storms and troubles of life. If you do not know these things, you are no less eternally secure, but you will miss the great joy and peace that this knowledge can give you.

Since we are safe and secure in Christ, does this mean we can do as we please—sin and pay no attention to what God wants us to do? I should say not! Our Heavenly Father has ways of 'spanking' us just as our earthly fathers do when we get out of line. Remember, we keep in fellowship with our Heavenly Father through confession of sin. Our sin is a family matter that puts us out of fellowship with God, but not out of His family. Even though you may fail Him or disappoint Him, God will deal with you as a father with his child. If you will confess your sins as soon as they

happen, you will be forgiven, and you will be happy (John 13:17).

I wonder if you are safe in the Ark, Jesus Christ. Do not think you will escape the judgment of God if you are not (Rom. 1:18). God is patient and longsuffering, and not willing for you to perish. He gives you every opportunity to be saved. But you should not wait any longer to decide to believe because you do not know what tomorrow may bring. Are you certain you will be on this earth tomorrow? If you depart from this life without the security of the Ark, the flood of God's judgment will fall upon you.

The Lord Jesus Christ took the terrible punishment of God's judgment for sin when He died on the cross, just as the ark took the beating of the rain. Will you take shelter in the Lord Jesus? He is the only way, the only door. Do not be like the people of Noah's day who reasoned wrongly that it could not happen to them. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ right now (John 3:18). Eternal life will begin for you the moment you believe and will go on forever.

Lesson Review

1. What does God always offer before judgment? (grace)

2. What does being put into the ark teach us about believers today? (we are safe in Christ)
3. What does the Holy Spirit do when we are put in Christ? (seals us, Eph. 4:30)
4. What is our 'skylight' of fellowship? (rebound, 1 John 1:9)
5. Can you quote our memory verse, Romans 8:1? "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Memory Verse

"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 8:1)

Chapter Six

Saved from the Power of Sin by the Use of the Word

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Saved from the Power of Sin by the Use of the Word—Matthew 4:1–11

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: “It Is Finished”
2. Lesson Two: The Temptation to Go against the Word
3. Lesson Three: The Temptation to Bypass the Cross

C. Story Objective:

This chapter begins the second phase of God’s plan for the believer after salvation: deliverance from the power of sin and Satan. This deliverance goes back to the cross where the death of Christ resulted in victory over the enemies of the believer’s soul: the world, the flesh, and the devil.

God had promised Satan, who is the author of sin, that the Savior would bruise him “on the head,” though Satan would “bruise him [Christ] on the heel” (Gen. 3:15). God’s promise was fulfilled when Christ hung upon the cross: His “heel” was bruised on the cross when He suffered and died for the sins of the world. Satan’s “head,” his power, was destroyed by our Lord’s victory. Anyone who believes in Jesus Christ no longer belongs to Satan, nor does he have to yield to Satan’s power. At the second advent of Christ, the remainder of Satan’s judgment will be executed.

Now, although victory was provided at the cross, experientially it must be claimed by faith. We must know and believe that Jesus Christ made victory possible for all time when He died for our sins. God provided two sources of power for the believer to use in order to resist temptation: the power of the Word and the power of the

Holy Spirit. Christ Himself showed us how to use these weapons of victory when He was personally tempted by Satan, for He depended entirely upon the Spirit and effectively used the Word of God to rout the enemy.

Two principles will be taught in this chapter: deliverance from the power of Satan through the use of the Word, and victory over sin and the sin nature through the power of the Holy Spirit. No attempt has been made to give all the details and implications of the temptations of Christ as this would detract from the main purpose of the chapter—to teach children how they can use the Word of God to overcome temptation.

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: deceit, deliverance, lust, pride, tempter
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Victory accomplished at the cross:
 - 1) “Now judgment is upon this world [through the cross]; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out [bruising of Satan’s head]” (John 12:31; 16:11).
 - 2) “Surpassing greatness of His power . . . which He brought about in Christ” (Eph. 1:19–20).
 - 3) “Delivered us from the domain of darkness” (Col. 1:13).
 - 4) He “disarmed the rulers and authorities [Satan and his angels]” and “triumphed over them through Him [through the cross]” (Col. 2:15).
 - 5) “Through death He might render powerless [bring to naught] him who had the power of death [Satan]” (Heb. 2:14).
 - b. Experiential victory through use of the Word:

- 1) “My word . . . accomplishing what I desire” (Isa. 55:11).
- 2) You do not understand “the Scriptures, or the power of God” (Matt. 22:29).
- 3) The Gospel of Christ is the power of God (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23).
- 4) “God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able” but “will provide the way of escape” (1 Cor. 10:13).
- 5) “In the word of truth, in the power of God [Holy Spirit]” (2 Cor. 6:7a).
- 6) Take “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17b).
- 7) “Word of His power” (Heb. 1:3).
- 8) “He Himself was tempted . . . He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted” (Heb. 2:18).
- 9) Unskillful in the Word (Heb. 5:13).

- 10) “The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation” (2 Pet. 2:9).
- 11) “From His mouth comes a sharp sword” (Rev. 19:15).

E. *Source Book* Keywords: Christ (temptations), deliverance from sin, sin, sin nature, soul, sword

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: none
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: “For the Word of God is alive and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb. 4:12, corrected translation)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE “IT IS FINISHED”

Is there anything left for God to do for our salvation? No, salvation is all done, isn’t it? When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). Salvation was complete. Jesus did all the work. Why did Jesus have to do all the work? Why could we not help a little bit? Jesus had to do all the work because we were “dead in sin” and could do nothing to save ourselves.

Jesus died for all because all are sinners. Does this mean that all people are saved? No, only those who have received His free gift of salvation are saved. At the moment we receive salvation by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven and blotted out, and we receive new life. We are put in Christ forever. Now, our salvation lasts as long as we don’t sin—right? No! How long does our salvation last? Forever and ever. How do you know this? That’s right, because God’s Word tells us so. Where does God’s Word tell us that you cannot lose your salvation? In Romans 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

“Sin Shall Not Be Master over You”

Now, we have seen that God has saved you once and for all and has given you eternal life, but what about sin in your life *now*? Even though you are saved and safe in

Christ, you soon discover an awful fact: You still sin! Did you ever notice that? Do you think God cares if you continue sinning after you are saved? Of course! Sin is terrible to Him (Rom. 6:1–2). It is even worse for a believer to sin than for an unbeliever. The unbeliever belongs to Satan anyway, so salvation, not sin, is the issue. But the believer is the temple of God the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16); every sin grieves Him (Eph. 4:30) and puts the believer out of fellowship with God.

You surely do not suppose that God would save you, then leave you to grieve the Holy Spirit and live out of fellowship until you get to heaven, do you? Of course not. God’s salvation is not only for the *past* and the *future*, but for the *present* as well. God’s plan includes a way to deliver His children from sins they commit right now. You see, even if you want to very much, it is not easy to keep from sinning. Do you know why? You have some powerful enemies who attack you from within and also from the outside. Your outside enemies are Satan and the world (the thoughts and ideas of the world), while your inside enemy is the sin nature. All three are continually tempting you to sin after you are saved.

How do you keep from yielding or giving in to the attacks and temptations of your enemies? By trying really hard to be good? No, your enemies are stronger than you

are, and they are unseen. Your strength comes from God. He gives you the power to overcome your enemies. Victory over sin in your daily life is a gift from God, just as being saved is a gift. Victory is a part of your salvation. You are promised in God's Word that "sin shall not be master [have rulership] over you" (Rom. 6:14), and that you can "overwhelmingly conquer" your enemies (Rom. 8:37).

For the next three chapters we will study how God has provided this second phase of your salvation—deliverance from the power of sin in your daily life. God has given you two gifts to give you power—the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Whenever you do sin, He has given you rebound in 1 John 1:9 to pick yourself back up. Confession of sin to God the Father restores the first gift, the power of the Holy Spirit in your life, so you can learn and use the second gift, the Word of God. So you see, there is no reason at all for you ever to be defeated by your enemies.

The Bruising of Satan's Head

In the legend of King Arthur and his knights, it was said that the king had a magic sword. It was so wonderful that whenever he had it and used it in battle, he was always victorious. One day, according to the story, the Lady of the Lake had suddenly extended her arm above the surface of the lake. In her hand she held this most unusual sword, all glittering with jewels, called Excalibur, which she asked King Arthur to take. When he obeyed, her arm disappeared back into the lake, leaving the king with the magic sword which would never fail him.

This is just a make-believe story, but you and I really do have a wonderful sword that will never fail us if we will use it. Would you like to see what our sword is called? Then look up Ephesians 6:17: "The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." This sword has as its many jewels God's promises that help to drive Satan away.

Way back in the Garden of Eden, God told Satan his power would be destroyed (Gen. 3:15). The Savior would come, God said, and "bruise" or crush Satan's "head," although at the same time Satan would wound the Savior in the "heel." What ever did God mean by such a strange statement? Have you ever been hit in the head? A strong enough blow can knock you out. By dying on the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ would 'knock out' Satan's power over believers. Those who believe in Christ no longer belong to Satan. He is no longer their head or ruler.

So how would Satan hurt Christ? Well, it is also very painful to get kicked in the heel. Sin caused our Lord excruciating pain as He suffered spiritual death and separation from God the Father on the cross. That is why it is called "bruis[ing] him on the heel." Through the bruising of the heel of Christ at the cross, Satan's head or power was crushed, and he is sentenced to be cast into the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41). Satan can never take believers with him to the lake of fire, for his power over them is broken. Believers belong to God once and for all. When Christ comes back

to earth to rule for a thousand years, Satan will be bound in chains where he cannot harm anyone (Rev. 20:1–3).

Victory Made Available

In the meantime, Satan still has great power and is free to tempt believers to sin, but remember, Jesus has won the victory for you at the cross. All you need to do is to claim this victory by faith. Let us illustrate it this way: Suppose you and your friends in your block build a fort on a vacant lot. Then along come some boys from the next street and chase you out and take your fort away from you. But one of you has a big brother who helps you out. He drives the bullies away. "There's your fort," he says. "Go back and play in it; and if they come again, you tell them that I will come back and help you." He won the victory over the other boys for you, didn't he? But if you want the fort, what must you do? Why, you must believe in your big brother and then go and get in your fort.

Now suppose the boys on the other block try again to take your fort away from you. Your big brother has told you that he will be back to help you every time the boys bother you. When the boys come, all you need to do is to tell them what your brother has said. That is your 'club' over them. Reminding them that your brother will get after them will make them afraid because they know he is stronger than they are.

What God Wants Me to Know

Your big brother taking your place and defending your fort is like what Jesus Christ has done for believers. Satan moved in and took over the world. Sin and death has taken us away from God. But when Jesus died on the cross for sins and rose again, He claimed victory for us. He made it possible for us to belong to God again. Now, whenever Satan comes to tempt you to sin, you have Jesus' Word that He will make Satan run from you when he attacks. Just use your 'club' on him. Tell Satan what Jesus has said, and Satan will run away every time, because Jesus has defeated him and he is afraid of Jesus. God's Word is better than a club. God's Word is a sharp two-edged sword, and with it you can drive away your enemy.

We have used this illustration to show how big a bully Satan is. Perhaps in your life he will use gentler or slyer ways to get you to sin. You will have to be on the lookout for him! In our next lesson we will see some of the ways Satan attacks believers and how we may defeat him with the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17).

You know, the big brother in our illustration chased away the bullies for the little boys because he was a brother. He was related to one of them; he loved his brother and wanted to help him.

How may you be related to God and become a member of His family? The Bible says that "you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26). What is faith? To

believe that something is true. Will you believe that Jesus died for you and wants to be your Savior? If you do, you will be saved and belong to God forever. You will be in His family, and He will take care of you. If you have never done so before, why not tell the Heavenly Father that you are believing in His Son right now, and you will have His power to defeat your unseen spiritual enemies.

Lesson Review

Did God save us and then leave us alone to sin or fail until we get to heaven? Not at all. How does His plan of salvation take care of that? Salvation is in the present, as well as past and future. God's plan includes deliverance from sin now. Where did the Lord Jesus make victory over sin possible? At the cross. Jesus Christ had to suffer and die for the sins of the world. But He did not stay dead. Satan did not have any power over Him. Jesus "was pierced through [died]" (Isa. 53:5) once for our sins, then He arose victorious. Whose power did Jesus destroy? Satan's. Someday Jesus will come back, and Satan will be put away in chains.

How do we claim the victory Jesus won for us over sin and Satan? By faith. Faith must be in something or someone. Whom must we believe or have faith in for salvation? The Lord Jesus Christ. When we believe in Jesus Christ, we no longer belong to Satan. He can never get us back or take us with him to the lake of fire. What must we believe or have faith in to keep from sinning? God's Word.

Memory Verse

"For the Word of God is alive and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12, corrected translation)

LESSON TWO THE TEMPTATION TO GO AGAINST THE WORD

The book *The Shining Sword* (Charles G. Coleman, Loizeaux Bros., N.Y.) tells the story of perhaps the greatest single, hand-to-hand combat ever fought in history. I am going to tell you this story; see if you can recognize what this battle was. Ready?

Just before the Lord, the King of Righteousness, started out into the world to conquer the forces of sin and evil, the King of Evil challenged Him to a duel. The Evil One knew that the Lord was coming to destroy sin, and so he had prepared some deadly weapons with which to attack first. The Lord carried only the weapons which He provides for His own soldiers today. The Evil One waited and watched for the right moment to attack. That moment came soon after the Lord was baptized, and the Holy Spirit had led Him into a desert. One of the weapons of the Son of God against evil is prayer. Jesus spent forty days and nights sharpening up this weapon. Prayer is a powerful weapon, but it is of no value unless sharpened by use. God's weapons are the only weapons that become sharper and brighter with use.

Strengthened by prayer for the great spiritual battle He was soon to face, the Lord, nevertheless, was hungry and

weak, for He had a human body like yours and mine. And now entered the devil with his first weapon, the fiery dart of hunger. This evil fiend attacked with all the cleverness and cunning of which he was capable. But our Savior stood firm and steady, turning each blow away with the shield of faith (Eph. 6:16) and with the sharp, flaming two-edged sword which went forth from His mouth (Heb. 4:12; Rev. 19:15).

Then the devil produced more and even deadlier weapons—a sharp, pointed spear of pride and a powerful club of evil desire or lust. The devil even had his own type of two-edged sword, a clever copy of the Lord's sword, which shot out as a flame from his mouth, but underneath were cleverly hidden, jagged edges of deceit. In this great hand-to-hand battle the fate of millions of souls stood in the balance.

Never did the sword of the Lord shine so brightly and pierce so sharply as that day when the King of Evil challenged the King of Righteousness. Although Satan fought with everything he could command, he was driven back, slowly but surely. At last he was completely beaten. The Lord put down His sword, proclaiming victory, and said to His enemy, "Begone, Satan!" The devil, knowing he was

defeated and his doom was sure, slunk away—but not to give up!

Do you know what this battle was? Yes, the time when Satan came to tempt the Lord Jesus Christ to sin in the wilderness. Let's turn to Matthew 4:1–11 where our story is found.

Facing the Enemy

Satan knows that believers have volition and do not have to choose to do what he says. That does not keep Satan from tempting them to see whether he can get them to choose to sin and disobey God's Word. Whenever you make any decision for Christ or take a stand for Him, you will be tested. If you learn to use the weapons God has provided, you will grow strong (Eph. 6:10). If you give in to the temptations and sin, you will become a weak believer. The battle Jesus Christ faced with Satan shows us how we also may overcome Satan's temptations and become strong in the Lord (Rom. 15:4).

Matthew 4:1 says, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." Part of the plan made by God the Father in eternity past was for His Son, Jesus, to use the power and guidance of God the Holy Spirit while on earth, rather than His own. Now, according to the plan, the Holy Spirit led Jesus to a lonely desert spot to be tempted by Satan.

"And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry" (Matt. 4:2). Here in the desert, Jesus fasted for forty days and nights. This means that He was praying and thinking about God's Word instead of eating. He was sharpening up His weapons for the battle to come. Did you ever think that prayer and Bible study were more important than your breakfast? If prayer and Bible study were this important to the Lord Jesus to give Him strength, how much more important are they for you and me to face the battles of life! You need more than "Wheaties" for breakfast; you need to learn the Word of God and to pray in order to become a "champion." Satan planned his attack when Jesus was physically weak. Satan did not know that prayer and Bible study gave Jesus more mental strength than food.

The Temptation to Do a Right Thing in a Wrong Way

"And the tempter came and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.' But He answered and said, 'It is written, "MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD"' (Matt. 4:3–4). What is Satan called in verse 3? The tempter. He is called this because he so cleverly uses his power to tempt believers to sin and do wrong. The Lord Jesus Christ did not have an inside enemy, a sin nature, as you and I have, but He did have the same outside enemies, Satan and the world. Satan thought that while Jesus was in a human body and weak

with hunger he could trick the Son of God into sinning. If Jesus did even one little sin, He would not be qualified to go to the cross and bear the sins of the world. Then all of God's plans would be spoiled. Satan would be the winner and able to rule the world forever. But Jesus did not sin. God allowed our Savior to be tested to show *us* how to overcome the temptations of the devil.

All the time Jesus was praying and thinking about God's Word, His enemy, Satan, was watching. He made note of the fact that Jesus did not eat once in all the forty days and nights. Satan began the attack by throwing out a flaming arrow of hunger. "If You are the Son of God," he said, "command that these stones become bread." Didn't Satan know that Jesus is the Son of God? Yes, Satan knew. That is why he suggested Jesus make the stones into bread, because only God could do that, and surely He must be awfully hungry after forty days and nights of just praying and meditating on the Word!

This shows you how deadly Satan's weapons are and how clever his temptations. The devil was really saying, "Since You are the Son of God, why do You have to bother about following God the Father's plan or using the power of the Spirit while You are down here on earth? You are as great as they are—do what You want; perform a miracle for Yourself!" As God, Jesus Christ could certainly turn stones into bread and satisfy His hunger. Would it be sin? Yes, because according to the Father's plan, Jesus was not to use His power for Himself.

Satan was tempting Jesus to do a right thing in a wrong way. We, too, are tempted to serve God (a right thing) in our own strength (the wrong way). What kind of 'good' is it when we pray or give or witness without being filled with the Spirit? Yes, human good. Is that acceptable to God? No, only what we do in the power of the Spirit is acceptable to God. Jesus came, not only to give us eternal life, but to teach us how to "overwhelmingly conquer" sin in Satan's world (Rom. 8:37). As a man like us, He was going to show us how we can use the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

So Jesus Christ answered, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD'" (Matt. 4:4). Where is this written? Turn to Deuteronomy 8:3: "And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD." Jesus knew what the Bible said, for its words are His words (1 Cor. 2:16). Jesus' body was too weak with hunger to defeat Satan, but God's Word is "alive and powerful." Jesus knew it; He believed it; and He used it. His "shield of faith" was up and the flaming sword of God's Word beat off the first attack. Satan's arrow fell harmlessly to the ground.

If Jesus had made bread of the stones and eaten them, He would have sinned and lost the battle. But the plan of

God was for Him to go to the cross, and nothing else mattered; whether He was hungry or weak—the Father and Holy Spirit would take care of that! He would get food at the proper time, and He did (Matt. 4:11). Jesus must be sure that nothing kept Him from going to the cross. God’s plan was more important to Him than eating!

Facing the Same Temptation in Your Life

Do you ever want something so badly that you think you would do anything to get it? One of Satan’s most powerful darts against believers is to get them to worry about the details and problems of life (1 Pet. 5:7–9). “How will I get this? What will happen tomorrow? Where will we get the money?” If you know God’s Word, you know the answer: “And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:19). God is “able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think” (Eph. 3:20a). “Do not be anxious [don’t worry] for your life, *as to* what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you shall put on . . . for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you” (Matt. 6:25–33). Do you know what you are saying when you worry? “God can’t take care of me. God won’t treat me in grace.” Why, you are doubting the grace of God! Now, are you going to rely on yourself or on God’s provision? Are you going to win or lose your spiritual battle?

Satan can tempt you to worry, to be afraid, and to think God cannot take care of you or your problems. When Satan convinces you to doubt God, you are a badly defeated Christian. You lose your happiness and you lose your power, because worry is a sin. You pick yourself up by using rebound (1 John 1:9), naming your worry or fear, and this way you can ward off the blows which come thick and fast when you’re down. When you bounce back up, you must start learning and believing the Word of God again in order to be victorious in your battle with Satan. Then you can use the Word of God as a sword, just as Jesus did. He nicked Satan in a vital spot, and so can you; then Satan will have to draw back.

The Temptation to Go against God’s Word

Satan had another weapon all prepared, a cheap but deadly imitation of the Lord’s own weapon—a sword. He took Jesus to the top of the Temple in Jerusalem, 450 feet high (Matt. 4:5). Anyone falling from there would surely be dashed to pieces below. Again Satan said, “If You are [since You are] the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written [uh, oh, Satan is using God’s Word], ‘HE WILL GIVE HIS ANGELS CHARGE CONCERNING YOU’; and ‘ON *their* HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, LEST YOU STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE’” (Matt. 4:6). But there was something wrong here. Satan’s ‘sword’ had some jagged

edges of deceit! Satan quoted Psalm 91:11–12 but he carefully left out the line, “To guard you in all your ways [journey].” This passage was originally written for the Jews as they traveled through very dangerous desert terrain. These verses promised them protection against accidents and wild animals. By twisting the meaning of Scripture and quoting it out of context, Satan made his argument appear true when it was false. He attempted to get Jesus to go against God’s Word and do something it did not say.

There are times when God does not promise us protection. One of those times is when we do not obey His Word. If you decide to jump off a cliff and kill yourself, does God promise to keep you from getting hurt? No! And He did not promise Jesus this either. It was God’s will that Jesus die on the cross—even the angels were not to help Him then. If Jesus had jumped down from the Temple at Satan’s command, Jesus would have been killed and could not have gone to the cross. How Jesus’ sword flashed as He told Satan what God’s Word really said: “It is written, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST’” (Matt. 4:7).

What God Wants Me to Know

Satan would like to tempt you to use the Word of God deceitfully, just as he did when he tempted Christ. How can you misuse the Word? You can say a verse means something it does not mean because you have not read what went before or after. You would not do that with any other book, would you? But this is Satan’s trick which he uses very effectively with many people to tempt them to do something that the Word does not really say to do.

There are so many ways Satan tempts us to use God’s Word wrongly. Some boys and girls use 1 John 1:9 wrongly. I have heard some say, “Oh, I can do anything I want, as long as I confess it!” This is adding to and twisting God’s Word, just as Satan did! God is not going to let believers get by with doing anything they want, any more than your parents let you get by with doing anything you want. He has very effective ways to discipline His children.

In 2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV), we are told to rightly divide the word of truth. How does the verse say we are to do it? By studying God’s Word carefully. You must learn the Word line upon line, doctrine (truths) upon doctrine, so that you will not distort God’s Word and make the Scripture say something it doesn’t mean. One of the most evil things Satan does is to twist the Word so that unbelievers get mixed up and do not know how to be saved. Satan adds to the Word through religion when the Bible is taught by false teachers. Religion says, “Oh, yes, believe—believe and be baptized; believe and join our church; believe and do this; believe and do that!” If you ever hear a teacher say anything like that you know he is a false teacher teaching Satan’s religion and adding to God’s Word.

The Bible says the way of salvation is to believe in Jesus Christ (Acts 16:31)—period! If you are trusting in anything else for salvation, you are not saved. Why not be

sure right now that you believe in Jesus Christ and Him alone for your salvation?

Lesson Review

After reviewing our memory verse, we should also take another look at the first two temptations of Jesus Christ. Let's chart them and include how our Lord's victory can be applied to our own lives.

Memory Verse

"For the Word of God is alive and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12, corrected translation)

TEMPTATIONS OF CHRIST					
SCRIPTURE	THE TEMPTATION BY SATAN	ATTACKED	THE TEST FOR JESUS	JESUS' SOLUTION	APPLICATION TO MY LIFE
Matthew 4:2-4 "Command that these stones become bread"	To do a right thing in a wrong way by using His power to benefit Himself	The grace of God and the provision of the Holy Spirit	He must decide whether to use His own power or depend on the power of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit	God's Word was more important to Him than food (Matt. 4:4)	I should not rely on myself but on God's provision (Zech. 4:6b)
Matthew 4:5-7 "Throw Yourself down"	To go against God's Word by distorting the meaning of Scripture	The Word of God	He had to know God's Word and then use it	Jesus told Satan what God's Word really said (Matt. 4:7)	I must study and learn God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15)

LESSON THREE THE TEMPTATION TO BYPASS THE CROSS

You remember Satan had his weapons all sharpened to use in his battle with the Lord. He had a fiery dart of hunger and a sword with jagged edges of deceit. Along with these he also had a spear of pride which he kept using against the Lord, much like a fighter with a dagger. He kept jabbing, jabbing, trying to get Him off balance so that he could close in for the kill. Twice Satan had said, "If [since] You are the Son of God" (Matt. 4:3, 6). Satan was really suggesting that the Lord Jesus ought to have some pride: "Don't you want to prove to us all that you really are the Son of God? Don't you want people to see that you are all-powerful?"

Did you ever feel like showing off to prove to someone how good you are? That was Satan's sin. He wanted to be

as great as God. He thought too much of himself. He wanted to show all the other angels he could take God's place. If Satan had not been so puffed up with pride, he might have known that he could not be omniscient and omnipresent and omnipotent like God, let alone be holy and righteous.

The Lord especially hates pride (Prov. 6:16-17). What does "pride" mean? It means to think more highly of yourself than you ought. When you are all swelled up with pride, it is so easy to be knocked over by the jagged edges of deceit of Satan's false words. So often boys and girls say, "Oh, I know all that," when they really do not know it at all. That is the time when Satan can defeat you. But Jesus was not hit by pride so He was not off-balance when

Satan attacked Him. Instead, Jesus knocked the spear from Satan's hands. Will Satan give up? Not yet! He had one more weapon to try—a big club of evil desire or lust.

The Temptation to Bypass the Father's Plan, Matthew 4:8–11

Satan himself wants more than anything to be ruler of heaven and earth and to have great power and glory. "Surely," he thought, "Jesus Christ has these same desires." Satan is jabbing again with the spear of pride! At this time Satan was ruling the world, and he still is (John 14:30). At the fall of Adam, Satan gained the kingdoms of the earth, and God is letting him rule for a while. Now, if Jesus would just bow down to him, Satan could be even greater—greater than God!

"Again, the devil took Him [Jesus] to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory [beauty or glamor]" (Matt. 4:8). "All these things will I give You, if You fall down and worship me," Satan offered (Matt. 4:9). From way up there I imagine all the cities of the world did look beautiful, just as when you look down from an airplane. You do not see the ugly things, the sickness and sadness and sin. But Jesus Christ could see all this sinfulness, and this is why He must go to the cross. One day God the Father will give Him all the earth to rule (Ps. 2); but before that happens, Christ must die for the sins of the world. This was God's plan made in eternity past. The cross must come before the crown! To become king and ruler of the earth right then would mean He would have to forget the cross.

This was a very real temptation because the thought of going to the cross and bearing our sins was repugnant to the Lord Jesus. Yet, do you think Jesus ever had an evil desire to rule at a time when it was not God's plan? Never (Heb. 12:2–3)! With a mighty thrust with the sword of the Word, Jesus struck Satan the final blow that sent him slinking off. "Begone, Satan!" Jesus warned him, "For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY'" (Matt. 4:10). Satan is a created being, and creatures are never to be worshiped. God gave Moses this commandment when the Word of God was first put into writing (Ex. 20:3–5).

How You May Serve Only God

Is it possible to serve Satan? Yes—and you do not have to do evil to serve him. You do Satan's work when you are doing human good. Human good is Satan's plan to imitate divine good. Remember, you can only produce divine good by serving God in the filling of the Holy Spirit. How then does Satan carry out his plan? By getting you into a religious program or activity. Forget the Word of God! Just do good! But when Jesus said, "It is written," these words represented all the power of God. His Word is as powerful as Himself, and His Word is our power to use. Just as Christ

claimed the promise that He would rule according to God's plan, so we claim the promise that when we are filled with the Spirit and learning the Word, we will do divine good.

What God Wants Me to Know

Our memory verse, Hebrews 4:12, says that "the Word of God is alive and powerful." This means that God's Word works when you use it. And it is "sharper than any two-edged sword." In the day this was written, the two-edged sword was a most unusual weapon. Before this, swords, the main weapon of the soldier, had only one sharp edge. The soldier could cut with one edge, but while he was bringing back his sword to cut again, the enemy could throw him off balance and make it much easier to kill him. With the invention of two sharp edges, the soldier could swing both ways without getting off balance and he was therefore much more protected.

No matter how good your weapon might be, to use it properly requires knowledge, training, and practice. It is quite an art to use the sword well. There are many techniques of handling the sword, such as the thrust or pierce, the slash, and the parry (warding off a blow). There are techniques for using the Word of God, too. But first you must have a period of training before you can begin to use the Word correctly. Your training comes at home, in Bible class—wherever you are taught the Word. Then, just as God allowed the Lord Jesus to be tested, so you may also be tested.

Perhaps you will face a test right after your lesson. Maybe one of your pals will say to you, "My dad says the Bible isn't all true. There are a lot of things wrong in it." What should you say? First, look at the next phrase in your memory verse: "piercing even to the dividing asunder [separating] of the soul and the spirit." The Word of God has the power to pierce into your very soul and human spirit with its truth. You can argue and call your pal names, but that will not help him. In fact, that will just get you out of fellowship! You need to pierce his mind with the Word of God. As you are filled with the Spirit and give him the Gospel, God's Word will show him he is a sinner and needs salvation. Start with Romans 3:23, followed by John 3:16 or 20:31 and Acts 16:31. Always remember, it is God's Word that does all the work, not your words.

What is the difference between the soul and the human spirit? Everyone has a soul, because that is the real, inner you by which you think and can understand the world around you. Remember, your soul has self-consciousness (you know you are alive), mentality (you can think), volition (you can make decisions), and conscience (you have certain guides or standards).

Does everyone have a human spirit? No, only believers. The human spirit allows us to understand God and learn His Word. Now, as you learn God's Word, doctrine is stored in your soul, like storing food on your kitchen shelves. Then when you need the food, it is ready to use. If

you have God's Word stored in your soul, it too will be there ready for use.

How do you use God's Word? Through your soul. What you have learned comes from your human spirit into your soul as you believe the Word. Then the different parts of your soul use what you have learned. Your self-consciousness becomes centered in the Lord Jesus Christ rather than in yourself; your mentality or thoughts think divine viewpoint or God's thoughts; your volition decides for God and His way; and your conscience can judge or understand things correctly. Now with God's Word in your soul, your sin nature is powerless and will not control you.

Satan has many ways to tempt you to sin. He can make you think it is more fun to go his way and enjoy his world than to go God's way and love serving God. When sometimes you think to yourself, "Don't believe God's Word; don't study it—that's no fun!" you can be sure that is a temptation from the old devil. If you have verses and promises and doctrines stored up in your soul, you can cut Satan down by bringing them to mind—verses like Matthew 24:35 and Psalm 16:11.

What does the rest of Hebrews 4:12 say? "And of the joints and the marrow." These are inner parts of your body, which must work smoothly if you are to have a healthy life. You must also have the Word of God inside if you are to be a spiritually healthy Christian. God's Word is able to heal any of your spiritual ailments and problems.

"And is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Bible can show you whether your thoughts are pleasing to God or not. When you are worried or afraid, Satan has defeated you. You bounce back again by using 1 John 1:9 and any other verse or doctrine you need. Now your sword will pierce and slash and parry all the enemy's attacks. You do not even have to do the fighting yourself. You hold up the sword by knowing God's Word and bringing His words to your mind at the right times. The Lord will win the battle for you: "'And they will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you,' declares the LORD" (Jer. 1:19).

We do not have exactly the same temptations that the Lord Jesus had, for He is God; but we do have many temptations, and we overcome them just the way He did. We prepare for combat with prayer (Eph. 6:18), and press the attack by the powerful and living Word. And like King Arthur's legendary sword, our weapon, too, will never fail!

Our sword is also called the "sword of the Spirit," because the Holy Spirit helps us to learn God's Word, and then He brings to our minds what we have learned when we need it. Our next chapter will teach us how to use the Holy Spirit's power for victory over sin.

Perhaps God's Word today has pierced your heart or mind, and you realize that you do not belong to God. You realize you are still in Satan's kingdom. The Bible tells us that "the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation," but He also knows how "to keep the unrighteous [unbeliever] under punishment for the day of judgment" (2 Pet. 2:9).

Wouldn't you like to break Satan's power over you by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ? That is why Christ died (Heb. 2:14–15). The Gospel of Christ is the "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16).

Lesson Review

From what do we need to be saved, besides the penalty of sin? Yes, from sin in our lives now. Why do believers sin after they are saved? Because we have enemies who constantly try to tempt us to sin. What enemy have we studied? Satan. How did the death of Christ on the cross make it possible for us to have victory over Satan? (1) Jesus Christ's victory on the cross destroyed the power of Satan. (2) Believers have the Word of God to defeat Satan.

In what way is Satan's power destroyed? All who believe in Christ no longer belong to Satan, and so they do not have to do what he says. Can you tell me how Jesus used the Word to defeat Satan? By applying the Bible verses and doctrines in His soul. Suppose you give in to the temptations of Satan and choose to sin. What should you do to get back on the victory side? Rebound—use 1 John 1:9.

Now that our chart below is complete, we can review all three temptations of Christ.

In our next chapter we are going to learn about another enemy and the power we have to help us defeat it.

Memory Verse

"For the Word of God is alive and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a critic of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12, corrected translation)

TEMPTATIONS OF CHRIST					
SCRIPTURE	THE TEMPTATION BY SATAN	ATTACKED	THE TEST FOR JESUS	JESUS' SOLUTION	APPLICATION TO MY LIFE
Matthew 4:2–4 “Command that these stones become bread”	To do a right thing in a wrong way by using His power to benefit Himself	The grace of God and the provision of the Holy Spirit	He must decide whether to use His own power or depend on the power of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit	God's Word was more important to Him than food (Matt. 4:4)	I should not rely on myself but on God's provision (Zech. 4:6b)
Matthew 4:5–7 “Throw Yourself down	To go against God's Word by distorting the meaning of Scripture	The Word of God	He had to know God's Word and then use it	Jesus told Satan what God's Word really said (Matt. 4:7)	I must study and learn God's Word (2 Tim. 2:15)
Matthew 4:8–9 “Fall down and worship me”	To bypass the cross and serve Satan	The plan of God	Should He forget the cross and bow to Satan? Then He would rule the world	Jesus obeyed a mandate in the Word to worship and serve God only (Matt. 4:10)	I must be filled with the Holy Spirit to produce divine good and serve God (Eph. 5:18)

Chapter Seven

Saved from the Power of Sin by the Use of the Holy Spirit

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Saved from the Power of Sin by the Use of the Holy Spirit—Exodus 17

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: The Challenge of the Inside Enemy
2. Lesson Two: The Test of Faith, Exodus 17:1–7
3. Lesson Three: The Charge of the Elephant

C. Story Objective:

Salvation for the believer includes deliverance from the power of sin and the sin nature (Rom. 6:1–18; Gal. 2:20; 5:24). Since we are identified with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, we can consider ourselves dead to the sin nature and walk according to our new position in the power of the filling of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:2–4; Eph. 5:18*b*; Col. 3:5–10; 1 John 1:9).

God has given us two sources of power to break the bondage of the sin nature: (1) The Holy Spirit. Rebound results in the filling of the Spirit, which gives the believer the power to live the Christian life. (2) The Word of God. Knowing and applying the Word of God helps to keep the believer from sin and from giving in to the sin nature (Ps. 119:11; Heb. 4:12; James 1:25).

Since God cannot coexist or have any contact with sin, there is a continual struggle within the believer between the Holy Spirit and the sin nature (Rom. 7). Sin in the life results in victory for the sin nature, and the believer under the sin nature's control is carnal (1 Cor. 3:1–3). Spiritual

victory is the result of divine power—the overcoming of sin through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God (Gal. 5:16–21). The outcome of the struggle depends on the volition of the believer. He can choose rebound, claiming the victory already won at the cross, and thereby have the power of the Holy Spirit. Or he can choose to continue in sin, be controlled by the sin nature, and be defeated in his Christian life.

The emphasis of this chapter will be on the struggle between the sin nature and the Holy Spirit within, showing the child, as much as possible within the realm of his own experience, how he may claim the victory available to him.

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: counterattack, strategy, tactics
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Our inside enemy is the sin nature.
 - 1) Bible words for the sin nature:
 - a) “Flesh” (Rom. 7:18; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 2:3)
 - b) “Old self” (Rom. 6:6; Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9)
 - c) “Sin,” in the singular (Rom. 7:14; 1 John 1:8)
 - 2) Characteristics of the sin nature:
 - a) Is “nothing good” (Rom. 7:18)
 - b) Controls your soul (Gal. 5:17)
 - c) Not pleasing to God (Rom. 8:7–8)
 - b. The victory over sin and the sin nature was won at the cross (Rom. 6:6).

- c. There is continual struggle inside the believer between the sin nature and the Holy Spirit (Rom. 7:5–6).
- d. The believer’s power for claiming victory is through:
 - 1) The filling of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18b),
 - 2) Rebound (1 John 1:9),
 - 3) Knowing and believing promises and doctrines of the Word (Heb. 4:12; James 1:25).

E. *Source Book* Keywords: Christ (the Rock, strategic victory), Moses, sin nature

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: Moses
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” (Gal. 5:16)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE THE CHALLENGE OF THE INSIDE ENEMY

V is for victory! When we talk about victory, we are talking about winning something. Where was the victory over sin and Satan won? At the cross. Did you ever hear of a war where victory was won before the battle? Well, this is the only one I know of like that. You know, don’t you, that we as believers are fighting a war? And of course, anyone fighting a war wants to win.

During World War II, Winston Churchill would hold up two fingers in the shape of a ‘V,’ and this became a symbol of victory for the Allies. The Allies hoped they would win their war, and they did. We can hold up the symbol of victory with perfect confidence that we too will win, because Christ made victory possible at the cross. God wants us to win so much that He has already given us the victory. However, we must claim that victory every moment. Looking back on World War II, we can see that the Lord wanted the Allies to win. Perhaps He had already given them the victory. But the Allies still had to go out and fight their enemies and claim victory. They lost some battles and won some, but it was God who caused them to be victorious.

Now, our war is not fought with guns and tanks, airplanes and bombs, because our enemies are unseen. Who are they? Satan and the sin nature. They are spiritual enemies (they are unseen, but nonetheless real), so we must have spiritual weapons with which to fight them. What is our first spiritual weapon for victory against the enemy? The Word of God. Satan was defeated by Christ’s use of the Word of God. We have learned that the Word of God can help us not to be fooled by the tricks of Satan, our outside enemy. Now we want to learn about another weapon we have with which to fight against our enemies.

Our Inside Enemy

It is very important to know all about your enemy. If our army in World War II had gone out to fight the enemy without first finding out who he was, what his strength

was, what his weapons and his ways of fighting or tactics were, we never would have won the war. Suppose we simply assumed that the enemy still fought on horseback, and so we went out to meet his armored divisions with swords and horses? Where would we be today? Gone! Wiped out! We must study our spiritual enemies, too, before we can ever begin to defeat them. That is why we have been learning about the sin nature.

This inside enemy is called in the Bible by various names. The sin nature is called “the flesh” because it resides in our physical body (Rom. 7:18; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 2:3); the “old self” because it is as old as Adam (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9); “sin” to let us know what God thinks of it (Rom. 7:14; 1 John 1:8).

What are the tactics and strengths of the sin nature? In other words, what are its characteristics? Remember, the sin nature has a weak side and a strong side. Evil comes from the weak side and human good from the strong side, but God finds nothing good in either side of the sin nature (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 7:18).

This enemy cannot be changed (Jer. 13:23), so we have to learn how to overcome it. The sin nature lives inside of us and can control our thoughts and actions if we let it. Even though the sin nature is always present, tempting us to sin, we are like the driver of a car—we can turn this way and that way by using our volition to decide which way to go. Whenever we decide to sin we are never pleasing to God (Rom. 8:7–8).

Victory Provided at the Cross

God knew all about how this enemy would try to run your life and keep you from pleasing God. That is why Jesus Christ died for you. Christ won another victory at the cross—this time over the sin nature. A very surprising thing happened when Christ died on the cross—you and I died with Him! I was not there, were you? No, so how

could that be, since I am very much alive, and so are you? This is because of the way God looks at the cross. God sees everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as dying with Him (Rom. 6:3, 8). But it is really our sinful self, the sin nature, not our bodies, that was crucified with Him (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20). Even though our sin nature is still inside of us, God does not look at it as alive, but as crucified with Christ and buried with Him. Our enemy is considered dead and buried by God! He tells us to consider our sin nature as dead and buried, too—just to act as if it were not there (Rom. 6:11).

How can you act as though something were not there when it keeps pestering you and tempting you to sin? Think about the tomb where Christ was buried. It is empty now, isn't it? Christ is no longer in the tomb, for He arose from the dead. God tells us that we arose with Him, but it is not our sinful self that arose. It is our new life in Christ which arose (Rom. 6:4, 8–11). We can now “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4b). Our old life is dead. We have a new way of life!

When you are promoted in school, you leave that grade for good. You would not want to go back to that old grade, would you? You are now in a better, higher grade. God wants us to look at our new life in Christ the same way. We have a better, higher life since we have been saved. Not that we won't sin anymore, for just as the Allies in World War II won some battles and lost some, so we will sin and lose some of our battles with the enemy. But the way has been made for us not to sin, because Christ destroyed the power of the sin nature, as well as the power of Satan. We do not have to obey either one. We have been freed from the power of sin in our lives.

The Inner Struggle

How can we walk in this newness of life? When we received our new life in Christ at salvation, we also received a new power inside of us which is stronger than our deadly enemy, the sin nature. This power is a Person. Who might that be? Yes, God the Holy Spirit. He is a member of the Trinity (Godhead). Do you think that God can live peaceably in the same house with a sin nature? Hardly! Well, what is going to happen, then? A conflict—a battle! That is exactly what is happening inside of you—a warfare is going on all the time, because the Holy Spirit and the sin nature are never at peace with each other (Gal. 5:17). Either one or the other must control your soul.

Now what does this do to you? If you sin, the sin nature is in control; if you confess your sin, God the Holy Spirit is in control and you act like Christ. It depends on the one you allow to ‘win’ inside. Suppose you are out playing, and your mother calls you to come in. “Okay,” you answer, and you really intend to obey. But for some reason—you don't know why—you keep right on playing. Inside, you think, “I'm coming.” But then, you don't want to come. You feel like a rope with someone pulling on each end.

There is a tug of war going on inside of you. Your sin nature is saying, “Stay and play—don't obey.” God the Holy Spirit, who puts a desire in you to do right and not to sin, is saying, “Go in; obey your mother.” Who will win? The one you say “yes” to. If you say “yes” to the sin nature, you will sin. Right away you should confess it, and get the sin nature out of the driver's seat so that the Holy Spirit can control you again. Then remember what the Word says, “Obey your parents” (Eph. 6:1), and you will go the Holy Spirit's way. This is “walk[ing] by the Spirit”: “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16).

What God Wants Me to Know

Of course, an unbeliever cannot walk by the Spirit. Why not? Because the unbeliever does not have the Holy Spirit inside of him. The Holy Spirit must be in you in order for you to walk by means of the Spirit. There is not even much of a warfare going on inside of an unbeliever, because the sin nature is always in control. Oh, sometimes there is a little struggle with the conscience—the part of the soul that is supposed to tell you what is right and what is wrong. But what does the unbeliever have that twists his conscience and causes it to act wrongly? Yes, the sin nature. If the unbeliever does right at all, it is only human good from the sin nature, and, remember, God rejects human good.

Do you know what I mean when I speak of an “unbeliever”? What is an unbeliever? That's right, a person who has not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Why must we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Why do we not just believe in “God” to be saved? Because the Lord Jesus was the one who died for our sins. Your sins would keep you out of heaven, but He took them out of the way on the cross. Now the only thing that stands in the way of you and eternal life is your negative volition. Why not say right now to the Father, “Yes, I believe that Jesus Christ died for me. I believe Him to be my Savior”? At that very minute, you are on the winning side. You have salvation once and for all, and your enemies can never take it away from you.

Lesson Review

1. We have an inside enemy and an outside enemy. The sin nature and Satan. Which one tempts us to sin the most? The sin nature.
2. Why? The sin nature is inside us.
3. Over which enemy did Jesus win the victory at the cross? Both.
4. Does this mean He destroyed the sin nature and killed Satan? No.
5. What did the Lord Jesus actually do? He destroyed their power and made the way for us not to obey them and sin. Before we were saved, we had to obey them whether we wanted to or not. One day both will be destroyed forever.

6. How do we keep from saying “yes” to the sin nature and sinning?
 - a. Remember that Jesus won the victory at the cross and considers the sin nature dead and buried.
 - b. We are to act as though the sin nature were dead, too, and live according to the new life we have in Christ.
7. What are the two powers we have with which to overcome our enemies? The Word and Holy Spirit.
8. How do you use the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome sin? The Holy Spirit puts a desire in you to do right and not to sin.
9. What happens when you sin? The sin nature is in control of your soul.
10. How do you get the Holy Spirit back in control? Confess your sins using 1 John 1:9.
11. Look up and read the following Scripture references and decide to which power or to which enemy the verse is referring: Colossians 3:9 (sin nature); James 1:25 (Word); Philippians 2:13 (Holy Spirit); Romans 7:18 (sin nature); Ephesians 5:18 (Holy Spirit); 2 Timothy 2:26 (Satan); Matthew 4:4 (Word); Mark 7:21 (sin nature); Galatians 5:17 (Holy Spirit and sin nature); 1 John 1:8 (sin nature).

Memory Verse

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” (Gal. 5:16)

LESSON TWO THE TEST OF FAITH, EXODUS 17:1–7

Does God promise His children that they will always have an easy time? No, He does not. Many times the Lord will lead you through very hard things: you may not always have the things you think you need; you might have sickness; you might be lonesome, or in a scary place; you might have to work very hard. But as long as you know you are doing what the Lord wants you to do and you are where He wants you to be, you do not have to be worried.

You see, the Lord lets these hard things come into your life so that your faith in Him will grow strong. He gives you promises and doctrines so that you will know hard things are for your own good and so you will trust Him right through each one to make it come out for the best.

When the children of Israel were delivered from slavery in Egypt and were at last on their way to the land God had promised them, they met with many difficulties out in the desert through which they traveled. God promised to be with them and provide for them every step of the way, just as He promises to be with you and me in our Christian life. Yet every time the Israelites had a problem, every time they were afraid or in a helpless place, instead of using this as a time to trust the Lord, they cried and complained and blamed God for their troubles. Now, if God could do the greatest thing and deliver them from a hopeless slavery, could He not also deliver them from their everyday problems?

Did you know that before you were saved, you also were a slave? Who was your master? You were a slave to

both Satan and the sin nature. Now God has delivered you from sin and slavery. If He did the greatest thing for you at salvation, can He not also help you in the problems that come up in your life and the sins that get you down? Romans 8:32 says, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” You are nodding, “yes.” But do you really believe that promise?

How about that time your brother got something you did not get—what did you do? Become jealous, act whiny, and complain to your mother? How about that time your parents would not let you do something you had your heart set on? Did you feel hatred, then gripe or “blow your top”? Cry, perhaps? How about when you cannot understand your schoolwork, or you think you will not make a good grade or be popular or invited to a certain party? How do you react? With worry?

Remember, we saw how Satan, your outside enemy, tempts you to worry. If he succeeds, what happens? You sin! Sin begins in your mind; and if your sinful thoughts of jealousy, fear, worry, and hatred are not confessed immediately, they become sinful actions, and you start adding sin to sin. Either way, you are out of fellowship with the Lord. And who is controlling your life when you are out of fellowship? That’s right, your inside enemy, the sin nature. How about testing yourself this week to see how you react to these little everyday problems? When something goes wrong or upsets you, check to see whether you think, “The

Lord will take care of this,” or whether you start to cry or complain or lose your temper. If you do the latter, you really do not believe God will do what He has promised, do you? Most sin begins with unbelief.

The children of Israel did not believe what God had promised. During their entire journey, every problem they ran up against produced a mental attitude sin. Today, we find them in a burning hot desert with no water: “And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched in Rephidim: and *there* was no water for the people to drink” (Ex. 17:1, KJV). Now the people have their choice: they can say, “Okay, Lord, you promised to take care of us; let’s see how You’re going to do it!” Or they can get out of fellowship through unbelief. Which will it be? Exodus 17:2 (KJV) says, “Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD?” What do you think they did? Do you know what “chide” means? It means to gripe or complain. And that’s exactly what they did! The complaining was so bad, they tempted the Lord to destroy them!

What else did they do? Read verses 3 and 4: “And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore *is* this *that* thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me.” The children of Israel were picking up stones to kill Moses. Do you know what they should have been picking up? Promises! But no, they got out of fellowship immediately through unbelief; then they added worry and finally bitter complaining. They added sin to sin. God should have struck them dead—that is what they deserved! Instead, God had Moses do something which was to bring to their minds the cross of Christ: “And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel” (Ex. 17:5–6, KJV).

The Solution

Moses was told by the Lord to strike the rock and water would flow from it. This is a picture of our salvation, for just as Moses would take the rod in his hand and strike the jagged rock, so God the Father smote God the Son on the cross for you and me so that all our sins could be forgiven. The cross had not yet taken place, but the children of Israel were learning what the Lord Jesus Christ would do to provide salvation. Remember, the Israelites looked forward to and believed in what He would do on the cross; we look

back to the cross and believe in what He has done. The “rock” pictures Jesus Christ: “And all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:4). The rod was the same one Moses had used in judgment to bring the terrible punishments and plagues upon the Egyptians. The rod of judgment struck the rock, but delivered the people from thirst—people who were completely undeserving!

Essentially, God was saying to the Israelites, as He says to us, “You have no reason to complain. Can’t you keep on trusting Me? If I did the most for you at the cross, what will I do for you now that you are my children? Why, much more than the most!” God never gives us what we deserve. He always treats us in grace. He does not let us get by with our sin, but He lovingly disciplines us in grace.

Did we deserve salvation? Not at all. No one does. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). We should have died for our own sins. But the Lord Jesus took the penalty for us. What was that penalty? Spiritual death. God the Father put all of our sins on His Son. Jesus had no sins of His own. Did He have a sin nature? No, He was born without one. And if He had sinned, He would have received a sin nature, just as Adam did. But Jesus did not sin, and so He could pay the penalty for our sins.

Now, when you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you become one with the Person who has no sin or sin nature. This is the reason you can have victory over sin and the sin nature. Look at it this way: Suppose you throw a string across a river and try to cross it by hanging on to the string. Would the string hold you? No! But suppose you attached the string to a steel cable. Would it hold you then? Yes! You and I are like the string: We are too weak to save ourselves, too weak to keep from sinning after we are saved. But when we believe in Jesus, we are attached to the ‘steel cable’; we have His strength and all the things He has provided for us to live a victorious Christian life, even though we still have the sin nature.

When the water poured out of the rock, the Israelites saw God’s wonderful provision for them. He supplied their need in a miraculous way. This was much more than the most! God has the power to perform miracles in order to provide for His own. For a special reason, God wanted them to remember their salvation and His power and promise to provide for them. He knew that right after this, something would happen which would panic them and make them all want to run back to Egypt.

Up to this time, the children of Israel had faced all kinds of little troubles. These were small compared to the big challenge for which God was preparing them—entering the Promised Land. Have you ever been attacked by hundreds of mosquitoes on a camping trip? They buzz your ears, and you slap at them; they land on your legs, and you swat them! And still they come! Mosquitoes are about the most annoying bugs in the world. Now, if you worry about a few

mosquitoes, think what you would do if there were elephants around!

Well, God prepares us for the charge of the elephant by teaching us how to combat the little mosquitoes which attack every day. If you go to pieces, as did the children of Israel, over every little trouble and every little problem, what ever will you do when the big disaster hits? We are going to see a pretty big catastrophe that hit the Israelites out on that desert; but before we get that far, I want you to see something else about the water that came out of the rock.

What God Wants Me to Know

Turn with me in your Bible to John 7:37: “Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink.’” Jesus said this to a group of Israelites of His day. Do you think they knew what He was talking about? Oh, yes; they knew very well the miracle of the water and the rock back in Moses’ day. They knew how thirsty their forefathers were out on the desert, and that if God had not provided water for them, they would have died. Now those shadow pictures are gone; the real Person is here. Jesus was saying, “I am that Rock, and if you will drink of the living water, you will live eternally!” What is the living water? Yes, salvation. How do you drink of salvation? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Drinking is a word picture of—what? Faith.

Jesus Christ, the God-man-Savior, who had no sin of His own and no sin nature, had come at last to die for the sins of the world. You and I were born with sin and a sin nature because we came from Adam, who handed down his sin nature to us. We must belong to Christ if we are to have victory over our sins and sin nature. Have you made the choice to drink of the living water of salvation by believing in the Rock, Christ Jesus?

If you have, then you must go on to the next verse, John 7:38: “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.’” This says that believers will also have living or life-giving water. We could make a lot of guesses as to what this means, but Jesus did not want us to guess. He explained it in verse 39: “But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Now we understand that the Holy Spirit was to be poured out to all believers after the Lord Jesus died and went back to heaven. Water sometimes pictures the Holy Spirit. Just as the water provided strength for the Israelites, so the Holy Spirit is given to us for strength and power.

Just because the Holy Spirit is living in us does not mean that we are using His power. You can be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ with God the Holy Spirit living in you and still be the sorriest person alive. This depends on whether you are using the power of the Spirit or letting your sin nature control you. You do not need to cry and

complain and fulfill the lusts of “the flesh [sin nature]” (Rom. 13:14); it is up to you to make a decision. Do you believe what God says, or do you not? It is that simple!

Lesson Review

What will cause the sin nature to control your life? Sin. When does the Holy Spirit control you? When all known sins are confessed. What about sins you do not know you have committed? God forgives those sins when you confess the ones you know. Now I am going to ask you some “If” questions. Which one, the sin nature or the Holy Spirit, controls you if . . . ?

1. You tell your mother “I’m coming” when she calls, but you keep on playing? The sin nature: disobedience.
2. You cannot think about anything except whether the new girl or new boy will invite you to her or his party? The sin nature: worry.
3. You get a poor grade on a test and do not get upset although you really studied hard? The Holy Spirit.
4. You are tempted to skip your chores one day? The Holy Spirit—being tempted is not sin, but giving in to temptation is sin.
5. Everything seems to go wrong: You break your favorite toy; you spill a glass of milk; you tear your shirt; and you have to babysit your little sister instead of playing? The Holy Spirit if you apply a verse like Romans 8:28; the sin nature if you complain.
6. Your brother told you to pretend you did not hear your mother call, so you did what he told you (after all, it was *his* fault!)? The sin nature; each person uses his own volition to sin and is responsible for his own decisions.
7. You got lost in the mall and were so afraid you began to cry hysterically and run every which way? The sin nature: fear.
8. You want a new bicycle because your friend got one? The sin nature: jealousy.

Memory Verse

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” (Gal. 5:16)

LESSON THREE

THE CHARGE OF THE ELEPHANT

Have you ever wondered why the men in military service must learn to march together in perfect order? Why must there be no stragglers and no slowpokes? In actual combat situations, stragglers can easily be killed by the enemy. Drill sergeants seem harsh and cruel at times, but this is for the purpose of saving lives. The men who are in combat training must go on long, difficult forced marches, sometimes in freezing cold weather and sometimes in the burning hot sun. Often the weaker men will drop behind or pass out. The sergeant does not go back to help them; they just lie there until they can get enough strength to go on.

Now in an actual battle, there is no time to pick up weak ones. In training, the weak men soon learn that they must build their strength if they are to survive. Why are some men weaker than others? Often it is because they have not eaten proper food or they have not exercised to build up their strength. In the Christian life there are strong and weak believers, too. What makes a strong believer? He has fed on the Word of God and has done his spiritual exercises regularly. What are some of these spiritual exercises? Two very important exercises are claiming or believing the promises and doctrines of the Word, and praying. If you do not feed daily on God's Word and exercise faith in the Scriptures, you will become desperately weak spiritually. Then what will happen? Your enemies will pick you off!

The Israelites of the Old Testament are pictures of believers today. Their enemies are pictures of our spiritual enemies. The story of their life on this earth is the story of our soul-life. The story we are going to study from God's Word is an extraordinarily exciting incident in the lives of the children of Israel, as well as a perfect picture of our spiritual battle. It is found in Exodus 17:8–16.

You might say that the Israelites were on a "forced march" from Egypt to the Promised Land. It was a hard march because the desert was very hot and they were not equipped with field kitchens, GI shoes, or supply trucks. Yet they actually had something far better. They had the promises of God. Whatever they would need, He would supply. Many armies cut off from their supplies have been forced to surrender or starve. But God promised the children of Israel this would never happen to them.

There was a cloud to cover them from the burning sun; there was water from the rock; their shoes never wore out; and God regularly sent food from heaven in the form of manna. Manna had all the vitamins a person would need to be strong and healthy. God told them to gather the manna and eat it for strength to keep up on the march. Perhaps

some were lazy, or perhaps they wanted to sleep in, so they did not go out early in the morning and gather up their food for the day. Then when they began to march, they lagged behind or fainted.

Do you know any boys and girls who would have done that? I do. I know some who do that with their Bible food. They are too lazy to study it at home, or to go to class to learn it. What is going to happen to them? Well, we shall see.

God had been preparing Israel by allowing many little problems to come up along their journey—little annoying difficulties, like mosquitoes! He had shown them that He could and would take care of all these problems. If He had done the greatest thing by saving them, would He not now do much more than the most? Now we read in Exodus 17:8, "Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim." Who was Amalek? They were actually a wandering tribe of desert people, named for the grandson of Esau. These Amalekites came along just at the time the Israelites were upset and in great distress. The Amalekites began to fight the Israelites to try to keep them from continuing their journey to the Promised Land. Uh, oh! The "charge of the elephant"! God had not told them they would have to fight enemies along the way! Do you know why? Many of them would have been so afraid they would never have left Egypt.

I want you to see the strategy and tactics of this enemy. Turn to Deuteronomy 25:17–18: "Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God." They were very sneaky fighters. They attacked from the rear of the column and picked off the weak and feeble people first who were straggling behind. No doubt the Amalekites made off with all the possessions of the weak and straggling Israelites after they killed them.

What will Moses do? Will he say, "Oh, if those slow ones can't keep up, they're getting just what they deserve"? No, Moses called his general, Joshua, and ordered a counterattack, a plan to fight back. "Choose men," he commanded, "and go out and fight the Amalekites." Joshua obeyed, but whether he won the battle or not did not depend on him. The victory of the Israelites depended on what Moses did during the battle: "So Moses said to Joshua, 'Choose men for us, and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.' And Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses,

Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed” (Ex. 17:9–11).

The Staff of Power

Moses and two of his helpers, Aaron and Hur, went to the top of a hill. In his hand Moses held his staff, the same staff or rod with which he had struck the rock. What else had Moses done with this staff? Why, he had stretched it out at God’s command in Egypt, and amazing things had happened! Miracles! With it he had turned water to blood and caused frogs, lice, and flies to appear. Once God had told Moses to cast his staff on the ground (Ex. 4:1–4); when Moses obeyed, do you know what it became? A poisonous, wriggling snake! Moses wanted to run, but God told him to pick it up by the tail. As he did, it became a staff again.

This was a staff of divine power and judgment. With it Moses performed miracles for the Israelites and brought judgment to the Egyptians. The staff had struck the rock and delivered the people from thirst. When the Israelites saw Moses’ staff raised, they remembered God’s power. The staff was a sign of victory already won for the Israelites! Now here is a battle again. Will they win? Where will they get their power to win? The Israelites are not trained fighting men. They have been slaves for four hundred years. Moses is going to show them how to win the battle. He will hold up the staff—the staff of power for the Israelites, but the staff of judgment for the enemy.

“So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed” (Ex. 17:11). As long as Moses held up the staff, Joshua’s army would drive away the enemy. But poor Moses’ arms would grow tired, and he would have to bring them down and rest them. What happened then? Amalek began to drive back Joshua’s army, and Joshua fought a losing battle. But when Moses’ hands were lifted high again, Joshua enjoyed the victory God won for him. Finally, Moses’ helpers had an idea: “But Moses’ hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set” (Ex. 17:12). They seated Moses on a stone; then each one held up one of his hands until evening came. Now Joshua had an easy victory. He and his army drove back the enemy with their swords: “So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword” (Ex. 17:13). Although they did not kill all the enemy, the Amalekites were defeated. But they would come back time and again to trouble Israel (Num. 14:42–45).

Have you discovered yet what Amalek pictures in your spiritual life? Amalek was an enemy. What enemy do you think he is like? Do you remember which one is constantly at war within us? The sin nature. This enemy sneaks up when you are not expecting it and keeps you from the promised

victory over sin, just as Amalek tried to keep the Israelites out of the Promised Land. The sin nature hits when you are faint or tired, when you are dragging your feet spiritually—the times that you forgot to confess your sins, forgot to pray or read or study your Bible or claim promises, or when you did not go to Bible class. Then you are defeated and useless for the Lord and living like an unbeliever.

Our Victory

After the battle, the Lord told Moses to write down that one day God would completely destroy the Amalekites (Ex. 17:14; Deut. 25:19). Then Moses built an altar. What would this speak of? The cross. Victory was first won at the cross, but we must be saved before the victory is ours. If you have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the sin nature is your master, and you cannot help but do what it wants. When you are born again, you receive the Holy Spirit who is more powerful than the sin nature.

Moses called the altar “The LORD is My Banner” (Ex. 17:15). Today we would say, “Christ is our victory.” Moses called the altar this because the Lord had said that although they would have war with Amalek from generation to generation, they could always have victory so long as they used God’s power: “And he said, ‘The LORD has sworn; the LORD will have war against Amalek from generation to generation’” (Ex. 17:16). Our power is the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, and even though the sin nature is always around to attack our spiritual lives, we will not sin if we know how to use this power.

God’s Order Concerning the Amalekites

About four hundred years later, God gave King Saul orders to destroy *all* of Amalek (1 Sam. 15:1–9). God said that there was no good in Amalek. Oh, no doubt the Amalekites may have done some good things, but they were enemies of God’s people, wicked and deceitful, always scheming to kill some of the Israelites. King Saul went out to fight them, as God had ordered, but he disobeyed God and spared the best of the Amalekites: their king, their sheep and oxen. Later King Saul was actually killed by an Amalekite (2 Sam. 1:1–10). The Israelites might spare some of these enemies, but the Amalekites never spared any of the Israelites. God knew this, so He swore that He would have war against the Amalekites in every generation.

We may see some good in people’s sin natures, but remember, it is human good (Isa. 64:6) and cannot please God. The sin nature is desperately sick and deceitful (Jer. 17:9) and will get you to sin every time your volition gives it a chance.

What God Wants Me to Know

Has your sin nature been giving you trouble lately? Do you grumble and whine like the Israelites? Are you hateful

and mean to your brothers and sisters? Are you selfish and want everything for yourself? Disobedient to your parents? Unhappy, unthankful? Do you disturb others in class because you want to be noticed? Your volition is giving in to your sin nature. And your sin nature is as dangerous as a poisonous snake. There is no need to run from the sin nature by pretending you did not think or do any of these things. You can't get away from it. You are to do what Moses did—pick up that snake of a sin nature by the tail. This means to get right with the problem. Rebound—admit your sins to God the Father. Hold up the staff!

But, you say, I don't have a staff like Moses did! Oh, yes, you do! Moses' staff was a symbol of divine power, just as making the sign of the "V" was a symbol of victory. What is your power today? The Holy Spirit. You use this power through the rebound principle of 1 John 1:9. This is your 'staff up.' Unconfessed sin in your life is your 'staff down.' When your staff is down, everything you do is in the power of the sin nature, and 'Amalek' gains an easy victory. But when your staff is up, the Holy Spirit is in control, and your sin nature is defeated.

Remember, when Moses struck the rock, it was a picture of Christ being punished for our sins instead of us. What came out from the rock when Moses struck it? Water. We saw in John 7:37–39 that this water pictures God the Holy Spirit, who is given to all those who believe in Christ. We must keep on remembering that Christ destroyed the power of the sin nature by dying for our sins, and He gave us the Holy Spirit so that we could always have victory over sin. You decide who will control your life. As long as you live, there will be a tug of war in you between your sin nature and the Holy Spirit because God will never be at peace with the sin nature, just as Israel was never at peace with Amalek. You must always be on your guard, for when you let that spiritual guard down the sin nature rises up. In Texas, "Remember the Alamo" became a watchword for taking a stand against the enemy. In your own life, your watchword may well be: "Remember the Amalekites!"

You must be habitually filled with the Holy Spirit through regular use of rebound. This is the way you claim a moment-by-moment victory. But when the sin nature sneaks up on you and tempts you to sin, you can keep from giving in to those temptations in the same way Joshua put down the Amalekites. He overwhelmed them "with the edge of the sword" (Ex. 17:13). What is your sword? Yes, the Word of God. Someone once said, "Sin will keep you from the Word, and the Word will keep you from sin." Learning the Word of God and doing what it says keeps the enemy down (Ps. 119:11). Believing the promises and doctrines of the Word of God is the stone we rest upon to help us keep up the staff (Ex. 17:12). In other words, if you believe God's Word that rebound restores the power of the Spirit in you, you will rebound whenever necessary.

One day God will "utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven" (Ex. 17:14; cf. Num. 24:20). When we die or when the Rapture takes place, the sin nature will be destroyed forever. Until then, we are to keep claiming victory over the sin nature every moment. The Lord told King Saul that because he did not destroy all the Amalekites and their property, he would lose his crown and kingdom. The descendants of King Saul could never reign after him. Did you know that everything you do under the control of the sin nature is lost? Only what is done in the power of the Holy Spirit will count with God and be rewarded. We are going to learn about this final phase of our Christian life and the crowns we can gain or lose, depending on how well we keep the sin nature caged up in this life.

As we pray, you may say silently to the Heavenly Father, "I am believing in Jesus Christ; I am receiving Him as my Savior." The moment you make this all-important decision, eternal life is yours, plus many other wonderful things you can never lose.

Lesson Review

Who are the three enemies of the believer's soul? The outside enemies are Satan and the world (the thoughts and ideas of the world). The inside enemy is the sin nature. Which one did Amalek picture? The sin nature. How was Amalek defeated? By Moses holding up the staff. What verse tells us how we defeat the sin nature in our lives? First John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

What power does the use of 1 John 1:9 release? The power of the Spirit. Were the Amalekites completely destroyed? No. What does this tell us about the sin nature? We will always have a sin nature in this life. What other power do we have to help keep the sin nature in its place? The Word of God. How do we use this power? We learn the Word and believe it.

Memory Verse

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." (Gal. 5:16)

Chapter Eight

The Eternal State

OVERVIEW

A. The Eternal State—Luke 16:19–31

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: Born into God’s Family
2. Lesson Two: Through the Eyes of Faith
3. Lesson Three: Lazarus and the Rich Man

C. Story Objective:

At the moment of salvation, the believer is placed “in Christ,” and is therefore positionally perfect and complete in Him (1 Cor. 1:2, 30; 2 Cor. 5:21). Experientially, the believer has two more phases in his Christian life. Because the believer still possesses a sin nature after salvation, the actual experience or condition of the believer is imperfect, requiring constant cleansing, victory over the enemies of the soul, and spiritual growth. The believer awaits the redemption of his body, at which time his experience will be equal to his position (Rom. 8:17).

When the believer receives his resurrection body, transformed “into conformity with the body of His glory” (Phil. 3:21), he will be like the Lord Jesus Christ in His faultless character—without sin or the sin nature, devoid of human good, able to produce divine good at all times. At that time he will receive rewards for what he did on earth in the filling of the Spirit, and he will be reunited with loved ones to enjoy the glories of heaven and eternity. Above all, he will see face to face the incomparable Christ and have the great joy and privilege of serving and praising Him for all eternity.

Relatively few passages regarding the eternal state itself are given in the Word of God. Human language evidently cannot delineate the celestial beauty of glory which awaits

all believers in heaven. Yet even being in heaven cannot surpass the joy of being with Him eternally in direct fulfillment of the Lord’s prayer in John 17:24. In contrast, the unbeliever faces a Christless eternity, the “resurrection of judgment” (John 5:29*b*) in the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:15). The conclusion of this chapter presents the contrast between the eternal state of the believer and the unbeliever, as illustrated by the story in Luke 16:19–31.

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: compartment, tenses
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. The believer’s position in Christ:
 - 1) Child of God (John 1:12; Rom. 8:16; 1 John 3:1)
 - 2) Son of God (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 3:26)
 - 3) New creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17)
 - 4) Secure (John 10:28), complete (Col. 2:10), perfect (Heb. 10:14)
 - 5) Righteous (2 Cor. 5:21)
 - 6) Heir, shares all that Christ has (Rom. 8:17)
 - b. The believer’s condition on earth:
 - 1) Imperfect, still possesses a sin nature; needs cleansing (1 John 1:9)
 - 2) Needs to “grow in the grace and knowledge” of Christ (2 Pet. 3:18)
 - 3) Needs to overcome world, flesh, and devil (Rom. 6:14; 1 John 2:13; 4:4; 5:4–5)
 - 4) Should become more like his position in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16) and the Word (Heb. 4:12)

- c. The believer's condition is made equal to his position in Christ at the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:14–17):
- 1) Receives a resurrection body exactly like Christ's (1 Cor. 15:51–54; 1 John 3:2)
 - 2) Possesses no more sin or sin nature (1 Cor. 1:8; Eph. 1:14; 4:30; 5:27; 1 Thess. 5:23; 1 John 3:2–7; Jude 24).
- d. The believer's life in heaven:
- 1) Resides with Christ forever (John 14:3; 1 Cor. 13:12; 2 Cor. 5:8)
 - 2) Serves and praises Christ for eternity (Rev. 7:9–17; 22:3)
 - 3) Receives rewards (1 Cor. 3:8, 14; Col. 3:24; Rev. 22:12)
 - 4) Meets loved ones (1 Thess. 4:14–17)
 - 5) Enjoys glories of heaven (Rev. 21–22)

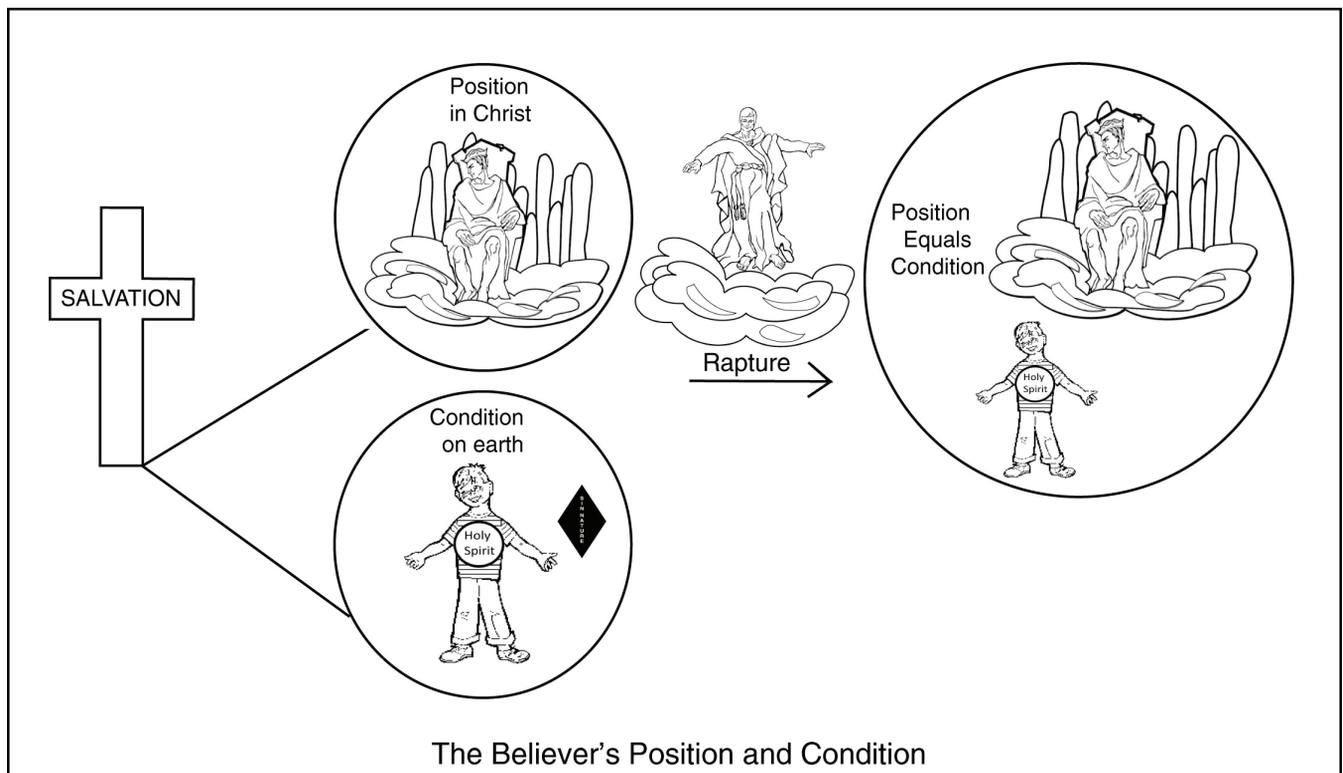
- e. Contrast between heaven and the lake of fire (see the chart at the end of the chapter)

E. *Source Book* Keywords: the barrier (redemption), eternal state, heirship, lake of fire, Lazarus and the rich man, positional truth, rebound, rewards/decorations

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: the believer's position and condition, compartments of Hades, the rich man
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is." (1 John 3:2)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE BORN INTO GOD'S FAMILY



What is a baby boy called who is born into the family of a king? Right, a prince. Must he wait until the state declares him a prince, or until he earns or

deserves the right, or even until he learns how? No, he is a prince just by being born into the royal family. This is called his "position" at birth. His position or place in his

family is perfect at the moment of his birth. He is the future king just as much at birth as he ever will be. Nothing he does can change that. Being born a prince entitles him to certain privileges and possessions. He is the heir, the one who will inherit the throne, as well as other things of value that belong to the family.

Now, although he has this high position of prince and heir and future king, there is a learning process he must go through before he ever becomes king. As a young boy, there are many times when he acts like anything but a king. His actual experience, or the way he lives each day, is often quite a bit different from his position. But every day he must study and learn and practice until he learns to think and act like a king. One day, when he becomes the king, his *condition* will finally be the same as his *position*.

The Believer's Position

At the point of salvation, we are born into God's family. We, too, have a position, but one far greater and more wonderful than that of a prince of this world. We receive a position as "sons of God" (Gal. 3:26). Our Father, God, is King over *all* the earth. Just by being born into His family, we are children of the King, and nothing can ever change it. How are we born into God's family? "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12). "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26).

So certain is our position, God says that we already are kings because we are in union with Christ, the King. What else are we? First, we are new creatures: "Therefore if any man is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Cor. 5:17). Then, we are complete in Christ: "And in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority" (Col. 2:10). Finally, we are perfect forever: "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). Do you always act perfect? Hardly!

At birth, a normal baby is perfect and complete physically. That means he has everything he ever will have. He has hands and feet, two eyes, two ears, and a nose. He is a perfect little specimen of the human race. All he needs is to grow and learn. Like the baby, the new believer in God's family is given a perfect position the moment he is born again. We may not act like children of God, but we are. We may not act perfect, but in God's 'books' we are!

Like a prince, we, too, are entitled to the privileges and possessions of the family. We are heirs of God and joint heirs of Jesus Christ. As soon as we are born again, God gives us thirty-nine blessings that are ours forever, such as His perfect righteousness and His eternal life. We share everything that He has. Think of what God has! Why, even the sun and moon and stars are His. We may not own one handful of dirt, but God says that whatever He owns is ours, too, because we belong to Him. As children of God, we are

very rich. And listen to this—we will share His future! This is the future we are going to find out about today.

The Believer's Condition

If we are perfect and complete in Christ, and even said to be seated already in heaven with Him (Eph. 2:6), why are we told to become more like Christ (Gal. 4:19)? Is there a mistake in the Word of God? Not at all. God sees us in two places at the same time. He sees us in our position and in our condition. Obviously, our condition on earth is different from the position we receive in God's family when we are born again. We are up in the top circle and down in the bottom circle at the same time. In the top circle our position is perfect; in the bottom circle our condition is imperfect, and we are not yet like Christ. In fact, we still possess a sin nature and are very sinful. But God's plan is for our condition to become more like our position each day. Just as a prince must grow and learn how to become a good king, so the believer must learn doctrine and grow spiritually so that his *condition* will be more and more like his *position*.

The Believer's Condition Equal to His Position

Events in our life always happen in three tenses: past, present, and future. God planned the Christian life in three tenses also. The past was when we received Christ as Savior; the present, called time, is our life now; and the future, called eternity, is after we get to heaven. We have been studying all about our salvation. First we learned that we were freed from the penalty of sin (past tense), and that we can be free from the power of sin (present tense—now). Now we are going to see that finally we will be freed from the presence of sin (future tense). Then our condition will truly be equal to our position.

A New Body

At what time will our condition finally be the same as our position? When the Lord Jesus returns at the Rapture to take us up to be with Him. Suddenly the Lord will come down into the clouds, and He will "shout" for all believers. Then we will hear the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God (1 Thess. 4:16). "In the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. 15:52), believers of the Church Age who have died will come out of their graves, followed by those believers who are alive, and together we will shoot upward toward heaven to meet the Lord in the air. Now think of yourself going up, up, up, when all of a sudden you notice that you are changed. What has happened to you? Then you remember that you were promised a body like that of the Lord Jesus Christ in His resurrection body. It has happened just as He said it would. What is His body like?

After Jesus Christ arose from the dead, He told the disciples to wait for Him in Galilee (Matt. 28:10). The disciples were all gathered together in a room with the doors shut and locked (John 20:19). Suddenly, Jesus was right there in the room with them. He had not opened any doors or windows; He just seemed to come right through the walls, as He did when He arose from the tomb.

The disciples were terrified, for they thought they were seeing a ghost. But Christ told them to touch Him and see that it was He, for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as Christ had (Luke 24:36–40). Even though His new body had flesh and bones, it was not limited by space or barriers. He could zip through space in a second of time and go through solid walls. Would you like to be able to do that? Of course! It will be great fun. And this is the type of body we will have when our condition equals our position.

Jesus' body is gloriously beautiful. We all like to look at good-looking people; there are even some who are so lovely we can scarcely take our eyes off of them. But we cannot imagine what it will be like to see Jesus! Even the most beautiful person in the world cannot compare with Him. Our bodies are so spoiled by sin that it is impossible for us to picture what a perfect, glorious body will be like. Why, even our eyes, as they are now, are not able to fully take in a heavenly sight. However, one day, even before Jesus Christ was resurrected, He let three of the disciples share a glimpse of His glory (Matt. 17:1–8; Luke 9:27–32).

The Transfiguration

Jesus took Peter, James, and John to a high mountain all by themselves. Jesus began to pray. The disciples soon fell asleep. As Jesus prayed, His face began to change. Soon it was shining as the sun. His clothes, too, began to shine and glisten until they became as white as the light. A beautiful, bright cloud came over them all, and the Father spoke out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased" (Matt. 17:5). Oh, what a glorious sight! Waking up in the midst of this, the disciples became afraid and fell on their faces, until Jesus touched them and told them not to fear. Then they wanted to stay there forever with Jesus like that, but it was not yet the right time.

It is possible that Adam and Eve were clothed in some sort of light before they sinned, and in our resurrection bodies we, too, will be bright and shining. Right now our bodies "groan" waiting for their change (Rom. 8:23). Our bodies are slowly decaying; they have many diseases, aches, and pains, which will only become worse as we get older. This plus our sin nature makes us groan within ourselves.

Have you ever thought when you were sick or in pain, "Oh, if only I could have my new body now! I can hardly wait until that day"? In the Bible this is called "the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8:23). This means that our bodies will be delivered from their sin, sickness, and pain (Rev. 21:4). Our souls were redeemed from sin when we were saved, but our bodies must wait until the Rapture.

No Sin or Sin Nature

We will discover something else after our bodies are changed. We will not sin, or even have a desire to sin. I wonder, why? All of our enemies will be gone. We will have final victory over the sin nature, Satan, and his world of religion and worldly thoughts. All during our lifetime we must continually gain victory over them, but in that day, the Rapture of the Church, they will be left behind forever. With these old things gone, all that God said we were at the moment of salvation will become our actual everyday experience. When we arrive in heaven, the Lord Jesus will present us before the throne of God without "spot or wrinkle" (Eph. 5:27). We will be spotlessly clean and perfect.

Like Christ in His Character

What does our memory verse say? "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). Here, "we shall be like Him" is not speaking only of Christ's resurrection body; we will also be like Him in His human character. First John 3:3–7 tells us that He is pure, in Him is no sin, and He is righteous. Jesus is the only human being who never had any sin or sin nature. Jesus was and always is filled with the Spirit.

Also, Jesus can only do divine good. After the Rapture, all of our works will be put to the test of fire (1 Cor. 3:13–15); those done while under the control of the sin nature will be burned up. There will be no more human good. From then on everything we do will be good and pleasing to God. We will have nothing but inner joy and happiness for all eternity.

What God Wants Me to Know

Do you know for sure that you will one day see the Lord Jesus Christ and be with Him? If you do not know for sure, you cannot wait until you die and for eternity to begin. Isaiah 55:6 says, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; Call upon Him while He is near." You see, there is a time when Christ cannot be found, a time when He will not be near. That is the time when the unbeliever is dead. This is a pretty serious thought, isn't it? When, then, may the Lord be found? Only as long as a person is alive may he find God and be saved (Eccl. 9:4).

Even though you are alive, you may be far from God. What separates you from God? Your sins have separated you from holy God (Isa. 59:2). God is ready and willing to save you, the sinner, but there is only one way to come near to God. That is by faith alone in Christ alone, by believing in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross (John 14:6).

Whether you are near to God or far off depends on your decision about the Lord Jesus Christ in time. For you, eternity might begin today or tomorrow. That is why the Bible says that now is "THE ACCEPTABLE TIME . . . THE DAY OF

SALVATION” (2 Cor. 6:2). Do not put off this most important decision a day longer. Tomorrow may be too late. You may find Him right now in His Word: “Whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16b).

Lesson Review

We are going to have some true or false questions for our review. Read carefully, as some may be tricky.

1. Our position in Christ comes at the moment we are born physically. (false)
2. Our position in Christ comes at the moment we are born again. (true)
3. To be born again means to be placed into God’s family. (true)
4. We are born again by faith that there is a God. (false)
5. We are born again by faith alone in Christ alone. (true)
6. Our position in Christ means that we have a place in God’s family forever. (true)

7. Our condition on earth is imperfect because we still possess a sin nature. (true)
8. When your condition equals your position, you will be sinlessly perfect. (true)
9. Our new bodies will be like those of the angels. (false)
10. Our new bodies will be without a sin nature, like that of Jesus Christ. (true)
11. At physical death we will lose our sin natures forever. (true)
12. Human good will be burned up after the Rapture. (true)

Memory Verse

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.” (1 John 3:2)

LESSON TWO THROUGH THE EYES OF FAITH

Aren’t you glad that when you were born, your parents had a home all prepared for you to live in? And they keep right on preparing good things for you, too, don’t they? It is the nicest thing in the world when you are as hungry as a young bear, and your mother calls to tell you dinner is all prepared! In John 14:2–3 (KJV), the Lord Jesus tells us of something He is preparing for His own: “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 unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also.” What the Lord Jesus is preparing for you is a mansion (literally, dwelling place). Where is this mansion? “In my Father’s house.” Where is that? In heaven.

The Bible lets us take a little peek at this glorious heavenly home. But our human language cannot come close to describing it because our thoughts are limited to time (1 Cor. 13:12). So in order to get a view of heaven, we must look at the things which are not seen, “for the things which are seen are temporal [of time], but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18b). How, then, is it possible to ‘see’ heaven? First of all, through the Word of God.

Let’s have a quick sword drill of some verses telling about heaven. Then we’ll talk more about it.

Hebrews 12:22–24 describes heaven as the residence of the angels, God, believers, and Jesus Christ. “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than *the blood* of Abel.”

First Timothy 4:8 describes heaven as a place of life. “For bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and *also* for the *life* to come.”

Second Corinthians 4:17 describes heaven as a place of glory. “For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.”

Revelation 14:13 describes heaven as a place of rest. “And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, ‘Write, “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!”’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.’”

First Thessalonians 4:14 describes heaven as fellowship with other believers and loved ones. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus."

Revelation 21:27 describes heaven as a place with no more sin. "And nothing unclean and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

First Corinthians 13:10 describes heaven as a place of perfect knowledge. "But when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away."

Revelation 19:1 describes heaven as a place of worship or praise. "After these things I heard, as it were, a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, 'Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.'"

Could we be happy in a place like this? What would we do for all eternity? Questions like these and probably many more come to your mind. But just remember, in our condition on earth, our thinking and activity are related to things of time, not eternity. But when we enter into the eternal state we will be completely changed.

Rewards

Probably you have heard people joke about sitting on clouds and playing harps when we get to heaven, but we are going to see that the Bible teaches we will have more important things to do. First of all, this is the time when believers will receive rewards according to the divine good they have done here on earth. The rewards are called crowns (1 Cor. 9:25, KJV), and there are crowns for different accomplishments.

A *crown of righteousness* is for faithfulness to the Lord. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

A *crown of joy* is given for people you have won to the Lord. "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?" (1 Thess. 2:19).

A *crown of glory* is given to pastor-teachers for teaching the Word. "Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness. . . . And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pet. 5:2, 4).

A *crown of life* is given for suffering. "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

Rulership over people in the Millennium is another reward promised for faithfulness. "His master said to him,

'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master'" (Matt. 25:21).

But did you know that you can do some good works and they will not please God or be rewarded? If you go to church to please people, or pray because you think you have to, or give just to receive praise from your friends, these works will not stand the test of fire at the judgment seat of Christ. Only what you do for the Lord in the filling of the Spirit will count for reward in eternity. Everything else will be burned up. Yet even "a cup of water" given as unto the Lord will not be forgotten and "he shall not lose his reward" (Mark 9:41).

Reunion with Loved Ones

We all look forward to seeing friends and loved ones who have already gone to be with the Lord. When those we know and love die, their death makes us sad to be separated from them. But if that person is a believer, our sorrow is not hopeless; you know from God's Word that there will be a time of happy reunion, and you will be with that person for all the rest of eternity: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 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, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall 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 Thess. 4:14-17).

Enjoying Heaven

Down here on earth we often get tired of things we enjoyed at first, but we will never get tired of what God has prepared for us in eternity. The Bible does not describe much about heaven, but we know that whatever God does is wonderful and perfect. Perhaps for this reason God has not given us a full description of heaven, for in our earthly bodies we cannot understand how wonderful heaven is. We do know, though, that heaven is the home of angels, that God's throne is in heaven (Acts 7:49), and that Jesus Christ sits on the throne with God the Father (Heb. 1:3).

Let's read a description of the throne in heaven: "Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance" (Rev. 4:2-3). Around God's throne are twenty-four smaller thrones with dazzling elders of high rank sitting upon them with crowns of gold on their heads (Rev. 4:4). In front of the throne is a sea of glass like

beautiful crystal (Rev. 4:6). There are no waves in this sea because there are no storms or troubles in heaven. Then Revelation chapter 4 goes on to tell about the different kinds of angels in heaven, but we are going to save that for later.

Finally, one day, we will see a most marvelous sight. John saw this great sight in a vision and told us about it in the Book of Revelation, chapters 21 and 22. He saw a bright and glorious city which came down out of heaven. This city is called the New Jerusalem, and was promised to Abraham long, long ago. New Jerusalem will be the headquarters of the new universe and the throne of God. This new city will be made of pure gold and covered with all kinds of precious stones. Its twelve gates are twelve pearls; the main street of the city is pure gold, as clear as glass. There will be no need for lights in this city, for there will never be any night or darkness. Do you know why? The Lord Jesus Christ will be all the light that is needed. Read the entire description of it in Revelation chapters 21 and 22 to see for yourself how magnificent it will be!

With Christ Forever

As wonderful as the glories of eternity are, more wonderful still is the fact that we will see the Lord Jesus and be with Him forever. Remember, in John 14:3, Jesus said He was going to prepare a place for His own, that “where I am, *there* you may be also.” If you had not seen someone very dear to you for a long time, and you were to meet him again, would you pay much attention to the place in which you met? Probably not at all, even though it might be a beautiful hotel or a lovely home. Just so, we want to remember always it is not so much the home where we are going, but the Person we are going to be with that will be the best part of eternity. To have us with Him to behold His glory was Christ’s dearest desire: “Father, I desire that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, in order that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou didst love Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

What will it be like to see Jesus? When Jesus ascended into heaven, the Bible tells us that He was glorified (John 7:39). Jesus is God, and as God, He has all the glory of God. Two men who had a glimpse of Him after His ascension were unable to look upon Him with their human eyes. Saul, later the Apostle Paul, became blind on the Damascus Road when the heavens were opened and the light of Christ shone upon him (Acts 9). Another time, Paul had been stoned and taken up to heaven for a short while (Acts 14:19–20; 2 Cor. 12:1–4). What Paul saw and heard in heaven he was not allowed to tell, but from this experience he could say that to be with Christ is “very much better” (Phil. 1:21–23; cf. 2 Cor. 5:8).

When the Apostle John was allowed a vision of Jesus while on the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:12–18), he “fell at His feet as a dead man” (Rev. 1:17). What did John, who had

been so close to Christ while He was on earth, see that caused him to faint? Jesus was clothed in a garment down to His feet, which we learn from other passages was brilliant and shining white. He wore a golden breastplate. His hair was white as the glistening snow and His eyes like a flame of fire. His feet were like brass burning in a furnace. When He spoke, His voice carried the sound of the roaring of many waters. His face shone with the brilliance of the sun at its brightest.

What a difference in His face now and when the world last saw Him on the cross. Then, His face was marred almost beyond recognition from the cruel treatment He had received. Now His face is so glorious, man cannot look upon Him with earthly eyes. No wonder John fell at His feet when he saw the wonderful sight of the Lord. We will need our resurrection bodies to see and be near the Lord in His glory. When we are able to look upon Him, we will scarcely be able to take our eyes off of Him in all His beauty (Isa. 33:17).

Praise for Eternity

All eternity will not be long enough to praise the Lord Jesus for what He has done for us. Let us read Revelation 7:9–17 to see the tribulational saints in heaven and how they spend their time: “After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches *were* in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’ And all the angels were standing around the throne and *around* the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, ‘Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *be* to our God forever and ever. Amen.’ And one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and from where have they come?’ And I said to him, ‘My lord, you know.’ And he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the water of life; and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes.’”

Notice, the tribulational saints praise God for their salvation and for the Lamb who provided it. If Christ had not become “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), neither they nor we would be there. For this reason they go about the throne of God day and

night serving Him. The Lord leads them into perfect happiness. He makes up for everything they suffered on earth for His sake.

What God Wants Me to Know

Perhaps you are thinking, "All this does sound wonderful. It will be nice *someday* to be in a place like this. But I don't want to go to heaven quite yet. I want to live down here and do all the exciting things there are to do first." It is natural to think this way because the things you can see are more real to you. In London, in World War II, many children were ordered out of the city during the bombing raids to the safety of the country. One boy, however, did not want to go. He was afraid to leave the only place he had ever known, even though his home was in the slums in an overcrowded, dirty section of town. But when he was finally persuaded to go to the lovely, peaceful, English countryside, he discovered there was no comparison. He even laughed at himself for trying to hang onto his miserable existence in the city.

We just cannot fully understand how much better everything will be when our condition equals our position. If we could understand, we would not be happy here. With our resurrection bodies we will be able to appreciate all that heaven is. Right now we can only see heaven through the eyes of faith and believe that it is far better. Yet as long as we stay here on earth, God has a purpose for us, and to fulfill that purpose brings us joy and happiness.

After being in heaven for seven years, Church Age believers will come back to earth with the Lord in their glorified resurrection bodies to reign on earth with Him during the thousand years of the Millennium. When this time is over, Jesus will sit upon the great white throne of judgment to declare the fate of all unbelievers. As He shows the unbelievers that they did not measure up to His perfect righteousness, we will surely praise Him, for He gave us His own righteousness simply through our faith in

Him. This is so simple and so easy, we will marvel that so many unbelievers tried so hard to be good enough to go to heaven by their own works.

All those who did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ during their lifetime are cast into the lake of fire forever. Then the eternal state begins for believers and unbelievers alike. But what a difference there will be between the two! For you, right now is the time to make sure that you will enter "into the joy of your master [the Lord]" for all eternity (Matt. 25:21*b*). "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31*a*).

Lesson Review

What is the first thing that is going to happen up in heaven after the Rapture? We will receive rewards for what we have done in the filling of the Spirit. What will happen to our human good? It will be burned up. What about our sin nature? It will be gone forever. What are the rewards called? Crowns. What else will we do in heaven? We will see loved ones, enjoy the glories of heaven, and best of all, we will see the Lord Jesus and be with Him for all eternity.

Memory Verse

"Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is." (1 John 3:2)

LESSON THREE LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN

Many people believe only in the things they want to happen and pretend the bad things do not exist. That's the way it is with heaven and hell. People find it easy to believe in heaven and living with God for eternity, but do not want to believe that there is a real hell where people will burn and be punished forever.

God did not leave us to wonder or guess about our eternal future. From the very beginning of time, God has let people know that after death there is a judgment (Heb. 9:27). He has shown man the way to heaven (John 14:6), but He has also stated in no uncertain terms the awful alternative to His grace—the lake of fire (Ps. 9:17). Yet people

dare to challenge God. “How do we know there really is a hell?” they ask. Then they make up a picture of hell where Satan is the ruler, all dressed up in a red suit, with horns and a pitchfork, pitching poor unbelievers into the lake. The whole idea is so unbelievable, people just laugh it off. Others say, “Well, if there is a hell, all my buddies will be there too, so we’ll have a big time together.” If these people were honest, they would just have to admit that they do not want to believe in hell.

These false ideas about hell are just man’s ideas. Do you know what the Bible says about the ideas of man? “There is a way *which seems* right to a man, But its end is the way of death” (Prov. 14:12). In the day of judgment, these people will hear the Lord Jesus Christ say to them, “I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS” (Matt. 7:23).

A True Story, Luke 16:19–31

One day Jesus was talking to a group of religious people, who were very much like some of the people we have been describing. They believed what they wanted to believe. They believed that they were going to heaven because they were so good; they did not believe that they were sinners and needed a Savior. Jesus said to them, “God knows your hearts [thoughts]” (Luke 16:15). Jesus is God, and He knew what they thought. So Jesus told them a true story to show them what they were like, and whether or not they would go to heaven.

“There was a certain rich man,” Jesus began. His clothes of linen and purple tell us how very rich he was, for these were the most expensive money could buy. Besides his fine clothes, his dinner table was loaded every day with rich and delicious food. And of course he must have had a large, beautiful home with servants, and many other luxuries. Is Jesus trying to tell us that having money is wrong? No. Yet there was something wrong. To find out what that was, we must read on and see another man in the story.

Every day, by the rich man’s gate, lay a poor man, a helpless man named Lazarus. His body was full of sores; his lot in life was nothing but suffering and want. Perhaps his relatives, thinking the rich man might have pity on him and help him, left him at the rich man’s gate.

The rich man had to pass by his gate every day, but we do not read that he did one kind thing for Lazarus. We will read later on that he knew Lazarus, but it bothered him not in the least that only the dogs came and licked Lazarus’s sores. Why, with all of his money, did he do nothing for this poor man? You see, the rich man could think only of himself and of having a good time. I am sure the people of his town thought he was a very great man; he certainly did not do anything they would consider bad. Then what was wrong? He had no time for God, and he did not care whether he pleased God or not. He never thought of seeking the Lord while He could be found. He was too busy ‘living it up.’ Perhaps he thought that only poor,

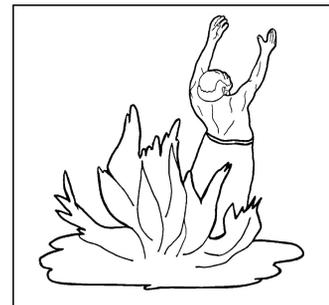
helpless people like Lazarus needed salvation. After all, was *he* not the rich man, respected by all the town? Did *he* not have plenty of money? What else did *he* need?

On the other hand, what about Lazarus? He merely wanted the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table. Even though he was an outcast of society, he knew God and was looking to Him for help. How do we know? His name means “God is my help.” He looked beyond his present situation to the blessings of eternity (Rom. 8:18). While the rich man cared nothing about God, the Lord meant more and more to Lazarus every day. Some people might have said when they looked at Lazarus, “Is there a God who cares? Why would God let someone suffer like this?” God has a purpose for suffering. He has special blessing and reward for His children who suffer without complaining or whining. The Lord can become more real to us through suffering than in any other way.

The Eternal State

The time came when the Lord knew that Lazarus had suffered long enough, and He took Lazarus home to Paradise. Now, perhaps the rich man will take pity on him and give him a nice funeral! No, we read nothing like that. No doubt Lazarus’s body was thrown into the city garbage dump and burned. Though he had no fancy funeral, God sent angels to escort his soul to Paradise, called here “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22). Paradise means “Garden of Delights,” a place of great joy and gladness. Lazarus, who had looked to God for help, is at last comforted. He no longer has pain and sickness and hunger, for now he has ultimate happiness (Rev. 21:4).

After a while, the rich man also died. The Bible mentions his burial, and he must have had a big funeral with all the trimmings. I wonder what people said at his funeral? Certainly not how kind he was to the poor! No doubt they talked about how much money he had. But now he was dead! Where was his soul? In Paradise? No, his soul ended up in hell.



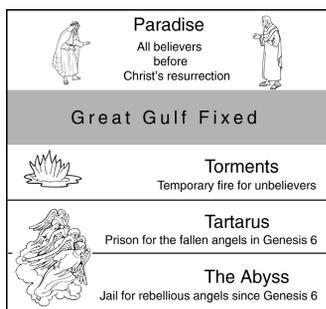
Hell is actually a part of “Hades” (Luke 16:23). Before the resurrection and ascension of Christ, the souls of both believers and unbelievers were in Hades. Hades has four sections and is in the heart of the earth. Paradise was the section for believers; the sections of Torments, Tartarus,

and the Abyss are for unbelievers and certain fallen angels. Between the sections for believers and unbelievers was a "great gulf fixed," so that no one could pass over to the other side (Luke 16:26, KJV).

Believers were in Paradise until Christ's resurrection, for they could not go to heaven until first the Lord Jesus Christ had died for their sins and opened the way into heaven in the presence of God the Father.

So, where exactly did the rich man find himself after death? In the section of Hades called Torments. It was the place of punishment for unbelievers. He was alive and conscious, just as Lazarus was in Paradise, but instead of being comforted in ultimate happiness, he was miserable in ultimate agony. From where he was, he could look over into the Paradise side of Hades and see Lazarus and Abraham. I wonder if the rich man thought about how Abraham had also been rich in his lifetime and yet he had time to find the Lord. He called to Abraham and asked for help. "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame" (Luke 16:24).

Isn't this interesting? In life the rich man would have nothing to do with the poor man, to say nothing of touching him. Now he wishes even for a drop of water from his fingertips. What did Abraham say to the rich man? "Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony" (Luke 16:25). The rich man had so many good things in life, he thought he did not need Christ. But even though Lazarus had a very hard time in life, still he kept right on looking to God. Do you know what the difference was between these two men? Was it their place in life, or their earthly possessions? No, the difference was that Lazarus had believed in Christ, while the rich man had trusted in his own works (Ps. 52:7; Jer. 9:23-24).



Now, just as they had been separated in life by their social position, so they were now separated in the life after death by their spiritual condition. "Remember that," Abraham said. He wanted the rich man to remember how he had thought of no one but himself, how he had left God out of his life, and how he had treated Lazarus. You see, death does not take away our memories. If you ever think that some unbeliever has it a lot better than you do, just remember that it will not make him happy in the place of punishment!

Abraham reminded the rich man of something else: "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm [gulf] fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us" (Luke 16:26). The great gulf between them was "fixed" there forever. The decision as to which place you will go must be made in your lifetime. After death, it is too late to make up your mind, or even to change your mind. There is no second chance.

When the rich man knew there was no more hope for him, he thought of his relatives. "I have five brothers who do not know about the terrible penalty of sin or the way of salvation," he said, perhaps trying to show, too, that it wasn't his fault he was in this place. "Can't you send Lazarus back from the dead to tell them about it?" (Luke 16:27-28, paraphrased). If they had spoken to Lazarus in life, he could have told them then, but I am sure neither the rich man nor his brothers gave Lazarus the opportunity.

Abraham did not let the rich man get by with this poor excuse of blaming someone else for his condition. "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them," he reminded him (Luke 16:29). What did Abraham mean? Your brothers have the Word of God just like everyone else. The way of salvation is clearly given there. The rich man had God's Word, too, but he had paid no attention to it. If he had read about salvation and believed it, he would have been in Paradise right then with Lazarus. We have learned that God promises that anyone who wants to know how to be saved will get that information. So there was no excuse for the rich man, just as there is no excuse for anyone not knowing how to be saved.

Still the rich man was not content. "If someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!" he pleaded (Luke 16:30). Abraham knew better. "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead" (Luke 16:31). Do you think that Abraham was wrong and that they would have believed if Lazarus had come back from the grave?

Jesus raised at least three people from the dead when He was on earth. Did everyone believe in Him then? Some did, but many more did not. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself came back from the dead, but all people did not believe in Him. It is the Word of God which is "alive and powerful" and through which the Holy Spirit reveals the plan of salvation for men to believe (Heb. 4:12).

Contrast between Heaven and the Lake of Fire

The lake of fire, commonly called hell, is not an imaginary place made up by someone who wants to scare us; neither is heaven a fairy tale told to little children. Both places are real. They have only one thing in common: both are "prepared" (Matt. 25:41; John 14:2-3). We have already seen what heaven is like. Do you know for whom the lake of fire was prepared? The devil and his angels. It is also the

place of the “eternal fire” for unbelievers, but the unbelieving dead are not there yet (Matt. 25:41). They are in the temporary compartment of Hades called “Torments,” alive, conscious, knowing that they are separated from God—no relationship with Him—forever. They will be kept there until the Great White Throne Judgment, when they will be judged and cast into the lake of fire.

At the time of the Great White Throne Judgment, the unbeliever experiences the “second death,” eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. This death is the beginning of a miserable existence in eternal suffering. Whereas believers will be resurrected with glorified bodies and eternal life, unbelievers will be resurrected to burn and to live forever in their sins. Will there ever be any peace in a place like this? There can be no peace without Christ. Without Christ there is only blackness and darkness forever, for He only is the Light. Those who chose in their lifetime to pay no attention to the warning in God’s Word will know the truth in eternity, but it will be knowledge found too late.

What God Wants Me to Know

Are you thinking, “Oh, but I can’t believe that a loving God would send anyone to hell”? Why can’t you believe it? God the Father let His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, be your substitute when He punished Him on the cross for your sins. The Lord Jesus Christ paid the penalty so that you would never have to go to the lake of fire. Will He not turn His back on you if you reject what He did for you at such great cost? God is a God of justice and righteousness. He must demand the penalty for sin if His plan of grace is refused. Only you can make the decision as to which way you will go (John 3:36).

Believers know what the future holds. We are “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus” (Titus 2:13). If death should come first, before the Rapture, we will merely be ushered into heaven and the eternal state a little sooner.

Yet, while we look to eternity, we still live in time. We may have much suffering ahead of us, but think how short time is compared to eternity! When you understand the eternal state, you know that any pain or trouble is but for a while (Rom. 8:18), and you never need to be upset about it or worried or afraid.

Lesson Review

I am sure you remember some of the wonderful things we will have and be when our condition equals our position in heaven. The Lord has also let us see in His Word what it would be like to be separated from Him in hell for all eternity. Will it be a place where you and your buddies all get together for a big time? No. Do you ever thank the Lord that He has saved you from that? What a wonderful salvation we have! No wonder the Bible calls it “so great a salvation” (Heb. 2:3).

Let’s review the differences between heaven and the lake of fire.

HEAVEN	LAKE OF FIRE
(1) Prepared in advance (John 14:2–3)	(1) Prepared in advance (Matt. 25:41)
(2) For believers only (Heb. 12:23)	(2) For unbelievers only (John 3:36b)
(3) The residence of God and elect angels (Heb. 12:22–24)	(3) The residence of Satan and fallen angels (demons) (Matt. 25:41b)
(4) Life (1 Tim. 4:8)	(4) Death (Rev. 20:14)
(5) Eternal glory (2 Cor. 4:17)	(5) Eternal fire (Matt. 25:41b)
(6) Rest from labor (Rev. 14:13)	(6) No peace for the wicked (Isa. 57:21)
(7) Relationship with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:13–18)	(7) No relationship with the Lord (Rev. 21:8)
(8) No sin ever (Rev. 21:27)	(8) Die in sin (John 8:24)
(9) Perfect knowledge (1 Cor. 13:10)	(9) Knowledge too late (Luke 16:23–31)
(10) Worship (Rev. 19:1)	(10) Regret (Luke 16:28)
(11) Light of the glory of God (Rev. 21:23)	(11) Black darkness forever (Jude 13)
(12) With Christ (John 14:3)	(12) Without Christ (Matt. 25:41a)
(13) Body like Christ’s (Phil. 3:21)	(13) Body able to burn forever (Matt. 10:28b)
(14) Service (Rev. 22:3)	(14) Agony (Luke 16:24)
(15) Perfect happiness (Rev. 21:4)	(15) Eternal punishment (Matt. 25:46a; Rev. 20:10)

Memory Verse

“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.” (1 John 3:2)

Chapter Nine

Making Our Salvation Known

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Making Our Salvation Known—Luke 5:1–11; Acts 10:9–22

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: Fishers of Men
2. Lesson Two: Salvation Opened to the Gentiles

C. Story Objective:

To receive the gift of salvation is only the beginning of God's plan; He intended that each believer should pass on the message of salvation and share it with others (Matt. 28:19; Rom. 10:14–15). This is one reason we are left on earth. Presenting the Gospel to a lost and dying world is an important responsibility of every believer. This chapter should challenge your children to obey the command given to every believer to be an ambassador and a witness for Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:20).

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: disciples, reap, synagogue
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. All believers called to be witnesses (Acts 1:8)

- 1) Promise to the disciples (Matt. 4:19)
- 2) Promise to Moses (Ex. 4:11–12)
- b. Provision for witnessing (Acts 1:8; Rom. 1:16)
 - 1) Word of God (learn)
 - 2) Holy Spirit (power)
- c. Reward for witnessing (John 4:36; 1 Thess. 2:19)
- d. Peter learns a lesson on witnessing (Acts 10:9–22):
 - 1) God loves all people alike.
 - 2) Salvation is for all races.

E. *Source Book* Keywords: ambassador, Christ (calls disciples), witnessing

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: none
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Rom. 1:16)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE FISHERS OF MEN

What are you doing about your so-great salvation? Perhaps you are going about your merry way, just taking your salvation for granted, giving little or no thought to what God wants you to do with the Gospel. The Bible says in John 4:35, “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, and *then* comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.” Do you know what a harvest is? It is the gathering in of grain or crops. Let’s illustrate with the story of Farmer Brown.

In the spring of the year, Farmer Brown plowed his fields and sowed his seeds carefully. The weather was perfect—just the right amount of moisture and sun. Surely he would have an unusually good crop this year. As the weeks went by, he often stood looking across his lands. He watched the little green shoots appear and gradually grow tall and sturdy until, toward the end of summer, the stalks were heavy with grain and ripe for the harvest.

The time came for him to reap or gather his harvest of grain. “I’ll do it tomorrow,” said Farmer Brown. He went back into his house and sat down in his favorite chair in front of the television. When tomorrow became today he put it off again, and again the next day. Then late one afternoon he looked out the window and saw a dark, threatening cloud in the sky. “Perhaps I had better hurry and take in the grain,” he thought. Just then a terrible hailstorm came down and flattened all his fields. When the skies finally cleared, he rushed out into the fields, but there was nothing left for him to harvest!

The farmer had only himself to blame. How richly he could have been paid for all his work had he only gone out to do the harvesting! But it was too late now.

The world we live in is like a huge field. The seed which is sown in the world is the good news, or the Gospel. The harvest is the salvation of all who will accept Jesus Christ as Savior. God wants a rich harvest to be gathered in, but He needs those who will help sow the seed and those who will help harvest and lead others to Christ.

Some of us are like Farmer Brown. We want to put off the work until some other day, but by then it might be too late. So God, who knows what we are like, told us not to think that we have plenty of time to give out the Gospel. The time is ripe right now!

Perhaps you are thinking, “But I don’t know how to give out the Gospel.” The disciples would have said that too, so when Jesus called them to be His witnesses, He promised to teach them how. We can also learn from their example. The disciples were not farmers, but they gathered

in a ‘harvest’ from their work nonetheless. Their harvest was called a “catch,” for they were fishermen. Turn to Matthew 4:18–22: “And walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ And they immediately left the nets, and followed Him. And going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him.”

Just like that—Jesus said, “Follow Me,” and four men left their work and their way of making a living and went with Christ. Peter and Andrew, James and John understood that the Lord wanted to make them His disciples or learners. In those days, a Jewish teacher had a following, a group of people who spent all their time with him in order to learn from him. There were schools in the synagogues, the Jewish churches, but few people were able to go on to higher education. Why were these men willing to leave their work and their families to learn from Jesus? Because they had heard from John the Baptist that this was the long-promised Messiah, and they had already seen proof of it.

The Miracle of the Fish

Let’s turn to Luke 5:1–11. As Jesus taught the Word of God to the people, the crowds often pressed upon Him so closely He could scarcely speak. On one of these occasions, He saw two boats lying empty on a nearby lake while their owners were washing their nets. Jesus asked one of them, Simon Peter, to take Him a little way out from land so that He could teach the people more easily. Peter was happy to oblige. After Jesus had finished He said to Peter, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch” (Luke 5:4b). You see, Jesus knew that these four fishermen had worked hard all night long and had not brought in a single fish.

Peter was most surprised to hear the Lord tell him to start fishing at this time of day. Any good fisherman knew that nighttime was the best time to catch fish, for the lake was quiet then. Besides, there were no fish around there anyway. Hadn’t they been trying all night and not caught a single fish? However, Peter decided to humor the Lord and let down his nets. He might as well have said, “I’ll do it because *you* say so, Lord, but you are certainly not up on fishing!”

Peter and his brother Andrew got into the boat and did as the Lord had said. Just as soon as the net was put into the sea, it was filled with hundreds of fish. In fact, it was so full, the net began to break. Quickly, they called their partners, James and John, to come to the rescue and help haul in the heavy nets. After all the fish were in, the boats began to sink. Peter had obeyed the Lord because he had believed in Him as Messiah, but there was still much about Jesus he had not known. After this miracle, he fell down before Jesus, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5:8b).

Peter and the others were amazed at this demonstration of who the Lord was. They suddenly understood that if He could look into the depths of the sea, He could also look into their sinful hearts. However, Jesus did not leave them, for He had "not come to call the righteous but sinners" (Luke 5:32). "Do not fear," He calmed them. "From now on you will be catching men" (Luke 5:10). How did the disciples respond to this statement? "And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him" (Luke 5:11). Yes, they left all and went with Jesus Christ.

Fishers of Men

Jesus wanted not only to teach the disciples the Word of God but also to make them "fishers of men." Jesus was going to teach them how to be witnesses. Where would the disciples go for their catch? Wherever people are, to those who would hear the Gospel and receive it. Would they take a boat? Yes, some would. Some would take the Gospel to the "remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). What kind of a net would the disciples use? The Gospel. What is the Gospel? It is the "good news." Do you know what the good news of the Gospel is? "That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3b-4). What kind of fish would they catch? Men, women, and children. In what way would they catch them? The disciples would give them the Gospel of Jesus Christ so they would have the opportunity to believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

What God Wants Me to Know

Have you been fishing for men recently? Are you still wondering what you would say? I want you to see what God has promised you. Turn to Exodus 4:11: "And the LORD said to him [Moses], 'Who has made man's mouth . . . Is it not I, the LORD?'" Since the Lord has made our mouths to speak, listen to what He has promised: "Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say" (Ex. 4:12).

Jesus spent three years with the disciples, teaching them what to say. Finally, after He went back to heaven, He sent down the Holy Spirit to continue to teach them and to give

them power. You, too, have the Holy Spirit; now it is up to you to learn God's Word. You see, it is not your words, it is God's Word that will catch men. When you have learned the content of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit will bring the salvation message to your mind at the right time to use in witnessing (telling someone about Christ). What does your memory verse say? "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

Now start looking around you. The fields are ready for harvest. People are waiting to be told how to be saved. Does your friend next door know that Jesus can save him? Does the boy or girl in your class know how he or she can go to heaven? Maybe they don't know because *you* have not told them. God will reward you for any witnessing you do for Him in the filling of the Spirit. Do you remember the name of the crown you will receive for witnessing? The crown of joy (1 Thess. 2:19). Look at John 4:36: "Already he who reaps is receiving wages [rewards], and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together." You will be glad that you were a witness for Christ. Even now, one of the greatest joys you can have is to tell someone about Jesus Christ. Have you tried it? Don't wait another day. "Now is 'THE DAY OF SALVATION'" (2 Cor. 6:2b).

Or will you be like Farmer Brown and let a whole crop go to waste? Don't just expect other believers to do all the sowing and reaping for the Lord. When the Lord told the disciples to go and tell all the world, He meant *you* too (Matt. 28:19)!

All believers are responsible to go and tell others the Gospel. If you do not obey God, He will send someone else, and you will lose the joy and reward God has promised to those who witness. When Moses complained to God that he really was not a good speaker (Ex. 4:10; 6:30), God chose Moses' brother Aaron to speak for him (Ex. 7:1) and after a while Moses became very unhappy about it. How much better if Moses had just said, like Isaiah, "Here am I. Send me!" (Isa. 6:8).

You have heard that the Scripture says that Christ died for your sins. Now, what should you do? "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved" (Acts 16:31a). Just a simple act of faith in the One who died to save you will move you from spiritual death to eternal life (John 5:24).

Lesson Review

Can you tell me who . . . ?

1. Left their fishing job to follow Jesus? Peter, Andrew, James, and John.
2. Told Peter to fish at the wrong time? Jesus.
3. Helped Peter and Andrew bring in the miraculous catch of fish? James and John.
4. Realized Jesus could look into his soul and see his sins? Peter.
5. Promised to teach us how to witness? The Lord.

6. Must go into all the world and ‘catch’ men? All believers.
7. Is indwelt by the Holy Spirit? All believers.
8. Will have a crown of joy? Those who witness in the filling of the Holy Spirit.
9. Can be saved? Any who believe.

Do you know what . . . ?

1. Jesus told the disciples when they left their fishing boats? “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”
2. Jesus meant when He said, “Follow Me”? To learn of Him.

3. You can do to ‘catch’ men for the Lord? Tell them how to be saved.

Did the disciples become fishers of men? That is what we want to find out in our next lesson.

Memory Verse

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.”
(Rom. 1:16)

LESSON TWO SALVATION OPENED TO THE GENTILES

Why do all believers not go straight to heaven the moment they are saved? Jesus has given them the wonderful privilege of telling the good news of salvation to a lost world. If believers do not tell the world, there is no one else to do so. Since Christ died for all people, all have the right to hear about Him. That is why the very first command Jesus gave to His disciples after He arose from the dead was to go and tell. Even the angels at the tomb gave the same message (Matt. 28:7, 10; John 20:17).

Then, as Jesus gathered His disciples together for His last instructions before ascending back into heaven, He said again to go and tell (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8). The disciples had hoped that Jesus would either set up His kingdom on earth, now that He was resurrected (Acts 1:6), or take them back to heaven with Him. But for those who had entered into His plan of salvation, Jesus had another plan—“go and tell.” So in obedience to Jesus’ last command, the disciples went back to Jerusalem; after the Holy Spirit had come and given them power to witness, they found that they could not keep the good news to themselves (Acts 4:20).

Peter was one of the first to go and tell the very ones who had put his Lord on the cross that Jesus Christ had died for them. “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved,” he told them (Acts 4:12). Because Peter obeyed the Lord’s command to go and tell, three thousand (Acts 2:41), then five thousand (Acts 4:4) were saved.

However, there were some people Peter did not like. He and the other Jews did not like the Gentiles, people who were not Jews. You would think the Jews would have

learned something from Jonah, wouldn’t you? God had started the Jewish race so that He would have a special people to go and tell the world about Christ. Pretty soon the Jews became so proud that God had chosen them that they began to look down their noses at Gentiles, and some even thought Gentiles were not meant to be saved at all! Even when Jesus commanded His disciples to go to the “remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8), they must have thought that He meant to go only to the Jews, for the disciples were very slow to take the Gospel to anyone else.

God Opens the Door to the Gentiles *Acts 10:9–22*

One day the Lord spoke to Peter in a very strange dream. While waiting for lunch to be prepared, Peter went up to the rooftop of the home in Joppa where he was staying and began to pray. Suddenly he saw heaven open, and a great sheet, tied at each corner, came down to the very housetop where he was kneeling in prayer. As it came closer, Peter noticed that in the sheet were all kinds of animals—wild beasts, creeping things, and birds. Each one of the animals in the sheet was forbidden for the Jews to eat. Then a voice spoke to Peter, “Arise, Peter, kill and eat” (Acts 10:13). Peter was shocked! Perhaps the Lord was testing his faithfulness to the Law. “By no means, Lord,” he answered, “I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean” (Acts 10:14). The voice from heaven spoke again. “What God has cleansed, no *longer* consider unholy” (Acts 10:15). Three times the voice of the Lord told Peter to kill and eat these animals, then the sheet was taken back up into heaven.

Peter realized that the Lord had sent a vision, but he was not sure what the Lord was trying to teach him. While he was wondering what it all meant, there came a knock at the door down below, and three men asked for Peter. At this moment, the Holy Spirit spoke to Peter, telling him that He had sent these men and Peter should not be afraid to go with them. The visitors told Peter that their master, a centurion or captain named Cornelius, had been told by an angel to send for Peter, who would have something to say to him. At this point Peter did not know exactly what he was supposed to say to Cornelius, but having been assured by the Holy Spirit that He would guide Peter, Peter made the journey to Caesarea where Cornelius lived.

Do you know what Peter was supposed to tell Cornelius? How to be saved, of course! Peter was sure dumb sometimes, wasn't he? Why didn't the angel tell Cornelius? Angels would love to tell people how to be saved, but God saves the privilege of witnessing for believers here on earth.

We are told that Cornelius "feared God" (Acts 10:2) and did many good things to try to please God. Yet we are going to discover that he was not saved. Lots of people today go to church and 'worship' God; they believe in God; they give money and do good things to try to please God; but they are not saved. Why not? They have not trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. Why must we believe in the Lord Jesus? Because He is the One who died for our sins. Now, while Cornelius prayed to God, God sent an angel with a message for him. Does God answer the prayers of unbelievers? There is only one prayer that God hears from the unbeliever. Do you know what that might be? Yes, the desire to be saved.

At some time in his life, each person comes to the place where he thinks and wonders about God. If he wants to know more, God will answer that desire. Do you remember what this is called? Positive volition. And this is just what Cornelius had.

As Peter entered Cornelius's home, he was greeted by a large number of people. Immediately he noticed that they were all Gentiles—the hated Gentiles! Jews just did not go into the homes of heathen Gentiles! Yet, the Holy Spirit had sent him here—right in the midst of them. What did the Holy Spirit have in mind? No doubt the Holy Spirit then brought the vision of the sheet to Peter's mind, for Peter understood at last what it meant (Acts 10:28).

The Jews might have thought that some people were no good to God or unclean, but God is righteous and just and loves all people, regardless of nationality, color, or race. If God thought this way about all people, then so must His servants, for "a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master" (Matt. 10:24). Was Peter ever getting his eyes opened! Peter told the group in Cornelius's house that he had been wrong in thinking the Jews were better than the Gentiles. God was showing Peter that He is "not one to show partiality" (Acts 10:34).

Poor old, slow Peter! "Now I get it," he was saying. Although God has sent His Word to the children of Israel,

they are not to keep it to themselves, but to tell all people, for Christ died for all, that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:35–43).

This was exactly what Cornelius wanted and needed to know. Cornelius had believed in God, but he did not know Jesus Christ. He had not known that Christ died for his sins. He was ready to believe just as soon as he knew what to believe. Peter was amazed that the Lord would save these Gentiles, but he knew now that salvation was the plan of God for the whole world. And I am sure, too, that he was thrilled to be one of the first to know about it and to be a part of God's wonderful plan!

What God Wants Me to Know

Suppose Peter had not obeyed the heavenly vision. Does that mean that Cornelius and the others would never have heard the Gospel? No, because when anyone desires to be saved (has positive volition), God will always see that he hears the Gospel. But Peter would have missed one of the greatest joys of his life; he would have been out of the plan and will of God and out of fellowship. He would have been like Moses who said to the Lord, "Send someone else; I can't do it."

Now, just what can you do to bring your friends to Jesus Christ? God promised to teach us, so let us look into His Word.

First, we should *think* about them (Eph. 2:12). If you give no thought to the need for others to be saved, you will never take the first step in being a fisher of men. The right mental attitude toward others is all-important. What is the right mental attitude? You must love them as Christ loves us. Can you honestly tell people that Christ loves them, if they see indifference or hate in you?

Perhaps like Peter there are some people whom you hate or you think are not as good as you are, and you have not cared at all if they were saved or not. Remember, Christ died for them as well as for you; He loves them as much as He loves you. Too often, boys and girls make fun of someone who is different, instead of seeing him as God sees him—a soul who needs the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's read 1 Corinthians 13:1–5: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered." If you love a soul for Christ, you will do something to see that person come to know Him (2 Cor. 5:14–15). And if you truly want to see your friends or anyone saved from a Christless eternity, you will "behave

properly toward outsiders [those who are without Christ]” (1 Thess. 4:12). That means that you will show in your own life what the Lord Jesus Christ means to you.

Second, we should *pray* for them (1 Sam. 12:23). Praying for your unsaved friends will lay the groundwork for all other witnessing opportunities. The Holy Spirit goes to work in answer to your prayers, and they are made ready to listen. It is a very good idea to have a prayer list of your unsaved friends (as well as others) and pray for them by name every day. You might want to pray especially for one person all week. Pray, too, that you will be a fisher of men (Luke 5:10) and that other believing boys and girls will be also. There are so many who need Christ and so few to tell them.

Third, we should *tell* them (Rom. 10:14, 17). If the unsaved do not know what the Gospel is, they cannot be saved. You can pray for them and live the Christian life before them, but you must also give them the information on how to be saved. If you always keep in mind that this friend needs to be saved, then pretty soon the Holy Spirit will open up a way to present the plan of salvation.

If you realize you have failed in giving someone the Gospel, what should you do? Of course, if you have sinned you must confess it (1 John 1:9). God always forgives, and He will give you another opportunity, although perhaps not with the same person. There will always be someone around you who does not know Christ as Savior. Many boys and girls and men and women—perhaps your best friend—may be waiting for the information that you have!

Fourth, we should *bring* them (John 1:41). Andrew brought his own brother, Peter, to hear Jesus for himself, and Peter believed. You can invite your friends to come with you to Bible class, or wherever you know they will hear the Gospel. This is the easiest step of all, yet you may have never bothered to invite anyone.

Let’s begin today to put these four steps into action. You will be amazed at the ‘catch’ you might bring in!

If you have been guilty of looking down your nose at anyone or not caring if other boys and girls were unsaved, rebound your sins of pride and indifference. Let God speak to you today through His Word, as you hear His command to go everywhere to everyone, whether it be next door or across the ocean, and make His wonderful salvation known.

If you are faithful now in witnessing to your friends and playmates, then when you grow up, God may give you the great joy of going to faraway places to carry the good news of salvation to thousands of boys and girls and men and women who have never heard.

You cannot tell others what you do not know yourself. We have been learning all about God’s plan of salvation. We have learned that all have sinned and have a sin nature which came from Adam and condemns us before God. Everything an unbeliever does comes from the sin nature, and therefore cannot please God. Man is “dead in trespasses and sins” and cannot save himself (Eph. 2:1, KJV).

According to the plan of God the Father, Jesus Christ, His Son, took on a human body, paid the penalty for our sins by dying spiritually on the cross, and now offers salvation and eternal life to all who will believe in Him (John 3:16). Are you willing to take God at His word that the Lord Jesus has provided your salvation, and believe in Him right now?

“AND IT SHALL BE, THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED” (Acts 2:21). He is just waiting for you to call on Him in faith—to say, “Yes, I believe.”

Lesson Review

What are we commanded to do besides study the Word? Clues: (1) To do this, you must go where people are. (2) You must know the Gospel to do this. (3) Jesus used this term in Matthew 4:19 to show the disciples how to be witnesses. (4) To do this, you must give the Gospel to people and give them the opportunity to believe in Jesus Christ. Answer: Be fishers of men.

Memory Verse

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Rom. 1:16)

Chapter Ten

What Are Angels?

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: What Are Angels?—2 Kings 6:8–23; Acts 12:1–11

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: The Reality of Angels
2. Lesson Two: A Superior Creation

C. Story Objective:

This chapter begins a new and fascinating study on the subject of angels. We shall discover that the study of angels has a distinct relation to creation and salvation, brings the purpose and plan of redemption into focus, and is a fitting conclusion to the lessons just studied.

Angelology is generally a neglected and often misunderstood doctrine, yet the Scripture has much to say on the subject. It becomes obvious, upon close scrutiny, that angels are a very definite and important part of God's plan.

Though angels are hidden to the vision of the human eye (Col. 1:16), both they and men are created beings, subject to their Creator, and brought forth to serve and praise Him (Ps. 103:20–21; Eph. 1:12). The service of angels in relation to mankind is at the command of God and in response to His love for human beings. Both holy and evil angels watch mankind, learning of the grace and wisdom of God through the outworking of salvation in the lives of believers (Eph. 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:12). Even so, we can learn more fully the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God (Rom. 11:33), through our study of angels. Through creation, angels are a superior order of beings; but through redemption, the order is reversed, and

regenerate humanity becomes positionally superior to angels (John 1:12; Heb. 1:14).

This chapter introduces the subject of angels, giving scriptural attestation to their reality and purpose. Understanding the purpose of angels in the plan of God is a real and valid source of comfort and assurance for the believer (Ps. 91:11). Further, this should prove to be a challenging study for those students who are particularly fascinated by the mysterious and unseen world of spirits.

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: atmosphere, dominions, myriads
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. The three heavens:
 - 1) Atmosphere (Gen. 1:20; Ps. 147:8)
 - 2) Space (Gen. 1:14–17)
 - 3) The third heaven (Deut. 10:14; Heb. 9:24)
 - b. Angels:
 - 1) Created beings (Neh. 9:6; Job 38:4–7; Col. 1:16)
 - 2) Countless in number (Dan. 7:10; Luke 2:13; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 5:11)
 - 3) Live in assigned places (Jude 6)
 - 4) Created to serve and praise God (Ps. 103:20–21)
 - 5) Kinds of angels:
 - a) Elect (holy, good) (Ps. 68:17; Heb. 1:14)
 - b) Fallen (evil, sinful) (James 2:19)
 - 6) A superior creation (2 Sam. 22:11; 2 Pet. 2:11)
 - 7) Unseen battle between holy and evil angels (Dan. 10:13)
 - c. Comparisons and contrasts of angels and men

E. *Source Book* Keywords: angels; Elisha; heavens, three; volition

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: angel crossword puzzle, elect angels, fallen angels, the three heavens
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets

3. Memory Verse: “For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him.” (Col. 1:16)

4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE THE REALITY OF ANGELS

We are about to study one of the most fascinating subjects in the Bible, outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. He, of course, is the most wonderful Person in the universe. Our topic is all about angels. Because we cannot see angels, many people think that they are imaginary or unreal and simply pass them off as fairy tales. Others are so fascinated with the subject that they let their imaginations go wild and come up with many strange and weird ideas. We are going to stay with just what the Bible says, and we will find that the Bible has quite a lot to say about angels.

The Space Age

Today, we still hear about the era called the Space Age, which began in the twentieth century. Even now in the twenty-first century, man continues to be excited about going into space. He has a great ambition to leave this earth and reach for something higher, something greater. He wants to return to the moon and go to distant planets—all on his own power.

Man thinks he can do everything without the help of God. He finally got up into space, but it was a struggle. Why? Man’s body is not equipped to function or survive in space. Since he was created from the elements of the earth (Gen. 2:7), man is earthly. He was designed to live on this earth. He is even bound to the earth by a law called gravity, which pulls him toward earth and keeps him there. Man has learned how to survive in space with certain equipment, but since he is not a heavenly being, he must stay in touch with earth and come back to survive.

Yet since the beginning of time God has offered man a place in heaven—by God’s power! A few men might get back to the moon or go on to some planet and see what is there, but the Bible says that “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3b). No one is going to get to heaven on his own power, but anyone can get there on God’s power. How are we “born again”? John 1:12 tells us by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as

Savior: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name.” When you go God’s way, you will not need a space suit or a rocket. And you will not need any money. It cost millions of dollars to put one man up in space. It costs us nothing to get to heaven, yet it cost the Son of God everything.

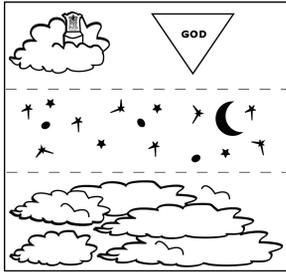
Do you know what a “countdown” is for launching a rocket into space? Ten, nine, eight, etc.—blastoff! God’s countdown for the believer has already begun. We do not know where we are in time or whether our “blastoff” will be at the Rapture or at physical death. In either case, the time is short, and “now is ‘THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,’ behold, now is ‘THE DAY OF SALVATION’” (2 Cor. 6:2). One day your time on earth will be complete; your ‘rocket’ will go up and you will be in heaven.

The Three Heavens

Man takes great pride in going into space. He thinks he has done a great, new thing, but he has not really gone up so far or done anything so new. Turn in your Bible to Ecclesiastes 1:9b: “There is nothing new under the sun.” There already have been some who have gone up into space without man-made equipment. But they have done it in God’s power. Do you remember who they are? Enoch (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:1, 11) went up without dying. The Lord Jesus Christ went up in His resurrection body into the third heaven (Acts 1:9; 2 Cor. 12:2).

What do we mean by the “third heaven”? The Bible speaks of three heavens. Hebrews 4:14 tells us that Jesus Christ “passed through the heavens.” He passed through the first heaven, which is the air above us where the birds and planes fly and where the clouds are (Gen. 1:20; Ps. 147:8). We usually call this the atmosphere, or the air we breathe. Up and up He went, through the second heaven, the home for angels and all the universe—the sun, the moon, the planets, and the stars. This is what we think of

as space and is where the astronauts go (Gen. 1:14–17). Space is so vast, it is hard for us to comprehend. It goes way beyond the stars we can see. There are millions more planets and galaxies beyond our own.



Beyond that, farther up than anyone can go without God's power, is the third heaven, the destination of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 9:24), sometimes called "the highest heavens" (Deut. 10:14). This is the abode of God and the place of His throne room (1 Kings 8:39). Believers who have died also live in the third heaven (Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 5:8; 12:2–4).

What Are Angels?

First of all, let's find out what angels are not. They are not human beings who have become angels after death. Neither are they some kind of make-believe fairies from never-never land. The Bible says that they are real created beings. We will not have to prove it by seeing them, for God's Word has a great deal to say about angels. And if you believe what the Bible says, you must believe in angels.

Did angels exist from all eternity, like God? No, angels are created beings (Neh. 9:6). We learned from Genesis 1:1 that "God created the heavens and the earth." Now let's turn to our memory verse (Col. 1:16) to read more details about creation. "For by Him [Christ—John 1:3] all things were created, *both* in the heavens [the three heavens] and on earth, visible [bodies seen] and invisible [bodies unseen], whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities [classes of angels]—all things have been created by Him and for Him [for His purpose]" (Col. 1:16).

God made man out of the chemicals of the soil, but there was a part of man which He created out of nothing (Gen. 1:27). What was that? Yes, his soul and his spirit. Angels were also created out of nothing. Now, although angels are invisible, this does not mean that they do not have some kind of body. They are made of a substance different from what we are made of; therefore, our eyes are not capable of seeing them. We see them now only through the Word of God.

In the past, God made angels visible on certain occasions to communicate His plan. They took on the appearance of men, or they appeared in dazzling light.

Sometimes when angels appeared, their splendor and beauty made men want to worship them (Rev. 19:10).

When Were Angels Created?

The Bible does not pinpoint the exact time of the creation of angels, but from Colossians 1:16 and Job 38:4–7 we can determine that they were brought into existence before the original creation of the heavens and the earth and long before the creation of man. We read that when the foundations of the earth were laid, the "sons of God [a designation for angels in the Old Testament] shouted for joy," in appreciation of God's works (Job 38:7). Do you wonder how many angels God created? Well, just like the stars, their numbers are more than we can count (Dan. 7:10; Luke 2:13; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 5:11).

Where Do Angels Live?

Many years ago, after returning from their trip into space, the Russian astronauts sneered, saying that they went up into heaven, but saw neither God nor angels. They thought this proved the Bible to be false. Why did they not see either one? God and angels are invisible. But space is filled with angels—not Martians or the weird creatures people are imagining today! God has assigned angels to certain places (Jude 6). Many are in the third heaven; some are assigned to earth; and many go back and forth. There are angels in this room with us. They can see through walls or go right through them.

Why Were Angels Created?

Have you ever wondered why God needed angels? Is He not omnipotent and can He not do anything with just the word of His mouth or the snap of His fingers? And if He is omnipresent, or everywhere, why would He need angels? God has a perfect plan, and angels are a part of this great plan, which also includes you and me as we have already learned. All creation is for the glory of Christ (Eph. 1:12; Phil. 2:9–11; Col. 1:16). Just as earthly kings surround themselves with beautiful people in order to add glory to their court, so the presence of angels, as well as their praise, brings glory to God.

The word "angel" means "messenger." Angels serve God and carry out His orders (Ps. 103:20), and God has assigned angels to be the servants of believers as well. Do you know that you have a servant? You have your very own guardian angel (Matt. 18:10). But since we cannot see angels, God commands them for us from His omniscience. Though we are not allowed to talk to or fellowship with angels now, we know from God's Word that they are all around us to minister constantly to us and to carry out God's protection of believers. Let us listen to a story from the Bible about a time when angels protected God's servants. Turn to 2 Kings 6:8–18.

A Servant Finds Out That Angels Are Real

During the days of Elisha the prophet, Ben-hadad, the king of Aram (today we call the country Syria), sent out a band of soldiers to capture Jehoram, the king of Israel. Ben-hadad's spies reported where the Israelite army would be at such and such a time, and laid plans to capture it. But always King Jehoram managed to escape Ben-hadad's traps. Finally, in desperation, the Aramean king called a council. "One of you must be a traitor," he said, "how else could Jehoram always find out my plans?"

One of the men answered, "No, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom [in private]" (2 Kings 6:12). You see, the Israelites were God's chosen people (1 Chron. 16:13). God Himself was fighting for them (Rom. 8:31). Ben-hadad thought he could outwit God, and he schemed to capture Elisha. He sent a great army with horses and chariots to surround the city where Elisha was. Hoping to surprise Elisha, they came at night and were well positioned around the city to cut off any possibility of escape.

Early the next morning, Elisha's servant stepped outside, and what should he see but the whole Aramean army! In great fear, he called to his master, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" (2 Kings 6:15*b*). He seemed to have forgotten all the wonderful miracles he had seen Elisha perform in the power of God.

Elisha came out to see the sight. I imagine he even chuckled to himself to see the great effort the Aramean king had made to arrest one man. Then, remembering his frightened servant, the prophet said, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (2 Kings 6:16). The servant may have thought, "Who is with us? Elisha's old, and I'm no soldier!" But then he heard Elisha praying for him. What was that he was saying? "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see" (2 Kings 6:17*a*). And at that very moment, the Lord answered Elisha's prayer, for the servant suddenly saw the mountain filled with horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. What were these horses and chariots?

Turn to Psalm 68:17 and you will see: "The chariots of God are myriads, thousands upon thousands [of angels]; The Lord is among them *as at* Sinai, in holiness." The horses and chariots were the angelic army of God. Elisha knew by faith that they were there to protect him. For a brief minute, the servant was allowed to see so that he and

we, too, might know something of God's plan and purpose for angels and believers. To read the rest of the story on your own, turn to 2 Kings 6:17–23.

What God Wants Me to Know

Do you, like Elisha's servant, fall apart when you get in trouble? You need not! God has given you Bible doctrine and promises so that you may know what He can and will do to help you. He has chosen faith as the way to come to Him and as the way to live the Christian life (Heb. 11:6). You do not have to see to believe. *Your* eyes can be 'opened' by learning His Word (Ps. 119:18). God wants you to take Him at His Word (2 Cor. 5:7). If you will, you will have no need to be frightened or upset when trouble surrounds you. Just "stand still" and watch the Lord go to work for you (Ex. 14:13, KJV). He may send His angels, or He may work in some other way. But you will see results, if you will trust Him.

Lesson Review

How many heavens are there? Three. Which one will one day be the home of all believers? The third heaven. What is in the second heaven? The stars and planets, the sun and the moon. Is there some kind of life in the second heaven? Yes, angelic life. What are angels? Created, invisible beings. Why did God create angels? Part of His plan—to serve and praise Him. What does the word "angel" mean? Messenger. Will you be an angel when you die? No. And in the next lesson you will find out why not, if you listen carefully.

Memory Verse

"For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him." (Col. 1:16)

LESSON TWO A SUPERIOR CREATION

Turn in your Bible to Psalm 8. Let's begin at verse 3: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained" (Ps. 8:3, KJV). How did God make the universe, according to these verses? With His "fingers." But when the Bible speaks of the work of salvation, it is sometimes called "arm" work (Isa. 59:16; 63:5). Salvation was harder work than creating the universe! Do you ever look up into the sky at the millions and millions of stars, the sun and the moon, and think of what a tremendous thing God did? God said to Job, "Stand and consider the wonders of God" (Job 37:14). The Bible says He "hangs the earth [in space] on nothing" (Job 26:7). Can you hang something on nothing? Try hanging your coat in space. How pitiful are man's efforts!

Now, I want you to stop a minute today and think of the countless number of stars in the sky and then remember that our earth is only one of those tiny bits of flickering lights hung up there in space. In fact, it is one of the smallest planets in our universe. Most of us have a tendency to think of earth as a huge planet and the rest of the universe as tiny and insignificant. Furthermore, we think of ourselves as the biggest thing in the world! But when you see yourself compared to the whole universe, one person living on a tiny planet, it makes you feel mighty small, doesn't it?

"What is man," David asks, "that thou [God] art mindful of him?" (Ps. 8:4a, KJV). Have you ever picked up a handful of sand? There are thousands of grains in one small handful. Would you care anything about one of those grains if it slipped out of your hand? Of course not. We are less significant in the universe than a grain of sand, yet God is mindful of us. Think how good the Lord is that He should even notice us! Yet in spite of our insignificance compared to the universe, we are very important to God.

Now, look at the next verse, Psalm 8:5, KJV: "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour." We are compared to the angels. How are we compared to them? We were created lower than they. Does this mean that because they live in the heavens, they are higher? No, higher means greater or superior. In the Old Testament angels are called "sons of God" (Job 1:6), and believers, "servants of the Most High God" (Dan. 3:26). In the New Testament this is reversed. Believers are called "children of God" (John 1:12), while angels are servants, "ministering spirits, sent out to render service" (Heb. 1:14). This new title for

believers shows our position in Christ, a new position that believers in the Old Testament did not have. Through salvation we become positionally higher than angels. God crowned man "with glory and honour," even though he was lower than angels, and made him to rule over the earth (Ps. 8:5–6). Man lost this right to rule when he sinned, and Satan took over the rulership of the earth. We are going to see the ways in which men and angels are alike and in what ways they are different.

How Men and Angels Are Alike *Colossians 1:16; Nehemiah 9:6*

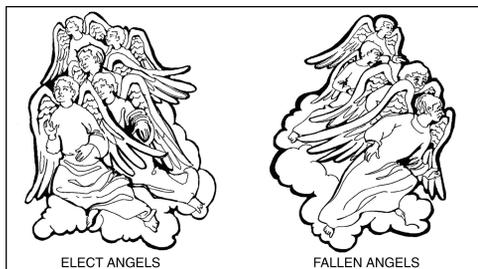
In what ways are men and angels alike? Your memory verse will give you several clues: "For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him" (Col. 1:16). What is the first way? Both are created beings. Why were each created? For God, for His glory, to serve Him (Ps. 103:20–21; Eph. 1:12; Col. 1:16). Men and angels have something else in common. Can you tell what it is from reading what the angel Lucifer said in Isaiah 14:13–14? Volition. God gave angels and men the right to choose for or against Him. We have volition and they have volition. How do we know? Because there are two kinds of angels as well as two kinds of people in the world.

Everyone in the world is either a believer or an unbeliever. God gives man time to choose for or against Him. At some time in his life each person must decide whether or not he will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had to choose whether they would obey or disobey God. What test did God put in the Garden to see which way they would choose? The tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:17). What did they choose? Yes, to disobey God. They became sinners and lost their relationship with God. But God made them a promise of another "tree" on which His Son would die for their sins (Gen. 3:15). Now Adam and Eve must make another choice: to believe in the promise of a Savior or not to believe.

Thousands of years later, God did set up the second "tree" (1 Pet. 2:24, KJV). What is this tree? It is the cross on which Christ died for the sins of the world—from Adam and Eve to the last person who will ever live. Those who

choose to believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for their sins are believers; those who do not are unbelievers.

We know that God also gave angels a time to choose for or against Him because there are two kinds of angels—elect (holy) and fallen (evil), or, as we may call them, the “good guys” and the “bad guys.” At some time in eternity past, the angel Lucifer chose against God. When he made his decision, millions of angels went along with him and also decided against God. We will study this in detail later.



Angels are not called believers and unbelievers, for all angels “believe,” even the fallen angels or “demons” (James 2:19). You see, they have seen God face to face; they know that He exists. But they chose not to serve Him and became fallen or evil angels. These sinful angels are the demons who help Satan carry out his evil plans against God on the earth.

Did you know that both good and bad angels are curious about us? Of course, we are curious about them too, perhaps because we cannot see them. But since angels can see us, why are they curious about us? Angels learn some things about God by watching us. Both good and bad angels learn about His wisdom and goodness (Eph. 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:12).

How Men and Angels Are Different

In what ways are men and angels different? What is perhaps the most obvious difference, learned from your memory verse (Col. 1:16)? Men are visible; angels are invisible. Man has a visible body; angels are invisible spirits. Of what were they created? Angels were created out of nothing (Gen. 1:1); man was created out of the elements of the soil (Gen. 2:7). Do angels die? No. Are they born? No. The entire realm of angelic creatures, millions and millions of angels, were all created perfect with eternal life by our Lord Jesus Christ in an instant of time (Ps. 148:5; Col. 1:16). What shall we call this difference? Angels have a beginning but no ending; men are born and die.

Angels, a Superior Creation

We have already learned that angels are a higher creation than human beings. How is this reversed? Through our salvation. For the remainder of our lesson we are going to see in what ways the angels are superior to us.

They are wiser than we (2 Sam. 14:20), but they are not omniscient: they cannot read our thoughts. They are physically stronger than we (Ps. 103:20; 2 Pet. 2:11), but they are not omnipotent: they are not so strong as God. Think of the difficulty the astronauts have orbiting through space, the men and man-hours, equipment and money it takes to get them a few miles up! Angels can fly through space at fantastic rates of speed, faster than lightning or the speed of sound. Since the Bible says that they fly (2 Sam. 22:11), angels are usually pictured with wings. However, not all angels have wings. Only certain angels have either four or six wings as a sign of rank.

Both the good and bad angels are organized like an army, and there are tremendous battles going on in the unseen world between these two groups (Dan. 10:13). Many times your guardian angel must fight off demons who would like to harm you in some way. The holy angels love God and desire to help believers whom God loves, but the evil angels or demons hate God and would like to destroy His plan for us. Since holy angels watch over believers, there are undoubtedly many of them right here in this room. But do you know who else is in this room? There are also some of the evil angels here. They want to stir up trouble so that you will not listen to God’s Word and so that others will be disturbed and not hear. And so the battle rages unseen about us all the time.

The Strength of Angels

Many feats of strength performed by angels are recorded in the Word of God. Can you think of one? What about the angel who rolled away the stone from the door of Jesus’ tomb? Even though the door was sealed, the angel rolled the stone away in an instant of time. In the future, four angels will hold back the winds of the earth (Rev. 7:1), and at another time four angels will kill one-third of the people on the earth (Rev. 9:15) as they are used by God to carry out His judgments. In spite of their great power, angels can do only what God commands and allows. Even Satan, the mightiest of all evil angels, can only go as far as God will let him.

Let’s turn to Acts 5:17–20, where we will see an amazing feat by an angel: “But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with jealousy; and they laid hands on the apostles, and put them in a public jail. But an angel of the Lord during the night opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said, ‘Go your way, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life.’” If you have ever seen a prison door, you know it would take quite a few men with a battering ram to get it open. Yet an angel opened the door without any trouble at all to free the apostles imprisoned in Jerusalem by the high priest and religious leaders.

Now, go over a few pages to Acts 12:1–11. This time Peter was put in prison alone and the soldiers were taking

no chances on his escape. He was not only guarded by sixteen men on four shifts, but he was bound with chains between two guards. He was in an inner prison behind several locked doors. It would seem impossible this time for Peter to be delivered. But delivered he was!

While Peter slept, an angel entered right into the prison. The guards were miraculously kept sound asleep. Then the angel hit Peter to wake him up, and the chains fell off his hands. Commanding Peter to follow him, the angel led him through the first locked door, past all the guards, through another locked prison door, and finally up to the great iron gate of the city. Even this was no barrier, for it opened easily, and they went on into the city where the angel left Peter. This was so fantastic, Peter thought he was dreaming.

What God Wants Me to Know

Undoubtedly angels have done many wonderful and startling things for you and for me. But we do not need to see and talk to angels today because God's written Word is complete and tells us all that God wants us to know. We have the Holy Spirit within us to help us understand His Word. But angels are continually watching over us for the sake of the Lord Jesus, whom they love, so that we may survive to bring glory to Him.

I wonder what the angels see when they watch you? Do holy or evil angels rejoice when they see your life? How the holy angels must shake their heads when we as believers, who have been saved from our sins at such great cost by the Son of God, do not choose to serve our loving Lord! Since we have been saved, we are higher than angels in God's sight. Shouldn't we serve Him as much as they do?

Were any of the angels created evil? No, God is holy and can never be the source of evil. All angels were created good and holy. They have seen and known God. Even so, God did not want to force them to love or serve Him. God does not want either them or us to be robots. He wants our love and service as we are willing to give it to Him. Unlike the angels, you were born a sinner. You have never been in the presence of God or seen His glory. You are 'fallen' to begin with, but by a choice of your volition you can become elect, holy, and good—good enough to live in the presence of God forever and behold His majesty. What is your choice? "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36).

Lesson Review

True-false quiz:

1. God the Father created all things. (False. Jesus Christ created all things—Colossians 1:16.)
2. Angels and man have the same kind of bodies. (False)
3. Both angels and mankind have volition. (True)
4. Fallen angels do not believe in God. (False)
5. Both angels and mankind were created to glorify and serve God. (True)
6. Some angels are superior to men in strength and wisdom. (False. All angels are.)
7. The term, "sons of God," refers to believers in both Old and New Testaments. (False. In the New Testament only.)
8. Man was *created* higher than the angels. (False) When is he higher than angels? At salvation.
9. The second heaven in the Bible is the place where God lives. (False. God lives in the third heaven.)
10. The word "angel" means messenger. (True)
11. Angels worship believers. (False. They worship God. They watch and help believers.)
12. Angels have a beginning but no end. (True)
13. Half the angels were created evil. (False. God is never the source of evil or sin.)
14. Angels who chose for God are described as good, holy, elect. (True)
15. Angels who chose against God are called bad, evil, fallen. (True)

Memory Verse

"For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him." (Col. 1:16)

Chapter Eleven

The Fall of Angels

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: The Fall of Angels—Isaiah 14:12–15;
Revelation 12:4a

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: The Five “I Wills” of Lucifer
2. Lesson Two: Why the Lake of Fire?

C. Story Objective:

While God is the creator of all angels, He did not create the sinfulness of the devil. Through his own negative volition, Lucifer, the most magnificent of all created beings (Ezek. 28:12–15), chose against his Creator (Isa. 14:12–14) and became the originator of sin in the universe (1 Tim. 3:6). One-third of the angels followed Lucifer in his revolt (Rev. 12:4a). As the leader of this rebellion against God, Lucifer became Satan, which means “accuser or adversary”—the adversary of God. Satan evidently made his headquarters on the earth (Isa. 14:17), which brought about God’s judgment of the earth in Genesis 1:2. Satan’s rebellion and fall set into motion crucial issues, eternal and universal in scope. The resulting conflict answers the weighty questions, “why man, why sin, and why suffering?”

Satan, attempting by his own works to win heaven, lost it, and has been sentenced instead by a righteous and just God to the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41). The fact that Satan objected to the sentence and condemned God’s judgment (John 16:11) as unfair and incompatible with His attribute of love is evidenced by the delay in the execution of God’s sentence (Rev. 20:7–10). Satan will see that God is not only a God of love, but also of righteousness and justice (Ps. 89:14).

To resolve the angelic conflict, an inferior creature was placed on planet earth (Ps. 8:5; Heb. 2:7) and was given free will or volition by which he, too, must make a decision for or against His Creator. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was set up by God as a test for man’s volition (Gen. 2:16–17). When man chose negatively, God set up another tree, the cross. His decision to deal with man in grace resolves the angelic conflict, for the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross vindicates God’s righteousness and justice, enabling His love to flow freely to man (Col. 2:14–15). Anyone who chooses for the work of Christ proves that God is fair and Satan is wrong (Luke 15:10; 1 Cor. 15:24–25; Heb. 1—2; 1 John 3:8).

In the meantime, Satan is unceasing in his efforts to prove God wrong and to usurp the Supreme Throne by setting up his own kingdom and stealing the worship and obedience that belong to God. But Satan’s doom is sure, and his delayed sentence is certain to be carried out (Luke 10:18; cf. Ezek. 28:16–19; Rev. 20:10).

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: ambition, appeal, impugn, wasteland
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Why the destruction of the original earth?
 - 1) Creation of Lucifer (Ezek. 28:13–15)
 - 2) Judgment of Lucifer (Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 18:16–17)
 - b. Why sin?
 - 1) Lucifer went on negative signals (Isa. 14:13–17).

- 2) Lucifer became the originator of sin (1 John 3:8).
- 3) Lucifer objected to his sentence to the lake of fire (John 16:11).
- c. Why man?
 - 1) Created to resolve the angelic conflict (Ps. 8:3–6; Heb. 2:7)
 - 2) That God might show His grace and justice in His offer of salvation to fallen man and save fallen humanity (Ps. 89:14)
- d. Why the lake of fire?
 - 1) For Satan and his angels (Matt. 25:41)
 - 2) For those who reject God's grace in salvation (2 Pet. 3:9)

E. *Source Book* Keywords: angelic conflict, angels (angelic history), creation/restoration, Satan

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: Lucifer, Satan after his fall, volition
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: "The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3:8)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE

THE FIVE "I WILLS" OF LUCIFER

Some people think Satan is a 'red devil' with a pitchfork and tail. Do you believe that there really is someone who looks like this? No? Do you know that the devil is very happy when people think this is what he looks like? The funnier and meaner he is made to appear, the more unbelievable he becomes in their minds, and the better he can fool them. He cunningly suggests to people that they are too smart to believe in such an old-fashioned idea as the devil, and so there is nothing to fear from him.

Let's see what God says about Satan in His Word. Did you know that God tells us more about Satan than about all the good angels put together? Why? So that we will not be taken unawares and be tricked by this enemy.

Why the Destruction of the Original Earth?

Satan was not always the devil as we know him today. Our story goes way back to the timeless past when Lucifer and all angels were created, sometime before the original creation of the heavens and the earth. Remember, we read that at the creation of the heavens and the earth, the angels "shouted for joy" (Job 38:4–7).

When you think of angels, do you think of evil creatures, such as the devil? We usually think the very opposite. But Satan is an angel and he was created by God. To what group of angels does he belong now? Yes, to fallen or evil angels. Did God create evil angels? Not at all. All angels were created good and holy. When God created the earth, Satan, or Lucifer as he was called then, was still a holy angel.

We don't know what the original earth looked like, but it must have been a beautiful place because it came from the hand of perfect God. We are not told, either, what kind of beings inhabited this original earth, though it was most likely angels under the leadership of Lucifer, who may have been put in charge of it. It may even have been created just for him. At least, he seems to have made it his special place.

Now, after reading in Genesis 1:1 that God created the earth, we suddenly read in verse 2 that "the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep." We already know that God did not create the earth this way. Actually, in the original Hebrew language, the word "was" should be translated "became." So the earth *became* formless and void. But I do not see anything between verses 1 and 2 to tell us what made it that way, do you? Yet the story of how Lucifer became Satan occurred somewhere between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. We must turn to another place in the Bible to see what happened. "I looked on the earth, and behold, *it was* formless and void; And to the heavens, and they had no light. I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking, And all the hills moved to and fro. I looked, and behold, there was no man, And all the birds of the heavens had fled. I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a wilderness, And all its cities were pulled down Before the LORD, before His fierce anger" (Jer. 4:23–26). The destruction of the earth was a judgment of God against it.

What would make the Lord so angry that He would destroy the earth He had made? We will have to turn to yet

another passage to find this out (Ezek. 28:11–19). Ezekiel 28:11–12 says, “Again the word of the Lord came to me saying, ‘Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, “Thus says the Lord GOD, You had the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.”’” In this passage, God told the prophet to speak to the King of Tyre, who was an enemy of Israel, and tell him that because he set himself above God, he would be brought to a terrible death (Ezek. 28:1–10). But as we read on, we see that God is also speaking of a greater enemy, Satan. Satan had so influenced the King of Tyre that he had the nerve to say, “I am a god!” Would you ever think of saying such a thing? Perhaps not; but every time you want your own way rather than God’s way, you are saying in effect that you know better than God!

Now God tells the prophet Ezekiel to “take up a lamentation,” a cry of great sorrow, upon the King of Tyre. Why should God be sad over a wicked man like this? Remember, God is perfect and possesses perfect happiness, so nothing we do can actually make Him sad. But the Bible often uses words we can understand, like sad or angry, to explain to us God’s actions. The King of Tyre would make God sad because God is “not wishing for any to perish [even the most wicked person of all time] but for all to come to repentance [believe in Christ and be saved]” (2 Pet. 3:9b). Christ died for all people, for all have sinned (Isa. 53:6; Rom. 3:23). God is grieved over anyone who will not accept His offer of grace in salvation. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). What about Satan? Was God sad that Satan chose against Him? Yes, very sad. Listen to how God created this great angel, and you will understand why God should “take up a lamentation” over him.

Description of Lucifer

Ezekiel 28:13a says, “You [Lucifer] were in Eden, the garden of God.” We know that Lucifer came to the Garden of Eden, but this is speaking of a time before the earth was restored—sometime in eternity past. Where do you think the Garden of God is? In heaven? Which heaven? Yes, the third heaven. God gave this super-angel a position in the very throne room of God.



Let us see how he was dressed: “Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz, and the diamond;

The beryl, the onyx, and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald; And the gold” (Ezek. 28:13b). Can you imagine somebody wearing every kind of jewel in the world on his clothing? Every time he moved, he shone and glittered. No wonder he was given the name of Lucifer, “star of the morning” (Isa. 14:12), or “shining one”! How the other angels must have gasped at the magnificent beauty of this, the most marvelous of all of God’s created beings! Why do you think Lucifer was covered in jewels? These were a sign of honor and his important rank as the greatest angel. But more than that, he reflected God’s glory, His essence. As Lucifer guarded the throne of God, he was a crown of praise to his Creator.

Even his voice was something special: “The workmanship of your settings and sockets [comparing his voice to musical instruments], Was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared” (Ezek. 28:13b). Every time he spoke he was an ‘instrument of praise’ to God. The nearest we can come to describing his voice is perhaps like the swelling sounds of a pipe organ. But notice: for all his dazzling appearance, he was still a *created* being, subject to his Creator, created to serve Him.

His Purpose

What else are we told about Lucifer? Ezekiel 28:14: “You were the anointed cherub who covers, And I [God] placed you *there*. You were on the holy mountain [throne] of God; You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.” The cherubim are among the highest angels. Their particular job is to protect and defend God’s holiness. Now Lucifer, the greatest of all cherubim, was appointed to cover or guard the throne of God. Does God need anyone to protect Him? No, nor does God need you and me. He gives us the privilege of helping Him in His plan, just as He did Lucifer. Lucifer was an “honor guard” or attendant. God chose to have it this way, just as He chose you and me to serve Him. We do not in any way deserve this privilege; it is all God’s grace.

Lucifer is said to have “walked in the midst of the stones of fire.” Does this mean that there are glowing coals around God’s throne? We do not know whether anything like this is actually there, but fire in the Bible speaks of God’s judgment. As fire burns and destroys, so God judges and destroys sin. We learn from this that there was no sin in Lucifer, nothing to keep him from having unbroken fellowship with God. He could come into God’s presence any time he wished.

Why Sin?

Ezekiel 28:15a: “You were blameless in your ways From the day you were created.” God created no evil (Gen. 1:31); Lucifer was absolutely perfect in every way—“until unrighteousness was found in [him]” (Ezek. 28:15b). What is unrighteousness? Sin. But Lucifer has not *done* anything

wrong yet. He has just been thinking. Can God read your thoughts? Can God look into your mind and see if you are listening with your mind and if you are really interested in His Word, or if you are tuned out and thinking about something else? Sometimes when you are all alone, you may think, "Nobody can see me; I can do anything I please." Do you know that the things you do when you are alone and the things you think to yourself make you the person you really are (Ps. 90:8)? The important thing is what God sees in us. God uncovered Lucifer's secret sin—the sin in his mind, before Lucifer ever *did* anything sinful. God is omniscient; He knows all things. But like Lucifer, we often think we can get away with sin! What was Lucifer thinking in his mind?

Negative Volition, Lucifer's Five "I Wills"

To find out what Lucifer was thinking, turn to Isaiah 14:12–17 and begin with verse 13a: "But you said in your heart [mind]." One day this super-angel began to think; but instead of thinking about God, his Maker, and the great honor that was his in reflecting God's very essence, he thought of himself and his great beauty and wisdom (Ezek. 28:17). The more he thought of himself, the more pride filled his mind. This pride resulted in five terrible "I wills" against the will of God. Lucifer intended, of course, for his thoughts to be kept secret. He must have forgotten that God can read minds.

In the first of his five "I wills," Lucifer thought, "I will ascend to heaven" (Isa. 14:13a). Now, we know that as the anointed cherub, Lucifer resided in the third heaven with God. But he wanted to ascend even higher! Not content with the wonderful position God gave him, Lucifer revolted against God's plan and wished to put himself in God's place—yes, even to rule over God!

Second, Lucifer thought, "I will raise my throne above the stars [angels] of God" (Isa. 14:13). Aha! Lucifer wants a throne! But why? So that he might rule all the angels. Then, third, he thought, "I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north." Lucifer wanted to rule over the earth and whatever came into existence there.

Fourth, he said, "I will ascend above the heights of the clouds" (Isa. 14:14a). Clouds in the Bible speak of the glory of God (Ex. 16:10; 40:34). So you see, Lucifer was not satisfied with the glory God gave him; he wanted more—even God's glory. Lucifer's thoughts are getting grander each time, aren't they? Finally, his fifth and greatest ambition forms in his mind: "I will make myself like the Most High" (Isa. 14:14b). When we think of Satan, we think of everything that is evil. But the devil does not want to appear evil. He wants to be like God! In his pride and ambition he likes to think of himself as a great and mighty ruler, and he is trying to take God's place as the possessor and ruler of heaven and earth (Isa. 14:15–17).

Just think—the very first sin was committed in heaven! And by the most glorious creature who was created to be

an honor guard in heaven and worship God. What did God do about Lucifer's decision? Well, we shall see in our next lesson.

What God Wants Me to Know

Your memory verse begins, "The one who practices sin is of the devil" (1 John 3:8a). This does not mean that every time you sin you are of the devil! It is telling us that sin began with the devil, "for the devil has sinned from the beginning" (1 John 3:8b). Any time you commit sin, you are going along with Satan's plan. Even though your sins come from your volition, you are working with Satan when you sin. Your sin nature is constantly tempting you to be the servant of Satan. This ought to make you think twice before you sin, shouldn't it? If you belong to God and are on His side, surely you do not want to work for Satan against God!

But God knew that sometimes we would sin, even though we do not want to, so He has provided a way for us to stay in fellowship with Him and not to serve Satan. That is, of course, by using 1 John 1:9 and by learning and applying other doctrines of the Word of God.

Not content to destroy God's plan for himself, Lucifer, now known as Satan, would like to destroy God's plan for you to be saved (Luke 8:12). We are all born into Satan's kingdom, but God has made a way to take you out of Satan's kingdom and put you in His own Kingdom, where you will be higher than angels and live forever with Him (1 Pet. 2:9). Are you in God's plan yet? "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

Lesson Review

What was the name of the super-angel God placed around His throne to guard it? Lucifer. What does his name mean? The shining one. Why was he called this? He reflected the light and glory of God. "God is light" (1 John 1:5b); Jesus Christ is "the light of the world" (John 8:12b) and "the bright morning star" (Rev. 22:16b). Was Lucifer content to be just a reflection? No, he wanted to have the very glory of God. How do we know? The five "I wills" of Satan: "But you [Lucifer] said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High'" (Isa. 14:13–14).

Memory Verse

"The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3:8)

LESSON TWO WHY THE LAKE OF FIRE?

At the beginning of our last lesson, we saw the creation of the original earth in Genesis 1:1, then suddenly in verse 2 we read that the earth was formless and void. We still have not learned what happened between verses 1 and 2 that caused the earth to be destroyed. Perhaps you are beginning to see that it has something to do with Lucifer, who was the guardian cherub of God's throne. Did Lucifer perform his duty faithfully? No, he did not. Instead, he became the first creature to sin. As yet, however, Lucifer has *done* nothing sinful. He has only *thought* about having his own way. Thus we are going to find out that "as [a man] thinks within himself, so he is" (Prov. 23:7a).

Satan's Three Falls

What is God going to do about Lucifer's sinful thoughts? Will He wait until Lucifer actually tries something and He catches him in the act? No, for as soon as Lucifer thought sin, he was a fallen angel. A thinking sin is as bad in God's sight as a doing sin. God pointed His 'finger' at Lucifer and said, "you sinned" (Ezek. 28:16a). "You are guilty." Right then and there God banished Lucifer from his high position guarding the throne of God (Isa. 14:12; Ezek. 28:17a). We would say today that he was "fired." This was the first thing that God did, but He was not through. At this point, the angel once called "Lucifer" is now called "Satan." The name "Satan" means "accuser" or "adversary."



God promised Lucifer another fall, still in the future. "I have cast you as profane From the mountain of God" (Ezek. 28:16b). When Lucifer said to himself, "I will," that was sin. When God says "I will," that is a promise. God will do exactly what He says. God did not immediately cast Lucifer out of the third heaven when he sinned. He is allowed to go into heaven, for God is still working out His purposes with Satan, as we shall see. But there is a time

coming when Satan will be cast once and for all out of the third heaven (Isa. 14:12; Luke 10:18; Rev. 9:1; 12:7–11). In this fall, Satan will be cast to the earth right in the middle of the terrible Tribulation, at which time God will allow Satan three-and-a-half more years before he is bound and cast into the Abyss (bottomless pit) for one thousand years (Rev. 20:1–3).

After this, Satan will be released for a short time at the end of the Millennium before the eternal state begins. But God promised, "I have destroyed you, O covering cherub" (Ezek. 28:16b). Obviously Satan is not yet destroyed, but God's judgment against negative volition is certain (Isa. 14:15; 45:9a; Ezek. 28:19). Satan's punishment is like that of a criminal who has been found guilty of murder in a modern court of law. As he stands before the judge, he is pronounced guilty and sentenced to die. Is he killed right then? No, he waits until the state is ready to execute justice. Often the criminal gets another trial; he is given every opportunity to appeal and prove his case. So Satan has been judged and sentenced by God, but the sentence has not yet been carried out.

It is a long fall from the "stones of fire" (Ezek. 28:16b) to the lake of fire where Satan is to be cast forever in this, his third and final fall (Matt. 25:41). But God will send him to his doom at the right time (Rev. 20:10). God prepared the lake of fire for Satan and the fallen angels. He did not create hell for people, but certain ones will go there with Satan. Who are they? Unbelievers! Satan's doom is sure. In the meantime, he is on the loose and making every attempt to doom others with him.

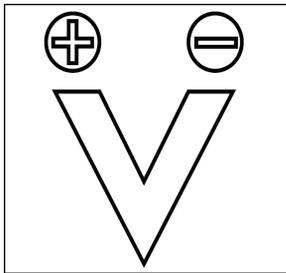
Satan's Angels

Now, when Lucifer sinned, he was no longer the "shining one," but became Satan, the adversary or enemy of God. Do you know what his first act against God was? Revelation 12:3–4: Satan took with him a third of all the angels. How did he accomplish that? He went about slandering God—that is, he told the angels things about God that were not true. I sometimes hear boys and girls slandering other boys and girls. Girls often say catty things that are not true, which usually come from jealousy. God hates these sins of the tongue because they are of the devil: "The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning" (1 John 3:8a).

We do not know exactly what Satan said, but it may have been something like this: "Look at what God did to me—ME, the super-angel! (Ezek. 28:16a, 17a). He

sentenced me to the lake of fire! God can't be fair; He isn't just—why, I haven't done a thing!" Then maybe he went around among the angels and suggested, "Why don't you serve me? I'm going to be greater than God. I'm going to take over!" And do you know, one-third of the angels did just that—they went with Satan and became the fallen, evil angels. From this time on, a conflict has raged between God and the fallen angels.

Satan is the father of sin (John 8:44)—Satan, who was created perfect. How is it possible for a perfect creature to become the originator of evil? Inside of this perfect creature, along with all angels, God put a free will with positive or negative volition. As long as he stayed on positive signals, he was perfect; but when he went negative toward God, then "unrighteousness was found" in him (Ezek. 28:15b).



God could have destroyed him right then and there, but Satan was allowed to put the other angels to the test of choosing for or against God.

The Reason for the Ruined Earth

Now, when Satan drew with him one-third of the angels, he set up his kingdom on the planet earth and made it his playground. His horde of fallen angels brought sin and ruin to the earth that God had created perfect: "Who made the world like a wilderness And overthrew its cities, Who did not allow his prisoners to go home?" (Isa. 14:17). God looked down and saw that the fallen angels were ruining the earth. Once again, Satan had impugned the character of God. Do you understand now why God had to make the earth a wasteland?

We are now back to Genesis 1:2. Because Satan and his angels were ruining the earth with their evil and unrighteousness, God destroyed the earth and covered it with ice. We do not know how long earth remained this way. However, God did not leave the earth a ruined planet because He had intended that it be inhabited (Isa. 45:18). But the new inhabitants were not going to be angels. God was going to put a lesser creature on it, to rule it and take care of it. The first two chapters of Genesis tell us how God renewed or cleaned up the earth for its new inhabitants. Do you remember who restored the earth? Did Jesus Christ? No, God the Holy Spirit did (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; Ps. 104:30).

Why Man?

After the earth was all restored, God planted a garden with perfect living conditions. Into this garden He put man, a perfect creature lower than angels and made in the image of God. Why did God put man on the earth this time instead of angels? Man was going to settle the warfare between God and Satan. There must have been some kind of courtroom scene and trial when Satan sinned. Satan and the fallen angels were condemned, but Satan thought God was unfair to sentence him to the lake of fire and appealed his case. He wanted God to change the sentence. So God created man to show Satan that His judgment was fair, righteous and just.

What was this man like? He had an earthbound body which housed a soul and a spirit. In his soul, he was like God. He was created perfect, innocent and free from sin, as was Lucifer. Just as Lucifer had walked in the midst of the stones of fire in fellowship with God until he sinned, now God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden in unbroken fellowship. What would spoil this fellowship? Sin! But if they were created without sin, how could they sin? Just like Lucifer sinned: by deciding to use negative volition against God. As Adam fellowshiped daily with God, he learned Bible doctrine. He was aware of God's enemy; in fact, Adam was told to guard against him (Gen. 2:15).

Now, here is God's plan to prove to Satan that He is fair: He put a test in the Garden for man. God told man there was just one thing he could not do: eat the fruit of one tree. That was all. Man could choose whether he would obey or disobey God. If he disobeyed, he would die (Gen. 1:17).

Do you think Satan was watching all this? You can be sure he immediately began to scheme to ruin God's plan. By tempting man to sin, Satan thought he would prove that God was unfair. Surely, God would not send man to the lake of fire—not this creature He had made to have fellowship with Himself! God loves His creatures too much! And, Satan reasoned, if man doesn't have to be punished, why should he?

How would Satan go about spoiling God's plan? Would he run around and tear up the Garden, pull up the trees, and engage in a fistfight with Adam? Oh, no, he is much smarter than that! Remember, Satan is the wisest of all created beings. He looked over the situation very carefully and set up his plan of attack. He would get to their thinking—persuade Adam and Eve to go on negative volition just as he had.

So do you know how Satan deceived Eve? He chose a perfect disguise, the shining serpent, who, very much like himself, was the wisest of the animal kingdom. This is where we learn for the first time that Satan takes on disguises and that he works through others to deceive us. Satan does not grab you by the shirt front and shake you; he reaches you with ideas and seemingly good things, such as church and religion. He works through sweet people, religious people, even preachers, for Satan has his own

preachers and churches. Many of you fall for Satan's ideas because you do not know God's Word. In fact, the first thing Satan wants is to persuade you to doubt God's Word, just as he tempted Eve to doubt. "Indeed, has God [really] said?" Satan slyly suggested, and Eve fell right into Satan's trap (Gen. 3:1–6).

If Satan had picked a piece of fruit off the tree and tried to cram it into Eve's mouth, I think she would have become very frightened and would have run quickly to Adam. But how clever Satan was! "Poor Eve," he pretended, "God is holding something back from you that you really should have. He is not being fair to you." Then, when Satan sees she is listening to him, he goes ahead and calls God a liar. By now Eve wants that fruit in the worst way, and she falls into the same sin as Satan—pride. She desired to be as wise as God.

Well, you know the story. Her volition went negative toward God; she ate the fruit and died. Died how? Spiritually. She lost her fellowship with God; she was now spiritually dead. I can imagine that Satan went off chuckling to himself at how easily she fell. Hadn't he gotten the best of God at last? He probably guessed that it would only be a matter of time before Adam would also eat of the fruit. But now the question was—would God send man to the lake of fire? Yes, God would! Sin must be punished. Man must be punished the same as Satan.

What God Wants Me to Know

But oh, how fair God is! He had prepared another tree, the cross, on which the Savior would die. Salvation, God's great plan, decided before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), came into being. God the Son would become a man and take the punishment for man's sin (1 John 3:8b). When man chooses for God this time by accepting what Christ has done for him, he is made acceptable or righteous enough to live in God's presence forever, and Satan's plan is foiled. But anyone who rejects the cross must face the righteousness and justice of God. He will go to the lake of fire along with Satan and his angels.

What does Satan see when he watches someone receive the Lord Jesus as Savior? He sees God's grace in providing salvation. He sees God's fairness, for God does not send anyone to hell except by one's own choice. Satan had a choice, too; he chose against God. Now he must face the punishment. But God is fair to allow him to try to prove that he should not be punished. Every time someone chooses for Jesus Christ, God wins another battle between Himself and Satan. Will you be one to help settle this great issue between God and Satan? You will, if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior.

Lesson Review

How did Satan get one-third of the angels to go along with him? By telling them that God was not fair to sentence him to the lake of fire. Remember, Satan is a slanderer of God. Since Satan naturally would not like his sentence, he must have appealed to God to change it. God could not change; Satan had made his choice, just as we must make our choice during our lifetime. After that, there is no more choice. But since God is fair, He must allow Satan to see that God can do no wrong, and that is why God put man on this earth. We are very important in settling the warfare between God and the fallen angels.

As soon as God put man on the earth, Satan wasted no time in making our planet a battleground. What did he do? In his clever way he suggested to Eve that God was not fair and did not really mean what He said. What had God said? "You shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17b). Did she die? Yes, she immediately died spiritually and eventually died physically. Satan became not only a sinner from the beginning, but a murderer and a liar (John 8:44). How did Satan lie to Eve? He said, "You won't really die." Do you ever tell a lie? Of course, and when you do, you do the work of the devil.

What was God's plan for man on the earth? Dominion, or rulership (Gen. 1:28). Can you say to the fish in the ocean, "Come here—jump into my lap"? Or to the birds, "Sit here on my hand"? How about a lion or a tiger? Can you command one to sit beside you? Adam could until he lost the rulership of the earth. Who took that from him? Satan. When Adam sinned, Satan grabbed the rulership for himself. He became the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). Why didn't God stop him? God is allowing Satan to do what he can to prove that Satan cannot win and that God is fair. It is still God's purpose for us to rule the earth, and someday, when Satan's power is destroyed, we will rule with God.

Memory Verse

"The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3:8)

Chapter Twelve

The Schemes and Strategies of the Devil

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: The Schemes and Strategies of the Devil—Job 1—2; Ephesians 6:10–18

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: Strategies of the Devil
2. Lesson Two: The Christian's Defense

C. Story Objective:

While man's most dangerous inside enemy is the sin nature, the devil is man's most dangerous outside enemy. Satan has fought God and man since the creation, and is even today increasing his opposition because he knows his time is short. Satan does not fight fair and is the originator of every perverse trick in existence. He aims to bring man to eternal condemnation. He directs his attacks against the believer and unbeliever alike through the infiltration of false ideas and concepts, such as human good, religion, and legalism (1 Chron. 21:1; 1 Cor. 10:19–21; 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 5:7–9).

Satan has a twofold strategy: In heaven, to discredit and accuse believers (Job 1:9–11; Zech. 3:1–2; Rev. 12:9–10). On earth, to counterfeit Bible doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1), pastors (2 Cor. 11:13–15), the Gospel (2 Cor. 11:3–4), spirituality (Gal. 3:1–3), righteousness (Matt. 19:16, 20), and power (2 Thess. 2:8–10). The first strategy is offset by the defense ministry of Christ (1 John 2:1–2); the second by the believer's knowledge of the Word of God (Matt. 4:3–4).

Satan has a well-organized demon army to help carry out his nefarious plans (Eph. 6:12). Although Satan and demons cannot indwell believers, they can influence mightily (James 4:7) and have power to persecute (Ps.

109:6, 10), to shorten life (Ps. 109:8a), to inflict disease (Acts 10:38), to heal (2 Thess. 2:9), and to kill (Heb. 2:14–15). We are warned to “be on the alert” to this adversary and to “resist him, firm in *your* faith” (1 Pet. 5:8–9). Faith, which comes by learning the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), is the basis of the armor of defense against the onslaughts of the wicked one (Eph. 6:10–18).

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: counterfeiter, schemes, torment, wiles
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Schemes of the devil against believers
 - 1) Tempts (Gen. 3:4–5; Matt. 4:1–11)
 - 2) Deceives (Gen. 3:4–5)
 - 3) Disguises
 - a) As an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14)
 - b) Uses his fallen angels (Eph. 6:12)
 - b. Strategies of the devil against unbelievers
 - 1) Uses army of demons (Mark 5:1–20)
 - 2) Blinds their minds to the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:4)
 - c. The Christian's armor (Eph. 6:11–18)
 - d. The angelic conflict and suffering (Job 1:1–11)
 - e. Satan in the role of accuser (Rev. 12:10)
 - 1) Jesus Christ, our defense attorney (1 John 2:1)
 - 2) Cleansed from sin through rebound (1 John 1:9)
 - 3) Armor of God for our defense (Eph. 6:10–18)

E. *Source Book* Keywords: armor of God, demonism (possession and influence), Job, Satan (strategy against believer and unbeliever)

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: the Christian's armor
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: "Finally, be strong in the Lord, and

- in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil." (Eph. 6:10–11)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE STRATEGIES OF THE DEVIL

Do you know that if you are a believer there is a battle going on about you? If you are not a believer, Satan does not need to bother much with you, unless you become interested in being saved. You are already on his side, and he does not fight against himself. Turn to Ephesians 6:12: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*." As believers, our battle is not with other people. If we could see what we were fighting, we could take a gun and shoot our enemy. But our warfare is not against things we can see; it is against the unseen rulers, powers, and forces of darkness of this world. Who are they? Satan and his demons. And believe me, Satan rules this world with an iron hand. He is a cruel master. He does not let go easily.

Now, God does not leave us without a defense. Let's see what this defense is: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil" (Eph. 6:10–11). This is your memory verse, and one you should know and use all of your life. Why are there three different words for strength in this verse? Each one tells you of the power you have available to overcome your enemies. "Be strong," is inward strength, and is the word for dynamite. You may be small, but you can be as strong as a giant inside. But this power is "in the Lord"—not in yourself. Second, "the strength" is God's omnipotence—His all-power—and it is yours to use. Third, "His might" is God's ability. "For nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). He "is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think" as we allow His power to work through us (Eph. 3:20a). By His power we put on "the full armor of God."

I should like to give you an assignment: every day next week read Ephesians 6:10–18—just eight verses. Then we will talk about this defense against the devil. But today we

want to learn about the devil's schemes—his tricks, strategies, or wiles.

Most of you like to wear a costume on Halloween, do you not? Why? So that nobody will know who you are. You know, wearing a costume is a little bit deceitful, isn't it? You are trying to make others believe you are someone you are really not. We do it all in fun on Halloween, but we are learning about someone who is not doing it for fun, somebody who is dead serious about the disguises he uses. This someone has a closet full of disguises to fit every occasion. Let us turn the spotlight of God's Word on Satan and see what he is really like.

The Schemes of the Devil

The many names and titles given Satan in the Bible tell us who he is and what he does—names such as "the devil" (Rev. 20:10); "accuser," "dragon," and "serpent" (Rev. 12:9–10); "the evil one" (Matt. 13:19). If he appeared like all the names the Bible calls him, do you think people would fall into his traps? Not at all. He has to use a mask or a disguise. God does not want us to be "ignorant of his schemes" (2 Cor. 2:11), so we must see what his tricks are and then unmask him for what he really is.

The Tempter

1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:5

We have already seen Satan in this mask twice. Do you remember where? In the Garden of Eden, and in the wilderness when he tempted the Lord Jesus (Gen. 3:4–5; Matt. 4:1–11). What does a tempter do? He persuades you to sin. We saw that Satan is very, very clever. He uses every means he can think of to trick you and win you over to his way. Remember, he did not appear to Eve as himself. He entered into a creature that Eve liked and really fooled her. He always does what you least expect, and just when

you think you know his methods, he sneaks up with another disguise and trick.

The Deceiver ***1 Timothy 2:14; Revelation 12:9***

Satan's greatest desire is to be "like the Most High" (Isa. 14:13–14). That does not mean he *is* like God. The devil is the greatest deceiver of history. In fact we might say Satan is the master counterfeiter. Something that is counterfeit is an imitation, a fake, something that pretends to be real. Satan's schemes are just like that—a sham. God *is* truth, but there is no truth in Satan (John 8:44). The ingenious counterfeit systems of Satan are extremely deceptive. Eve was deceived in the Garden by Satan's suggestion that she could be as smart as God, if she would eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Had Eve not rejected the Bible doctrine Jesus Christ taught to her, she would not have been "quite [completely] deceived" (1 Tim. 2:14).

Satan will stop at nothing and will use every trick in the book to try to make himself like God. In fact, he is so cunning and convincing that entire nations are deceived (Rev. 12:9; 13:14). Satan also deceives people through false doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1) and false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1). He is not that horned creature with the red skin and forked tail. If he were, nobody would fall for him. He constantly makes himself tempting and appealing. He is the master imitator.

The Angel of Light, 2 Corinthians 11:14

How does Satan go about imitating God? He transforms or makes himself into an angel of light, for "God is light" (1 John 1:5). But do not let him fool you: As the saying goes, "all that glitters is not gold." Not all the tempting and lovely things of this world are of God. Most of them are of Satan. He makes the things of this world so attractive that you want them more than the things of God. Satan's strategy is to make this world a better place in which to live. Those who spend their time improving Satan's world are wasting their time. The only thing that can make this world a good place in which to live is to believe in Jesus Christ and to live for Him.

Strategies of the Devil against Unbelievers

Since Satan is not omniscient like God, nor can he be everywhere at once (omnipresent), he has organized his angels into an army, and as their commander in chief, they obey him. In his army he has "rulers" (general officers), "powers" (noncommissioned officers), and "spiritual forces of wickedness" (privates) (Eph. 6:12). The higher-ranking demons ("world forces of this darkness") do the more important jobs for Satan, such as indwelling or influencing kings and others in high places.

His strategy against unbelievers is to blind their minds to the Gospel so that they will not be saved (2 Cor. 4:4). Listen to a story of how Satan used his demons to blind and bind a man to keep him from being saved, and then how cleverly he used what Jesus did for this man to try to keep others from hearing how to be saved. Do you think he succeeded?

The Demon-Possessed Man, Mark 5:1–20

Jesus and His disciples had no more than stepped onto the shore in the country of Gerasa, when a wild man ran to meet Him. We are told that this man had an unclean spirit. Do you know what that is? It is a demon or fallen angel. This man was possessed by many demons (Mark 5:9). Do you think that this man was a believer or an unbeliever? He was an unbeliever, for demons can possess only unbelievers. They can influence or affect believers in certain ways but cannot get inside and control them. Why not? Believers belong to God and can never be taken over completely by Satan or his demons.

This man lived in the tombs or caves which were used as burial places. Would you like to live among dead bodies? Why, no one in his right mind would live in a place like that! But this man was not in his right mind. He was a madman and a danger to the entire region. He was so fierce, no one dared go past the place where he was (Matt. 8:28). Several times the townspeople had tried to tame him by putting chains on his hands and feet, but always he broke them off as if they were strings. His unusual strength came from the demons possessing him.

Not only that, the man would scream and cut himself with stones. What a horrible sight he must have been! But as soon as he saw Jesus, he ran and fell at His feet. Did the man know who Jesus was? No, but the demons knew. You see, Jesus had commanded them to come out of the man. The demons recognized that Jesus was God and that He had all authority (Mark 5:7; Luke 4:41). There is no doubt in heaven and there is no doubt in hell who Jesus is—only on earth in Satan's kingdom is there doubt. The demons spoke to Jesus, using the wild man's voice: "I implore [beg] You by God, do not torment me!" (Mark 5:7b).

Had Jesus come to torment this man? No. Jesus, knowing this poor man was here and needed help, came to help. But the demons were very much afraid of being tormented. Turn to Matthew 8:29: "And behold, they cried out, saying, 'What do we have to do with You, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?'" They were afraid of the time of their final judgment in the lake of fire. They knew what their future was. They begged Jesus not to send them away to the Abyss (Luke 8:31).

As we have learned, God is allowing the evil angels freedom for a time to test man to see whether he will choose for God or Satan, so Jesus allowed the demons to go into a herd of swine which were nearby (Mark 5:11–13a). Immediately, all the pigs ran violently into the

sea and were drowned (Mark 5:13b). The men who tended the pigs ran into the towns to tell the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man and the pigs (Mark 5:14). Now, wouldn't you think that when the people of the towns found out the wonderful thing Jesus had done for the madman they would be glad and thankful? Instead, they became frightened and, in a panic, asked Jesus to get out of their country (Mark 5:15–17).

Now, I want you to see how Satan works. Satan and the demons knew they could run those pigs into the sea and drown them so that the people would become afraid and drive Jesus away. Then they could not hear the Gospel and be saved. Whenever the Lord performed a miracle, many people believed in Him, just as this demon-possessed man did. Do you think that in getting Jesus to leave the country, Satan won a victory?

No, Satan can never win against the Lord! How did Jesus get the best of Satan? When the people asked Him to leave, Jesus left, for He does not force Himself on those who do not want Him. But before Jesus left, He told the healed man to go home to his friends and tell them what great things the Lord had done for him. Jesus Christ is greater than Satan, and He knew how to defeat him. Jesus sent the man to be a missionary to his own people, just as He has sent you. As a result, many people believed in spite of Satan and his army!

What God Wants Me to Know

Yes, Satan is strong—stronger than you are—but not stronger than the Lord Jesus. As the Lord Jesus did for the wild man, so He will do great things for you too. What is the greatest thing He will do for you, or for anybody? He will save you if you will just believe in Him. Only then can you be “strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might” (Eph. 6:10b). Will you believe? “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).

The strength of the Lord is from the Holy Spirit, and it is available to you the moment you believe. When you are filled with the Spirit, and you are when you have confessed your sins, you have the very power of God. But you must know God's Word, because it is the Word of God that the Holy Spirit uses to make you strong. Are you learning your Bible verses? Why do you learn them? So that you can get credit in Bible class or win a prize? No, so that you can use them to keep from being fooled by the schemes of the devil!

Lesson Review

Why do we need the power of God? Because Satan, the most powerful of all the angels, is our enemy. What does he try to do to us? Deceive, trick, and tempt us; he appears as an “angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14). However, Satan himself usually does not bother with you and me. We are not important enough to him. He has a whole army of demons at his command. When Satan says to certain demons, “You are on duty over John, and you are on duty over Nancy; you watch Mary and give her all kinds of trouble,” they are going to do it because they obey him. So we need to “be strong in the Lord [not in ourselves], and in the strength of His might” (Eph. 6:10b). How do we get the power of God? Through the filling of the Holy Spirit and by learning the Word of God.

Where did Satan send some of his demons? Yes, into a man of Gerasa, in an effort to keep him from being saved. Did he succeed? No, because the man showed the Lord his positive volition. When the Lord commanded the demons to come out of the man, they obeyed. Then the man believed in the Lord Jesus and was saved.

Memory Verse

“Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.” (Eph. 6:10–11)

LESSON TWO THE CHRISTIAN'S DEFENSE

Did you do the assignment I gave you in our last lesson? Did you read Ephesians 6:10–18 every day? “Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of

His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the

rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil *one*. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.” What has God given us to protect us from our spiritual enemies? Armor, that’s right. Armor is any covering used as a defense against weapons. Armor is something that every boy, and girl too, likes to wear. Even though you cannot see it, you can wear God’s armor to protect you from Satan’s weapons. Satan can tell whether you have on your armor and whether you are using every piece of equipment God has provided. Satan will know if you are well protected.

Let’s quote our memory verse: “Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (Eph. 6:10–11). This verse instructs us to do two things: (1) Put on the armor God provides. God gives armor to you, but He does not put it on for you. This is your job and you cannot stand against the schemes of the devil unless you learn how to put on God’s armor and use it. (2) Stand firm against your enemy. This armor is for every part of your body except the back. Why did God not provide protection for the back? So that we will not run away. We must stand and face the enemy unafraid: “Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm” (Eph. 6:13). Let’s review the pieces of armor quickly to see whether you have put them on.

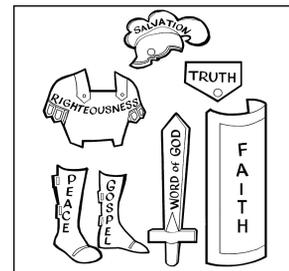
The Christian’s Armor

Paul patterned his description of the Christian’s armor after the armor of the Roman soldier of his day. “Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Eph. 6:14). The Roman soldier wore a foundation belt on which he hung all the other pieces of his equipment. We, too, have a belt upon which all of our pieces of armor depend. It is called “truth.” What is God’s truth? It is the Word of God (John 17:17). We must first of all know the doctrines of the Word before we can wear or use any other part of our armor.

The next piece is located just above the belt: the breastplate of righteousness. What vital part of your body does the breastplate protect? Your heart. If an arrow or

bullet strikes your heart, that’s it! Does our enemy have arrows? Yes, “flaming missiles of the evil *one*” (Eph. 6:16). Why is this piece called a “breastplate of righteousness”? If you don’t have it on, your enemy’s arrows can get to you and you will sin. When you use this piece, you are actually using 1 John 1:9, by which you are cleansed from all unrighteousness, and you are then filled with the Holy Spirit. When you are controlled by the Holy Spirit, you have protection against temptation and sin.

What is the third piece? “And having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE” (Eph. 6:15). What a long name for shoes! But if you understand one or two of these words, you can understand how to put on this part of your equipment. What is the Gospel? The good news that Christ died for your sins. What do your feet do? They walk and take you where you want to go. Are you prepared or ready with the Gospel? Can you tell others how they might have peace with God by believing in Jesus Christ? You have on your ‘shoes’ when you are ready at all times to tell others how to be saved.



Fourth, we have the shield of faith (Eph. 6:16). Satan’s temptations and schemes are like dangerous, flaming arrows. The shield of faith wards them off. What does faith mean? To believe that what God says is true. To believe and use the promises of God in His Word is to have your shield up. There are about seven thousand promises available in the Bible to learn and claim. If you will call them to mind when you are tempted to sin, they will make you strong and keep you from sinning. “Thy word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against Thee” (Ps. 119:11).

The fifth piece of equipment protects another vital spot (Eph. 6:17). Even modern soldiers must wear a helmet to protect their head. The helmet of salvation does not mean that we need to be saved, for this armor is for the believer. It means that we must know in our minds all about our salvation. Satan would like to make you doubt that you are really saved. He tries to make you think that you can lose your salvation by some sin you commit. You are wearing your helmet of salvation when you know for sure that you are eternally saved.

The sixth piece of equipment is your sword (Eph. 6:17). Since we must stand and fight, we must have a weapon. All of the other pieces of your armor are for defending yourself. This one is for attacking the enemy. What does the sword stand for? The Word of God (Heb. 4:12). Who

used the sword of the Spirit to drive Satan away? The Lord Jesus, when He used the Word of God to resist Satan's temptations in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–11).

Finally, in Ephesians 6:18, there is one more thing: Prayer is part of our defense against Satan. This has been called a “secret weapon.” Why? You can pray silently, right in your own mind, and God can hear you and send answers right into your mind.

God commands His soldiers to put on the armor, “resist the devil” (James 4:7), stand firm, be strong, pray, “be of sober *spirit* [keep your mind on Christ], be on the alert” because Satan is going about “like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour [trying to get believers to sin]” (1 Pet. 5:8–9). If the devil succeeds, what does he do about it? He runs up to heaven and tells God.

Now I am going to tell you a story that takes us back to a time when Satan was stalking the earth like a roaring lion, and he had his eyes on one particular person. This man was very great, and Satan wanted to break him and get him to sin. He wanted to use all of his flaming missiles against this man.

The Angelic Conflict Answers the Question, “Why Suffering?”

Does God want you to suffer? Why does He allow you to have a hard time? One reason is that you deserve the suffering because you brought it on yourself. Suppose you ride your bike on the wrong side of the street and get hit by a car. You didn't pay attention to the safety rules, did you? You brought on your own suffering. Sin and disobedience to God brings on suffering, too. But what about someone who is born crippled or with a painful disease, or has a hard time through no fault of his own? God allows these things to test us and to make our faith grow strong.

Today we are going to see that God also allows the believer to suffer in order to help resolve the battle between Himself and Satan. We are here to prove to Satan and the fallen angels that God is holy and righteous in all that He does. Job, the man in our story, was allowed to suffer for this very reason though he did not know it. In using his “shield of faith,” Job resisted the devil and brought honor and glory to the Lord, proving that God was right and Satan was wrong.

Satan in the Role of Accuser

The story of Job is like a play with the scene changing often from heaven to earth. The main characters are God, Satan, and Job. In the first verse of Job chapter 1, we see Job, the main character on earth, who is said to be “blameless, upright, fearing [trusting] God, and turning away from evil.” This does not mean that Job never sinned, but that Job was a believer who lived in fellowship with God. I wish the Lord could say that about each one of us. More often than not, He looks down at us and sees a sorry,

out-of-fellowship believer. Job was a very wealthy man, perhaps one of the richest who ever lived. He was very concerned that his seven sons and three daughters also live in fellowship with God (Job 1:2–5).

Next the scene changes from earth to heaven. Although Job knew nothing about what was happening on the stage of heaven, God lets us look in on that scene through His Word. On a certain day all the angels came to “present themselves before the LORD” (Job 1:6). Satan was among the angels who came. Remember, Satan is still allowed in heaven, even though he no longer enjoys the position of honor he had before his fall.

Perhaps as Satan was “roaming about on the earth” (Job 1:7) he saw many sins committed by believers. He must have reminded the Lord of this. So the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered [noticed] my servant Job?” (Job 1:8a). Yes, Satan had noticed, but he accused Job of loving and serving the Lord only because the Lord had blessed him with so many riches and protected him against his enemies. “If you took all this away,” argued Satan, “he would no longer serve you. He would hate you and curse you to your face” (Job 1:9–11, paraphrased).

Right here we see Satan in his role as an accuser of God's people (Rev. 12:10). He is always on the lookout to discover some sin in us and to report it to God. In fact, he is a real tattletale! Why does God put up with Satan's accusations? To settle the angelic conflict. God must allow Satan to test Job to prove that Satan is wrong. Satan might take away all of Job's possessions, but he must not touch Job himself. Satan can go only as far as God allows, for believers are a “PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION [a protected people]” (1 Pet. 2:9a). The Lord knows exactly how much testing we can take (1 Cor. 10:13), and Satan can do no more.

Satan wasted no time in beginning his terrible plan to break Job. Right away Satan brought disaster after disaster upon Job, from the loss of his wealth to the death of all his children (Job 1:14–19). Did Job react as Satan expected? Let's read Job 1:20: “Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head [a sign of total loss of his wealth], and he fell to the ground”—and cursed God. Is that what it says? Not at all: “and worshiped”! In what way? Job 1:21: “And he said, ‘Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD’” (cf. 1 Thess. 5:18; 1 Tim. 6:7). “Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God” (Job 1:22). He never once asked, “Why did God let this happen to me?”

Will Satan now admit that Job is a faithful believer? No, Satan was not through with his accusations. He said, “Job still has his health; but if you take that away, he will curse you” (Job 2:4–5, paraphrased). So God allowed Satan to go a little further. He was permitted to take away Job's health in whatever manner he desired, but he could not take his life (Job 2:6). Satan chose a horrible and painful disease, possibly skin cancer (Job 2:7). Job was in such a pitiful and

miserable state that even his wife advised him to “curse God and die [kill himself]” (Job 2:9b). But Job knew that the Lord not only brings good things into our lives, but permits bad as well—all for His purpose.

Satan had thrown fiery arrow after fiery arrow at Job, and they really hurt. Satan tried to get Job to turn against the Lord by getting him to give up all hope. At times Job feared he could not live through it. For a short time, Job dropped his shield of faith (Job 3:25), and that was when Satan's arrows got to him. Fear and worry are weapons of the devil against you, too. When we stop trusting and start worrying, we sin (Rom. 14:23b). What do we do about our sins? We name them to God the Father, and that is what Job did (Job 42:6). When he once more held up the shield of faith against the fiery arrows of Satan, notice what he said: “Though He slay me, I will hope in Him” (Job 13:15a). Satan had no more to say about Job. God proved His point to Satan. And God did not forget Job after that. The Lord blessed Job with twice as much as he had before (Job 42:10).

What God Wants Me to Know

Satan accuses you and me, too, when we sin. Does God say to Satan, “All right, go down and make that believer suffer?” No, 1 John 2:1 tells us that if we sin, we have an “Advocate” (lawyer) up in heaven who takes up our case when Satan accuses us. Our Lawyer is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as an attorney in court comes before the judge and pleads our case, so the Lord Jesus speaks to God the Father in our defense. Whenever Satan says, “Look how Mary hates that little girl in her class—do you call Mary a Christian?” the Lord Jesus explains that He bore Mary's sin on the cross. Mary is “in Christ”; she is secure (Eph. 2:6). God the Father dismisses the case, and Satan gets nowhere.

If Mary does not confess her sin of hatred, God then disciplines her from His perfect justice and righteousness for her disobedience. Sometimes God may allow Satan to do the disciplining (1 Cor. 5:5), but he can never take the believer out of God's family (Isa. 43:1; Ps. 107:2). Do not let Satan make you useless to God, and do not give him an excuse to tattle on you. Keep your armor on lest you be caught off guard. Keep on your breastplate of righteousness by using 1 John 1:9 every time you sin, and hold up your shield of faith when you are tempted to sin. Then, with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, drive the enemy away.

Since God loves everyone and wants all to be saved, Satan is doing everything in his power to keep people from

being saved. His strategy is not to get people to become more wicked. They will do that by themselves because they have a sin nature. Satan's method is to get you to imitate the true thing just as he does: act like a Christian, do good deeds, become religious. His terrible lie is to deceive you into thinking that you can do something to be saved or that you can become good enough to go to heaven. Do not let Satan hide the truth from you. Listen to the Word of God when it says, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved” (Acts 16:31).

Lesson Review

I wonder whether you thought about using your armor last week? Did you remember to read and study God's Word? What piece of armor is that? The belt of truth. Did you think about God's promises and use your sword of the Spirit when you were tempted to sin? What piece of armor would you have had on if you believed what God said was true? The shield of faith. What would you have done if you had on your shoes of the Gospel? You would have been prepared to tell someone about the Lord Jesus Christ. What else should you have used this week? How about your breastplate of righteousness? How would you have used that? By keeping your sins confessed. I surely hope you had this on because the Holy Spirit cannot control your life unless you keep it on. Do not forget your helmet of salvation, whereby you know you are saved, and remember that you cannot lose your salvation. Also, never forget your secret weapon of prayer.

Why do you need armor? To defend yourself against your enemies. What does Satan do if he catches you with any of your equipment off or not in use? He accuses or tattles on you to God. Does God say, “All right, Satan, that believer has sinned against me; you can have him back”? I should say not! The Lord Jesus Christ defends us. He says, “I have died for that believer. His sins have all been forgiven.” So Satan has nothing more to say.

Memory Verse

“Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.” (Eph. 6:10–11)

Chapter Thirteen

Satan's Attacks on the Lord Jesus Christ

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Satan's Attacks on the Lord Jesus Christ—
Matthew 4:1–10

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: Satan's Attempts to Hinder Christ's First Advent
2. Lesson Two: Satan's Attempts to Keep Christ from the Cross

C. Story Objective:

Although the outcome of the angelic conflict has been settled from eternity past, Satan refuses to give up. He is well aware of the plan of God whereby his works will be destroyed (Heb. 2:14; 1 John 3:8), and has therefore centered his attacks on the Lord Jesus Christ. As the time drew near for the First Advent, Satan stepped up his activity, even as he will just before the Second Advent (Rev. 19:19). His attacks on Christ were first aimed at keeping Him from coming into the world. They began with the attempt to destroy the ancestral line of Christ through the murder of Abel (1 John 3:12), and continued on down through human history with numerous attempts to annihilate the Jewish race. These attempts culminated in a wicked plan to destroy Mary, the mother of the humanity of Christ, through a Jewish law (Deut. 22:23–24; cf. Matt. 1:19).

Failing in his attempt to hinder Christ's first advent, Satan was obliged to change his strategy. His attacks then centered on attempts to kill the Lord Jesus Christ before He could go to the cross and die for the sins of the world (Matt. 2:1–18; 4:6–10; 26:36–43; Luke 22:3–6; John 8:59). However, the plan of God cannot be frustrated by either

man or angel; until "His hour" had come (John 7:30), nothing or no one could touch the Lord Jesus (John 10:17–18). Christ went to the cross on schedule, but even then Satan launched his greatest attack by inciting evil men to challenge Him to come down from the cross.

Resisting to the end, with "the joy set before Him," Christ finished His work and destroyed the works of the devil (Heb. 12:2). Foiled in all his attempts against the person of Christ, Satan now concentrates his attacks against believers (1 Pet. 5:8).

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: advent, insidious, pretense, symbolism
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. The angelic conflict was settled in eternity past (Matt. 25:41).
 - b. The attempts by Satan to keep Christ from coming into the world by destroying:
 - 1) The line of Christ (1 John 3:12)
 - 2) The true human race (Gen. 6:1–4)
 - 3) The Jewish race (Ex. 1:7–22)
 - 4) The mother of the humanity of Christ (Deut. 22:23–24; Matt. 1:18–25)
 - c. The attempts by Satan to keep Christ from going to the cross by:
 - 1) Tempting Christ to sin in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–11)
 - 2) Inspiring evil men to destroy Christ (religious leaders and Judas) (Luke 22:3–6; John 7:1)
 - 3) Tempting Christ to fear the cross in Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36–45; Mark 14:32–42)

- 4) Trying to kill Christ during pre-cross trials and scourging (Matt. 26:67; Mark 15:19–20; Luke 22:63–65; John 19:1)
- d. The battle of the cross involved:
 - 1) Temptation to come down from the cross (Matt. 27:40)
 - 2) Being judged for our sins and forsaken by the Father (Matt. 27:46)
- e. The victory of Christ and the defeat of Satan (John 19:30)

E. *Source Book* Keywords: Christ, cross, Satan (attempt to block First Advent)

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: Christ in the manger
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: “Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4b)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE

SATAN'S ATTEMPTS TO HINDER CHRIST'S FIRST ADVENT

Now, even though Satan will never win his battle against God, he does not stop trying to destroy God's plans. Haven't you ever tried to fool yourself? When you have something unpleasant coming up, such as an appointment with the dentist or with the doctor to get your shots, do you ever find yourself hoping your parents will forget? Or do you try to get out of it by pretending to be sick, or running off to play, hoping no one will find you? You are fooling yourself by thinking that you can get out of it this time, aren't you? However, it does not work, does it? Satan reasons that way, too, but it will not work any more with him than it does with you.

The Outcome Settled in Eternity Past

The warfare between God and Satan is not one in which they are biting their fingernails and wondering how it is going to turn out. No, the outcome has been settled from eternity past, and God has said right from the beginning that Satan is sentenced to spend eternity in the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41).

How did Satan know God's plans? Let's go back into eternity past, before time as we know it began. You remember that the three persons of the Trinity had a conference and talked about many things. Before man was created or ever sinned, omniscient God knew what would happen, so God the Father made His wonderful plan for man. What was that plan called? Yes, the salvation plan. We are not told when God told the angels about His plan of salvation, but we do know that sometime before our world was made, the angels learned of God's plan to send His Son to take away the sins of the world and to give those who believe in Him the gift of eternal life. They must have wondered how this could be. How could their beloved

Creator, whom they worshiped and adored, leave the glory of heaven to clothe Himself with the body of man and yet remain God? How could He become the God-man-Savior?

The angels had much to learn about their God, just as we do. They have watched closely all that God planned and all that God has done over the centuries. Satan, eager to destroy God's works, was right there to tempt man to sin. As smart as he is, Satan in his supreme arrogance still did not think that God could get the best of him. But as soon as man sinned, God came right down to provide the solution to man's sin and to announce Satan's ultimate defeat. God told Satan that “He [Christ] shall bruise you [Satan] on the head” (Gen. 3:15). Though on the cross the Lord Jesus would be wounded “on the heel” as He paid the terrible penalty for the sins of the world, Satan would completely lose his power over those who belong to God.

We are told in 1 John 3:8b, “The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.” No one knew this any better than Satan. He knew that when the Lord Jesus Christ came, He would be Satan's judge and finally destroy all his evil works (John 5:22). So what would Satan try to do? He would try to keep the Lord Jesus from coming into the world, wouldn't he? If Satan could keep his Judge from coming into the world, Satan's power would not be broken; consequently, his attacks were centered on the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Attempt to Destroy the Line of Christ

From the very beginning of time Satan began his work of trying to keep the Lord Jesus Christ from coming into the world. We have learned that the devil was “a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44). He usually does not kill people himself; instead, he uses those he can control to do

his work. What man committed the first murder? Yes, the very first child born into the world—Cain. Cain had refused God's way of salvation. He became jealous of his brother Abel and killed him because God had accepted Abel's offering rather than Cain's offering. Satan put the idea into the mind of Cain to murder his brother (1 John 3:12), for through Abel God had planned to send His Son. Would that stop the plan of God? Not at all. God gave Adam and Eve another son, Seth, to take the place of Abel. Little Seth became a believer, and through him the line continued down to the Lord Jesus Christ. God's plan went right on.

The Infiltration into the Human Race

When Satan saw his plan fail to stop the line through which God had chosen to send His Son, he next attempted a very daring plan. He tried to ruin the whole human race (Gen. 6:1–4). Now, how could he possibly do this? He sent his fallen angels into the human race to corrupt the women on the earth. If mankind became half men and half angel, Jesus could not be born a true human being. Do you know how God stopped this vicious attempt to wipe out true humanity? He sent a great flood to destroy all the people on the earth, except for the eight believers, Noah and his family. Through Noah, God's line for the Savior continued on the earth.

The Attempt to Annihilate the Jews

Satan's next attack was on God's special race of people, the Jewish race, through whom the Lord Jesus Christ would be born. Satan came up with an insidious and cruel plan. As the Jews began to grow into a large nation, Satan put the idea into the soul of Pharaoh to kill all the Jewish boy babies so that the race would die out (Ex. 1:7–22). What did God do about that? He saved one special baby boy to deliver His people from Pharaoh. Do you know his name? Moses, of course (Ex. 2:1–10).

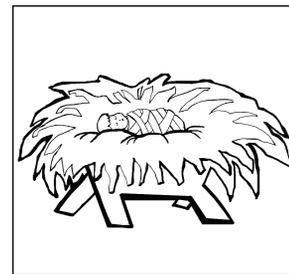
The Attempt on Mary

Though Satan tried many times, he was not able to destroy the Jewish race. All through the centuries, God preserved a line of believing Jews through whom His Son would come. As the time of the first advent of Christ drew near, Satan got really busy. God had selected a lovely, young Jewish woman to be the mother of the humanity of His Son. The holy angels were watching eagerly, for they did not want Satan to destroy God's great and wondrous plan. Soon after God sent the mighty angel Gabriel to Mary to announce she would miraculously become the way for the coming of His Son, Satan began his attack (Luke 1:26–32).

The Jewish people had a very strict law, which God had given them, that if any young woman who was not married were to have a baby, she must be stoned to death (Deut. 22:23–24). Do you think that Satan thought about this law?

I am sure he did. He also had a plan to put this idea into someone's mind as soon as Mary's pregnancy became known. Perhaps he thought that when Joseph, the man to whom Mary was engaged, found out, he might be reminded of the law and be angry enough to have her stoned.

Well, Joseph did find out about Mary's pregnancy, and he did remember the law. Instead of being angry with Mary, he began to think what might be done to keep her from being stoned to death. God had a plan for that, too. He sent another angel to Joseph to explain about the Savior who was to come into the world through Mary. The angel said, "do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1:20). The angel told Joseph to make Mary his wife and to care for her while she was waiting for the Child to be born (Matt. 1:18–25). Joseph did as God had said, and Satan did not succeed in destroying Mary, the one whom God chose to be the mother of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when the right time came, the Son of God was born, despite all the attempts of Satan to stop Him.



God gave His holy angels the great joy of announcing Christ's birth to the shepherds. As the angels rejoiced over the miracle that had come to pass, they were learning something important: They had known the Lord Jesus as the Lord of creation, as the God of might and power; but now they were seeing Him as the Lord of salvation and the God of love. To think that He would humble Himself and come down to the earth not as the King of the universe but in the form of a man; and that He would leave all of His power and glory in heaven and put on a body of weakness! And why? To bring sinners back to God and to destroy the works of the devil.

The Attempt to Kill the Lord Jesus

What did Satan think about this? Did he rejoice that God's Son was born? As you might expect, he was furious! Since he had not been able to keep the Lord Jesus from coming onto the scene of history, he tried to have Jesus killed. He put it into the mind of the ruler of the Jews, King Herod, to order all baby boys from birth to two years old put to death, not only in Bethlehem, but in the surrounding areas (Matt. 2:13–18). Satan thought he had made sure the Lord Jesus would be killed, hadn't he? But God's plan was not to be stopped by Satan or anyone. Again, God sent a

holy angel to Joseph to tell him to escape quickly to Egypt (Matt. 2:19–23).

The Plan to Disqualify Jesus from Going to the Cross, Matthew 4

With that plan foiled, Satan watched and waited. He never gave up. When he thought the time was right, he began his attempt to get Jesus to sin so that He would not be qualified to go to the cross. Yet you will remember that Jesus resisted the temptation to sin and defeated Satan with the same armor we have, using especially the sword of the Spirit, the shield of faith, and the belt of truth.

What God Wants Me to Know

God's plan for the Lord Jesus Christ was not stopped by Satan, but I wonder whether the devil is successful in keeping you from hearing and doing God's Word? He uses all kinds of false ideas, as well as the attractive and nice things of this world, to get your eyes and mind away from the Lord.

Satan's most enticing method to make you useless for the Lord is to imitate the doctrines of the Bible so cleverly that you cannot tell the difference unless you know true doctrine (2 Cor. 11:13–15; 1 Tim. 4:1). Satan's preachers and teachers are drawing more and more believers away from the Truth (1 Tim. 5:15). Always remember, just because a man is a preacher does not mean he is right! You must test all teaching by the Word (1 Thess. 5:21): Does the preacher recognize Jesus Christ as the God-man-Savior? Does he teach salvation by grace through faith alone in Christ alone (Eph. 2:8–9)? If he is wrong on these, he cannot be trusted (Gal. 1:8; 2 Tim. 3:5). Satan is so clever that he will finally imitate the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and even believers will be fooled (Matt. 24:24). The only way you can resist the devil and his lies is to use the power and provision of God (1 John 4:4).

How is Jesus going to destroy the works of the devil? Would it be by just being born into the world and escaping Satan's attacks? No, turn to Hebrews 2:14b: "Through death

He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." The only way Jesus could destroy the power and works of the devil was to die on the cross.

Tempted by Satan, Adam through his own volition sinned, bringing sin and death into the world. The Lord Jesus Christ is sometimes called the "Last Adam" because He was born perfect just as Adam was created perfect. The Last Adam did what the first Adam should have done—maintain his relationship with God. Because of Adam's sin, Jesus Christ had to die for our sins so that we might be saved. Notice, I did not say so that we *are* saved, because that depends on you. Each individual person through his own volition must receive God's gift of salvation for himself. Have you received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

Lesson Review

What was God's plan, made in eternity past, for sinful man? To send His Son to die for sins. Why did Satan fear this plan? It would destroy his power. What did Satan plan to do about it? He tried to keep God's Son from coming into the world. But he did not stop the Lord Jesus from coming into the world, did he?

After the Lord's birth Satan changed his strategy and tried to kill the Lord Jesus. In the battle in the wilderness, Satan tried to tempt Jesus to commit suicide by jumping off the tower. When Satan failed in that, he left Jesus. For how long? For good? No, just "until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13). He would wait until a good opportunity came again. In the meantime, he kept right on scheming and planning. The devil is never idle.

Memory Verse

"Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world." (1 John 4:4b)

LESSON TWO SATAN'S ATTEMPTS TO KEEP CHRIST FROM THE CROSS

The Lord Jesus will soon face two more important battles with Satan, the battle of Gethsemane and the battle of the cross. We are now going to see how Satan sets

the scene for those next two battles. As we study this lesson, I want you to pay close attention to when the Lord Jesus uses the word "hour." This word was used many

times by Jesus, but in different ways. This is a key word in understanding why Satan was allowed to oppose the Lord Jesus and why he could not succeed in his attempts to kill Him before He could go to the cross.

Further Attempts on Jesus' Life

After the temptation in the wilderness, Jesus began to teach in the synagogues. One Sabbath day in His hometown, He was handed the Book of Isaiah to read (Luke 4:16–21). He opened it to the place where it spoke of Him as the promised Savior and read it to all the people. He then closed it, sat down, and said, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). When the people in the synagogue heard that, they became very angry (Luke 4:28). I wonder, why?

They had seen Jesus grow up from childhood in their own city, and now He was claiming to be the Son of God! They knew His parents, Mary and Joseph, so how can Jesus say that He is the Son of God? “And they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff” (Luke 4:29). Who was really behind this plan? Satan, of course. He thought he had found his opportunity to kill Christ before the cross. But look at what verse 30 says: “But passing through their midst, He went His way.” Why didn't anyone push Him over?

Turn to John 7:30: “They were seeking therefore to seize Him; and no man laid his hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.” No one could touch the Lord Jesus because “His hour had not yet come.” To what do you suppose this “hour” is referring? To the time when Jesus would die on the cross. Until His hour came to do what He had come to do, nothing or no one could touch the Lord Jesus. “For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father” (John 10:17–18). When “His hour” came, the Lord Jesus gave His life by His own volition; no one took it from Him. Those who put Him on the cross did only what God allowed.

Now turn to John 12:20. About three years had passed since Jesus had been baptized and had announced to the world that He had come to do the Father's will. Christ knew His hour was near (John 12:23).

Jesus turned to the people and said, “Now judgment [of sins] is upon this world; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out [receive his judgment]” (John 12:31). Who is “the ruler of this world”? Satan! Although the presence and work of Satan were not obvious to the people, they were very real to the Lord Jesus. Even today people are ignorant of Satan and his strategies, and few are aware that he is behind much of the activity going on in the world.

Satan was behind every attempt to kill the Lord Jesus. The religious leaders tried many times to kill Him during His ministry (John 7:1). But wherever He went, there were crowds surrounding Him and “they were afraid of the people” (Luke 22:2). They watched for some way to get Him when the people were not around. Now they were going to get some help in an unexpected way. Satan and Judas Iscariot also had their plans, which fit in perfectly with those of the religious leaders (Luke 22:3–6). Do you recall how Satan entered into the serpent and caused him to do his work? That is what Satan did with Judas Iscariot, one of the Lord's disciples.

Can Satan enter into a believer! No! What does this tell us immediately about Judas? He was an unbeliever. Think of living so closely with the Son of God and watching His perfect life and the miracles which proved He was God, yet not believing in Him! That is why Satan could enter into Judas, who then betrayed the Lord for thirty pieces of silver.

Then came the time of the Passover. Jesus knew His hour had come (John 13:1). When the disciples had prepared the Passover supper, they all sat down at the table together (Luke 22:7, 14). Judas, putting on his usual phony good front, was with the other eleven. Can you imagine sitting at the same table with someone whom you know is about to betray you? Wouldn't it have been easy for the Lord to strike Judas dead right then? Instead, the Lord gave him one more chance (Luke 22:21–22). Jesus let it be known that He knew He was being betrayed, which provided Judas the opportunity to change his mind. He did not.

Since all the disciples wanted to know who would betray Jesus, He dipped some bread in gravy and said that it was the one to whom He would give the “morsel” (John 13:25–27). Then Jesus pointedly handed the morsel to Judas. This was the very moment that Satan entered into Judas. Jesus then told Judas, “What you [are going to] do, do quickly” (John 13:27b). Judas immediately left to give the Jewish leaders the information that would lead to the capture of the Lord Jesus. It was night, and for Judas it was a dark night indeed, for his was the darkness of Satan's kingdom.

The Battle of Gethsemane

Satan had the stage all set for the next battle, which took place in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus was very conscious of Satan's presence. “The ruler of the world is coming, and he has [found] nothing in Me [to keep Me from going to the cross]” (John 14:30). Then Christ prayed to the heavenly Father, “Father, the hour has come [I am ready to go]” (John 17:1).

Then, going on to the garden with Peter, James, and John, Jesus asked them to watch and pray with Him, lest they “enter into temptation” (Luke 22:40). They fell asleep, however, and were no help to the Lord. Prayer, you know, is our secret weapon to give us strength against Satan's

temptations. The disciples needed this strength, for soon they would be sorely tempted and would fail.

Jesus went a short distance from them, and in great agony and sorrow, prayed: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26:36b). "Then He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done'" (Matt. 26:42; cf. Mark 14:32–42). What is the "cup" Christ spoke of? Symbolically, the cup contains all the sins of the world. On the cross, Christ is going to "drink" the full content of this cup as the sins of the world are poured out upon Him and judged.

Mark 14:35 tells us that Jesus prayed "that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by." The hour and the cup both refer to one thing—the cross. In effect, Jesus was saying, "Father, I know You can keep Me from going to the cross; and if it is possible for Me not to—well, the thought is so horrible, I can scarcely face it! But I am willing to do what You want Me to do." Now, why would Jesus pray a prayer like this? Had He not come to do this very thing?

Well, guess who was there in the garden also. None other than Satan, and we can imagine how chill the night was with the devil hanging around. He was there to tempt Jesus again not to go to the cross. Satan had cast all pretense aside and showed up as he really is—a roaring lion seeking to devour (1 Pet. 5:8b). He tempted Jesus with dread and horror, holding before His mind the terrible things that were going to happen.

Did Jesus not know what was going to happen? Is He not God and does He not know all things? It says in the Book of John, "Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him" (John 18:4a). Yes, He knew these things, but they were still dreadful to Him, and Satan was trying to make them so real that Jesus would shrink from going to the cross. The devil brought to His mind the pain, the trials that He must go through, the mocking and laughing, the spear which would pierce His side. But these trials were not what were so horrible to the Lord. As the Son of God, He would endure a suffering so terrible that the thought caused His sweat to become "like drops of blood" (Luke 22:44). What really horrified Christ were the sins, yours and mine, that were going to be placed on Him, for He is without sin. Yet God the Father wanted Jesus to go through with the cross, and in answer to His prayer, the Father sent an angel to strengthen Him (Luke 22:43). It was just in time, for at that moment came the ones who were going to lead Him away to be tried and crucified (Matt. 26:47–56; Luke 22:47–53; John 18:2–11).

Do you know who was leading the band of men who came to arrest Jesus? The missing Judas, who then betrayed Jesus with a kiss! Peter thought he could defend Jesus with a sword and gave a mighty swing; but instead of killing one of the men, he cut off his ear. Jesus healed the man's ear and reminded Peter that He must drink of the "cup which the Father has given Me" (John 18:11). All of these men

saw proof that night that Jesus was truly God, yet they went right on roughly binding Him so that He could not escape. How foolish and hardened is man's sin nature! Their negative volition allowed Satan to blind their eyes.

Jesus said to the band of men, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as against a robber? While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours" (Luke 22:52–53). What was this hour? It was the time God allowed them to do what they would with Jesus. And it was Satan's time to do his evil work. They did not know it, but they were doing Satan's work.

The Battle of the Cross, Matthew 27:35–50

The tormentors of Jesus failed to kill Him by vicious beatings, and our Lord went to the cross as God had planned. Then followed the greatest battle yet. Satan's temptations were the strongest that he had ever put forth. He influenced the evil men to taunt and challenge Jesus, saying, "if You are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt. 27:40). Think of the Lord's situation, hanging there stripped of His clothes, the shame and embarrassment, appearing so helpless to the crowds, when He is all powerful! It would have been so easy to say, "Father, strike them dead," and then come down.

Instead, Christ said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34a). For three terrible hours Jesus bore your sins and mine in His body while hanging on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24). So horrible was the agony of bearing our sins, He screamed out, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?" (Matt. 27:46). Was He hoping God the Father would take Him down from the cross? No, at that moment the Father turned from Him. For three hours Christ felt the unspeakable pain of the judgment that should have come to us. This was the horror He had dreaded; this was the agony of His cry! So terrible was Christ's suffering that God covered His Son in complete darkness so that others could not see Him!

At the end of the three hours, He cried "It is finished" (John 19:30). What was finished? The work He had come to do—taking away the sins of the world (John 1:29). The death of Christ paid for our sins, satisfying the righteousness and justice of God (Lev. 16:13–16).

What God Wants Me to Know

Satan was defeated. He had lost every battle with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now who is Satan going to turn against with all his power and fury? Believers (John 15:18)! But Satan does not need to succeed in your life. You can be "more than conquerors" (Rom. 8:37, KJV) over Satan, just as the Lord Jesus was, for you have His power: "Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). How may you be sure you have the all-power of God at

every moment? Through 1 John 1:9 and the knowledge and application of God’s Word.

Before He went to the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ prayed for each one of you who would be hearing His Word (John 17:20–21). Do you know what He asked the Father? That you would be saved. The Father has answered Jesus’ prayer many, many times—every time someone has believed in Him as Savior. Have you been an answer to His prayer? Have you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? Think of what He has suffered for you! Think of what He allowed Satan to do that you might be saved! Can you turn your back on Him and say, “I don’t care”? Satan would like to blind your mind just as he blinded the minds of the people who put Jesus on the cross. Is this going to be your hour of salvation or darkness? Why not make this your hour of the decision to believe and be saved?

Lesson Review

Why does God allow Satan to continue as ruler of this earth when he is already judged? Satan is allowed to continue for a while so that God can prove to him that He is fair and righteous in sentencing Satan to the lake of fire. That is why you and I are here. Every time someone believes in Jesus Christ, it proves to Satan that God is perfect righteousness and justice.

What did Jesus call the time in which Satan was allowed to work out his plans and strategies against the Lord Jesus? “This hour and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53b). Satan is still having his “hour” against believers, but it will not last forever: “And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you” (Rom. 16:20). What did Jesus mean when He said “Father, the hour has come” (John 17:1)? He was ready to go to the cross. What did Jesus Christ do to Satan when He paid for our sins on the cross? Defeated Satan for every believer.

Memory Verse

“Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4b)

Chapter Fourteen

Who's Who among the Elect Angels

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Who's Who among the Elect Angels—Isaiah 6:2; Ezekiel 1; 10; Daniel 6; Jude 9; Revelation 4:6–8

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: Ranks of Elect Angels
2. Lesson Two: Guardian Angels

C. Story Objective:

The Bible reveals limited detail regarding angels, yet enough is given so that we may be certain of definite orders and ranks, among both elect and fallen angels (Rom. 8:38; Eph. 1:21; 6:12; Col. 1:16). Scripture teaches two ranks of the highest elect angels: cherubim (Gen. 3:24; Ex. 25:19–20; 26:1; Isa. 37:16; Ezek. 1:5–10) and seraphim (Isa. 6:2; Rev. 4:6–8). The archangels, the highest ranking among the elect angels, are seraphim and commanders of angelic armies.

Three of the angels named in Scripture are of particularly high rank: Lucifer, Michael, and Gabriel. Lucifer was the anointed cherub until his fall (Ezek. 28:14). Michael is the prince of Israel and defends all Jewish client nations (Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1; Rev. 12:7–12). Gabriel, whose rank is not given, is certainly one of the higher ranking angels (Dan. 8:16; 9:21; Luke 1:19, 26), and possibly the army commander for Gentile client nations. It seems likely that he, too, is an archangel.

Elect angels are, from first to last, “ministering spirits” (Heb. 1:14), primarily to God, but also to believers. Their twofold function is to worship and glorify their Creator (Isa. 6:3; Rev. 4:8) and to serve Him (Ps. 103:20–21). Their service to mankind does not emanate from their love

for humanity, but from their love for God. Since He gave His beloved Son to redeem fallen man, they protect those whom God loves and obey instantly every command of God concerning believers (Ps. 91:11–12; Dan. 6:22). Their role in the angelic conflict is guardianship of believers, just as Satan's aim is to harm and even to destroy believers, and thus to frustrate the plan of God (Luke 22:31).

The reality of the presence of angels shielding and protecting believers at the command of God and in response to His love for us should be particularly effective in the child's life as a bulwark against fear and worry.

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: anointed
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Highest ranks of elect angels
 - 1) Cherubim (covering angel): guard God's holiness
 - 2) Seraphim (to burn or to shine): lead in worship; teach about cleansing (Isa. 6:2; Rev. 4:6–8)
 - b. Archangels (chief angel): service; generals in the angelic army (1 Thess. 4:16–17)
 - c. Angels named in the Bible: Lucifer, Michael, Gabriel (Ezek. 28:14; Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:6; 1 Thess. 4:16; Jude 9; Rev. 12:7–8)
 - d. Guardian angels
 - 1) Serve believers in obedience to God's will (Ps. 103:21)
 - 2) Guard believers against fallen angels (demons) because of the angelic conflict (Ps. 91:11–12)

E. *Source Book* Keywords: angels (appearance of angels; guardian angels protect children; order, classes, and roster of angels), Daniel, positional truth

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: cherub, guardian angel, seraph

2. Games, Songs, Worksheets

3. Memory Verse: “For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways.” (Ps. 91:11)

4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE RANKS OF ELECT ANGELS

Satan has his angels, which the Bible calls demons, and God has His angels. What are God's angels called? Elect or holy. Today we are going to discover who's who among the elect angels. In the Bible, some angels are mentioned by their titles, and some are mentioned by name. Lucifer, Michael, and Gabriel are three of the named angels that we will see in this lesson. There are two ranks of angels, cherubim and seraphim. The difference between them is in the work that they do. Would you like to find out more about them?

Cherubim

The cherubim are extraordinary creatures. To see a description of them, turn first to Ezekiel 10:20–21: “These are the living beings that I saw beneath the God of Israel by the river Chebar; so I knew that they *were* cherubim. Each one had four faces and each one four wings, and beneath their wings *was* the form of human hands.” What is so unusual about these angels? Yes, they have four wings and four—heads? No, four faces! Now turn to Ezekiel 1:10 to find out what their four faces look like: “As for the form of their faces, *each* had the face of a man, all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle.” A man, a lion, a bull, and an eagle. They may not really have these faces; the description of the faces may just represent the purpose of these marvelous angels and what they are like. The face of the man shows intelligence and wisdom; the lion, majesty; the bull, service; and the eagle, a fierceness to defend. They are, of course, very dazzling and flashing (Ezek. 1:13–14).

The word “cherub” (cherubim in the plural) means “covering angel.” Who was the great angel called the “anointed cherub”? Lucifer. You recall that his job was to cover God's throne. Why do you sometimes cover up with a blanket? You are protecting or shielding yourself against the cold. The cherub was positioned before the throne to

shield or guard the way to the throne. Cherubim are to protect God's holiness, and they have the ability to carry out judgment or punishment. Have you ever thought that the very one who was given the honor of defending the throne of God against sin was the first sinner? There are four seraphim who took Lucifer's place (Rev. 4:6–8). Perhaps they keep Satan himself away now.



The first mention of cherubim in the Bible is in Genesis 3:22–24 when God sends them down to protect His holiness in the Garden of Eden. After man sinned, God did not want Adam and Eve to come back into the Garden, eat of the tree of life, and live forever in their sinful state. So, He placed the cherubim at the entrance of the Garden to guard the tree of life.

In the Tabernacle there were two cherubim figures made of gold on top of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies where God dwelt (Isa. 37:16). One represented the righteousness of God; the other, His justice. These figures reminded the priest, who came in once a year to sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat, that sinful man cannot come into the presence of God without a sacrifice for sin. The cherubim looked down on the mercy seat at the blood to teach us that God never closes His eyes to sin. If the priest, or anyone, came into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies without the blood of a sacrifice, he would die. People today have the nerve to think they can come into God's presence in some other way than by the cross, where

the Lord Jesus Christ was made a sacrifice for us. But to try to come to God by any way other than believing in the Lord Jesus Christ means certain death (Prov. 14:12).

Seraphim

The seraphim angels are described in Isaiah 6:2 and Revelation 4:6–8. Read Isaiah 6:2 and see whether you can tell what they are like: “Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.” Each seraph has six wings. Why do they need so many wings? The first pair they use to cover their face; the second pair they use to cover their feet; the third pair they use for flying. How many faces does each seraph have? Just one, unlike the cherubim who are represented with four faces. Now turn to Revelation 4:6, and you will find more about the face of the seraphim: “And before the throne *there was*, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.” The seraphim are called “living creatures” in this verse. They are full of eyes in front and in back. This describes their superior intelligence.



Each seraph is said to have a different face: “And the first creature *was* like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature *was* like a flying eagle” (Rev. 4:7). Each face reflects something about the Lord Jesus Christ: the lion, Christ as sovereign or king; the calf or ox, Christ as servant taking our place on the cross; the face of a man, Christ becoming a man; the eagle, Christ controlling history.

The word “seraph” is from a Hebrew word which means “to burn or shine,” or “to be lit up from inside, as a lamp.” Read Revelation 4:8 and tell me what these shining angels do: “And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, ‘HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, *is* THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME.’” The seraphim lead in the worship of God in heaven. They chant to one another. One group starts singing, and the other answers in song. All day and all night they sing the praises of the Lord (Isa. 6:3).

Why do the seraphim cover their faces and feet with their wings? In the presence of the perfect glory of God,

they cover their faces in humility and their feet in respect. They are holy, glorious creatures; but still they are only created beings. They are there to show God’s glory, not their own, and to wait for His command. If such holy creatures are so humbled in God’s presence, how will a mere human being feel? Isaiah was given a vision of the very throne room of God, and he tells us. He saw “the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple [throne room]” (Isa. 6:1). How did Isaiah feel? He said, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (Isa. 6:5). He saw his own sinfulness in contrast to the holiness of God. Isaiah wondered how he, a sinful man, could stand before the Lord and live.

Then God sent a seraph with a coal taken from the altar of incense and touched Isaiah’s lips. Remember, this is a vision, so Isaiah was not actually burned with a live coal. The seraph then said to Isaiah “your iniquity is taken away, and your sin is forgiven [and cleansed]” (Isa. 6:7). The Lord could now use Isaiah to serve Him (Isa. 6:8–9). The story of the seraphim is in God’s Word to teach us the same lesson Isaiah learned: that we cannot serve the Lord unless our sins are cleansed. We may know 1 John 1:9 backwards and forwards, but if we do not use it and confess our sin, we are useless to the Lord.

The Archangel

An archangel is a seraph who is a very important angel. Do you remember what the word “angel” means? Messenger. “Arch” means “chief.” So archangel means “chief angel” or “chief messenger.” Michael is the only angel identified as an archangel in the Bible (Jude 9).

Michael is apparently the angel of highest rank among holy angels. The elect angels are organized as an army, as are Satan’s fallen angels. An army must have a commander in chief. Who would that be in the heavenly army? The Lord Jesus Christ. He is called “the LORD of hosts [armies]” (Isa. 6:5). Maybe we should call God’s army the “heavenly air force” because they are all ‘fliers.’ Of the angelic armies, there are two ‘five-star’ generals—Michael on the Lord’s side, and Satan on the opposing force.

The name Michael means “Who is like God?” What is the answer to the question in his name? “There is none like God.” When Satan said, “I will be like God,” God had to punish him. Michael always reminds us that as great as any creature is, no one is like God. Michael never says “I will,” as Satan said. He waits to do the will of God.

There are only five verses in the Bible about Michael. Let us look at these verses about Michael and see what his jobs are.

(1) *Guards the Nation Israel (Dan. 12:1a)*. God put Michael in charge of protecting His chosen people, the Jews. Because God chose the Jews, Satan is very interested in destroying them. Knowing this, God selected the

mightiest angel to protect them against Satan. Michael stands guard and rescues the Jews whenever God commands. He does this in the name of God and in His strength. Even though Michael is the most powerful of the holy angels, he must rely on God. Satan thinks he does not need God, but he will find out differently someday, won't he?

(2) *Opposes Satan (Jude 9)*. The very first time Michael appeared on the scene of history, he and Satan fought over the body of Moses. Satan tried to steal the body of Moses after the Lord had buried him (Deut. 34:5–6). Satan wanted to spoil God's plan for Moses to come back bodily in the Tribulation as a witness for Christ. Michael defeated Satan in the battle over Moses' body, but he did not judge him for what he did. The archangel left Satan to the Lord (2 Pet. 2:11). If someone treats you in a mean way, do you try to get even? The Bible tells us to just tell the Lord and let Him handle the case (Rom. 12:19).

(3) *Aids the Angel Gabriel (Dan. 10:13, 21)*. Daniel prayed for three weeks about the nation Israel. God sent the angel, Gabriel, with an answer to his prayer. Gabriel is very likely an archangel like Michael, although Scripture does not specifically call him one. We do know that Gabriel is a great and powerful angel, for his name means "the mighty one," or "hero of God," and he has many important and high-ranking jobs (Dan. 9:21; Luke 1:11, 19, 26).

Now, we know that an angel can fly to earth as fast as lightning, but Gabriel took twenty-one days to reach Daniel. Do you know why? To answer Daniel's prayer Gabriel had to defeat a powerful demon who stood in the way. There was a great struggle, and who do you think came to Gabriel's rescue? None other than the five-star general, Michael. Sometimes when you cannot get an answer to your prayer right away, you might remember this story. Many times when you think your prayers are not being answered, they are answered and you just do not know it at the time.

(4) *Leads the Heavenly Armies (Rev. 12:7)*. Halfway through the Tribulation, there is a "war in heaven" in which Michael leads the heavenly armies against Satan and his armies (Rev. 12:7–12). Who do you think will win? Michael will be victorious, and Satan will once and for all be cast out of heaven.

What God Wants Me to Know

Why do Michael and the holy angels serve God and want no other reward? The angels delight to do God's will because they love God. Do you love God? Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). He didn't say, "You'd better keep my commandments—or else!" No, He said, "if you love Me, you will"! The twofold function of these great angels is worship—to express their love for God, and service—to fly quickly at God's command.

When God speaks to you through His Word, do you run to obey, or do you drag your feet and think, "Someday I'll do what the Lord wants me to"? If your parents remind you that it is time to get ready for Bible class, do you ask, "Do I have to?" Or do you get ready without having to be told? The angel's entire life is lived to please God and to worship Him. What about yours? Do you ever think about pleasing Him, or is your mind always on yourself and what you want? "But whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected" (1 John 2:5a).

Perhaps you are serving Satan instead of God. If you are not on God's side, His commandment to you is not John 14:15, but 1 John 3:23a: "And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ." If you have not obeyed this first commandment, why not do so right now?

Lesson Review

Can you name three angels mentioned by name in the Bible? Lucifer, Michael, and Gabriel. What are the two ranks of elect angels? Cherub and seraph. What is God's purpose for the cherubim? Guard the throne, and protect the holiness of God. Seraphim? Lead in worship, and teach us about the believer's cleansing for service. What is particularly unusual about both cherubim and seraphim? The description of their faces. Each cherub has four faces and four wings; each seraph has one face and six wings.

What does the word "archangel" mean? Chief messenger. What important jobs does the archangel Michael have? To guard God's chosen people, oppose Satan, aid the angel Gabriel, and lead the heavenly armies. Why do these angels serve God so willingly and faithfully? They love and adore Him. Angels watch us and learn from us, but we can also learn something from them: the great joy of serving our wonderful Lord.

Memory Verse

"For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways." (Ps. 91:11)

LESSON TWO GUARDIAN ANGELS

Who was created higher—man or angels? Angels. All angels are a more powerful and more intelligent order of creation than man. If angels are greater than man, should we worship angels? What would you do if an angel from heaven should suddenly appear to you, as angels often did in Bible times? Would you bow down and worship the heavenly being? What would the angel do if you should worship him? “And I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he said to me, ‘Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book; worship God’” (Rev. 22:8–9).

Satan was an angel who wanted to be worshiped. He said to the Lord Jesus, “Fall down and worship me” (Matt. 4:9b). What did Jesus answer? “Begone, Satan! For it is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY’” (Matt. 4:10). No matter how great a creature may be, we are never to worship a created being.

We are told in Hebrews 2:9 that Jesus was “made a little while lower than the angels.” Does this mean He is a created being? No, it means that while He was on earth, He was in the form of a man. He is always to be worshiped, whether in human form or as deity, for Jesus was and is and always will be God! When He took on a human body, He became the God-man—totally God and totally man in one person. Was it not a very humiliating thing for the Lord Jesus, who had always been the glorious Son of God, worshiped by angels, to become lower than they? Yes, it was. Then why did He do it? So that He might die for our sins. He suffered this shame for you and for me (Phil. 2:5–8).

However, it was not God’s purpose for Him to be shamed forever. “Having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they” (Heb. 1:4). After Jesus ascended and went back to heaven, God the Father made Him “better” or higher than angels—not as God, but as the God-man forever. As God, He always was better than angels; but now as the God-man, His humanity has become far superior to angels (1 Pet. 3:22). That is the reason why the Bible says, “LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM” (Heb. 1:6b; cf. Phil. 2:9–11).

Are we, as sons of God, higher or lower than angels? When we are born we are physically lower than angels. When we believe in Christ and are “born again,” we become positionally higher than the angels because through salvation

we are one with the Son of God. This is what the Lord Jesus has done for us by making Himself lower than angels for a while. And that is why angels serve us (Heb. 1:14).

Guardian Angels

What does it mean “to minister”? To serve or help. Who are the heirs of salvation? Those who have received Christ as Savior. Have you? Then you have at least one angel assigned to serve you and to help you. This is one way we know that we as believers are positionally higher than angels. At what time does an angel start serving a believer? Since Psalm 34:7 and Hebrews 1:14 tell us that angels help those who are saved, it is quite certain that angels begin their ministry the moment a person believes. As soon as you receive the Lord Jesus as your Savior, God says to an angel, “you are assigned to Johnny Jones,” or “you are to guard Patti Smith,” and that angel flies down immediately to take up his position around you. Perhaps others help, or they take turns. We are not told the details of their organization.



From Matthew 18:10 we learn that all children have an angel. From this verse we understand that God places an angel to watch over babies when they are born until the time they are old enough to accept Christ as Savior for themselves. If a baby or child dies before he has the opportunity to believe in Christ, he goes to heaven by the grace of God (1 Sam. 12:18–23).

In what way do the angels minister to us? They are bodyguards. Many important people, such as presidents and kings, have a special bodyguard of soldiers or secret service men assigned to them when they go out in public. Such precaution is to protect them from harm. This is also the job of the angel or angels assigned to us and is the reason we call them “guardian angels.” They actually keep us from bodily harm when the Lord so commands it. Our guardian angel, of course, does not interfere when, for

some reason—perhaps to glorify Him or to teach us faith—it is the Lord's will for us to be hurt or even to die.

We are guarded from actual physical harm, which may come from many sources. Sometimes after a close call or a narrow escape from danger, you look back and wonder why you weren't killed. A lot of people would say, "I sure was lucky!" But if you are a believer, it was not luck. It is at these times that your guardian angel protects you from harm. Of course, we will never really know the whole story until we get to heaven. Won't you have a good time talking to your guardian angel?

What else do guardian angels guard against? Remember, there is a conflict or warfare going on all the time in the unseen world of angels. The evil forces of Satan are in constant conflict with the holy forces of God. Satan is nefarious in his desire to defeat believers, and he tries to keep them from serving the Lord. Satan assigns his angels to believers. He may assign more than one to those who are doing an especially important job for the Lord. Our guardian angel must keep the fallen angels from harming us. I am sure that there are many battles raging over our heads, especially over those who are serving the Lord. If you spend most of your time out of fellowship and live to please yourself, your guardian angel does not have much trouble with the fallen angels. Your sin nature has already done the job for them.

Your memory verse says, "For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways" (Ps. 91:11). Who used these words and twisted them? Satan, when he tried to get Jesus to jump off the top of the Temple in Jerusalem. If Jesus had obeyed Satan and jumped the 450 feet, would God the Father have ordered the angels to keep Jesus from getting hurt? No! Our Lord understood that Satan was trying to tempt Him to disobey God the Father. Thus, Jesus said to Satan, "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test" (Matt. 4:7).

Angels Obey God, Not Believers

Suppose you said to yourself, "Well, since I have a guardian angel, I'm just going to run in front of that car coming down the street and let my angel protect me." Would your guardian angel protect you in a case like that? No! If I gave you a bottle of poison and told you that you could drink it because you had a guardian angel to guard you at any time, would you drink it? I hope not, because God does not promise to protect you if you deliberately go against His will. Sometimes He keeps you from your own foolishness because He knows you will confess your sins and serve Him again, but that is not part of the promise. You cannot say, "Guardian angel, I'm going to ride my bike on the freeway—be sure to protect me!" The angels obey God's commands, not ours.

Angels Do Not Interfere with Volition

Angels do not keep us from doing wrong. Learning God's Word and being filled with and controlled by the

Holy Spirit are the provisions from God for this. God has given each one of us volition, and the angels do not interfere with our free will, just as God does not. The angels did not keep Adam and Eve from eating of the forbidden tree, did they? I am sure the angels would have liked to hold back Adam's hands so that he could not have taken the fruit from Eve, but this the angels may not do. Their job is to protect the believer when he is helpless to protect himself. Now I am going to tell you about a man in the Bible who was protected by an angel.

Daniel's Guardian Angel, Daniel 6

Daniel was a "man of high esteem," greatly beloved by God (Dan. 10:11). Does God play favorites and love some people more than others? No, God loves all alike, but some believers love and obey God (John 14:15) more than others so that God can express His love to them in a greater way. Daniel was one of these believers, living in constant fellowship with Him (Dan. 10:12). Satan, knowing how greatly God used Daniel, tried to get rid of him. We have already learned how he sent a powerful demon to keep Daniel from receiving an answer to prayer.

Satan influenced the princes and wise men of the kingdom of Babylon to be jealous of Daniel, for God had given Daniel wisdom above that of all the other rulers. Though they tried hard, none of them could find any error or fault in the way Daniel did his work. "If we're going to get rid of him," they said, "we'll have to think of a way that would be against the law of his God." And think of a way they did! They presented Darius, the king, with a new law which said that no one could pray to any god or man other than the king for thirty days. Anyone caught breaking this law would be thrown into a den of lions. Never realizing this was a scheme to trap his faithful servant Daniel, Darius thought only of how great this would make him, and he signed the law—a law that could not be changed!

Now when Daniel heard of the new law, he was not worried one bit. He had many things to talk over with the Lord in prayer, and "he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously" (Dan. 6:10b). After all, if this were the Lord's time for him to die, then he would soon be with the Lord face to face. If not, the Lord would protect him. As he continued his daily routine of praying three times a day, the princes were right there spying on him. Immediately, they ran to tattle to the king.

"Didn't you make a law that no one should pray to anyone but yourself, or else be thrown to the lions?" they asked the king. "It is true," he answered. "Well," they went on, "Daniel—that Jewish captive—hasn't paid any attention to you, but keeps right on praying to HIS God!" "So that was what they were up to," thought the king. "They were jealous of Daniel, and I fell right into their trap." Darius was terribly angry with himself and tried all day to find a

way to keep Daniel from being thrown into the lion's den. But try as he might, there was no way; Daniel had to go. Before Daniel was cast into the den of lions, the king said to him, "Your God whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you" (Dan. 6:16). At least the king hoped so!

Down into the den went Daniel, but God had already sent Daniel's guardian angel to shut the mouths of the lions. As we have seen, angels have supernatural powers, and this angel made those lions behave like little kittens. Perhaps Daniel slept that night on the soft mane of one of them and had a most comfortable night. But up in the palace the king could not sleep a wink, so worried was he about Daniel. It seemed as if morning would never come, and at the first light of day, the king rushed to the den to find out about Daniel. Even though he had given him that 'pep talk,' he fully expected Daniel to be dead.

In a pitiful voice King Darius called to Daniel, "Did your God deliver you?" And the answer came back, "My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me" (Dan. 6:22a). Once again, Satan failed against a believer. Daniel's guardian angel held back the hungry lions, and perhaps held back the demons also, and saved him. The king ordered the men who had plotted against Daniel to be thrown to the lions. No angel came to their rescue.

What God Wants Me to Know

Could you go right on praying as Daniel did, even though you knew it might mean your death? Why did Daniel not sin or start blaming God for his troubles? Well, suppose I had with me today a balloon and a pin cushion. One is filled with air and the other with cotton. Which one will stand up to a prick with a pin? The pin cushion, of course. The balloon will go "pop!" The pin cushion will stay the same. What keeps the pin cushion from collapsing? It has stuffing on the inside. What was Daniel—a balloon or a pin cushion believer? He was like a pin cushion because he did not burst or collapse when Satan pricked him with his pins. This reminds us of Job, doesn't it?

Both Job and Daniel had stuffed themselves with the Word of God. Daniel knew that God had angels at His command to protect His own; he knew God's promises and doctrines. You can be either a pin cushion believer or a balloon believer. If you are learning and obeying God's Word, a little trouble will not bother you at all. If you are not, a little trouble can make you pop all to pieces. Which do you want to be?

You can see that an unbeliever is very much like a balloon. He has no solid stuffing inside to keep him from going to pieces. And he has every reason to fear and to worry! He is not under God's care and protection. If you have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, why go any longer without the Lord? Wouldn't you like to make sure you are safe in Him right now? "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

Lesson Review

We are going to review with some questions that you can answer in one word. Let's see whether you can answer them correctly the first time!

1. Did Jesus become lower than angels as God or man? Man.
2. Are believers positionally higher or lower than angels? Higher.
3. What does it mean "to minister"? Serve or help.
4. At what time does an angel begin to serve a believer? Salvation.
5. What kind of angel is a "ministering spirit" to the believer? Guardian.
6. Whom must your guardian angel fight off? Demons.
7. Does your guardian angel keep you from doing wrong? No.
8. What has God provided to keep you from sin? Bible.

Memory Verse

"For He will give His angels charge concerning you, To guard you in all your ways." (Ps. 91:11)

Chapter Fifteen

Angels Watch and Learn

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Angels Watch and Learn—Deuteronomy 33:2; Job 38:4–7; 1 Corinthians 4:9

B. Lesson Title: Angels Watch Believers and the Events of Biblical History

C. Story Objective:

The angelic conflict has given rise to the curiosity of angels toward the human race. Angels have been present at every event in the unfolding of the plan of God, either as spectators, ministers, or both. Today angels are spectators of the Church (1 Cor. 4:9; Eph. 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:10–12), as well as guardians. By watching mankind, they learn of the manifold wisdom and grace of God in providing salvation for undeserving sinners (Luke 15:10; Eph. 3:10). They see the love of Christ as manifested in believers through the filling of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5). Believers, therefore, have a responsibility to be faithful witnesses to God’s love and grace by life and lips, not only to the unbeliever, but to all angelic creation (Eccl. 5:6).

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: spectacle
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Angels observe God and man (1 Pet. 1:10–12).
 - 1) Watched creation (Job 38:4–7)
 - 2) Watch human race
 - a) Look to see how God works out conflict with Satan (1 Pet. 1:10–12)

- b) Observe salvation in action (1 Pet. 1:10–12)
 - 3) Watched and helped in giving of the Law (Deut. 33:2)
 - 4) Watched and helped Jesus Christ while on earth (Luke 22:43)
 - 5) Watch believers (1 Cor. 4:9b)
 - b. What should believers show angels?
 - 1) How to please the Lord (1 Tim. 5:21)
 - 2) Love for the Word of God (Jer. 15:16)
 - 3) How to live life as unto the Lord (Col. 3:17; 1 Cor. 10:31)
 - c. What do angels learn?
 - 1) Wisdom and grace of God (Luke 15:10; Eph. 3:10)
 - 2) Love of God (John 3:16)

E. *Source Book* Keywords: angels (angelic observation), Body of Christ, invisible impact of believers, Mosaic Law, obedience and happiness

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: none
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: “Because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men.” (1 Cor. 4:9b)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON

ANGELS WATCH BELIEVERS AND THE EVENTS OF BIBLICAL HISTORY

Do you like to watch ball games, or plays, or shows? I know you like to watch television. How would you like to have a free pass for every great event in the world—for the professional ball games, for the Olympics, for all the great shows, circuses, rodeos—everything that you would like to see? Do you know that the angels have just that? Angels never miss any of the great events in history. Our earth is like a great stage or a giant television screen to the angels. They watch all that goes on down here.

Are angels interested in our ball games or our shows? No, angels are interested in watching believers. They want to see how you and I act. Suppose you play on a team. The angels are watching, but they are looking to see whether you are playing as unto the Lord or just to show off how good you are or to hear others praise you. They want to know whether you are a good testimony by being a good sport, by obeying the rules, or by not being jealous when someone else is better than you. Colossians 3:17 and 1 Corinthians 10:31 tell us that whatever we do should be done for the glory of God.

How do we know that the angels are always watching us—bad angels as well as the good? There are many passages in the Word of God that tell us so. Let us look at some of them.

Turn to 1 Peter 1:10–12: “As to this salvation, the [Old Testament] prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come* to you made careful search and inquiry . . . things into which angels long to look.” The prophets (preachers) in Old Testament times were not the only ones who desired to look into God’s Word and learn of His plan; angels also want to know about God’s plan. “Look” doesn’t mean just to glance, but to watch intently or to look hard. The angels are very curious. They are ‘bending down’ to get a good, clear look at us. Why are they looking so hard? Because they want to learn.

Sometimes, when you are sitting in Bible class, you look and listen very intently, but other times you are looking around. You cannot learn when you are not paying attention. Think of the angels. The way they learn is by watching carefully and taking in everything. Be like them; be curious about the Word of God! Look intently into it!

What Do Angels Watch?

The angels have witnessed many dramatic and significant events as God’s plan unfolds on the earth. When was the first time angels watched the earth? At creation, “when the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God

shouted for joy” (Job 38:4–7). Let us take a closer look at some of the extraordinary things the angels had the privilege to observe.

(1) The angels watched the Lord Jesus Christ create the earth. When we see or hear a great thing or something we like very much, we clap our hands. Sometimes we even cheer. The angels cheered God with singing and shouting for joy. The earth was so perfect and beautiful, they just could not help shouting. It was not at all like our earth today with thunderstorms, earthquakes, floods, and fire. Everything was peaceful, calm, and beautiful.

(2) From the moment God made man, the angels began to watch this creature. They knew of God’s plan to put people on the earth, but until God actually created people and placed them on the earth, angels had no idea what a human being would look like. First, they watched Adam and Eve in the Garden. The holy angels must have been horrified to see them take the fruit when God had said not to eat it.

Do you wonder why God put us on the earth when He knew we would sin? Well, remember, ever since Satan revolted against God, there have been two sides—God and His holy angels on one side and Satan and his fallen angels on the other. War has continually raged between the two sides, and we are in the middle of the battle. We are here to show the angels that God is fair in condemning both angels and men to the lake of fire. God’s plan was to give man the same free will the angels had so that he might make a choice for or against Him and His plan of salvation. Satan has been allowed to make you a counteroffer of his own plan. It is up to you to decide for God or for Satan. If even one person decides for God, the angels learn that God was not unfair to sentence Satan and his angels to the lake of fire. They see that a creature with free will won’t necessarily decide against God as did Satan. Satan thought everyone would decide against God. But when anyone goes God’s way, angels see God’s wondrous love for man. They see His salvation go into action for that person.

(3) The next great event the angels watched was the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. In fact, they had a part in giving Moses the Law. In Deuteronomy 33:2, we learn that “ten thousand holy ones [angels]” were with the Lord to help Moses record the Law. Remember, Moses was up on the mountain forty days and nights (Ex. 24:18). It took a long time to hear and write down all that God wanted the people to know. Angels told much of it to Moses during those long days (Ps. 68:17; Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19). The angels went between God and Moses and brought him

God's instructions. Perhaps only one or two angels actually helped God give Moses the Law, while the rest were watchers.

(4) The angels saw that the Israelites could not keep the Law. Even while the angels were helping to pass the Law on to Moses, the people down below were making themselves a golden calf to worship (Ex. 32:1–8). What would God do now? God knew that they could not keep the Law, and His plan took care of that very problem.

(5) The angels watched God's plan unfold until at last the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world. As they watched Him very carefully, they began to see what grace and salvation were all about. They discovered that "the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). Not only did they watch and learn, but they were present to help at all the events in our Lord's ministry.

(6) Now that Jesus has gone back up to heaven, angels are watching you and me—believers. "Because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men" (1 Cor. 4:9b). Do you know what a spectator is? It is a person who watches. Angels are spectators, but we are a spectacle—we are the ones being watched. The word "spectacle" in the Greek, the language in which our New Testament was originally written, is our word for "theater." We are a theater or a show for the angels.

In ancient Rome there was a famous Colosseum, which still exists to this day, that seated eighty thousand people. Down below in the arena, gladiators or fighters entertained the Roman emperor and the crowds. It was here that the early Christians were made to fight wild beasts. The Roman spectators looked on and cheered.

Paul used this to illustrate the way in which believers today are being watched. We are all being watched by unbelievers, angels, and other believers to see how we act. Believers who are serving the Lord are like the gladiators down in the arena. The devil, like a roaring lion, is in the arena "seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8b). Like the lions in the Roman arena, Satan would like to tear your spiritual life to pieces. A good gladiator will fight to the death. Are you resisting the devil and making a good show?

What Should Believers Show?

Those watching you should see a life that is different from that of the world. When the Lord Jesus Christ comes into your life, you receive the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to help you live a life pleasing to Him. Let's think about your life just yesterday. Did you obey your parents all day long? Did you pretend you did not hear your mother when she asked you to do the dishes? What kind of a spectacle is that to the angels? They watch to see how you perform your duties (1 Tim. 5:21). The Bible says, "Be kind to one another" (Eph. 4:32a), and that means even to your brothers and sisters. Do you stick out your tongue when you go by them and tell them you can't

stand them, or give them a mean little shove? A fine believer you are if you show that side of you!

If you are a child of God, angels should be able to see that the things of the Lord are more important to you than the best television show or sport, or any game or toy. If you are more interested in these things than in the Word of God, you do not make a very good spectacle. Satan's fallen angels love to see you make a poor showing. They cheer when you disobey your parents or the Word, or when you try to get even with someone who hurt you, for then Satan, the roaring lion, has scored a victory!

I wonder whether the angels booed or cheered you this week? If you remembered to look into the Word and pray; if you stood up for the Lord and the things that are right; if you told other boys and girls about the Lord Jesus Christ, holy angels cheered. What about the world of unbelievers? You are the only 'Bible' they read. If you make a poor showing, they think to themselves: "If that is a Christian, I don't need to be one. Why should I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ if He hasn't made any difference in that boy's life? I'm as good as he is."

Other believers are watching you, too. In fact, we watch each other. What you do speaks just as loudly as what you say. When you do not obey God's Word, some other believer may not obey God's Word, just because you didn't.

What Do Angels Learn?

You may think it does not matter what you do, but you are very important in God's plan. Your life is a special event to both good and bad angels, as well as a spectacle to believers and unbelievers. They learn things about God they never knew by watching a believer whose life counts for Him.

Turn to Ephesians 3:10. What do angels learn, according to this verse? "In order that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly *places*." The wisdom of God. God's true Church is made up of people all over the world who believe in Jesus Christ. God has made the Church like a body, with each saved person a member of the body. When all of them function properly, the Church is a beautiful thing, working together as one body. Only an all-wise God could have thought of a plan that brings all kinds and races of people together and makes them all to be one body, with one mind—the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16), and one purpose—to glorify Him.

What God Wants Me to Know

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents [changes his mind about Christ and believes]" (Luke 15:10). The angels are watching to see who will make the most important decision in life. When you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you make the holy angels very happy. They saw the unbelievable sacrifice that

Jesus made for mankind. They saw the mighty Son of God become a lowly man. They saw Him take all of man's sins on Himself. They saw the Father forsake the Son as He bore our sins on the cross. That God would do all of this to save even one sinner from eternal death and separation from Him proves to the angels that He is a gracious and just and righteous God.

Angels are learning that God gives you every opportunity to believe in His Son and be saved. The angels cannot understand why anyone would reject the Lord Jesus after all He has done for mankind. At the final judgment, holy angels will watch as all who have rejected Christ are cast into the eternal lake of fire. Are the holy angels going to see this happen to you? Or are you going to let the holy angels rejoice in your decision to accept Christ?

Lesson Review

What past events have the angels watched? Creation of the earth and of Adam and Eve, the giving of the Law to

Moses, and the Lord Jesus Christ on earth. Who are the angels watching now? Believers. Who else are your "spectators"? Unbelievers and other believers. Why should you remember to be kind to others and perform your duties as unto the Lord? So that you will be a good spectacle. What is "the Church" made up of? Believers all over the world. What do angels learn from watching the Church? The grace and wisdom of God.

Memory Verse

"Because we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men." (1 Cor. 4:9b)

Chapter Sixteen

Angels at the End of Time

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Angels at the End of Time—Revelation 14 and 20

B. Lesson Title: Holy Angels Carry Out Judgments, Fallen Angels Receive Judgment

C. Story Objective:

At the end of the Church Age, angels will assist the Lord Jesus Christ at the Rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:16). During the Tribulation which follows, they will be administrators of judgment by executing the wrath of God on unrighteousness (Rev. 17–19), and for the first time will be allowed to preach the Gospel (Rev. 14:6–7). Angels will accompany Christ at His second advent (Matt. 25:31; Mark 8:38b), at which time He will make war against unbelievers on the earth and will slay them with the sword which comes “from His mouth” (2 Thess. 1:7–8; Rev. 19:11–21).

After the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth, and after Satan has been “released for a short time” (Rev. 20:3), Satan and the fallen angels will be cast once and for all into the lake of fire, along with all unbelievers (Rev. 20).

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: martyr
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Angels at the end of time:

- 1) Drive Satan and fallen angels from third heaven (Rev. 12:7–9)
- 2) Preach the Gospel (Rev. 14:6–7)
- 3) Announce and accompany Christ at His second coming (Matt. 16:27a)
- 4) Help Christ fight and destroy wickedness (Matt. 13:39–42; 25:31–32, 41; 2 Thess. 1:7–10)
- 5) Cast Satan into the Abyss for one thousand years (Rev. 9:1–2; 20:1–3)
- b. Satan’s third and final fall:
 - 1) Released after one thousand years (Rev. 20:7)
 - 2) Cast into lake of fire forever (Rev. 20:10)

E. *Source Book* Keywords: angels (incarceration and ultimate punishment, work of elect angels), dispensations (Tribulation, Millennium), Last Judgment, Satan, Second Advent

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: none
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.” (Matt. 25:31)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON

HOLY ANGELS CARRY OUT JUDGMENTS, FALLEN ANGELS RECEIVE JUDGMENT

Before we leave our subject of angels, we want to see God's purpose for them at the end of time. Even though God still sends guardian angels to watch over His children, He no longer sends angelic messengers. Why? We have God's completed Word, which is our Guide Book. We also have the Holy Spirit living in us to be our Teacher and Guide and to give us inner power. We do not need to be strengthened or taught by angels because the Word of God and His power in us are stronger than all the angels put together. Believers take the angels' place in carrying God's message to other human beings.

The day is coming, however, when we as God's messengers will be removed from the earth. When is that? At the Rapture of the Church when we will be caught up to heaven to be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:17). Then who will take the message of God's Word to the human race? First, there will be 144,000 Jews who will accept Christ and will be God's witnesses (Rev. 7:1-8; 14:1). Remember, God formed the nation Israel to witness for Him. All through Bible times, and even now, they have failed to do so. After the Church is gone from the earth, suddenly the 144,000 Jews will become the greatest evangelists the world has ever known. They will preach during the Tribulation, the most terrible time of trouble in the history of the world. During the awful war and suffering, these Jews will be martyred (lose their lives) for the sake of the Gospel.

After this, God will send down from heaven two special witnesses to preach the Gospel (Rev. 11:1-12). These two are not angels; they are Moses and Elijah who are brought back to life. About this same time, there will be the war in heaven between Michael and Satan (Rev. 12:7-9). With the help of his angelic army, Michael will throw Satan and his fallen angels out of heaven and down to earth. Just think—you will be in heaven to see this unusual battle! Satan will never again be allowed in heaven. Knowing then that he has only a short time left (Rev. 12:12), he will turn all his fury against the earth, especially against the Jewish believers (Rev. 12:13). If God did not make this time very short, "no life would have been saved" (Matt. 24:22).

Angels Preach the Gospel

During the Tribulation, God will use angels to send forth terrible judgments on the earth, such as fire, sickness, famine, and drought (Rev. 17-19). Angels are also allowed to preach the Gospel (Rev. 14:6-7). Since time is nearly at an end, they preach to all nations and people so that the message of salvation will be spread quickly. Their message in Revelation 14:7 has four points:

(1) "*Fear God.*" The Gospel means "good news," and the message of the angels is good news to those who receive it, but it is also a warning. God will destroy all unrighteousness and those who reject His Son. God never destroys or judges until He first gives a warning. "Fear God" is the warning to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ because of the judgment to come. We know the angels are speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ because "there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

(2) "*Give Him glory.*" People always want to take the credit for what they have done (Eph. 2:9). They think they can do something good enough for salvation, but we must all come to the place where we will acknowledge that salvation is of the Lord.

(3) "*The hour of His judgment has come.*" When Jonah preached concerning the judgment of Nineveh, the whole city turned to the Lord. But at the end of time, even though people will hear the Gospel of salvation many, many times, most of them will reject it. Think of hearing the Gospel from the revived Moses and Elijah and also from an angel from heaven! Yet most people will refuse to believe the message and pretend there is no judgment.

(4) "*Worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.*" Doesn't this remind you of Colossians 1:16? Who made all things? Jesus Christ. Do you know who will be worshiped in the Tribulation? Satan! Even today some preachers and so-called religious leaders believe that God does not exist. Yet they go to church to worship every Sunday. Who is there to worship if God does not exist? The "god of this world," Satan (2 Cor. 4:4)! But God does exist, and He is deserving of all praise and glory (Deut. 4:39; cf. 1 Chron. 29:13; Rev. 19:5).

An Angel Announces Time to Stop

"And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT, that there shall be delay no longer" (Rev. 10:5-6). Does "delay no longer" mean that an angel or the Lord is going to stop the clock of time? No, it means that there will be no more delay before Christ comes back to earth. He is coming at last (Rev. 19:11-21)! With Him will be all the heavenly hosts (Matt. 16:27a), as well as the army of the saints (Jude 14-15; Rev. 19:14). The angelic army will gather all those who did

not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:7–10) and carry out the sentence against unbelievers (Matt. 13:39–42; 25:31–32).

Why will there be so many unbelievers on the earth at the return of Christ, when the Gospel has been preached to them over and over in the most powerful message ever? Satan has completely taken them in by his wonders and miracles (2 Cor. 4:3–4; 2 Thess. 2:7–12). But God gave them every opportunity to be saved, didn't He?

Now, when Jesus Christ comes back to reign on earth, what will happen to Satan? Can there be two rulers of this world at the same time—one evil and the other good? No, another angel takes care of Satan—very likely Michael (Rev. 20:1–3). He is given the job of capturing Satan, binding him, and casting him into the Abyss for one thousand years (Rev. 9:1–2). With Satan and religion gone, Jesus Christ begins His thousand-year rule on perfect earth.

The Release of Satan, Revelation 20:7–9

Would you believe that even though people will live in perfect environment and will see the Lord Jesus Christ in all His glory, there will be many who still reject Him as their Savior? When the one thousand years are complete and Satan is “released for a short time” by the Lord, millions of people will line up on Satan's side (Rev. 20:3, 8). They will march to Jerusalem to destroy it, but what happens? “And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them” (Rev. 20:9). God becomes the Divine Flamethrower and destroys them all!

Why do you think people still reject Christ and go along with Satan? Even in the perfect conditions of the earth during the reign of the Lord, those born during this time will still have a sin nature. It is still the same sinful, deceitful nature, the center of man's rebellion toward God. Those under the control of the sin nature are slaves to Satan, and when he can appeal to their negative volition, they will follow him.

The Last Judgment, Revelation 20:10–15

Let's read what happens to Satan: “And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10). This is Satan's third fall, and the doom that he has been trying so hard to escape. But God's Word is sure, and what He promises will always come to pass. After this, all unbelievers will be resurrected and brought before the Lord Jesus Christ. Since their names are not in the Book of Life, they will be cast alive into the lake of fire to be tormented forever and ever. Did you know that if you are a believer, you will help to judge both unbelievers and fallen angels (1 Cor. 6:2–3)?

What God Wants Me to Know

After this, time as we know it will no longer exist. Eternity past and eternity future meet to go on and on forever. Both believers and holy angels will praise the Lord Jesus Christ for all eternity. What will we praise Him for? Read Revelation 1:5–6, and you will see: “And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, and He has made us *to be* a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him *be* the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” What will the angels say? “And all the angels were standing around the throne and *around* the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, ‘Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *be* to our God forever and ever. Amen’” (Rev. 7:11–12). But we should not wait until eternity to praise Him for all He has done for us. We should start right now!

What will eternity be for you? Will you be in the presence of the Lord and the holy angels in heaven, or in the presence of Satan and his fallen angels in the lake of fire? If you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, your name will never be blotted out of the Book of Life (Rev. 3:5, KJV), and God will tell the holy angels that you belong to Him forever. When you were born, your name was written down, because the Lord Jesus died for everyone. But if you do not believe in Him, your name will be erased from His Book when you die. Whether you have eternal life or the eternal wrath of God depends on your decision. Be sure you make that decision before it is forever too late.

Lesson Review

1. Which elect angel will throw Satan and his fallen angels out of heaven? Michael, the archangel.
2. When will God use angels to preach the Gospel? During the Tribulation.
3. Will there still be unbelievers on earth at the end of the Tribulation? At the end of the Millennium? Yes.
4. For how long is Satan imprisoned in the Abyss? One thousand years.
5. In Satan's third fall, he will be cast into what place of eternal torment? The lake of fire.
6. Where will all the elect angels and believers live forever? In heaven, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Memory Verse

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.” (Matt. 25:31)

Chapter Seventeen

Arise and Go!

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Arise and Go!—Jonah 1:1–3*a*; 3:4*b*

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: Arise and Go!
2. Lesson Two: The Call and Reaction of Jonah

C. Story Objective:

Many Bible stories, and even certain verses, are so well known and familiar that their meaning is overlooked. Yet these same familiar passages contain great hidden truths and afford much joy upon their discovery. Because the student has mastered the story content, time may be more profitably spent in searching out these truths as well as the lesser known but interesting historical facts. This we shall endeavor to do with the Book of Jonah.

It is our prayer that every child who is taught these lessons will gain a vital interest in the Word of God; a deeper understanding and appreciation of God's love and grace toward sinners, the saved and the unsaved; and may see his own place and responsibility within the plan of God.

This introductory chapter in our study of Jonah is of utmost importance. It serves as a foundation for the next six chapters on the Book of Jonah and presents valuable information. The historical background to the Book is taught, along with the purpose of its writing. It introduces the principle characters, God and Jonah, and reviews the essence of God, inspiration of the Scriptures, and the importance of personal Bible study and its application.

Your aim is to seek to arouse a healthy curiosity in the hidden things of the Word, a keen interest in those facts which your child may have overlooked. Challenge him to

explore the Word daily on his own, and to apply those lessons which God has shown him.

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: archaeologist, discernment, excavate, gloat, reconstruct
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Background (Jonah 1:1–3*a*)
 - 1) Author: possibly Jonah
 - 2) Time: approximately 782–753 B.C., during the reign of Jeroboam II, fourteenth king of Israel (2 Kings 14:23)
 - 3) Place: Gath-hepher, Jonah's hometown (2 Kings 14:25)
 - 4) Characters: God, Sovereign of the universe (Jonah 1:1–3*a*); Jonah, prophet, servant of God (2 Kings 14:25; Jonah 1:1–3*a*; Luke 11:30)
 - b. What God is like (Jonah 4:2*b*)
 - 1) Attributes: sovereignty, righteousness, justice, love, eternal life, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, immutability, veracity
 - 2) Trinity: God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
 - c. Events
 - 1) Jonah's call: "Arise, go to Nineveh" (Jonah 1:1–2); at Gath-hepher (2 Kings 14:25)
 - 2) Destination: Nineveh, capital of Assyrian Empire on the Tigris River; chief gods: Nebo, Dagon (fish-god); city walls 100 feet high, 4-lane highway for chariots; excavated A.D. 1847–51 (Jonah 1:2)

- 3) Purpose: “Cry against it” (Jonah 1:2); warning (Jonah 3:4b)
- 4) Jonah’s decision: No (Jonah 1:3a), because he did not want the Assyrians (enemies of the Jews) spared (Jonah 4:2)
- d. Discoveries for child’s life
 - 1) God’s Word to me (2 Tim. 3:16–17; cf. Jer. 15:16). What does He say?
 - 2) Search the Word daily (Prov. 2:4b). What does it mean?
 - 3) God knows my thinking, planning and doings (Heb. 4:13). What does He want me to think?
 - 4) Be doers of the Word (James 1:22). What does He want me to do?

E. *Source Book* Keywords: divine discipline, God the Holy Spirit (Old Testament ministry of), Jonah, verbal plenary inspiration

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: Jonah, Jonah crossword puzzle
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: “But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” (James 1:22)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE ARISE AND GO!

Boys and girls everywhere love adventure. So do many grown people. In the year 1848, right here in America, many people left home to go on a great adventure—searching for gold. The “gold rush” was on in California, and everybody hoped to strike it rich. Many did, but many more returned home, empty-handed and bitterly disappointed. It seems that man is always ready to set out in search of hidden treasures. He digs deep into the earth in search of diamonds, silver, gold; for oil or water; for coal, metals, and stones. Indeed, God has put these things there for man to find and use (Job 28:1–2, 5–6; Ps. 135:6).

Man also goes down to the bottom of the ocean where God has hidden precious treasures in oysters—pearls. Divers bring up these treasures as well as riches from ships that sank into the deep. Other great treasures, which have remained hidden for centuries, are excavated and brought to light by archaeologists, such as old cities and ancient tombs. Ever curious, where could man go next? Yes, you guessed it—up into space, to see what he might find there.

But, sadly enough, the greatest treasures by far have been neglected. Do you wonder what treasures I have in mind? The hidden riches which God has “PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM” (1 Cor. 2:9). Now, you cannot expect the unbeliever to be interested in spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14), but isn’t it a shame that so many believers do not care enough or are too lazy to get into the Word and dig?

Would you like to know what some of these spiritual riches are? I would, at least. In fact, I am so excited about those I have found that I want to invite you to go with me on a search for hidden treasures—a search from which I

promise none of you will return disappointed or empty-handed. Where? Into the Book of Jonah.

Let’s look at a few verses to guide us as we begin our journey: “For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; Then you will discern the fear of the LORD, And discover the knowledge of God” (Prov. 2:3–5). “Thy words were found and I ate them, And Thy words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; For I have been called by Thy name, O LORD God of hosts” (Jer. 15:16). “But just as it is written, ‘THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND *which* HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.’ For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. . . . Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God” (1 Cor. 2:9–10, 12).

Now, let’s look at some general information to introduce you to the book in which we will excavate our discoveries. Each word in the Book of Jonah is true and precious. Each word was given by inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16a), and is therefore “profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God [every believer] may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16b–17). Most likely, Jonah himself was the author of this little book. And God the Holy Spirit inspired him to record every detail, even those which were embarrassing to him. God has also preserved this book in His Word for us to read and learn.

Suppose you and I could ask Jonah, "Sir, just why did you write a book which speaks badly of you?" Jonah would sadly shake his head, "You've missed the point entirely. I wrote it to show you God's boundless love and grace for the saved and the unsaved. Read it and find out just how much He really cares!" Then Jonah would continue, "As for me, I had to learn my lesson the hard way. You can learn much from my experience. Here, let me give you some sound advice in the words of James 1:22: 'But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.' Apply what you know!"

With this short introduction we should be well prepared for the adventure. Our Guide, God the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 16:23), is ready to take us. Of course, the Holy Spirit can only guide those who are said to love God (1 Cor. 2:9–10), that is, those who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior. If you have never made that decision, the only thing the Holy Spirit can do for you is to show you the way of salvation: You cannot hope to measure up to God's standards (Rom. 3:23); you cannot save yourself from either the penalty or the power of sin. You need a Savior. God offers you salvation as a gift through faith in His Son. There is no other way to be acceptable to God, no other way of salvation, no other Savior (Acts 4:12). There is no other way to come under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So take this opportunity to make the most important decision in your life—believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Instructions for the Search

Are you ready? Now, since all of our exploring will be done with our minds, we need not do physical labor. Rather, we will dig in the Word, verse by verse. But we do need tools just the same. Our tools: a Bible, a notebook, a pen or pencil, a map, and most important of all, a sharp mind, eager and ready, controlled by the Holy Spirit (1 John 1:9). Just one more thing: Let's take along a treasure chest to collect your verses and discoveries. Now, where do we go from here?

We turn back our calendar from the present year to the distant past, some 2,800 years ago—sometime between 782–753 B.C. We are standing in Gath-hepher, in lower Galilee, about three miles from Nazareth where our Lord spent His childhood and much of his adult life. Gath-hepher means "the wine press of the well." Perhaps it was so named for the livelihood of the townspeople who raised grapes and made wine. This is the hometown of Jonah. Read Jonah 1:1 silently and tell me if you see the word Gath-hepher there. You don't? Well, neither do I. Now perhaps you will see what I meant when I said we will search for hidden treasures. Turn with me to 2 Kings 14:25b: "According to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher." Now, in your notebook, begin to chart your discoveries. This is how

your chart should read: The Book of Jonah. Time: 780–740 B.C. Place: Gath-hepher. Scripture: 2 Kings 14:25; Jonah 1:1.

We know very little about Jonah. Some have doubted that such a man even lived. But we know better from God's Word. As you read, we are told that Jonah was a real person. His name means "dove." His father's name was Amittai, meaning "true" or "faithful." He lived during the reign of Jeroboam II, the fourteenth king of Israel. Jonah was a prophet (2 Kings 14:25; Luke 11:29–30). What is a prophet? Prophets were messengers of God, sent to peoples and places with God's Word, often to warn them of judgment. Some had the gift of prophecy, like David, and others had the office or job of a prophet. Jonah was one of these. So were Samuel, Isaiah, and Ezekiel.

Now, let's write down your latest findings about Jonah: (1) name means "dove," (2) son of Amittai, (3) a prophet. Be sure to include the Scripture references. Jonah and God are the main characters in this book. What else do we know of Jonah? Well, he was a Jew, a very patriotic Jew, as we will find out later. He was a Hebrew, as the Jews were then called. Jonah was the only Old Testament prophet whom God ever sent to the Gentiles. All other prophets were sent to the Jews, God's own people. Also he was the only prophet on record who ever refused to do as he was told.

The Call of Jonah, Jonah 1:1–2

On a day which started just like any other day but ended altogether differently, "The word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh the great city, and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me'" (Jonah 1:1–2). Now let us take this verse apart, into little bits and pieces, so that we might find those hidden treasures we are searching for. Just how the Word came to Jonah is kept a secret from us (Deut. 29:29). Before the Bible was completed, God spoke to His prophets and special chosen people in many ways—in dreams and visions, face to face, and even through angelic messengers. I guess we must wait until we are in heaven to ask Jonah for the details. However, when the Word came, it came as a command, "Arise, go to Nineveh."

What God Wants Me to Know

Does God have the right to order His people about? Of course He does. Jonah is God's servant, and a servant expects his master to tell him what to do. Also, there is none greater than God. He is the absolute Sovereign of the universe (Ps. 24:1; 47:7). He can do as He pleases (Ps. 135:6), and none can say to Him, "What hast Thou done?" (Dan. 4:35b). And that includes us! Today God's Word comes to us on the printed pages of the Bible. It is just as clear and true. We are not to question or doubt it (2 Tim. 3:16). God fully expects us to listen, to hear what He will say, to find out what He means, and to act upon it. Let me ask you, was there anything complicated or hard to

understand in the command God gave to Jonah? No, it was clear enough, “Arise, go to Nineveh” (Jonah 1:2a). Did Jonah know about the city of Nineveh? Indeed, he knew of it well. What sort of a place was it? We will find out all about it in our next lesson.

Lesson Review

The search for hidden treasures has taken man to many parts of the earth, sea, and sky, but where can we find the greatest treasures of all time? In God’s Word. Are these treasures revealed to both the unbeliever and the believer

alike? No, to believers only. Who must guide us on our search? The Holy Spirit. Where did we begin our search in God’s Word? In the Book of Jonah. Where was Jonah when God called him? In Gath-hepher. Where was he commanded to go? To Nineveh.

Memory Verse

“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.” (James 1:22)

LESSON TWO THE CALL AND REACTION OF JONAH

To begin with, we shall ‘excavate,’ at least in our imagination, the ruins of ancient Nineveh and reconstruct it to its former beauty. After that we will learn more about the two most important persons in this Book: God and Jonah. Are you ready? Then let’s be off to Nineveh!

Nineveh Described

Nineveh was the capital of the last Assyrian empire and the largest city in the world at that time. It was located on the eastern bank of the Tigris river. The Tigris river was one of the rivers that flowed through the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:14), and Daniel once had a vision at this river (Dan. 10:4). The Bible names Nimrod, the mighty, unbelieving king, as the founder of Nineveh (Gen. 10:8–11). This city was rediscovered and dug out during the years of 1847–1851 by Sir Austen Layard and others. The entire site has been excavated and proven to have been a great city indeed. Near the city is a mound of earth, called “Nebi Yunus,” the mound of the prophet Jonah. Some people believe that Jonah is actually buried not far from there.

Inside its walls, the city measured some three miles in length and one-and-a-half miles in width, but the outlying districts (like our suburbs) made the whole city thirty miles in length and ten miles in width. It must have been a marvelous sight, with its walls one hundred feet high and wide enough to allow four chariots to be driven upon it, side by side, a regular four-lane super highway atop a city wall. From that wall fifteen gates opened into the city proper. These were guarded by colossal figures of bulls and lions. Inside the city walls, glittering in the sunlight, stood a ziggurat, a great temple tower in the shape of a pyramid.

This was dedicated to their chief god, Nebo, the god of wisdom and literature. There were numerous temples besides this one in which the lesser gods, among them the fish-god, Dagon, were worshiped.

As great as the city of Nineveh was in wealth and splendor, it was even greater in wickedness. The Assyrians were a terribly cruel people. They tormented their captives in public, and put them to death in the most horrible ways. The Ninevites themselves, from the king in his 71-room palace with walls lined with slabs of beautifully sculptured alabaster, to the studious librarians working on a collection of 22,000 inscribed clay tablets, to the common man, lived a life of luxury and ease and never gave God one thought.

Does God know and care? Daily, around us, many cruel and terrible things happen—in our city, in our country, in the world. Often we think that some of these awful things just happen to people we have never heard of before. But when they happen to someone we know, we begin to think and ask questions. Especially if we do not know the doctrines of the Word of God, we may ask, “If there really is a God, why does He allow all this suffering? Why does He allow awful things to happen? Does He not care? Does He not know?” Now, if we study the Word as we should, we know that He knows, and we know that He cares. Let me prove it to you. Let’s read the following verses: “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13); “The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men; From His dwelling place He looks out On all the inhabitants of the earth, He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works. . . . Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, On

those who hope for His lovingkindness” (Ps. 33:13–15, 18); “The eyes of the LORD are in every place, Watching the evil and the good” (Prov. 15:3). He is not only sovereign, He is also omniscient, omnipresent, righteous, and just, and He will never let evil go unpunished. Looking down upon the people of Nineveh, God decided that because of their wickedness they were deserving of death. He would destroy them and their city. How do I know? These were the people to whom God was going to send Jonah with a message, and the message was, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown” (Jonah 3:4b).

Jonah's Reaction

Now you would think that Jonah would be more than happy to go and gloatingly tell the wicked Ninevites that God was going to wipe them out. The Assyrians had always been the hated enemies of the Hebrews. Imagine, he could go and rub it in that God was going to destroy them. Yet Jonah was anything but happy about God's command. Although Jonah would be warning the Ninevites of judgment to come, he would also be offering God's grace in salvation as an alternative.

In Romans 3:29 we read that God is not only the God of the Jews, but also the God of the Gentiles. To Jonah, the idea that the God of Israel should even consider being called the God of the hated Assyrians was especially distasteful. Another fact that troubled Jonah was that he knew from prophecy (Hosea 9:3), that some day God would use the Assyrians to discipline the disobedient Jews. So he reasoned something like this, “If I do not go to deliver the warning to the Ninevites, they would have no chance to know the way of salvation. If they do not turn to the Savior, God will certainly destroy them; and if they are destroyed, then surely the Hebrew people will be safe.”

However, God is not willing that any should perish, not even the wicked inhabitants of Nineveh (2 Pet. 3:9). Jonah knew this, as we see in Jonah 4:2b: “I knew,” he said, “that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness.” Jonah understood the love and grace of God. He knew that because God is love He always makes possible a way whereby His creatures may escape judgment. He understood from Isaiah 30:18 that God was ‘tapping His foot,’ as it were, waiting to pour out His grace. Yet Jonah hated the Ninevites so much he just could not stand to see that happen. Jonah had heard the Word, but he decided not to be a doer of the Word. In going his own way rather than that of God's guidance he deceived himself into thinking he could get away with disobedience (James 1:22b).

What God Wants Me to Know

Now, I ask you, could Jonah get away with disobedience? Can you as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ get away with it? Of course not. God knows what you are

doing and what you are thinking. If you think you can get away with disobedience, you are only kidding yourself, not God! God is eternal life (Ps. 90:2) and immutable. He never changes (Mal. 3:6a), never goes back on His word. He is “the same yesterday and today, *yes* and forever” (Heb. 13:8). In love, God disciplines His disobedient children (Heb. 12:6). Heed His Word! Heed His warnings, for He means what He says. This is an important discovery to make in your life!

What happens, say, if we ignore a warning such as a red traffic light? We get into all kinds of trouble, don't we? Anything from a traffic ticket to actually getting hurt. We can expect trouble for ignoring any sort of a warning, especially God's warnings. God knows only too well that most people will pay no attention to His warnings. Yet God warns, lovingly, faithfully. Remember how He warned the people in Noah's day of the flood that was to come (Gen. 6)? They ignored the warning. Only Noah and his family believed and escaped from that terrible destruction.

Do you remember how God warned Adam and Eve not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16–17)? God told them exactly what would happen, but Adam and Eve chose to ignore God's warning. They paid no attention to His Word and disobeyed. They chose instead to become sinners, and through them sin came into the world. Sin brought suffering, cruelty, sickness, and death. Adam's sinful ways, his sin nature, is passed down to all of us (Rom. 3:23; 5:12). As sinners, we are all guilty before God (Rom. 6:23a). Still, God loves us and warns us. His warning is found in many places in the Bible. Let's pick just one today, John 3:36: “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” Have you ever heard God's personal warning for you? If you have not before, you certainly have now. You, like Jonah, have become a hearer of the Word. The next step is to become a doer. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; 16:31). Do not deceive yourself into thinking that there is some other way to God. There is not (John 14:6).

Lesson Review

Let us refresh our memories by going over the discoveries we made thus far in the Book of Jonah. Let's open our large treasure chest and place in it the treasures we have found. How many of them can you remember? When did the events of the Book take place? About 782–753 B.C. Where was Jonah when God's Word came to him? In his hometown, Gath-hepher. Jonah was a Hebrew who lived during the reign of Jeroboam II, king of Israel. To what people was he sent? The Assyrians. To what city? Nineveh. How many days of grace was God willing to give the Ninevites? Forty days. Why did Jonah not want to take God's message to Nineveh? He knew that if they believed on the Lord, God would spare them. Also the Assyrians were the enemies of the Jews. God would later use them to

discipline His people, Israel, for their sins. Jonah knew well what God is like—do you?

Because God is righteous and just He always makes known His grace before His judgment. He always warns in love before He shows His wrath (John 3:16, 36). That is why He spoke in Person; that is why He sent His prophets (Jer. 7:13*b*); that is why He sent His Son (1 John 4:14). Jonah was to be God's messenger to the Ninevites (Jonah 1:2). If Jonah had responded as he should have, we could close our Bibles or else look for another subject to study. But he did not. Instead, he became the first and only prophet on record to have willfully disobeyed God's commission; yes, he even talked back to God. Let's read between the lines of Jonah 4:2 to see how Jonah's argument must have sounded. Jonah reminded God, "Didn't I

tell you, back home in Gath-hepher, that I knew all along your message would be a success, and that you wouldn't clobber the Ninevites at all? Why then go in the first place?" However, God had spoken, and God's Word is a command. Now it was up to Jonah either to do or not do as God had told him.

Memory Verse

"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." (James 1:22)

Chapter Eighteen

Ticket to Tarshish

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Ticket to Tarshish—Jonah 1:3–6

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: The Directive and Permissive Will of God
2. Lesson Two: The Overruling Will of God

C. Story Objective:

To bypass the road of obedience to divine guidance is to choose the toll road of divine discipline, on which the believer must invariably pay the fare. Once a believer has received definite guidance from God, whether by way of a direct command, as in the Old Testament, or through His Word, as in the Church Age, the believer is obliged to act. He can no longer plead ignorance. His response should be one of immediate obedience to the directive will of God (John 17:18; Acts 1:8; Rom. 10:14–15).

God's will for Jonah at this point stemmed from God's compassion for a world of lost sinners (2 Pet. 3:9). Love for the Lord, as well as concern for those who are lost, should be the motivating force in the life of God's servants (2 Cor. 5:14–15, 20). The believer must never forget that the saving grace of God extended to others was also extended to him.

Unhappily this is not always the case. Instead, there may be a questioning of God's judgment through excuses, delays, or willful disobedience. We see the last one in the lesson before us, as Jonah moves out of the directive will of God (Jonah 1:1–2), into His permissive will (Jonah 1:3), and finally meets the force of God's overruling will (Jonah

1:4–6). God never allows willful disobedience to go unpunished (Heb. 12:6). He lovingly exerts pressure and divine discipline to bring His erring child back to Himself (Heb. 12:10*b*).

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: controversy, forbearing, heathen, rebuke, supplication
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. God's will for the believer is declared in Jonah 1:2, then to Jonah, now to you.
 - 1) Arise, go!
 - 2) Declare the Gospel.
 - 3) Make clear that Christ is the issue.
 - 4) Obey God's Word.
 - b. God's will for the unbeliever is always salvation (2 Pet. 3:9).
 - c. State of Jonah's soul is dependent on his attitude.
 - d. Divine will of God: directive, permissive, overruling
 - e. Jonah's will opposes God's will (Jonah 1:3).
 - f. Map of Jonah's travels
 - g. The storm, first of ten miracles (Jonah 1:4); shows God's sovereignty, omnipotence (Ps. 107:25–26; 135:6–7)
 - h. Discoveries for child's life
 - 1) A change of place is no solution for sin, confession is (Jonah 1:3; cf. 1 John 1:9).
 - 2) Disobedient? Count on discipline (Heb. 12:6).
 - 3) Pray before you act!
 - 4) Sin bars prayer (Ps. 66:18).

E. *Source Book* Keywords: divine discipline, divine guidance, essence of God (sovereignty), Jonah, prayer

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: map of Jonah's travels

2. Games, Songs, Worksheets

3. Memory Verse: "Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin." (James 4:17)

4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE

THE DIRECTIVE AND PERMISSIVE WILL OF GOD

How often have you done the exact opposite of what you were told? When you found out you did not get away with it and were in for discipline, did you try to talk your way out of it? Or did you take the discipline that was coming to you? More often than not, we try to justify ourselves. We come up with a long string of explanations and excuses, like, "Really, I started to—BUT," or, "I would have—BUT," or just plain, "Yes, BUT!"

Let's look at that little word "but" as used in the Bible. You have learned in school that "but" is a conjunction of contrast. It can be used in a good sense or in a bad sense. When it speaks of God, it is always used in a good sense, mostly showing that God stepped in, in a marvelous and unexpected way. "But" is used in a good sense when speaking of believers in fellowship who stand out in contrast to the wickedness of the world around them, as did Noah (Gen. 6:8), or Stephen (Acts 7:55). It may well be used of you and of me. It is used in a bad sense of Jonah, in Jonah 1:3, or of any other believer who knowingly goes against the will of God and is therefore out of fellowship. Let's pick up Jonah where we last left him, in his room in Gath-hepher, some 2,800 years ago, and continue our search for more of the deep and hidden treasures of God's Word.

God commanded Jonah to "Arise, go to Nineveh" (Jonah 1:2a). This is the directive will of God, which is said to be "good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:2). Jonah understood perfectly well what God wanted him to do. But to him the job was most distasteful. So distasteful, in fact, that Jonah had only one thought—to separate himself as far as possible from the path God had marked out for him. You would think that anyone knowing as much doctrine as Jonah knew would also know that to disobey God means certain divine discipline. Why then did he disobey? It seems that Jonah must have considered this matter and preferred discipline from God to the salvation of his hated enemies.

God's directive will regarding His plan of salvation has not changed. The will of God for the believer is the same, then and now: "Arise, go" and declare the Gospel, making the issue clear. Really, it is not a matter of wanting or not

wanting to, but a matter of obedience to God's command (Acts 1:8). And what is God's will for the unbeliever? That he might come to a personal knowledge of Christ and accept Him as Savior (2 Pet. 3:9).

Jonah's Soul

For as long as it took Jonah to make up his mind, he remained in the directive will of God. But while a prophet is a servant of the Most High God, he is not a robot. He has volition, that is, a God-given free will, to serve God or refuse to serve Him.

The real Jonah is his soul. For the time being we will be 'soul-searchers' and dig into Jonah's innermost being. Jonah's soul has self-consciousness, mentality, volition, and a conscience. He has a good knowledge of Bible doctrine, and had Jonah chosen the way God intended, doctrine would be in control of every part of his soul. In his self-consciousness, his personality, he would be aware of his place in God's will and plan. In his mentality, the thinking part of his soul, he would look at life from the divine viewpoint and appreciate God's grace toward the Ninevites. His volition would concentrate on doing the will of God. His conscience would measure the whole situation according to God's standards. If Jonah had obeyed God, his sin nature would have had no hold on him and all systems would have been "GO." But were they? Far from it! Instead, all systems were "FLEE!"

The Will of Jonah

Look at the first two words of Jonah 1:3, "But Jonah." The will of Jonah opposed the will of God. His decision was made because of misguided patriotism. Jonah disobeyed God's will, thinking he would spare his nation a future invasion of the Assyrians (Hosea 9:3). God's plan for the Jews had always been that they were to take His Word and message of salvation to the nations surrounding them. If they failed to take them the Word, their enemies would come upon them with the sword. Now, do not

misunderstand. It is good and right to love one's country and to be patriotic. But love of God must always come before love of country. If you truly love the Lord, you will want to obey Him. John 14:15 says, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." In obeying God and proclaiming His plan of salvation you will do the best for your country.

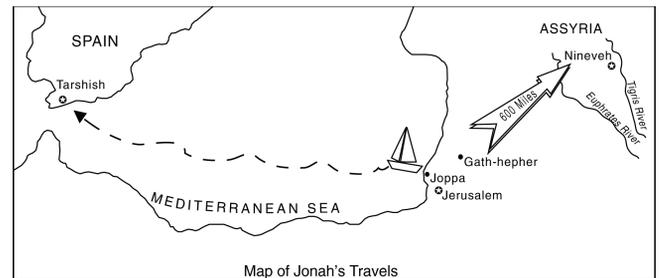
ALL SYSTEMS GO	JONAH'S SOUL	ALL SYSTEMS FLEE
GOD'S DIRECTIVE WILL: DOCTRINE PLUS (+) APPLICATION		GOD'S PERMISSIVE WILL: DOCTRINE MINUS (-) APPLICATION
Knows he is in the will and plan of God	SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS (PERSONALITY)	Sees himself as a great hero; lack of humility
Uses divine viewpoint and appreciates God's grace	MENTALITY (THINKING)	Uses human viewpoint
Desires to do God's will; sin nature not in control	VOLITION (DECIDER)	Desires to do his own will; sin nature in control
Applies God's standards to all situations	CONSCIENCE (STANDARD)	Has forgotten God's standards

The next four words of Jonah 1:3 tell us that Jonah "rose up to flee." God had said, "Arise, go" (Jonah 1:2), and Jonah did arise. But instead of going, he fled. Let's 'soul-search' again and dig into Jonah's soul where all systems were "FLEE." In his self-consciousness, he possibly saw himself as the great hero who would go down in history for saving his nation and giving his own life to God's discipline. In his mentality, he looked at life from the human viewpoint. He was more afraid of the power of men than of the power of God. He thought the Ninevites deserved destruction, not grace. He was filled with hatred for the people of Nineveh. He thought only of himself and of Israel. His volition said "no" to God's will and put his own will above God's. The Lord Jesus said to His heavenly Father, "Yet not My will, but Thine be done" (Luke 22:42), but Jonah showed God, "Yet not Thy will, but MINE." In his conscience, he had forgotten that once God had offered him the same grace. In disobedience, Jonah's sin nature was in control of his soul as he acted without God. Although Jonah turned his back on God, God did not turn His back on Jonah (2 Tim. 2:13).

The Permissive Will of God

"But Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. So he went down to Joppa, found a ship which was going to Tarshish, paid the fare, and went down into it to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD" (Jonah 1:3). Let's pinpoint Jonah's location on the map. Jonah is still at Gath-hepher. Even before he leaves his room and closes the door behind him, he is already out of fellowship. He has started on a downward path. He has

sinned knowingly, "Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17).



We read that Jonah fled "from the presence of the LORD." Jonah, however, was not kidding himself. He knew that God is omniscient and omnipresent (Ps. 139:7-12; Jer. 23:24). He was not trying to run away from God, rather from the job God had asked him to do. Jonah would rather risk losing his office of prophet and put as many miles as possible between himself and his destination than obey God. Nineveh was about 600 miles to the east of Gath-hepher, which was a long way in those days. Jonah would go in the very opposite direction. He was on his way to Joppa.

What God Wants Me to Know

While Jonah is on his way to Joppa, we want to stop just long enough to dig out some lessons to treasure in our own lives. What personal discoveries have we made?

(1) A change of place is no solution or way out of sin. If you are a believer out of fellowship you will be just as miserable in one place as in another, as Jonah soon discovered. But with your sins confessed (1 John 1:9), you can be happy no matter where you happen to be!

(2) If you disobey and let sin continue without rebounding, you can count on discipline. If you have discipline coming, accept it from God as from a loving Father (Heb. 12:6). Thank Him for loving you enough to care what you are going to turn out to be like! God can only discipline His children this side of heaven. Once we get to heaven we will be perfect and need no correction.

In contrast, the lake of fire awaits the unbeliever for all eternity. You have learned that God warns in grace before He punishes in wrath. Shall we turn to John 3:36 for one more look? "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." If you discover that God is warning you personally, why not heed His warning today?

Lesson Review

Before we go on to the next part of our story, we want to make sure that you have understood what you were taught thus far. We have seen the clashing of the wills of

God and Jonah. Why did God allow Jonah to go against His will? Why does He allow us to go against His will? God gave us free will that we may choose whether to serve Him or not. He does not want robots, but children who love Him and want to please Him. God allowed Jonah to disobey, but Jonah must suffer the consequences. Where did Jonah go instead of Nineveh? To Joppa.

Memory Verse

“Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin.” (James 4:17)

LESSON TWO THE OVERRULING WILL OF GOD

Once more our search takes us to an ancient city, but one which is still very much in existence today. Joppa is now Tel Aviv, the busy, modern harbor city in Israel. Joppa was a large port even in the days of King Solomon (2 Chron. 2:16). By the way, it was in Joppa that the Lord showed Peter the vision of the sheet containing unclean animals, and through that vision Peter learned that God was pleased to be the God of both Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 3:29). As you know, Peter obeyed God’s order to take His plan of salvation to Cornelius. Joppa was also a well-known seaport where ships of many nations came to transport ore. It was located about thirty miles northwest of Jerusalem.

Here it was that Jonah headed for the nearest ‘ticket office,’ most likely the waterfront where the captains, seamen, merchants, and longshoremen of that day hung out. Is it not interesting to see God at work? He could have easily blocked Jonah’s path, but He did not. As a matter of fact, God had a Phoenician mining vessel waiting and ready to sail to faraway southern Spain. He allowed Jonah to purchase his ticket and get aboard. “How convenient, what luck,” Jonah must have thought. But Jonah’s ticket to Tarshish was no guarantee that he would ever reach that port. I doubt seriously that Jonah ever suspected God’s hand in all this, nor did he realize that he had only begun to ‘pay the fare.’ Make no mistake, when we get out of line, we will pay for it in some way or another (Heb. 12:6).

Jonah had been a hearer of the Word, but he had not become a doer (James 2:22). He was deceiving himself, thinking that all was well after all. Galatians 6:7 warns, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.” Another warning is found in Isaiah 45:9a: “Woe to *the one* that quarrels with his Maker.” Watch it, Jonah! Watch it, believer! That warning is applicable to you and to me. We struggle with God whenever our will goes against God’s will. And you

might as well find out now that God always has the last word.

Now let’s read Jonah 1:4–5a: “And the LORD hurled a great wind on the sea and there was a great storm on the sea so that the ship was about to break up. Then the sailors became afraid, and every man cried to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea to lighten *it* for them.” In our search for treasures, we are about to discover the first of ten miracles to place in our large treasure chest as we watch God go into action. From here to the end of the Book of Jonah, we have a record of Jonah’s loss of fellowship and controversy with God. We see God’s sovereignty as He does what He pleases in hurling the storm on the sea (Ps. 135:6–7). We see His omnipotence. Just look at Psalm 107:25–26a: “For He spoke and raised up a stormy wind, Which lifted up the waves of the sea. They rose up to the heavens, they went down to the depths.” No, this was no ordinary storm. It was a miracle worked by God.

The “stormy wind” was “fulfilling His word” (Ps. 148:8). The ship was in distress. The Phoenician captain and crew, who were expert, professional seamen, were terrified. We find a perfect description of their panic in Psalm 107:26b–27: “Their soul melted away in *their* misery. They reeled and staggered like a drunken man, And were at their wits’ end.” All seemed lost. They must send an SOS (the international distress signal for help) to a power greater than themselves, but to whom? These were heathens, unbelievers who knew no better than to turn to their false gods. First, they prayed for deliverance; next, they went into action. Their valuable cargo was abandoned, thrown overboard, and we are reminded of the words in Job 2:4b: “Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.”

In a way, we must admire these heathens. While they go about their job the only way they know, they go about it in the right order. First they pray, then they act. How often do

we come up against a storm in our lives? Sometimes it might be a storm of our own making; other times it might be a storm sent by God to test our faith. What do we do? We come unglued! First we try everything we can think of, and then when all has failed we turn to God and ask Him to get us out of this mess. Shouldn't we go the route of Philippians 4:5–6 first? "Let your forbearing *spirit* be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Certainly, we can learn a lesson from these seamen. What lesson, you may wonder? Pray before you act.

Suddenly the crew and captain paused. They had temporarily forgotten about their passenger. They were responsible for his life. If they, as professional sailors, were frightened out of their wits, how must he feel? "But Jonah had gone below into the hold of the ship, lain down, and fallen sound asleep" (Jonah 1:5*b*). Jonah was not 'faith-resting' it as you might think. He was still out of fellowship (Eph. 5:14). He was sleeping a sleep of despair and discouragement (Ps. 31:10*b*). He was simply exhausted and for the moment had no idea of the terrible danger in which they found themselves. He did not hear the howling storm; he did not feel the tossing of the ship. He never heard the creaking and groaning of the wooden beams as the vessel came shuddering down on top of yet another mountainous wave, until someone shook him awake.

The captain had come down into Jonah's cabin and stood over him, saying, "How is it that you are sleeping? Get up, call on your god. Perhaps *your* god will be concerned about us so that we will not perish" (Jonah 1:6*b*)! What a terrible shame on Jonah! God was using an unbeliever to shame Jonah into praying. It seems that Jonah was just as indifferent about the fate of those around him as he was about the Ninevites. Did he not care?

Jonah's Dilemma

Jonah was in an embarrassing situation of his own making, and a dangerous one at that. Here he was, the only believer aboard. He had access to the throne of grace—normally, that is, to appeal to God for help. But Jonah's prayers would go no higher than the deck of the ship. Why? Jonah had unconfessed sin in his life. Psalm 66:18 tells us that "If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear [me]." If he prayed in order to please the captain and crew, it was a useless prayer, and Jonah must have squirmed uncomfortably at that thought. Of course, there was a way out. What way is that? Yes, 1 John 1:9. But Jonah was not prepared to give in just yet. God must bring more pressure to bear on His runaway prophet. It was going to take more than a spoken rebuke from an unbeliever before Jonah would come to his senses.

Does unconfessed sin stand between you and God? Perhaps you would like to pray. Do your part, confess your sins, and God will do His part, cleanse and forgive you

(1 John 1:9). As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have direct access to God the Father when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. You and I, as God's children, can come to Him any time of day or night to talk matters over with Him, to ask for help in time of need (Heb. 4:16), and be confident of being heard and answered (Matt. 21:22). Do you think many believers take advantage of God's readiness to listen and offer Him praise and thanksgiving (Heb. 13:15)? No! They are far more likely to remember to pray only when they are in a tight spot, like Jonah and the sailors.

What God Wants Me to Know

We have been talking about a ticket to Tarshish in this lesson, a ticket to disaster for which Jonah must pay dearly. But now, let's talk about another ticket, a ticket to heaven. Would you like to have a ticket to heaven and with it God's guarantee of arrival? How much does it cost? Nothing! It is absolutely free—to you. But it cost the Son of God everything. He paid dearly with His perfect, sinless life, for the sins of the whole world were laid on Him. The penalty for sin is death (Rom. 6:23*a*). We are all sinners (Rom. 3:23), but Jesus Christ paid the penalty for all of us. He is therefore free to offer us a gift, the gift of eternal life through faith in Him (Rom. 6:23*b*). "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16*a*). He sent Him to spare us eternal punishment in the lake of fire. The Son of God loves you. He died in your place, and now God is waiting for you to simply accept His offer of salvation.

Jesus Christ holds the ticket to heaven as He says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (John 14:6). The Ninevites had forty days of grace, which was the time God allowed them before punishment. Do you know how long you might have to make up your mind? None of us knows. That is why it is important not to put off making your decision. The gift is yours free of charge. You are unable to work or pay for it. None of us deserves the gift of salvation in the least (Eph. 2:8–9). It can be yours right now in exchange for a simple act of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Consider this carefully. What is your destination in eternity?

Lesson Review

We left a Phoenician mining vessel in distress upon the stormy waters of the Mediterranean Sea. She was heading for Tarshish in southern Spain. The ship carried one paying passenger—Jonah. What was the present state of Jonah's soul? All systems were "FLEE." He had decided to be a quitter, shirking his responsibility to God because he hated his enemies. Amazingly enough, it looked as though he might get away with it. In fact, God had made all the necessary arrangements for Jonah. The ship was ready to sail, a berth was waiting for him, and all that Jonah had to do

was to get aboard. But while Jonah slept, exhausted from running and despair, God's overruling will went into action.

The power of God's overruling will can be seen in the words of Psalm 107:23–24. "Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters; They have seen the works of the LORD, And His wonders in the deep." And what wonders these men were about to see! Miracle number one, God hurled a storm into the ocean (Jonah 1:4). The captain and crew realized that this was no ordinary storm. They were terrified. We read in Psalm 107:26–27 that the waves mounted up to heaven and returned again into the depth. The seamen reeled back and forth like drunken men and were terrified and at their wit's end. Their prayers had not helped, neither had their efforts to

change the ballast and balance of the ship by ridding it of her cargo. If anything, the storm had become worse. It was then that they remembered the safety of their passenger. The captain went to awaken him and shamed him into prayer. Jonah found himself in an embarrassing and dangerous situation. But worse was yet to come.

Memory Verse

"Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do, and does not do it, to him it is sin." (James 4:17)

Chapter Nineteen

Chance or Providence?

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Chance or Providence?—Jonah 1:7–17a

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: Divine Guidance and Casting Lots
2. Lesson Two: The Importance of Rebound and Orientation to Grace

C. Story Objective:

The lesson before us has more than one aim in view. Because of its scope we cannot go into detail on every one of these aims, but we must be content to use the pertinent principles and make the most obvious applications as we deal with the following discoveries:

- (1) Three new miracles: casting of lots, a calm sea, and a prepared fish.
- (2) A lesser known facet of divine guidance during the pre-canon period (Prov. 16:33).
- (3) The amazing formula by which God can and does work all things “together for good” for His own called ones (Rom. 8:28).
- (4) Jonah seen through the eyes of unbelievers; our own reflection as having become a “spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men” (1 Cor. 4:9b).
- (5) The importance of confessing known sins (Ps. 66:18) and orienting to the grace of God (Ps. 103:8–14).
- (6) There is no place for human works in the plan of God (Titus 3:5).
- (7) Three more rebukes against Jonah, one verbal and two silent: the crew’s rebuke (Jonah 1:10); the

crew’s silent effort to spare Jonah’s life (Jonah 1:13); the obedience of a fish (Jonah 1:17).

We must ask ourselves, “Do I fulfill my responsibility as God’s messenger on this earth?” Or must God bring unusual circumstances to pass because sin has made us deaf toward God and dumb toward man?

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: appease, lot, predicament, providence, rebuke, scapegoat
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Guidance (Jonah 1:7 with Prov. 16:33)
 - 1) Before the Bible was completed: casting of lots
 - a) To settle disputes (Prov. 18:18)
 - b) To select a scapegoat (Lev. 16:8–10)
 - c) To divide the Promised Land (Num. 26:52–56)
 - d) To detect crime (Joshua 7:14)
 - e) To select invading forces (Judg. 20:9)
 - f) To divide the spoils of war (Obad. 11; Nah. 3:10)
 - g) For the robe of Jesus (John 19:24)
 - h) To choose priestly duty (Luke 1:9)
 - i) To find a suitable day (Esther 9:24–26)
 - j) To find the guilty man on ship (Jonah 1:7)
 - 2) After the Bible was completed: the Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16–17); the filling of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 20); knowledge of doctrine
 - b. Importance of rebound (Jonah 1:9–10 with 1 John 1:9)

- 1) Warning: “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper” (Prov. 28:13a).
 - 2) Grace: “But he who confesses and forsakes *them* will find compassion (Prov. 28:13b).
 - 3) Name sins to God, not to man (1 John 1:9).
- c. Miracles in Jonah 1
- 1) Storm (Jonah 1:4)
 - 2) Lots (Jonah 1:7)
 - 3) Calm sea (Jonah 1:15)
 - 4) Fish (Jonah 1:17)
- d. Obedient animals (Jonah 1:17)
- 1) Ox and donkey (Isa. 1:3)
 - 2) Donkey (Num. 22:25–33)
 - 3) Colt (Luke 19:30, 35)
 - 4) Fish (Jonah 1:17)
 - 5) Ant, rock badger, locust, lizard (Prov. 30:24–28)

- e. Discoveries for child’s life
- 1) God works in my life (Rom. 8:28).
 - 2) Watch out! You are being watched! (1 Cor. 4:9b)
 - 3) Confession pays (Prov. 28:13).
 - 4) Obey God’s way (John 3:36).

E. *Source Book* Keywords: ambassador, animals, divine guidance, human good

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: none
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: “For nothing will be impossible with God.” (Luke 1:37)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE DIVINE GUIDANCE AND CASTING LOTS

Come aboard with me! Our search for God’s treasures in this chapter will be made on the high seas. Pretend, if you can, that you are a detective, as we try to reconstruct the events as they happened. Forget that you already know the outcome, and keep a record of your discoveries as we go along.

The scene of our search is the deck of the mining vessel that is being tossed about somewhere in the Mediterranean Sea. All hands are on deck doing what they possibly can, or else hanging on to the railings so as not to be swept overboard. What are the sailors shouting to each other above the howling winds and the raging seas? We piece their words together and find that they are convinced that someone aboard this ship has brought upon them the wrath or anger of the gods. But who might that be? They dare not accuse one of their crew falsely. “And each man said to his mate, ‘Come, let us cast lots so we may learn on whose account this calamity *has struck us*’” (Jonah 1:7a). Are these seamen superstitious? Yes, they trust that their gods will guide the ‘throwing of dice’ and so take the accusation out of their own hands. Are they not gambling with human lives, leaving the outcome to chance?

I want you to make an imaginary side trip into a courtroom. The judge, jury, prosecuting and defense attorneys, the accused and the accusers are all assembled, and the case has been presented. Now the jury is ready to discuss

the case and settle it. But instead of discussing the case, they throw dice to see who is guilty. “Impossible,” you would shout. “That’s an unfair way to settle a case.” And in our day and time you would be right. Civil and criminal cases are to be handled according to known law. The jury’s decision must be guided by the rules of law and by impartiality or fairness. A serious solution by casting lots would be out of the question today, although we sometimes still use the general idea. Let me give you one example: If you have ever drawn straws, then you will understand the idea of casting lots a little better.

In the days of the Bible casting lots was not a gambling matter. It was a serious way of settling arguments and questions which were to be made with absolute impartiality. Heathens, as well as believers, used this method, and in doing so they committed the solving of their problems to a higher power. God permitted the casting of lots—yes, even commanded it, and God is no gambler. Our treasure hunt takes us back to some of the instances listed in the Word of God when lots were cast.

Casting of Lots in the Bible

Let’s begin with Proverbs 18:18, where the reason for and most common use of casting lots is given. “The lot puts an end to contentions, And decides between the

mighty.” Once the lot pointed to some specific person or thing, that decision was considered final and binding. It was accepted as God’s will in the matter according to Proverbs 16:33: “The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.” The people said, “We may throw the lot, but God makes it fall the way it does.” And God honored this system.

For instance, in Leviticus 16:8–10 we read that by God’s order the scapegoat was one of the two goats chosen by lot on the Day of Atonement. How were lots cast, you wonder? The heathen used sticks, arrows, or pebbles, which were marked or of a different color. The Jews used pebbles. Thus, they would decide beforehand which pebble stood for the scapegoat and which stood for the Lord’s goat. Then the pebbles were shaken in a container, or in the hands, and thrown down on the ground or in the lap. The lot which pointed out the Lord’s goat marked that goat to be the sacrifice. The other goat was sent off into the wilderness, symbolically laden with the sins of the people, never to return.

Lots were cast when the Promised Land was divided among the tribes of Israel (Num. 26:52–56). Most of you know the story of Achan’s sin of theft which caused the armies of Israel to be defeated at the battle of Ai (Joshua 7:1, 5–6). Only God and Achan knew of Achan’s guilt. How could Joshua ever find one criminal among all the tribes of Israel? Yes, you guessed it, by lot (Joshua 7:14, 18). Before an invasion, the members of the invading Israelite forces were selected by lot (Judg. 20:9). In heathen lands, the spoils of war, prisoners, as well as loot, were generally divided among the victors by lot (Obad. 11; Nah. 3:10). Remember how the Roman soldiers sat at the foot of the cross and cast lots for the robe which had belonged to the Lord Jesus Christ (John 19:24)?

In later years, when the Temple still stood in Jerusalem, the duties and office of the Levitical priesthood was determined by lot (Luke 1:9). A Jewish festival was named after the casting of lots—Purim, or the Feast of Lots. The Jews of Esther’s day were to be destroyed on a day chosen by lot. The feast of Purim celebrates their deliverance from death (Esther 9:24–26). In 1884, when archaeologists dug up the ruins of the palace in Susa, they found one of these “Pur” (lots) which had been used for casting of lots.

Last but not least, we have the casting of lots in Jonah 1:7. Remember, the sailors wanted to find out “on whose account this calamity *has struck*” them. “So they cast lots and the lot fell on [pointed to] Jonah.” This was not chance, it was miracle number two. God had so arranged it, for God moves in the affairs of man with infinite care and love, ever watching, guiding and, if need be, overruling according to His perfect will. How does God guide His own people today? By lot? No, through His written and completed Word (Ps. 119:105, 130; 2 Tim. 3:16–17), the filling of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 16:13), and the Bible doctrine in our soul. But before the Bible was

completed God had chosen this means—the lot—to force the hand of Jonah and bring him to his senses.

The Formula of Romans 8:28

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God” (Rom. 8:28a). Here is a reminder for you: when you love God and learn His ways, whatever comes into your life is taken by God and comes out “for good.” I wonder if Jonah knew that? For Jonah, the grace of God had already begun to work all things “together for good.” Watch Him at work! He will take the following ingredients—a runaway prophet, a portion of His Word contained in a testimony, a heathen captain and crew, a stormy sea—mix them together and come up with something good. What will the results be? A prophet who will see the importance of rebound and open his mouth once more to witness for his Lord, and a calm sea.

At the moment, all eyes are fixed on Jonah as the sailors fire question after question at him (Jonah 1:8). What caused his guilt? What is his occupation? Where did he come from? What is his nationality? Treasure seekers, you should be able to answer every one of these questions!

“I am a Hebrew, and I fear the LORD God of heaven who made the sea and the dry land,” Jonah answered (Jonah 1:9). He then gives an account of the whole story. The sailors listen in amazement, and as they listen God the Holy Spirit begins to work on them. This man, Jonah, claims to have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ, Creator of heaven and earth, Creator of this stormy sea (Jonah 1:9; John 1:3; Col. 1:16). He claims to be God’s servant, a prophet of the Most High, and yet he dared to go against God. They shake their heads, “How could you do this?” These unbelievers in the midst of the storm are seeing a show of God’s power and omniscience, and they are “extremely frightened.” They find it hard to understand how Jonah would dare to disobey God. They watch him and wonder.

What God Wants Me to Know

You and I as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are a “spectacle,” a regular show to those around us (1 Cor. 4:9b). Daily, the unbelieving world, angels, and fellow believers watch us. Often our actions speak louder than our words. Do our actions attract others, or do they turn them away? Since we are as different from those around us as was Jonah in his day, let us ask ourselves the same questions that were addressed to Jonah. Who are we? Ambassadors whom the Lord has appointed to represent Him (2 Cor. 5:20a). What do we do? The same as Jonah should have done—witness for our Lord (Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:20b). What country do we represent? True, we are citizens of the United States of America, but even better than that, we are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20). Who are our people? The Lord’s own. We are Christians, called by

His worthy Name (James 2:7b). Can we answer these questions confidently, unflinchingly, or must we hang our heads in shame like Jonah when we see ourselves through the eyes of an unbeliever? Do you speak up as you should? Or has sin made you deaf to God and silent toward man? All of us have failed and will fail the Lord at some time or other. But, like Jonah, to be cleansed and forgiven we need only to rebound (1 John 1:9).

What about the unbeliever? Is he being watched as well? Yes, especially at this very moment. If you are an unbeliever, who do you think is watching you? God knows who is and who is not an unbeliever, and He is watching. So are His angels. They are waiting eagerly, hopefully, to see whether you will accept the God and Creator of the universe as your own personal Savior. God's commandment is that "we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 3:23). Yet, God does not force you to obey Him any more than He forced Jonah. He will give you a choice. Why not decide to obey Him right now?

Lesson Review

Treasure seeker, have you noticed that up to this point in our lessons we have seen four interesting contrasts? (1) God told Jonah, "Arise, go!" But Jonah arose and fled (Jonah 1:2–3). (2) God said, "cry against" Nineveh (Jonah 1:2). But Jonah kept his mouth shut. (3) God wanted Jonah to do His will. But Jonah wanted his own way. (4) Jonah turned his back on God. But God did not forsake Jonah.

Memory Verse

"For nothing will be impossible with God."
(Luke 1:37)

LESSON TWO THE IMPORTANCE OF REBOUND AND ORIENTATION TO GRACE

Turn with me to Proverbs 28:13. "He who conceals his transgressions [sins] will not prosper, But he who confesses [rebounds] and forsakes [isolates or forgets] *them* will find compassion." Up to now Jonah certainly tried to conceal his disobedience. Things did not prosper for him, did they? Trying to cover up your sins is utterly foolish and will only bring misery. Even if others know nothing about your sins, God does, and He will most certainly discipline you.

Jonah admitted his wrongdoing to the sailors, but of course that did not get him back in fellowship with God. Jonah will eventually confess his sins to God and be in fellowship again, but he hasn't come to that place yet. God must apply some pressure before Jonah decides to rebound.

Isn't it wonderful that God always treats us in mercy when we finally own up and confess our sins? Just what is mercy? Mercy is grace in action; it is using God's grace in our lives. Every time we rebound, God treats us in grace and forgives us our sins. His grace attitude of forgiveness knows no limit, for "your sins are forgiven you for His name's [Christ's] sake" (1 John 2:12b).

Jonah had finished speaking. For a moment there was silence. "So they said to him, 'What should we do to you

that the sea may become calm for us?'" (Jonah 1:11). Their question shows that the sailors respect this prophet of God. He had caused the storm, now he must advise them what to do. Notice Jonah's answer. It is an answer that takes plenty of courage. It shows that he is beginning to wake up to his responsibility and to remember the grace of God, for he is willing to sacrifice himself so that these men might not die. "And he said to them, 'Pick me up and throw me into the sea. Then the sea will become calm for you, for I know that on account of me this great storm *has come upon you*'" (Jonah 1:12). Jonah knows his disobedience is sin and he is prepared to take the punishment. This is the right mental attitude. When Jonah does rebound, we will see how that allows God to show His mercy.

The sailors have their instructions from Jonah, but they refuse to act. They know that to throw Jonah into the stormy sea would practically be an act of murder. They would try to brave the storm and do all in their power to spare the life of the prophet. Courageously "the men rowed *desperately*," but to no avail (Jonah 1:13). When we think of the attitude and actions of the crew in comparison to those of Jonah, we must admit that they were excellent throughout. In fact, often the unbeliever will outdo the

believer in his behavior. These heathen sailors and their captain certainly did. But commendable as this was, it did no good. The storm only became worse. God was not appeased.

No Place for Human Good in God's Plan

Man's efforts can never please God. We might think that if we are just good enough and try hard enough and are sincere enough, God will accept us and allow us to go to heaven. Will He? Not any more than He allowed the sailors to bring the ship to land. Titus 3:5, Romans 4:4–5, Ephesians 2:8–9, and many other passages assure us that it is only by grace that we are saved through faith, never by anything we do. Unbelievers, standing before God at the Last Judgment, will be judged on the basis of their own works (Rev. 20:12–15). No one will be judged for his sins because Christ was judged on the cross for the sins of the entire world (1 John 2:2). We must come to God in God's way—through faith alone in Christ alone. And as we continue in our Christian life, we must use what God provides in grace to live in a way that is pleasing to Him.

Back to Jonah 1:14: "Then they called on the LORD and said, 'We earnestly pray, O LORD, do not let us perish on account of this man's life and do not put innocent blood on us; for Thou, O LORD, hast done as Thou hast pleased.'" The sailors have no choice now but to recognize God's sovereignty (Ps. 135:6). The storm was God's doing, and it was useless to fight against Him. But they did not want Jonah's God to blame them or punish them for throwing Jonah into the sea. Somehow they knew that would be murder punishable by death (Gen. 9:5–6; Ex. 21:12; Lev. 24:17; Rom. 13:4). But seeing no way out of their predicament, they called upon the Lord (as Jonah had called Him in verse 9) not to blame them and threw Jonah overboard (Jonah 1:15), expecting him to drown. But wonder of wonders, God worked the third miracle. In an instant the sea stood as still as glass. "Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows" (Jonah 1:16). Now the amazed sailors see again the omnipotence of God. So afraid were they for their own lives, they offered God a sacrifice, probably of something they had aboard ship. They even made some promises to God which they intended to keep when they got to shore. Heathen people, very superstitious and accustomed to offering sacrifices to their gods to appease their anger, figured Jonah's God was no exception.

Summary in Psalm 107:28–30

Now we must do some digging back in Psalm 107, where we have previously read verses 23–27, about God's "wonders in the deep" and those who see them on their ocean voyages. We have read about the terror of storms at sea and the despair of the seamen. Now we will read of their deliverance: "Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, And He brought them out of their distresses. He

caused the storm to be still, So that the waves of the sea were hushed. Then they were glad because they were quiet; So He guided them to their desired haven" (Ps. 107:28–30). For these sailors, the "desired haven" was Tarshish. That takes care of ship, captain, and crew. And what a tale they will have to tell! But what about Jonah?

Miracle Number Four

God still loved Jonah as much as ever. True, Jonah had deserved death, and you and I might have said, "Serves him right." But thank God, He does not give us what we deserve (Ps. 103:10)! We should have been long dead if that were the case! No, if God was willing to save the wicked Ninevites, He was not going to abandon Jonah. For the moment, I want you to forget how God saved Jonah's life. Instead, I ask you, how would you have gone about it? If you had written the Book of Jonah, would you have rushed Superman to the rescue? Would you have made the captain turn around to pick up Jonah now that the sea was calm? Would you have brought a passing ship to the scene and thrown Jonah a life preserver? Or would you have let him find a plank and swim ashore?

God's ways are not ours (Isa. 55:8b). His ways are past finding out (Rom. 11:33). He does not have to use ordinary ways and means. He worked a miracle, the fourth miracle we have seen so far (after the storm, the casting of lots, and the calm sea). God prepared a great fish. What kind of a fish was it? A whale? A shark? We don't know. In various translations of Matthew 12:40 we find the terms "whale," "great fish," and "sea monster," while the original Greek word actually means "a great sea monster," any sea monster in the form of a fish.

God caused the great fish to be in the right place at the right time. Since God, the Lord Jesus Christ, created everything, it is no problem for Him to prepare a great fish; nor is it difficult for His omnipotence to direct a great fish to the vicinity of a certain ship, even in a storm. And so it follows that neither was it a great problem for that fish to latch onto Jonah as he went overboard.

The great fish swallowed up Jonah (Jonah 1:17a). Swallowed Jonah? "Impossible," some may say. Is it really? Luke 1:37 says "Nothing will be impossible with God." Do you know what it takes to accept a miracle? F–A–I–T–H. Miracles just cannot be explained away. They have to be "swallowed" by faith! Do you believe Genesis 1:1, that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" out of absolutely nothing and in an instant of time? If you cannot, how can you believe anything else in the Word of God? That is a miracle! Do you believe that God came down to earth as the God-man to save you from sin (1 John 4:14)? That is a miracle you *must* believe to be saved! Do you believe that you can have eternal life simply for the taking? That is a miracle! Certainly the fish did not seem to think that God asked of him the "impossible."

What a lesson we all have to learn, and to think that a ‘dumb animal’ can teach us!

The Obedience of a ‘Dumb Animal’

The fish did as he was told. He came to the exact spot and swallowed up Jonah. Often so-called dumb animals are smarter than human beings. Think of Isaiah’s statement in Isaiah 1:3. “An ox knows its owner, And a donkey its master’s manger, *But* Israel does not know, My people do not understand.” Think of the little donkey that carried the Lord Jesus into Jerusalem (Luke 19:30, 35). He had never been ridden but did not kick, nor buck, nor struggle. Think of the talking donkey, rebuking the prophet Balaam (Num. 22:25–33). Think of the four little things upon the earth which are mentioned in Proverbs 30:24–28 and said to be “exceedingly wise.” What little things, you wonder? The ant, the rock badger, the locust, and the lizard. Just how wise are they? “The ants are not a strong folk, But they prepare their food in the summer; The badgers are not mighty folk, Yet they make their houses in the rocks; The locusts have no king, Yet all of them go out in ranks; The lizard you may grasp with the hands, Yet it is in kings’ palaces” (Prov. 30:25–28). My, how we can learn from them!

And what have we here in our story? Another rebuke, as the fish obediently swallows Jonah. We have seen Jonah being rebuked three times in this lesson. First, by the sailors’ question, “How could you do this?” Next, by their silent efforts to spare his life when he did not even care what happened to all of Nineveh, and now by a fish. Do you think he got the point? Do you get it? It is simply this: “Listen, learn, and obey.” Well, Jonah is out of sight, but he is not out of our minds, nor out of God’s mind. We must leave him for the time being but will pick him up on our next search for hidden treasures, which we hope you have enjoyed thus far.

What God Wants Me to Know

In closing, let us go back to a question which the sailors asked Jonah when their lives were in danger, “What should we do to you that the sea may become calm for us?” (Jonah 1:11). Doesn’t that remind you of a similar question? A desperate jailor, fearful for his life and safety, once asked Paul, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). Paul had an answer which promised safety for time and eternity. “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved” (Acts 16:31a). If you are without the Lord Jesus Christ you are as lost in sin as was the ship in the storm. Anyone who rejects God’s so-great salvation will experience the storm of God’s wrath for all eternity (John 3:36). But there is hope for you from the Captain of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:10, KJV).

God the Father prepared for us, not a fish, but something far greater—the cross. On that cross, the Lord Jesus

died for our sins and condemned all human good—that is, all our efforts and works that are not good enough for salvation (Rom. 8:3). Instead, God offers you the work of His Son, His mercy and pardon, His saving power, this very minute. Do as He says, accept the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior. Let Him save you that you, too, might serve Him.

Lesson Review

Jonah’s troubles started when he refused to take God’s message to Nineveh, a city of at least 600,000 inhabitants. God dispatched the heavenly police force, in the form of a storm, to chase His runaway prophet. Then in the casting of the lots God pointed an accusing finger at the guilty man aboard, and Jonah found out that there was no getting away from God. He was ready to surrender and had himself thrown into the raging sea. He was convinced by now that he must pay for his disobedience in full. He thought that God would surely require his life—or would He? Jonah had disappeared from sight. The waves had closed above his head and the sailors saw him no longer.

But Jonah did not know that a great fish had been prepared to come to his rescue. As he sank deeper and deeper, right to the very bottom of the ocean, he was fully conscious of all that happened. It was all a very terrifying experience. He thought he must certainly drown sooner or later or come to some other awful end. Then it all happened so fast. A huge sea monster darted toward him, his mouth gaping wide open like a great yawning cavern, with a row of sharp and pointed white teeth. In no time at all, Jonah found himself sucked into the fish (Jonah 1:17a). Little did he realize that he would spend the next three days and three nights in this most unusual surrounding and live to tell of it. Amazing, you say? Indeed so! Miracles are always amazing.

Memory Verse

“For nothing will be impossible with God.”
(Luke 1:37)

Chapter Twenty

Three Days and Nights

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Three Days and Nights—Jonah 1:17—2:10

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: Jonah's Discipline for Training and Blessing
2. Lesson Two: Deliverance In and From Trouble

C. Story Objective:

In this age of rationalism and materialism, when God and faith are scoffed, the Bible teacher's aim must be to firmly establish and nourish the believer in "the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:6). The believer must become oriented to grace and learn to rely moment by moment on our omniscient, omnipotent Lord (2 Tim. 1:12*b*), for those things which happen to him are allowed of God (Isa. 28:29). With God nothing shall be impossible (Luke 1:37), and God will either deliver the believer *in* trouble (Jonah 1:17) or *from* trouble (Ps. 107:28), according to His perfect plan.

With the discovery of two more miracles in this chapter, the preservation of Jonah in the fish (Jonah 1:17) and the deliverance of Jonah out of the fish (Jonah 2:10), we shall show the reality and nature of true miracles. We will also see that although God does lovingly discipline His children, this discipline becomes blessing after rebound (Job 5:17–18; Heb. 12:6*a*, 11*b*). When the believer confesses his sins to God the Father, his discipline may cease, diminish, or continue at the same intensity. Whatever suffering remains after rebound is designed for blessing rather than for cursing. Rebound restores the believer to fellowship with

God and reestablishes the 'hot line' of prayer to God's throne room (Ps. 66:18; 1 John 1:9).

In analyzing Jonah's prayer, we will find that it contains the basic ingredients of acceptable prayer—rebound, thanksgiving, and confident petition (Jonah 2:1–9). From our Lord's account in Matthew 12:38–41, we will learn how Jonah was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. And in closing, we will apply the solemn warning of our Lord and His description of a judgment scene to the life of the unsaved child.

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: supernatural
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Miracles
 - 1) Definition: unexplainable wonders done by God
 - 2) Miracles involving fish:
 - a) Jonah swallowed, preserved alive, and delivered (Jonah 1:17—2:10)
 - b) The Lord Jesus feeds 5,000 on 5 loaves and 2 fish with 12 basketfuls left over (Matt. 14:19–21)
 - c) Income tax money for Jesus and Peter found in a fish
 - d) Miracle catch breaks the nets and fills 2 boats
 - e) Peter and other disciples catch 153 large fish where none had been caught before
 - b. Discoveries for child's life; discipline (Heb. 12:5–13)

- c. Jonah's prayer (Jonah 2:1–9)
- 1) Included:
 - a) Rebound (Ps. 66:18)
 - b) Praise (Eph. 5:20)
 - c) Thanksgiving (1 Thess. 5:18)
 - d) Petition (Matt. 21:22)
 - 2) God's promise: deliverance (Ps. 50:15)
 - a) From trouble (Jonah 2:10b)
 - b) In trouble (1 Cor. 10:13)
 - 3) Quotations in Jonah's prayer:
 - a) Psalm 18:6; 120:1 (Jonah 2:2)
 - b) Psalm 42:7 (Jonah 2:3)
 - c) Psalm 31:22 (Jonah 2:4)
 - d) Psalm 69:1 (Jonah 2:5)
 - 4) Orientation to God's plan (Isa. 28:29)
- d. Jonah, a picture of Christ. Both were: from Galilee; put in an unusual place for three days and nights then brought back out; sent on a special mission.
- E. *Source Book* Keywords: Jonah, Last Judgment, miracles, prayer, promises, thanksgiving
- F. Activities:
1. Suggested Visuals: none
 2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
 3. Memory Verse: "And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me." (Ps. 50:15)
 4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE

JONAH'S DISCIPLINE FOR TRAINING AND BLESSING

Let us talk about the miracle of the fish swallowing Jonah. First of all, what is a miracle? It is a remarkable event or action that surpasses all known human or natural powers. Miracles cannot be explained away by man's reasoning. Man thinks a lot of himself and his ability to reason things out in his own mind; he prides himself on his knowledge and power and sees no need of God. In fact, he tries to put himself in God's place, and we can see the sad results of such foolishness all around us. Troubles and dangers are everywhere, but still man thinks he can handle it all by himself and do a good job of it. He has no use for the things of God, no use for the supernatural. If he cannot figure it out, he tries to explain it away. Unbelievers have tried to disprove every one of the miracles recorded in the Bible, yet all of the miracles in the Bible are real and should not be ignored.

People have come up with some incredible stories to explain away the miracle of Jonah in the fish. They say, "It was all a bad dream brought on by Jonah's bad conscience" or "Jonah was just an imaginative writer, but he never really expected us to believe his fish story." Or they say, "What really happened was this: Jonah was picked up by a ship with a huge fish ornament carved on its bow, but he was too dazed to recognize it for a ship" or "He landed on the dead body of a great fish and exaggerated a bit." Scientists also claim that there was nothing miraculous about it at all, since it is possible for a fish to swallow a man alive.

Yet man's opinions do not matter. What really counts is what God says in His Word. If you, as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, have any doubt whatsoever about Bible miracles, I feel sorry for you. You are either an unbelieving believer, or you simply do not know what kind of God we have. What good, I ask you, is trusting a God who can do no more than you or I? Instead, make it your business to get to know Him through His Word and you will be able to trust Him, moment by moment, all through your life.

Once more, come with me on our search for hidden treasures, this time into the world of the miraculous. Our first stop is Jonah in the fish. "And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow Jonah" (Jonah 1:17a). Are you amazed at this miracle? God does many wonders, and a miracle is just another way that God shows His mighty power (Ps. 77:14). The word "impossible" does not exist in God's vocabulary (Luke 1:37). Had He wanted to choose another means of saving and preserving Jonah's life, He could have done so. He could have just as easily prepared a fabulous seaside resort hotel on the spot, but it is doubtful that Jonah would have then seen a need to confess his sin of disobedience to God's command. He might have gone surfing instead!

Now, since I have promised to take you into the world of miracles on this search, what better subject could we select than other miracles in which fish had an important part? Matthew 14:19–21 records the well-known miracle of 5,000 men, plus women and children, who were fed by

only five little barley loaves and two small fish, with twelve basketfuls left over. Next, let us look at the miracle in Matthew 17:24–27. These verses tell us how the Lord Jesus Christ paid His own as well as Peter's income tax with a gold piece found in the mouth of the first fish which Peter caught on his hook. This was not a coincidence, not a piece of 'good luck.' No, the Lord sent Peter fishing for this particular coin, as you can read for yourself.

Next stop, Luke 5:2–11. The Lord Jesus had used Peter's fishing boat for a pulpit from which to teach a Bible class on the banks of the Sea of Galilee. When the Lord can use us or anything we own, He always repays plentifully. He told Peter to let down his nets for a special catch of fish. Here we have another case where man thinks he knows more than God. Simon Peter told the Lord that all of them, expert fishermen, had worked all night and had caught nothing. Nevertheless, he was willing to humor the Lord Jesus. "Okay," he was saying, "if you say so, we'll give it another try!" It was the same boat with the same crew and the same net which set out once more. But there was another Commander in Chief at the helm, and what happened? No less than a miracle. So many fish filled the net, it broke. The ship was in danger of sinking from the weight of the catch. With the help of their fishing partners they filled two boats with their miracle catch. This miracle so impressed Peter and the brothers James and John that they left their net of fish and their boats to become "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19).

MIRACLES WITH FISH		
SCRIPTURE	PERSONS	DESCRIPTION
Jonah 1:17—2:10	Jonah	Swallowed, preserved alive, delivered
Matthew 14:19–21	5,000 men, Lord Jesus	Fed on 5 loaves, 2 fish, 12 basketfuls left over
Matthew 17:24–27	Peter, Jesus	Income tax money found in fish
Luke 5:2–11	Peter, James, John, Lord	Miracle catch, broke nets, filled 2 boats
John 21:3–11	Peter, others	153 large fish caught where no fish were

Just one more miracle with fish and then we must rejoin Jonah. This last miracle happened after the Lord Jesus was resurrected, or risen from the dead. Last stop, John 21:3–11. It seems that Simon Peter and six other disciples have decided to go fishing in the Sea of Galilee, disobeying the Lord's instructions to stay and wait for Him on the mountain (Matt. 28:16). All that night the disciples worked and worked, throwing out the net and bringing it back, but their efforts were no good. They caught nothing. Human efforts without divine assets (the means or resources that

God provides) are useless. Early the next morning the Lord appeared to the disciples. They did not recognize Him until He showed them that indeed He is the God of the impossible. He directed them to cast their net over the right side of the ship. When they obeyed, they hauled in 153 large fish, "and although there were so many, the net was not torn" (John 21:11b). Simon Peter had to admit that doing things God's way pays off. Is it not sad to think that we have to learn this the hard way, as did Simon Peter, as did so many others, and certainly as did Jonah?

What God Wants Me to Know

Jonah knew he was being disciplined. First the storm, then the frightening experience of sinking to the bottom of the ocean, and now he found himself in the belly of a great fish. He began to think. In fact, he had nothing to do but think, and he marveled at how lovingly God spans His children when they need it. Do your parents discipline you when you have it coming? Do you think they do it out of meanness, just to make your life miserable? No, they do it out of love and concern. Discipline, whether from God or from your parents, is part of your training. "And you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, 'MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES'" (Heb. 12:5–13).

Never resent discipline or feel sorry for yourself when discipline comes your way. Be thankful instead. Confess your sin and ride out your discipline in blessing. Your parents can only discipline you as long as you are under their roof and care. Our heavenly Father can only discipline the believer in time, for there is no discipline for the believer in eternity.

But pity the unbeliever. His punishment begins when his life on earth is over. Some have asked, "If God is really a God of love, how can He send anyone to the lake of fire?" God is also a God of righteousness and justice. He so loved the world that He gave His Son, Jesus Christ, to be condemned in our place, to spare us from eternal punishment (John 3:16; Rom. 8:32). It is not God, but those who reject God's so-great salvation who judge themselves "unworthy of eternal life" (Acts 13:46). Think it over carefully. Will you choose the loving discipline of a heavenly Father by accepting His Son as your Savior, or will you choose the "wrath of God" for all eternity (John 3:36)?

Lesson Review

Can you name the four miracles we have studied in the Book of Jonah? The storm, the casting of lots, the calm sea, and the fish. We stopped to look at other miracles to see some of the great things God has done by using fish. Can you remember at least three of them? The feeding of

the five thousand on two small fish and five barley loaves, which left over twelve basketfuls of fish and bread. Two miraculous catches of fish, one which caused the nets to break; the other did not. The gold coin found in the mouth of the fish. Isn't it wonderful that our God is the God of the impossible (Luke 1:37)?

Memory Verse

“And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.” (Ps. 50:15)

LESSON TWO DELIVERANCE IN AND FROM TROUBLE

Where shall we take up our search for God's treasures today? In Nineveh? In Joppa? No, in the belly of a great fish. All aboard God's submarine! Down we go to see (1) how Jonah was disciplined and blessed by God at the same time; (2) how God heard Jonah's prayer; and (3) how this one incident in Jonah's life teaches us an even greater lesson.

Jonah's Prayer Room

Inside the fish, Jonah had come to the end of himself. It was then that “Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the stomach of the fish” (Jonah 2:1). Many years later, the Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “And when you pray, you are not [to pray] . . . in order to be seen by men. . . . Go into your inner room [private place], and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret” (Matt. 6:5–6). Jonah's strange prayer “room,” though not exactly his choice, was very private indeed. And his Lord and God knew his needs before Jonah said one word (Matt. 6:8).

Jonah's Prayer Analyzed, Jonah 2:1–9

How would you pray and what would you pray for in what seems like an impossible situation? Would you scream, “Lord, get me out of here!” or, “Oh, God, help me!”? Let's take a close look at Jonah's prayer and see that it contains every part of effective prayer. First, Jonah got himself back on prayer ground. How does anyone get on prayer ground? By using the grace of God. Do you know how to do that? By confessing your sins to God the Father (1 John 1:9). We know from Psalm 66:18 that as long as unconfessed, known sins remain in our lives the Lord will not hear us. Jonah's sins were off his chest and forgiven (Jonah 2:2, 7), and he may have wondered why he had ever tried to cover them up when all along he was only hurting himself by doing so (Jonah 2:8; cf. Prov. 28:13). We said

in our last lesson we would see how rebound allows God to show His mercy. Jonah now has the right mental attitude. He will be able to take his discipline with thanksgiving instead of bitterness and self-pity, and the discipline will become a blessing.

Had Jonah still been at Gath-hepher, he would have prayed in the direction of the Temple, that is, facing Jerusalem. Ever since King Solomon had dedicated the great Temple, all Jews who were not worshiping in the Temple itself would pray facing in the direction of where the Temple stood (1 Kings 8:29–30, 38–39). But as it was, he had no idea in which direction he was traveling. It was dark in that great fish, as dark as inside a grave, and so he prayed as though “from the depth of Sheol [the place of the dead]” (Jonah 2:2). Does it actually matter where we are or what posture we are in when we pray? Not in the least! What does matter is that we are on prayer ground and that we direct all prayer to the Father (Matt. 6:6, 9; Eph. 5:20), in the name of the Son (John 14:13–14), and in the power or filling of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 6:18).

Jonah did not actually die in the fish, but he knew that unless God helped him he would go to a watery grave. As he thought about the goodness and greatness of God, his prayer became one of praise and thanksgiving. Do you ever offer God praise and adoration because of who and what He is? According to Ephesians 5:20, we should. Do you ever thank Him for what He has done and is still doing for you? We are to offer Him thanks in and for everything (1 Thess. 5:18). When we have done so, we may ask for our own needs to be met. That part of prayer, asking for your own needs, is called petition. Do you ask, believing (Matt. 21:22)? Jonah did. He knew God's promises to help.

God says to every believer, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me” (Ps. 50:15). God's deliverance works in one of two ways. He will either deliver *from* trouble (Jonah 2:10), or will deliver *in* trouble (1 Cor. 10:13). Whatever the case may be, be

sure to give God all the credit! Jonah was confident that God would deliver him (Jonah 2:9b; cf. Matt. 21:22). How thankful he must have been to know that all the while God disciplined him, God also protected and preserved him. A double miracle indeed—first to be swallowed alive by the fish, and then to be preserved inside the fish (cf. Isa. 43:2). No wonder Jonah said, “Thou [God] hadst cast me into the deep” (Jonah 2:3), but “thou didst hear my voice” (Jonah 2:2). “Thou hast brought up my life from the pit,” he declared (Jonah 2:6). “Salvation [deliverance] is from the LORD,” was Jonah’s happy conclusion (Jonah 2:9).

Jonah not only knew doctrine, he knew the Word of God as it then existed. Over and over he used verses from the Book of Psalms in his prayer. Let me give you some of these references for you to look up in your own time in the Word, and these are but a few: Psalm 18:6; 31:22; 42:7; 69:1; 120:1. Do you use the promises of God’s Word in your prayers, claiming them for yourself? Or do you even know what promises you might use? Do you relax in the knowledge that if God has allowed the unpleasant things to come into your life, He will see you through them? Jonah finally did. The sooner we learn that “This also comes from the LORD of hosts, *Who* has made *His* counsel wonderful and *His* wisdom great” (Isa. 28:29), the better off we will be. I should not wonder if Jonah did not actually enjoy his little vacation once he was confident that he would sacrifice “with the voice of thanksgiving,” and that he would serve God obediently if he had but another chance (Jonah 2:9). Once more before we move on, what basic parts of acceptable prayer did Jonah use? Rebound, praise and thanksgiving, and confident petition.

Prayer is a most important part of the believer’s life, especially before we must make important decisions, or before we try to do a job for the Lord. Who knows, Jonah may never have disobeyed had he first talked things over with the Lord in prayer instead of arguing with Him.

A Lesson from the Lord Jesus Matthew 12:38–40

Jonah spent three days and three nights in the stomach of the great fish (Jonah 1:17b). Many years later, the Lord Jesus Christ used the doctrinal miracle of Jonah to foretell His death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus had been performing miracles for many weeks (Matt. 12:13, 15, 22), still, the unbelieving scribes (religious students of the Mosaic Law) demanded that He give them a sign. The Lord Jesus Christ flatly refused, for He knew it would do no good. Since these scribes were Old Testament experts, the Lord Jesus instead gave them the strongest possible sign—a miracle from Bible doctrine, a miracle which had happened in the days of Jonah. He said “for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER [a huge fish], SO SHALL THE SON OF MAN BE THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE HEART OF THE

EARTH” (Matt. 12:40). He was showing them that an even greater miracle would happen before their very eyes.

Jonah—a Picture of the Lord Jesus Christ

In some ways, the prophet Jonah was a picture of Christ; in other ways, he was very different from Christ. Let’s compare them, shall we? Both came from Galilee: Jonah from Gath-hepher, the Lord Jesus from Nazareth. Both were ‘buried,’ that is, hidden from view for three days and three nights. Both were put in an unusual place: Jonah in the fish, the Lord in another man’s tomb. Both were brought back out again: one out of water, the Other out of the grave. Both were sent on a special mission. And here is where we must begin the contrast. The Lord Jesus came to do the Father’s will, while Jonah ran away from God’s will. Jonah suffered for his own sin of disobedience, but the Lord Jesus suffered for all our sins (1 Pet. 2:21–25; 3:18).

What God Wants Me to Know

The most important decision you will ever be called on to make is that of choosing for or against the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us hear the conclusion of the Lord on that long ago day when He was asked to do a miracle. Open your Bibles to Matthew 12:41: “The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment, and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.” What did the Lord Jesus have in mind when He said those words? Just a few moments before, He had pointed them to a scene in the past; now He was taking them to a future judgment scene (Rev. 20:11–15), the most terrible scene in the Bible. Picture it in your mind: all unbelievers are gathered before the Great White Throne of God to be judged, not for their sins, but for their rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. They will hear from the Lord that all their works, good though they may have seemed, are not good enough and that they are eternally condemned. On the side of the believing eyewitnesses of that last judgment will be the men of Nineveh. They will point accusing fingers at the unbelieving Jews of Jesus’ day. They will say, “We believed Jonah’s words and accepted God’s way of salvation by faith. Do you mean to say that you saw the Lord Himself with your own eyes and heard His words from His very own lips, and rejected Him? Why, that is utterly unbelievable!”

Now let’s make it personal. Will you be there among those to be judged? I hope not. You need not be. You, too, have heard over and over the same message of salvation. Maybe by now you have heard it so often that it falls on deaf ears! The Lord and Jonah were not the only sent ones. Your pastor, parents, and teachers are here to tell you in the words of the Bible that there is hope of eternal life for everyone. While there is yet time, accept God’s offer of salvation through faith in His Son Jesus Christ (John 3:16),

and God will deliver you from condemnation (Rom. 8:1). You have His assurance of eternal life (1 John 5:11–12), and you can take your place on the side of those who go out and tell others that “Salvation is from the LORD” (Jonah 2:9).

Lesson Review

Listen to the statements I am going to make and call out to me whether they are true or false:

1. The account of Jonah in the fish is a genuine, real miracle. (true)
2. A miracle is an unusual event that can be explained by human reasoning. (false)
3. Miracles present no problems to the Lord. (true)
4. The fish swallowed Jonah on the surface of the water. (false)
5. God never disciplines the unbeliever. (false)
6. God never disciplines the believer in eternity. (true)
7. Bad things come into our lives whether God permits them or not. (false)
8. Confession is not a part of prayer. (false)
9. The Lord Jesus Christ used Jonah as a sign. (true)
10. Jonah was a sign of God’s mercy. (true)

Spot the one false statement as I compare the Lord Jesus and Jonah:

The Lord Jesus and Jonah had the following things in common:

1. Both were sent on a special mission. Both were from Galilee.
2. Both spent 3 days and 3 nights in an unusual place.
3. Both were brought back alive.
4. Both suffered for their disobedience.

The last statement is false.

Memory Verse

“And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.” (Ps. 50:15)

Chapter Twenty-One

A Greater Grace!

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: A Greater Grace!—Jonah 2:9—3:9

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: The Only True God
2. Lesson Two: Jonah's Second Chance

C. Story Objective:

This chapter could well be summed up in the words of James 4:6a: "But He gives a greater grace." Beginning with the deliverance and recommissioning of Jonah and ending with the miraculous conversion of an entire city, one cannot help but exclaim, "What great things the Lord has done" (Mark 5:19b).

Many interesting side issues arise in this chapter. Some we shall look into, for instance, cases similar to that of Jonah's preservation in the water, and other mass conversions. We shall see God's power made known, but mainly we shall aim to show that the believer's purpose is to glorify God in the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:20; Eph. 1:12). God has planned for every believer to serve and honor Him (Eph. 2:10). He will use us in spite of our weaknesses; and our past failures, once confessed, will not hinder us from future service (Phil. 3:13). God's own faithfulness to every believer continues, even if the believer himself is faithless to God (Lam. 3:23; 2 Tim. 2:13).

Much is at stake. Countless souls are in need of salvation and must hear God's message of grace before judgment. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is "the power of God for salvation" (Rom. 1:16). In God's command to Jonah, "proclaim to it [Nineveh] the proclamation which I am going to tell you," God emphasizes that Jonah must proclaim to the Ninevites His Word and only His Word

(Jonah 3:2). God is faithful to honor His Word and uses it to accomplish that which He pleases (Isa. 55:11).

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: proclamation, sackcloth
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Believers preserved in water
 - 1) Jonah in the stomach of the fish (Jonah 1:17)
 - 2) Noah and his family in the ark (Gen. 7:5)
 - 3) Moses in the basket (Ex. 2:3)
 - 4) Paul in a shipwreck (Acts 27:44)
 - b. Believers saved and protected
 - 1) By God's grace (Gen. 15:6; Acts 4:12; Eph. 2:8–9)
 - 2) By God's power (1 Pet. 1:5)
 - c. Miracles
 - 1) Number six: Jonah delivered (Jonah 2:10)
 - 2) Number seven: Ninevites saved (Jonah 3:5a)
 - d. The only true God (John 17:3)
 - 1) God's power over Dagon (1 Sam. 5; Jonah 2:8), the river-god of Egypt (Ex. 7:17, 20), and the sun-god of Egypt (Ex. 10:21–22).
 - 2) God's grace to Jonah (Jonah 3:1–2a), Peter (John 21:15–19), Mark (Acts 15:39; 2 Tim 4:11), Elijah (1 Kings 19:5, 7), and you (2 Tim. 2:13; James 4:6a).
 - 3) God's Word is successful (Isa. 55:11), alive and powerful (Heb. 4:12), important (Jonah 3:2b); Jonah's message (Jonah 3:4b) and your message (John 3:16; 1 Cor 15:3–4) should proclaim God's Word alone.

- e. Conversion records
 - 1) 600,000 Ninevites (Jonah 3:5a)
 - 2) Noah and 7 family members (Gen. 7:13)
 - 3) 3,000 from Peter’s sermon (Acts 2:41)
- f. Conversion results
 - 1) A changed life (Jonah 3:7–8; 1 Thess. 1:9)
 - 2) Application: Has your life changed?

E. *Source Book* Keywords: Elijah, evangelism, faithfulness

of God, grace, idolatry, Peter, power of the Word

- F. Activities:
 1. Suggested Visuals: none
 2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
 3. Memory Verse: “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” (2 Pet. 3:9)
 4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE THE ONLY TRUE GOD

Let us begin with a wonderful promise found in Psalm 32:7: “Thou [God] art my hiding place; Thou dost preserve me from trouble; Thou dost surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah [pause to think about that].” Day in, day out, the One who never sleeps nor slumbers watches over you and keeps you (Ps. 121:3–4). Have you ever thought to thank Him for it?

God had preserved Jonah in the water, inside of a great, prepared fish, and Jonah remembered to thank Him (Jonah 2). You know that, because you learned it in the last chapter. But did you know that there were others whom God also preserved in water by His grace and power? Can you think of any of them? I can think of three other incidents. First, there is the case of Noah and his family. How did God preserve them when all others were swept away by the flood waters? Yes, in the ark (Gen. 7–8). Next, there was the baby Moses. God kept him safe in a little waterproof basket (Ex. 2:3). Lastly, there was the Apostle Paul whose life was spared in a shipwreck (Acts 27:23–24, 44). Had any of them earned or deserved such kindness? Does God owe it to us to keep us because we are so lovable, good, and obedient? No!

It is by God’s grace that we are saved (Eph. 2:8–9), and by His grace we are protected (1 Pet. 1:5). In fact, we are what we are by the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10). The sooner we understand grace, the sooner we will be able to serve the Lord. Just think how often you and I have failed the Lord! How often we have been faithless! Yet, never once has He disappointed us (2 Tim. 2:13). Never once has He let us down. And He, who took care of you and me yesterday and the day before, will look after us tomorrow and the next day and the next. As long as we are alive, God’s purpose for us continues. He has put us here to honor and serve Him just as He did Jonah long ago. Do we

fulfill His purpose? Did Jonah? That remains to be seen. Let us pick up Jonah where we left him—still in the belly of the fish, but minus his sin.

The Sixth Miracle

After Jonah had confessed his sin of disobedience, he prayed a confident prayer of thanksgiving. He was ready to serve God once more. He was sure now of God’s deliverance (Jonah 2:9), and the deliverance came as expected. A strong current had carried the fish near Nineveh, to the very spot where God wanted Jonah. Had Jonah done what God commanded, he would not have had such a difficult journey. As it was, God showed that He was well able to provide transportation for Jonah but, in obeying, Jonah could have traveled in better style and more comfort! “Then the LORD commanded the fish, and it vomited Jonah up onto the dry land” (Jonah 2:10). Again, God performed a miracle, the sixth miracle we have seen thus far in the Book of Jonah. God delivered Jonah out of the fish, safe and sound. What a sight Jonah must have been! How he must have smelled! No doubt he was glad to be so close to water. It could well have been that he sang praises to God at the top of his voice as he splashed and washed up at the beach, much as you would sing in the shower when you are happy.

God’s Power over Dagon

Treasure seekers, let’s let our imaginations wander. Just suppose, and this could well have happened, that there were eyewitnesses to the sixth miracle, perhaps some fishermen. Imagine their surprise when a great fish vomited up a foreigner on their shores. They would have recognized

by his clothing that he was a Hebrew prophet. The Ninevites worshiped the fish-god, Dagon. The statue of this idol, half fish and half man, stood in a great temple in the city. And now, Dagon himself, or so it would seem to them, was bringing God's prophet to them. So if the Hebrew God could make Dagon obey Him, God must be greater than Dagon indeed! They may have run into the city to spread the amazing news. Perhaps it was just such an incident which paved the way for God's message.

The Only True God

We, as Christians, have a wonderful God. We worship "the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou [God] has sent" (John 17:3). God said that there is none like Him, that He is great above all other gods (Ps. 95:3; 113:5); and He has proved that He alone is God (Isa. 43:10).

Once, Pharaoh of Egypt demanded, "Who is the LORD that I should obey His voice?" (Ex. 5:2). God showed him who He is (Ex. 7:5): He defeated the Egyptian's river-god by turning all the water into blood (Ex. 7:17, 20) and defeated his sun-god by sending darkness over the land (Ex. 10:21–22). In the days of Elijah, God defeated the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:36–39). But especially interesting to us, because of our study in Jonah, is an account given in 1 Samuel 5, where we read how God defeated Dagon over 250 years before the time of Jonah.

The Philistines had captured the ark of the covenant and dragged it off triumphantly. They set it up in the temple of Dagon, beside their fish-god, to honor Dagon for the victory they thought he had granted them (1 Sam. 5:2). The next morning, to their shock, Dagon had fallen on his face before the ark of God. They picked up Dagon and set him "in his place again" (1 Sam. 5:3). Bright and early the following morning, they ran to the temple to discover that worse things had happened during the night. Not only had Dagon toppled over again before the ark of God, but this time his hands and head were broken off and only the trunk remained intact (1 Sam. 5:4). Further, God severely punished all the people of the city with terrible diseases so that when they returned the ark to the Israelites, they did so with a healthy respect for the God of the Hebrews whose power they had seen. Would God show His might in such a spectacular way again? Well, God does not have to repeat past miracles. He works in many different ways. This time, it pleased Him to have chosen a fish and a prophet to do His work.

A Greater Grace

"Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, 'Arise, go to Nineveh the great city'" (Jonah 3:1–2a). Oh, what grace! Jonah had failed the Lord, yet the Lord was willing to give Jonah a second chance (Phil. 3:13). Now do not misunderstand. There are many chances to serve the Lord in time as far as the believer is con-

cerned, but there are no second chances for the unbeliever in eternity. If you have never trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, do not put it off another minute. The Word of God to you is, "Now is 'THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,' behold, now is 'THE DAY OF SALVATION'" (2 Cor. 6:2b). Tomorrow may be too late. You may not have a tomorrow. Why not do it right now? Then, time and time again, you and all other believers will have repeated opportunities for service. You and I may get fed up with our own failures and with others, but thank God, His grace never runs out! He always "gives a greater grace" (James 4:6a).

Would you like to know some of the men to whom God gave another chance after they had failed Him at first? Let's look them up, for it will greatly encourage us. Perhaps the one you know best is Peter. Do you remember how he failed the Lord? In spite of his previous brave words, when the time came, he denied his Lord three times (John 18:17–27). He wept bitterly and thought that all was now over for him. But was it? The crowing of the rooster was not only a reminder of the Lord's words to him (Matt. 26:34), but also the beginning of another day—a new day of service for Peter. For after the Lord had risen, He showed the disciples and us that Peter, through rebound and learning Bible doctrine, had a tremendous life of service ahead of him (John 21:15–19).

Mark, the writer of the second Gospel, had deserted his missionary team, Barnabas and Saul, because he was frightened to travel into one of the most dangerous areas of the ancient world (Acts 12:25; 15:36–39). He, too, was given another chance and became a most "useful" servant of God (2 Tim. 4:11). Let's take just one more, the prophet Elijah. After his great victory over 450 false prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, he ran for his life because of a threat from Queen Jezebel (1 Kings 18; 19:2–3). He, too, was going to be a quitter until the Lord graciously called him a second time (1 Kings 19:5–8).

What God Wants Me to Know

Don't say, or even think, "I would never fail God like they did!" You never know what you will do or will not do until the time comes. Just pray that you will not fail the grace of God (Heb. 12:15a). But even if you do fail, don't give up. Should God grant you another day of service, a second or third or fourth chance, just move on and thank Him for His great faithfulness to you (2 Tim. 2:13). In our next lesson we will find out about Jonah's second chance to serve God.

Talk about a second chance! How many times has God given you a chance to accept His gift of salvation by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, perhaps today will be your last chance to hear it. Who knows whether any of us will have another day on earth? God alone knows, for our times are in His hands (Ps. 31:15a). That is why we read in 2 Corinthians 6:2: "Now is 'THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,' behold, now is 'THE DAY OF SALVATION.'" Why wait

another day? Why even wait another minute? “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved” (Acts 16:31).

Lesson Review

We have two more miracles to add to those we have reviewed. The fifth miracle was Jonah’s preservation or safekeeping in the fish; the sixth miracle was Jonah’s deliverance from the fish. What three other people in the Bible did God preserve in water? Noah, Moses, and Paul. When Jonah was delivered out of the great fish, where did he land? Near Nineveh. God did not abandon him there,

either. He gave Jonah another chance to serve Him. He gave Jonah “a greater grace!”

Memory Verse

“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” (2 Pet. 3:9)

LESSON TWO JONAH’S SECOND CHANCE

What is grace? Grace is God doing something for us which we cannot earn, do not deserve, and can never work for. God does not cast off His children for disobeying Him, although He certainly will discipline them. But when the dust settles and we find that we are still alive, we can be sure that the Lord still has a purpose for us. And so we see that we not only have a second, but also a third, fourth, fifth chance, and so on, to pick up where we left off serving our gracious God.

God, still determined to send Jonah to Nineveh, said, “Arise, go to Nineveh, the great city” (Jonah 3:2a). How great was Nineveh? We talked about its greatness in Chapter 17 and about its glamor as seen from the world’s viewpoint. But here we see Nineveh from God’s viewpoint of love. It says, literally, that Nineveh “is great unto God.” In what way do you think Nineveh was great unto God? Jonah 4:11 tells us that God was concerned for the 120,000 children in that city, too young to know right from wrong, left from right. The total population of Nineveh is estimated to have been somewhere between 600,000 and 1,000,000. Why does the Lord seem to have such a special love for children (Luke 18:16)? Children and young people often respond better to the Lord and His Word than do adults. Living amid great wickedness, the children of Nineveh must be reached with the message of salvation before it is too late. After all, the children of today are the adults and leaders of tomorrow. You, too, are important in God’s plan. And who knows, the future of our country may well depend on your attitude toward the Lord and His

Word that you are now being taught! The Word of God is of utmost importance. Listen to His Word and remember what it says!

The Power of the Word

God said, “Proclaim to it [Nineveh] the proclamation which I am going to tell you” (Jonah 3:2b). In other words, “Give them the Word, Jonah, nothing but the Word!” Now, take God’s promise of Isaiah 55:11, that His Word will not return empty but will accomplish what He pleases. Combine it with Hebrews 4:12, that His Word is alive and powerful enough to get into every part of our soul, and you have an unbeatable guarantee of success. Jonah’s mission would have amazing results, and Jonah knew it (Jonah 4:2).

This time Jonah obeyed. Why? Was it from fear of what might happen should he run away again, or because when he was in a tight spot he had promised to obey? Scripture does not tell us Jonah’s motivation, but we are told that we should obey because we love the Lord (John 14:15).

That day, as Jonah walked into Nineveh, he called out for all to hear, “Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown” (Jonah 3:4b). It would take him three days to cover the entire city, some sixty to seventy miles. We do not know what language Jonah used to make himself understood. In that part of the ancient world, both Hebrew and Aramaic were spoken (Isa. 36:11). Both languages were similar. However, we do know this, that whenever and wherever someone has a desire to come to know God,

God will make Himself known. God will overcome all barriers (Jer. 29:13; John 7:17; Acts 17:27).

And wherever Jonah went, he repeated that same message over and over. Was it his entire message? Strangely enough, we do not have the entire message of Jonah. He preached for hours on end, but we do not have the content of his sermon. Only one phrase is revealed from his dynamic message, yet the gist of it can be reconstructed. Everywhere he went in the city of Nineveh, he would see the statue of Dagon, the fish-god. Every time he would stand under one of these fish-gods, he would point to it and say, "I was swallowed by a 'fish-god,' because I disobeyed the God of heaven, the Lord Jehovah, and the Lord Jehovah spoke to my heart concerning you. Just as I was swallowed by a fish, your fish-god will destroy you! Because you have turned your backs upon the only Savior, He is going to destroy the city. Your wickedness has come as a bad odor to Him. Therefore, if you do not believe in the Lord Jehovah (Jesus Christ), if you do not trust in Him, this city will be destroyed." But all that is recorded is this one phrase, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown."

Possibly, because Jonah hated the Assyrians so much, his message only told them the bad news of sin and judgment, without mentioning the good news of love and grace. Had God not insisted that Jonah use the Word alone, he might have added, "And there is nothing you can do about it! Am I ever glad." You and I are not given a choice of speaking or not speaking, of what to say and not to say. The Apostle Paul puts it this way, "Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16b). And what is the Gospel? It is the good news that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16) to die and be buried and to rise again, that we might have everlasting life by believing on Him (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Have you given that message to anyone, ever? Have you stuck to the Word and to the issue and left the results to the Holy Spirit (John 16:8)?

God the Holy Spirit went to work on the Ninevites to show them their urgent need of the Savior. Jonah himself is not mentioned for the rest of the chapter. The power of the message is in the Word, never in the messenger. People must get their eyes on the Lord, for He says, "Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For I am God, and there is no other" (Isa. 45:22). God alone can save. Have you let Him save you?

Had you lived then and heard Jonah's message, would you have understood it to be a message of hope and salvation? The Ninevites did, not because Jonah spelled it out that way, but because the Holy Spirit made the message clear to them. They began to think, why should the all-powerful God of the Hebrews warn them through His prophet if He intended to destroy them? Why would God give them forty days longer if it was not to show them His love and grace? He did not send Jonah to condemn them but to let them know that they could be saved. And if they could be saved, they most certainly would be saved!

This and Other Group Conversions

The result of God's message through Jonah was another miracle, the seventh miracle we have seen so far. We read, "Then the people of Nineveh believed in God" (Jonah 3:5a). Other messages which led to the conversion of more than one person are recorded in Scripture, the first as a result of Noah's 120-year preaching—eight souls saved (Noah and family—Gen. 7:13). Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost resulted in the salvation of 3,000 people (Acts 2:41). But never before, nor ever again would an entire city of at least 600,000 inhabitants be saved at once, "from the greatest [oldest] to the least [youngest]" (Jonah 3:5).

The Proof of Salvation

As a result of their newfound faith, the people of Nineveh wanted to convince God that their lives had been changed indeed. When word of this mass conversion was brought to the king of Nineveh, he wasted no time. Immediately, he arose from his throne, laid his robe aside (Jonah 3:6) and humbled himself "under the mighty hand of God" (1 Pet. 5:6). In ancient times, people showed their sorrow, grief, or distress openly by putting on sackcloth and sitting in ashes. And so it was that the king of Nineveh accepted the King of heaven and earth as his own Savior, but he did not stop there. He caused a proclamation to be made throughout the city (Jonah 3:7-9). He begged all the people to turn from their wicked ways, to pray mightily to show God that they had indeed "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God" (1 Thess. 1:9). Even the animals were to have their part in this demonstration of faith. "Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth" (Jonah 3:7b-8a). "Who knows," said the king, "God may turn and relent, and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish?" (Jonah 3:9).

What God Wants Me to Know

The Ninevites had no real assurance from Jonah that God would actually spare and save them. They had only a ray of hope, as found in the words "Who knows?" (Jonah 3:9a). But I can tell you, on the authority of God's Word, that God is willing, ready, and able to save eternally all who will come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ (Heb. 7:25). God is not willing that anyone die without being saved (2 Pet. 3:9b). He says in Ezekiel 18:32: "'For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies,' declares the Lord GOD. 'Therefore, repent and live.'"

Wonderful and impressive though group conversions may be, God honors every believer's individual decision for salvation. If you were the only person in the world who would ever believe on His Son, God would still have sent Him to die for you. God's Word comes to you today, as it came to the Ninevites of long ago. Listen: "Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts;

And let him return to the LORD, And He will have compassion on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:7). Abundant pardon waits for you as well as the assurance of eternal life. Simply accept God’s Son as your own personal Savior. He did not come to “judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him” (John 3:17). You can be saved. It’s up to you. Right now, you may receive Him as your Savior (John 1:12).

Lesson Review

The Ninevites worshiped the fish-god Dagon. How did God show the Ninevites His power? He used a great fish to deliver Jonah. Did Jonah know what he must do when he found himself vomited out on the beach? Yes. How did he know what to do? God spoke to him a second time. On what did God insist about Jonah’s message? That Jonah proclaim only the Word of God. This Jonah did.

Remember when we spoke about other messages which led to the conversion of more than one person? Noah preached 120 years, yet only seven others were saved (Gen. 7:23). Peter’s message, recorded in the Bible in nineteen verses, led to the salvation of 3,000 people (Acts 2:22–40). Jonah’s message won an entire city of at least 600,000

inhabitants to the Lord. What did the king of Nineveh do after he accepted Christ as his Savior? He made a proclamation. What did he instruct his people to do? Neither eat nor drink, cover themselves and the animals with sackcloth, pray mightily, and turn from their wicked ways. What was the king’s hope? That God would spare them.

Memory Verse

“The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” (2 Pet. 3:9)

Chapter Twenty-Two

God's Mercy and Jonah's Anger

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: God's Mercy and Jonah's Anger—Jonah 3:10—4:5

B. Lesson Titles:

1. Lesson One: Sackcloth and Ashes
2. Lesson Two: Become a Grace-Oriented Believer

C. Story Objective:

The aim of this chapter is to contrast two mental attitudes toward the inhabitants of Nineveh: God's and Jonah's (Jonah 3:10; 4:1). Omniscient God saw the changed attitude of the Ninevites toward the Savior and their complete dependence on His mercy, and showed His compassion and grace in sparing them. Nescient Jonah saw his hated enemies saved from condemnation in time and eternity. Far from rejoicing in their salvation, he jealously nursed his grudge against them, forgetting how God had spared him only a short time before. Jonah's wrong thought pattern led him into self-induced misery from which came an unreasonable prayer for God to take his life, which God in His wisdom ignored (Jonah 4:3).

God's attitude of grace and concern includes even the animals (Jonah 3:7–8; 4:11). Lower creation came under the curse of sin through Adam's fall (Gen. 3:14; Rom. 8:19, 22), and therefore shares in mankind's sufferings and eventually the removal of the curse (Isa. 11:6–9).

The following points can be gleaned from this chapter:

- (1) Salvation has been provided for all of mankind (John 3:16; Rom. 5:6–8; 2 Cor. 5:14; 1 John 2:2).
- (2) Works, while never the means of salvation (Rom. 4:4–5; Eph. 2:8–9), should follow salvation (Eph.

2:10) and be performed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

- (3) The saved person functioning under the filling of the Holy Spirit will show outward signs of his inward change (Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:10; 3:9b–10; 1 Pet. 4:2).
- (4) The believer's mental attitude should be one of grace toward all those around him (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: bankruptcy, begrudge
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Man and beast (Jonah 3:8; 4:11)
 - 1) Each were created in perfect environment; each were cursed when Adam sinned (Gen. 3:16–18; Rom. 5:12)
 - 2) Curse on nature and animals removed in Christ's millennial reign (Isa. 11:6–9)
 - 3) Mankind not abandoned to the curse because God provides a solution in grace
 - b. Sackcloth and ashes: a show of sorrow and helplessness in the ancient world (Jonah 3:5–8; cf. Job 2:8)
 - c. God's mercy and grace
 - 1) What God saw (Jonah 3:10)
 - a) The "deeds" or works of the Ninevites: faith (Jonah 3:5; John 6:29)
 - b) The Ninevites "turned from their wicked way": changed from unbelief to belief in God (John 3:18–19)

- 2) Discoveries for child’s life
 - a) No works for salvation (Eph. 2:8–9; Titus 3:5)
 - b) Works produced after salvation in the filling of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:10)
- d. Jonah’s mental attitude (Jonah 4:1)
 - 1) Wrong: anger, begrudging, hatefulness, selfishness, self-pity, unforgiving
 - 2) Right: praise for God’s grace (Ps. 84:11), forgiveness (Col. 3:13b), accepting God’s mercy and pardon (Ps. 86:5)
- e. Sword drill
 - 1) Bible verses showing God’s grace: Ex. 34:6; Ps. 36:6b; Jer. 9:24; Lam. 3:22; Luke 6:35; 19:10; John 1:17; 2 Cor. 12:9; Eph. 1:6; 2:7; Titus 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:9

- 2) Bible verses showing characteristics of the grace-oriented believer: 1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 6:1; 8:7; Eph. 2:7; 4:7, 29, 32; Col. 1:6, 10; 3:13b; Heb. 4:16; 12:15; 13:9; 2 Pet. 3:18

E. *Source Book* Keywords: fall of man, grace, mental attitude, spiritual life of the Church Age (grace orientation)

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: none
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: “For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon Thee.” (Ps. 86:5)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON ONE SACKCLOTH AND ASHES

In our last lesson we saw how “the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they called a fast and put on sackcloth” (Jonah 3:5). The king of Nineveh even issued an official statement throughout the city that all the people and animals shall fast and be draped in sackcloth. Today we shall learn why the king included the animals in his decree, and then we will find out what the Bible has to say about all animal life.

If God were to destroy Nineveh, He would have to slay the animals as well as the people. The king of Nineveh must have been thinking about this as he addressed the people of Nineveh. Do you see how the king showed more concern for animal life than Jonah did for human life?

A Show of Grief and Helplessness

Not only did the king’s proclamation show his concern and protection for the animals, it also reflected a custom of the day. What do you suppose the custom might have been? People of the ancient world used to make a great public show of their helplessness or sorrow. They would put on sackcloth—a rough, dark cloth, something like a gunny sack or feed sack—and sit in a heap of ashes, weeping and crying out loud. This is what the king of Nineveh did with all his people (Jonah 3:5–6). We know from Job 1:20 and 2:8 that Job declared his grief and bankruptcy in much the same way. We are told that the

ancient Persians, on losing a well-loved general, clipped the manes and tails of their horses and mules and draped them in sackcloth.

In our day and time, at least in the Western world, we tend to keep our grieving private. But amazingly enough, some ancient customs have come down to us through the centuries with only a few changes. For instance, in Europe, people who have lost loved ones still wear black clothing for as long as a whole year. And even here in the United States it is customary to drape horses in black cloth at funerals of some great military leaders or heads of state. Such was the case when President John F. Kennedy was buried in 1963. It makes for quite an impressive and solemn sight.

Now, imagine, if you can, the entire city of Nineveh, man and beast alike, draped and crying out loud for God’s mercy! Why, the sight and the sound of it reached right into the very heaven of heavens, right into God’s presence. We know from Jonah 4:11 that God was just as concerned about the animals of Nineveh as He was about the people. So what exactly does the Bible have to say about this ‘lower creation’ we call animal life?

The Curse of Sin

Once, at the beginning of human history, both mankind and the animals lived in perfect surroundings and under

perfect conditions. Both man and animals were entirely happy as long as these conditions continued, but then a terrible change took place. Adam's sin in the Garden brought the whole earth under a curse. Not only was this curse to affect Adam and Eve with sickness, sorrow, suffering, and death, but it would also be passed down to the entire human race (Gen. 3:16–17; 5:3; Rom. 5:12). What an awful thing to leave to all of us!

But the curse did not stop there. The very ground upon which mankind walked was cursed to grow thorns, thistles, and weeds. The earth no longer bore fruit or grain of itself, but had to be planted or cultivated (Gen. 3:17b–18). All animals shared the curse as well (Gen. 3:14). Before Adam's sin all animals were tame and gentle, and it seems that Eve was not at all surprised when the serpent spoke to her intelligently. Because of the curse, animals became wild and ferocious.

Do the animals and mankind put up with the curse cheerfully, making the best of it? No, the Bible tells us that all creation groans under the terrible but fair judgment of God and the suffering the curse has brought on the whole earth (Joel 1:18, 20; Rom. 8:19–22). The curse will eventually be removed and replaced by blessings, but not until the Lord Jesus Christ returns to rule the earth for one thousand glorious years in the Millennium (Isa. 11:6–9). Until then, God preserves mankind and animal life alike in His grace (Ps. 36:6b). All that they and we need He provides for us (Ps. 104:21; 145:15; Matt. 6:26). Why, even the common little sparrow, to which you and I never give a thought, is not forgotten by God (Luke 12:6). Not one sparrow falls to the ground without God's knowledge (Matt. 10:29). Yes, thank God, all of us are under His loving care (1 Pet. 5:7b). He has not abandoned us to the curse.

A Changed City

Now open your Bible to Jonah 3:10 and look at the scene from God's viewpoint. "God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way" (Jonah 3:10a). Just exactly what "deeds" did God see? And from what "wicked way" had the Ninevites turned? Cruel though their heathen practices had been, these were not the wicked ways God had in mind when Jonah 3:10 was written. No, as God saw it, their "wicked way" had been unbelief (John 3:19). If you will read Jonah 3:10 carefully you will see that "their deeds" and their turning "from their wicked way" were one and the same thing. Where once the Ninevites had rejected the Savior, they had now "turned to God from idols" (1 Thess. 1:9). This is what made Nineveh a changed city in God's sight. There is no doubt that the Ninevites would want to try to live to please God in days to come, but at this particular time they had no assurance that God would even spare them. They knew that they depended entirely on God's mercy and were not ashamed to show their helplessness as they turned in prayer to the only one who could help them—God.

What God Wants Me to Know

The deed of the Ninevites was that they believed in God (Jonah 3:5). Once the Lord Jesus Christ was asked, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" (John 6:28). This was His answer: "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent" (John 6:29). Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as your own Savior?

Salvation is a gift of God's grace. A gift cannot be earned or paid for. You cannot hope to deserve salvation because you try to live a better life from now on (Eph. 2:8–9; Titus 3:5). Even if the whole world, that is, all of the inhabitants, suddenly stopped sinning it would not bring them one step closer to heaven. God is not impressed with what we do but with what His Son did for us on the cross. Man is born a sinner (Rom. 5:12). He is helpless to save himself; he is under the penalty of sin (Rom. 6:23a). But knowing our helplessness, God acted in mercy. He sent His Son that we might live through Him (1 John 4:9). When God sees your faith in Jesus Christ, He will spare you from eternal judgment and give you the gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23b).

Once a person is saved, his life should reflect his new relationship in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Believer, can the unbelievers around you—your family, your classmates, your friends and neighbors—see that you are different now? Is the Lord pleased as He watches your life before Him? If you still go your own way, trying to please yourself, there is something wrong. Could it be that you are only a hearer of the Word and not a doer? Or do you feel you tried but just could not make it on your own? How right you are! Salvation is by grace, and the Christian life is a life of grace. You do not have to go it alone. In fact, you cannot live the Christian life in your own power. That is why God has given you His Holy Spirit, to fill you with His power and live in you to enable you to please God (1 Cor. 6:19–20). You have come beyond Ephesians 2:8–9; now move on to Ephesians 2:10.

Lesson Review

Questions and answers:

1. Why were the animals included in the king's proclamation? They, too, would be affected if the city was destroyed. It was a custom of that day.
2. Besides mankind, what other parts of creation came under the curse of Adam's sin? Plants and animals.
3. What was "the wicked way" of the Ninevites? Their unbelief in God.
4. What were their "deeds"? Their faith in the Savior.
5. If the whole world stopped sinning, would this bring anyone closer to God? No.
6. What would? Faith alone in Christ alone.
7. Nineveh was a changed city because of the salvation of its people. In what ways should the believer's life be changed after salvation? The believer belongs to

the Lord; he must now live to please Him, not self; he is to be filled with the Holy Spirit and, using His power, be a doer of the Word.

Memory Verse

“For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive,
And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call
upon Thee.” (Ps. 86:5)

LESSON TWO BECOME A GRACE-ORIENTED BELIEVER

Have you ever proved to yourself that God really does answer prayer? Why not take Him at His Word and claim His promise of Psalm 50:15? “And call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.” That is what the Ninevites did, and coming boldly to His throne of grace, they obtained mercy and found grace to help in their own time of need (Heb. 4:16).

God’s Mercy

We are told in James 5:16 that “the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.” In modern English this verse may well read, “The prayer of a believer filled with the Holy Spirit has much power.” As the prayers of the Ninevites rose to heaven, God’s mercy was already at work. We read that God had changed His mind. He would not destroy them after all: “When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented [changed His mind] concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do *it*” (Jonah 3:10). Let’s take a look at the essence of God. God is immutable. That means God never changes (Num. 23:19; Mal. 3:6a). How, then, can we understand that God “relented” or changed His mind? Really, it is quite simple. Think of it this way: Who had changed, God or the Ninevites? Yes, the Ninevites. They had listened to God’s messenger, Jonah. They knew that he had brought them a message of warning, a conditional message. Turn to Jeremiah 18:7–10: “At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy *it*; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant *it*; if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it.” God was saying, in effect, “If you

will . . . I will.” What do I mean? Had the Ninevites refused God’s warning, they would have been destroyed by God’s righteousness and justice. But now that they had become believers God would spare them. God’s love is expressed through grace. Mercy is simply grace in action. God Himself never changes, but His treatment of us does and will change, depending on our lives before Him.

God’s Grace

In order that we might all have a better understanding of God’s grace, let’s look up some verses. We will begin in the Old Testament.

God is compassionate, gracious: “Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth’” (Ex. 34:6). God protects man and animals: “O LORD, Thou preservest man and beast” (Ps. 36:6b). God works lovingkindness on earth: “But let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice, and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things, ‘declares the LORD’” (Jer. 9:24). God never fails us: “The LORD’S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail” (Lam. 3:22).

Now let’s move on to the New Testament. God is kind to the ungrateful: “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil *men*” (Luke 6:35). God came to seek and save us: “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ: “For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). God’s grace is all sufficient: “And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’”

Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (2 Cor. 12:9). God's grace is the basis of, or provides, a perfect position: "To the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). God's grace exceeds in riches: "In order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7). God's grace brought salvation: "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (Titus 2:11). God is longsuffering, unwilling that any be lost: "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). What a wonderful God we have!

Right here in our story is yet another marvelous expression of the grace of God. We read, "and He [God] did not do it [did not destroy the Ninevites]" (Jonah 3:10). The Ninevites who trusted in the Lord were now children of God and under His grace. Would God destroy His children? Of course not!

Don't you think this would make a perfect, happy ending for our book? Maybe if Jonah had been allowed to have his way, he would have preferred to put a big fat period after Jonah chapter 3. But God made him write another chapter. Why? Because Jonah, and we, too, still had a lesson to learn. We must all be made to see the greatness of God's love and mercy. That's exactly why we have Jonah chapter 4.

Jonah's Anger

How nice it would be to read, "Jonah was delighted and praised and thanked God for being allowed to see this great miracle happen as a result of his message." Unhappily, this is not what we read. Look at the first word of Jonah 4:1: "But." Something has gone wrong: "But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry" (Jonah 4:1). Let me tell you what this says in the Hebrew, "But it was evil with a great evil, and it was hot to him!" Today we would say, "Jonah was hot under the collar. He was all burned up about the whole thing."

What was wrong with Jonah? He had the wrong mental attitude! Proverbs 23:7 tells us that as a man "thinks within himself, so he is." Jonah was unforgiving, angry, selfish, and hateful. He wanted revenge. He was plainly out of fellowship with the Lord. Had Jonah forgotten so soon that God had miraculously saved him only a short while ago? Had he forgotten that God had forgiven his own sins when he had accepted the Savior himself? If anyone should have an attitude of grace it should be Jonah. He should have rejoiced over God's mercy to others. He should have praised God in the words of the Psalmist, "For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in loving-kindness to all who call upon Thee" (Ps. 86:5).

Salvation was not limited to the Jews only. Salvation is for "whoever believes" (John 3:16). Christ died for all people (Isa. 53:6; John 1:29; Rom. 8:32; 1 John 4:14). All have sinned (Rom. 3:23) and all are savable, although not all will accept salvation. If the angels in heaven rejoice over the salvation of one soul, how much more should Jonah have rejoiced over the salvation of an entire city (Luke 15:10). Yes, Jonah should have forgotten his hatred of the Assyrians and forgiven them as readily as God had forgiven him.

Let's turn to Colossians 3:13b: "Whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you." Are you a Jonah when it comes to bearing a grudge? Are you selfish and hateful, wanting to get even if it is the last thing you do? Or are you a doer of Colossians 3:13b? How often does God expect you to forgive a wrong done to you? Every time. Just think how small and unimportant all these wrongs become when we compare them to the countless ways in which sinners like us have offended God's holy character. And notice, every time, without exception, God is willing to forgive and forget (Isa. 44:22; Jer. 31:34; 1 John 1:9). Can we do less?

Jonah certainly did. He was unwilling to give an inch. He wanted to get even with the hated Ninevites. "And he prayed to the LORD and said, 'Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my *own* country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity. Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for death is better to me than life'" (Jonah 4:2-3). What a selfish and unreasonable prayer! And all because Jonah could not stand the idea of God being merciful to a people Jonah hated. Jonah wanted to have the last word. "I told you so," he told omniscient God, as if God needed to be reminded! God knows all things, including the reasons for Jonah's past disobedience and present misery. God knew why Jonah would soon go off sulking and pouting.

"I wish I were dead!" Jonah cried in self-pity. But God has a marvelous sense of humor and endless patience. He knew Jonah did not really mean it, for when things were going badly for Jonah in the great fish and it looked as though he might die, Jonah had prayed and praised God for sparing his life. But now that all is well he wished he would die. First of all, God disregarded Jonah's prayer because he was out of fellowship (Ps. 66:18). Next, He ignored Jonah's complaining whine. God did not even chew out Jonah for having the nerve to talk back to Him. And finally, our gracious God asked one simple question: "And the LORD said, 'Do you have good reason to be angry?'" (Jonah 4:4). God reminded Jonah to stop and think! In effect, God is saying, "Why, Jonah, my grace has been extended to you without measure—you are on dry land, you are alive, you are here, and by the power of the Spirit you have proclaimed the gospel with the result that a

great many people have received Christ as Savior!” Does Jonah, of all people, have a reason to be angry with God for being merciful and pardoning? Why should Jonah, or anyone else, be all burned up that God treats all His children in grace? Remember that, and be a grace-oriented believer no matter what!

The Grace-Oriented Believer

Let’s find out what a grace-oriented believer is like. By that I mean a believer who knows what grace is all about. The grace-oriented believer knows and uses grace: “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me” (1 Cor. 15:10). The grace-oriented believer does not hinder or defeat God’s grace: “And working together *with Him*, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain” (2 Cor. 6:1). The grace-oriented believer overflows in grace: “But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, *see* that you abound in this gracious work also” (2 Cor. 8:7). The grace-oriented believer is a trophy of God’s grace: “In order that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:7). The grace-oriented believer is gracious: “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. . . . Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such *a word* as is good for edification according to the need *of the moment*, that it may give grace to those who hear” (Eph. 4:7, 29). The grace-oriented believer treats others in grace: “And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. . . . Just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you” (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13b). The grace-oriented believer is strong in grace: “The gospel, which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as *it has been doing* in you also since the day you heard *of it* and understood the grace of God in truth” (Col. 1:5b–6). The grace-oriented believer reflects grace and lives to please God: “So that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects” (Col. 1:10a). The grace-oriented believer prays confidently: “Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16). The grace-oriented believer does not become bitter: “See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled” (Heb. 12:15). The grace-oriented believer has a soul established in grace: “Do not be carried away by varied and strange teachings; for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, through which those who were thus occupied were not benefited” (Heb. 13:9). The grace-oriented believer

grows in grace: “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen” (2 Pet. 3:18).

Jonah Sulks

Jonah has yet to learn to be grace-oriented, and incidentally, so do all of us! Jonah had heard God’s question, but for the time being, he is in no mood to answer. Instead, he sticks out his lower lip and goes off in a sulk. Really, he is still hoping against hope that God might destroy Nineveh after all. In that case, he would not be caught inside the city for the world! He builds a lean-to, a temporary shelter of greens and shrubs, so he will be more comfortable while he waits around for God to change His mind. Although Jonah does not know this yet, his shelter will become Jonah’s little red schoolhouse. Here God would teach Jonah a lesson he will never forget. But in the meantime, we will leave Jonah to sit and think.

What God Wants Me to Know

While Jonah sits and thinks in his lean-to, I want you to do some serious thinking as well. I want you to think about our great, loving God. God has not changed one bit. He is still as merciful and pardoning as ever. And He is waiting, willing to accept your faith in His Son’s finished work on the cross. He offers you His mercy. Accept it, and you will never have to face His wrath. How do you, how does anyone, come to God? The Lord Jesus Christ says, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. . . . And the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out” (John 14:6; 6:37b). You may come by faith this very minute and know that you are saved for all eternity.

Lesson Review

We left the prophet Jonah sitting in the shade of his homemade shelter outside the city of Nineveh. There, he was having a case of self-pity. He was hot under the collar. He was plainly out of fellowship and downright miserable, hoping against hope that God would destroy the Ninevites. Can you imagine any believer wishing that God would strike others—especially other believers—dead, just because he did not like them? We find that hard to believe. Why, often an unbeliever will be kinder than a believer who is out of fellowship. God expects better things of His children (1 Pet. 3:8–9), such as compassion, tenderness, concern, and love for fellow believers. How sad to see the very opposite in Jonah, and how sad to see this so often in ourselves.

How many times have you had a grudge against some boy or girl and sworn to yourself that you would never speak to that person again? What kind of a sin is a “grudge”? Yes, a mental attitude sin. Outward and inward sins come from our giving in to the temptations of the sin

nature inside of us. As long as we stay under the control of the sin nature, we cannot live up to God's expectation of us. We cannot forgive as Christ forgave. Neither could Jonah. I ask you, why should Jonah begrudge God's mercy on Nineveh, after seeing what God did for him only a short time ago?

Memory Verse

“For Thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive,
And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call
upon Thee.” (Ps. 86:5)

Chapter Twenty-Three

Jonah Learns a Lesson

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Jonah Learns a Lesson—Jonah 4:5–11

B. Lesson Title: The Lessons of the Gourd, the Worm, and the East Wind

C. Story Objective:

Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ must grow in knowledge and in grace. Knowledge is not an end in itself (1 Cor. 8:1). It must be applied daily, moment by moment throughout the Christian life. Every lesson in life is learned either the easy way or the hard way. Sadly, most of us choose the hard way. The easiest way to learn God's lessons is through the examples and principles declared in the Bible, "for whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11). The sooner we adapt our lives to the plan of God the happier we shall be.

Jonah learned his lesson the hard way. God used three more miracles to silence His prophet's objections: (1) the gourd plant, (2) the worm, (3) the east wind. When all was said and done, God reserved for Himself the right to have the last word. The Book of Jonah began with Jonah's failure. It ends, in a rather abrupt and unexpected way, with God's victory.

The believers of Nineveh, however, failed to pass the message of grace down to their children and grandchildren, and about a hundred years later Nineveh was destroyed (Book of Nahum). The faith of the past generation was no guarantee for the security of the next generation.

In this final lesson, we shall think our way through the book and conclude our search for hidden treasures with further discoveries for the child's life. Encourage your child to continue his search in the Word daily for "ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM" (1 Cor. 2:9b; Acts 17:11). It will give him not only knowledge but the joy of discovery as he establishes a wonderful, profitable habit—mining out the truths of God's gold mine, His Word.

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: inanimate, props
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Three lessons from God in Jonah's school of discipline
 - 1) The lesson of the gourd plant (Jonah 4:6): true comfort and happiness comes only from God
 - 2) The lesson of the worm (Jonah 4:7): rely on God and not on props
 - 3) The lesson of the east wind (Jonah 4:8): apply doctrine in times of difficulty
 - b. Review using chart
 - 1) Summary of chapters by event
 - 2) Ten miracles
 - c. Discoveries for child's life
 - 1) Rely on God, not on "gourds"
 - 2) Trials and their solutions
 - 3) Apply knowledge and grow in grace (2 Pet. 3:18)
 - 4) Share God's grace with others (Isa. 6:8)
 - 5) Continue searching the Word every day (grow in knowledge)

E. *Source Book* Keywords: faithfulness of God, grow in grace, happiness, Jonah, witnessing

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: none

2. Games, Songs, Worksheets

3. Memory Verse: "Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'" (Isa. 6:8)

4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON

THE LESSONS OF THE GOURD, THE WORM, AND THE EAST WIND

Just think how gracious the Lord really is! Even when we are out of fellowship and out of His will, He still loves us and takes care of us. As Jonah sat in his lean-to, out of fellowship, God still looked after him, providing shelter and comfort. God is immutable—unchangeable—and faithful. He meant it when He promised, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU" (Heb. 13:5b). In His immutability, God never stops training His children. Let us see if we can search out the lessons Jonah learned in God's school.

The Lesson of the Gourd, Jonah 4:6

The lesson of the gourd plant was God's first lesson to Jonah. "So the LORD God appointed a plant [gourd] and it grew up over Jonah to be a shade over his head to deliver him from his discomfort" (Jonah 4:6). Among the ten miracles in the Book of Jonah, there are four prepared things. The first prepared thing is found in Jonah 1:17. What was that? Yes, the great fish. "The LORD appointed a great fish." As absolute Sovereign of heaven and earth and the deep places, God can do as He pleases. He prepared a fish first, and now it pleased Him to prepare a gourd plant.

It is thought that this plant is a castor bean plant, which in those regions grows rapidly to a height of ten to twelve feet. Where, then, does the miracle come in, you wonder? Look at Jonah 4:10: It came up overnight and was a full-grown tree in a matter of a few hours. Wouldn't you consider it a miracle if you woke up in the morning to find a tall tree above your head where none had been the night before? I would! And now for the first time in the entire Book of Jonah we read that Jonah was happy. He was "extremely happy about the plant." It does not say that he was thankful, just that he was very, very happy (Jonah 4:6b). In verse 1, Jonah was very angry, and now he is very glad! He is unstable. He goes from one extreme to another, like a yo-yo.

Are you like that? Up in the clouds one minute and oh, so happy, but down in the dumps the next—a real sad

sack? All smiles and sweetness one second, grouchy as a grizzly bear the next? When you are like that it shows that you have not yet grown up in the Lord. You must still learn faith-rest, that is, to completely trust the Lord and His promises moment by moment. We can only be truly content and happy when we are controlled by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God and therefore just as immutable or unchangeable as God the Father and God the Son. The closest you and I can come to being immutable is to have stability through the Lord and His Word.

Jonah's miserable bit of happiness came from selfishness. He thought only of his own comfort and protection. The safety of the Ninevites never crossed his mind, nor did he stop to think, "Now, I wonder how this plant grew so amazingly fast? Perhaps God is trying to tell me something special!"

Are you a Jonah? Are you content to sit idly by as long as nothing touches you, watching fellow believers in need of comfort and help without raising a finger? We are to be concerned for others, not in a nosy kind of way, but in a real loving way (Phil. 2:3-4). Are you a Jonah when it comes to unbelievers? Are you rocking along in your own spiritual rocking chair of safety in Christ (Rom. 8:1), but could not care less if others face eternal condemnation (John 3:18b)? Would you rather keep your mouth shut than give out the Gospel? If so, watch out! You, too, may be in for a hard lesson.

Explanation of the Gourd Plant

What should Jonah have learned from the plant? God had prepared the plant to shade a miserable believer from the heat of the day. The plant would be a comfort to Jonah. God always comforts the believer in need of comfort for He is "the Father of mercies and God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3-4). He comforts us in many different ways. He might use a friend's love (Prov. 17:17a), a kind word (Prov. 16:24), or Bible verses as they are brought to our minds by the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). Jonah's trouble was

that he was looking to the plant instead of looking to God for comfort. Are there any ‘plants’ in your life? What do we mean by plants? Your very best friend, the group or the club to which you belong, your toys, games, books, television, can all become plants in your life when you look to them for happiness or help. But each of these can disappoint you or be taken away, often in a matter of minutes. Do not make the mistake of relying on them. They may seem fine for the moment, but they cannot really help. Plants of all kinds come and go; the Lord alone remains the same, and He says to us, “I, even I, am He that comforts you” (Isa. 51:12).

The Lord was showing Jonah, by comparison, that if a plant could make Jonah this glad, how overjoyed must God be because of the salvation of Nineveh. Unhappily, Jonah did not get the point, and God had to teach Jonah another lesson.

The Lesson of the Worm, Jonah 4:7

“But God appointed a worm when dawn came the next day, and it attacked the plant and it withered” (Jonah 4:7). The worm is the ninth miracle, and the third of the prepared things. Early the next morning, perhaps while Jonah still slept, the prepared worm went to work on Jonah’s plant. Most of you have seen the great damage worms or caterpillars can do to a plant. They may riddle the leaves with holes or even strip off all foliage, leaving only the stem. This worm, by God’s command, destroyed the entire plant, possibly by gnawing on its roots. Jonah’s comfort was completely gone. See now what I meant when I said we are not to look to people or things for help?

Explanation of the Worm

We are sure to get into trouble when we rely on props and not on God. As we said, each prop or plant can be knocked out or removed. Our own little world may seem to crumble around us, as did Jonah’s plant, but wait! God is still there! His Word is still there, as are the doctrines we have learned! And life has to go on. The worm reminds us of the many trials which God allows to come into our lives. Are you prepared for lessons like these by knowing verses such as 1 Corinthians 10:13 or 1 Peter 5:7, or are you going to be like Jonah?

How easy it would have been for Jonah to come out of his shelter of self-pity and back into the will of God. Yet he was not ready to submit to God’s will, and miracle number ten had to happen before Jonah finally came to his senses. School was not out for Jonah yet. He had another class to attend. So let’s have him move over and make room for us. Then we, too, can profit from his experience.

The Lesson of the East Wind, Jonah 4:8

“And it came about when the sun came up that God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on

Jonah’s head so that he became faint and begged with *all* his soul to die, saying, ‘Death is better to me than life.’” The fourth prepared thing on our list, and the last miracle, is the well-known Eastern Sirocco, an extremely hot wind which withers everything in its path (Ezek. 17:10b). It was a real “scorcher,” we would say today. The sun beat down mercilessly on Jonah’s head, and he fainted from exhaustion and hopelessness. “What a relief death would be right now,” he thought, wishing out loud. His was a case of ‘give-up-itis.’ If things were not going his way, why bother to keep on living?

How differently the Apostle Paul thought when difficulties came his way. He was imprisoned, but unlike Jonah, he was content with whatever came along in God’s plan for his life (Phil. 4:11–12). Paul applied the Bible doctrine in his soul, saying “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13). Jonah, on the other hand, felt the sting of God’s discipline because he refused to apply doctrine and wallowed in his self-pity. And so he hears God ask, “Do you have good reason to be angry about the plant?” (Jonah 4:9).

What amazing grace that God should bother to get Jonah’s opinion! But Jonah had his eyes on himself and snapped back at God rudely, “I have good reason to be angry, even to death” (Jonah 4:9b). How childish of him! He is ‘spitting mad.’ In fact, he practically says, “I’m so mad I could die!”

It is then that God drives His lesson home. What a rebuke to the runaway, disobedient prophet! “Then the LORD said, ‘You had compassion on the plant for which you did not work, and *which* you did not cause to grow, which came up overnight and perished overnight. And should I [God] not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know *the difference* between their right and left hand [children], as well as many animals?’” (Jonah 4:10–11). If Jonah could be grieved, even willing to die over a measly, inanimate plant, how much more would God grieve over the destruction of Nineveh? Do you understand what God said to Jonah? “If you have become attached to that gourd which served you and gratified you, and yet you did not plant it, you did not water it, you did not tend it or prune it, you did not have a thing to do with it, if you can love that gourd, cannot I love and have compassion on people whom I have created—people for whom Christ will die? If you are willing to die for a gourd, can I not die for those I love?”

God’s love for His creatures is so great we can scarcely understand it. He created them. He provides for them and keeps them. He has given these human beings immortal (deathless) souls—souls which need salvation and need the Savior. Now that these Ninevites were saved, they had become spiritually alive and they could never be separated from God (Rom. 8:38–39). God’s love includes all people, regardless of race or color. Why, God has compassion even for the animals, as we have seen in Jonah chapter 3, and also here, at the end of chapter 4.

The End of the Book

I want you to notice the strange way our book ends: “as well as many animals.” To us it would seem that the last verse of chapter 3 would have made a much better closing sentence. It would have shown that the Ninevites lived happily ever after. But did they? Wait, and I will tell you in just a minute. But first we want to discover why the book leaves off with such a sudden ending.

Think of the book as a whole. It describes a quarrel between God and Jonah, a quarrel in which up to now Jonah always wanted the last word. In writing this book, Jonah lets us see his poor attitude toward the Word of God. He tells us what he thought and what he said. By the end of the book, God’s lesson has come through loud and clear. Jonah is now a prepared prophet, ready to look at life from God’s viewpoint. His quarrel with God has ended with God’s victory. God has the last word, and nothing more can be said. The Book of Jonah could easily be the greatest missionary challenge in the whole Bible. Its message? Exactly the same as that of 2 Peter 3:9: “The Lord is . . . not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” And how can people hear of God’s love and His offer of salvation? Someone must go and tell them (Rom. 10:14–17).

Could that someone be you? Are you willing to say, as did Isaiah, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isa. 6:8b)? The Lord does not depend on us, but it pleases Him to choose prepared people, believers who know doctrine and have learned to walk in fellowship with Him. Are you prepared and ready to do His will? Or would you rather stay put under your nice, cozy little plant, with your books, your toys, and your television programs, all snug and comfy at home?

Are you not yet prepared? Well, what are you waiting for? The teaching of the Word is available to you. Believers must never stand still or go backwards. They are commanded to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18a). If you do not take in God’s Word, you will become a spiritual weakling, unable to do anything that counts for the Lord.

The End of a City

What actually became of the Ninevites? The sad ending to this story was written some 100 to 150 years after Jonah’s time. It is found in the Book of Nahum, where we learn that the people of Nineveh who had lived in Jonah’s day failed to pass the message of grace down to their children and grandchildren. So God sent another messenger to tell them that He would utterly destroy them, and He did.

Nineveh saw terrible warfare and was wiped out with fire. The huge city walls crumbled and washed away when the floodgates opened due to heavy rains. The enemy entered the city and destroyed or stole what was left. The proud city of Nineveh fell. Today, Nineveh’s location is

marked by two enormous mounds of earth in an immense area of ruins. The modern city of Mosul, Iraq stands near the site where once stood the great palace of the king. Nineveh lives on only in ancient history books as a warning of God’s judgment, yet also as a reminder that grace always comes before judgment.

What God Wants Me to Know

Right now you can receive God’s forgiveness of sin and gift of eternal life by believing on Him whom God has sent—the Lord Jesus Christ (John 6:29). Turn with me to John 3:16–18, then to verse 36. Let’s read them together: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. . . . He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” Now is the time to decide your eternal future. Will it be salvation or condemnation?

Let’s look back and see if we can think our way through the Book of Jonah. We can use the chart on the next page to discuss events and miracles in this wonderful book.

Chapter 1: What can you remember in that chapter? Yes, God’s call and command to Jonah, Jonah’s running away from responsibility, the storm at sea, the casting of the lots, Jonah being tossed overboard, the sailors’ recognition of God’s essence, and last of all, Jonah’s miraculous preservation in the fish.

Chapter 2: Jonah’s three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, his confession and prayer, and lastly his deliverance from the fish.

Chapter 3: Jonah’s second call from God, Jonah’s work in Nineveh, the salvation of the Ninevites, and God’s mercy in sparing the city.

Chapter 4: Jonah’s happiness under the plant, his anger and self-pity when the worm destroys the plant, and the east wind that brings the sting of God’s discipline. We saw God’s love and compassion for all His creatures and learned of His challenge to go and tell His message of salvation.

Conclusion to Our Search

Well, we have made our last search for hidden treasures in Jonah. It has taken us back into the far distant past and shown us what eternity holds for the saved—eternal life, and for the lost—eternal condemnation. We have traveled through much of the Bible. Our search in Jonah is over, but it certainly should not be our last search in this book or in the Bible. There are many treasures in God’s Word, many adventures and much knowledge for all who go on mining

out the truths God has prepared for them that love Him (1 Cor. 2:9–12). Go on searching the Word every day. It will be most rewarding for you. You will have the joy of discovery and establish a wonderful habit in your Christian life. But do not stop there! Become a doer of the Word, a truly happy believer who carries out the marvelous plan God has for his life (Eph. 4:15; Col. 3:1; James 1:25; 2 Pet. 3:18).

Memory Verse

“Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’” (Isa. 6:8)

BOOK OF JONAH				
	CHAPTER 1	CHAPTER 2	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 4
EVENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God’s call to Jonah • Jonah flees • The storm • The casting of lots • Jonah thrown overboard • The sailors’ respect of God • Jonah swallowed by the fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three days and nights • Confession and prayer • Deliverance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jonah’s second call from God • Jonah in Nineveh • Salvation of the city • God’s mercy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jonah’s anger • Jonah sulks • Jonah learns a lesson
TEN MIRACLES	(1) God hurled a storm into the ocean (verse 4) (2) The casting of lots (verse 7) (3) A calm sea (verse 15) (4) A prepared fish (verse 17a) (5) The preservation of Jonah in the fish (verse 17b)	(6) The deliverance of Jonah out of the fish (verse 10)	(7) The Ninevites saved (verse 5a)	(8) A prepared gourd (verse 6) (9) A prepared worm (verse 7) (10) A prepared east wind (verse 8)

Chapter Twenty-Four

Thanksgiving: How to Be Thankful

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Thanksgiving: How to Be Thankful—Luke 17:11–19

B. Lesson Title: The Thankful Leper

C. Story Objective:

Thankfulness toward God should be a constant mental attitude in every believer. If this attitude is present, it will express itself in praise and thanksgiving. Sadly this is not always the case, and we need to be reminded, yes, even commanded by the Word, both to be thankful and to give thanks. Just as we are taught from childhood to say thank you to those around us, so we must be taught to thank God for all things He has done and continues to do for us.

How necessary such teaching is can be seen from the Bible account of the healing of the ten lepers. God's grace was extended to each of them, yet only one out of the ten remembered to thank and praise God for His mercy.

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: contagious, leper, speculation
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Continually being thankful is the right attitude (Heb. 13:15).
 - b. Always be thankful for all things (Eph. 5:20).
 - c. Commanded by the Word to be thankful (Col. 3:17; 1 Thess. 5:18).
 - d. Learn to be thankful from studying the Word (Ps. 100:4; 107:8).
 - e. Lesson of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11–19).

E. *Source Book* Keywords: miracles (heals ten lepers), thanksgiving

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: none
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: "In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thess. 5:18)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON THE THANKFUL LEPER

The Thanksgiving holiday is a special time with your family, and I bet you are looking forward to a big dinner of turkey and dressing, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie. And, of course, you are looking forward to getting out of school for a few days. You should be very thankful that you have all these things. Are you? Let us find out what the Bible says about giving thanks.

Perhaps it will surprise you to know that giving thanks is part of God's plan for your life. Turn to your memory verse, 1 Thessalonians 5:18. Did you know that God has commanded believers to give thanks? In fact, it is the will of God that you give thanks in everything. We are not naturally thankful. How often does your mother have to remind you, "Did you say thank you?" Most of the time you did not. We have to be taught to say thank you. But even though we learn to *say* thank you, too often we are guilty of not really meaning it. Inside you may be thinking, "I don't like that, but I have to *say* I do!" True thankfulness is first of all 'thankfulness.' We must think thankfulness as well as say it. If you think thankfulness, you will express thanksgiving.

Your parents teach you how to *say* thank you, but God's Word teaches us how to *be* thankful. We are to have an attitude of continual thankfulness. The pilgrims celebrated a feast of thanksgiving because they knew God's Word and were truly thankful for all things in life. Our holiday sets aside one day a year to remind us that we should be thankful at all times. I wonder if when you woke up this morning you were truly thankful you were still alive? It is only by God's grace that we are given one more day to live. None of us deserve to live at all. Do you remember to thank the Lord that you have food and a home and parents—and even school? You know, many boys and girls do not have these. And above all, are you thankful for the "indescribable gift," the Lord Jesus Christ, and His Word? "Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (2 Cor. 9:15).

All right, now let me ask you something else: Were you thankful when you had to take that hard test, or when you hurt yourself, or when you could not do something you wanted to? No? Well, what did 1 Thessalonians 5:18 say? In *everything* give thanks. This includes the hard times and unpleasant surroundings, not just nice things, or times when things are going well. When you learn to do this, you have learned true thankfulness, "always giving thanks for all things" (Eph. 5:20a).

There is a reason why the believer in Jesus Christ can be thankful even though everything around him is going wrong, and that is because things only *seem* to be going

wrong. God takes all of these bad and unpleasant things and makes them work out for good in your life. He wants you to look at Him instead of the bad things around you; and when you do, you see only the good. The Lord "daily bears our burden" (Ps. 68:19), not only on the days things are going well for you, but *every day*! When you learn who God is and what He does for you every day, you cannot be any other way but thankful. You understand why you must be thankful in all things. But don't forget, you must *learn* who God is and what He does for you through studying His Word. Thankless believers are ignorant believers.

God's Word tells us a story of ten people for whom the Lord did a very wonderful thing. Were they thankful? Let us see. Turn to Luke 17:11–19.

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, and He again went through Samaria (Luke 17:11), as He did the day He met the Samaritan woman (John 4:5–39). Do you think He knew of someone else who needed His life-giving message? Jesus knows all things, and He knew about a group of ten men who wished they might see Him. What does Luke 17:12 say about these ten men? Yes, they were lepers.

These men had a disease called leprosy for which there was no cure. Besides that, it was contagious, like measles or mumps. People were so afraid of catching leprosy that those who had it were forced to leave their homes and live outside the city, far away from other people. Even small children with leprosy had to live outside of the city walls. No one would go near the lepers. Wherever the lepers walked, they had to hold up their hands and shout, "Unclean! Unclean!" to warn others (Lev. 13:45). What sad, lonely lives these poor lepers lived! Many of them never saw their loved ones again.

Health care in those days was much different from today. There were no hospitals, very few doctors, and not many medicines. There was little hope for people with incurable diseases. It was no wonder that great multitudes of people followed Jesus around hoping to be healed of some sickness or to watch Him heal others. His fame was spread all over Palestine. The ten lepers had heard of this One who could help them, but how could they ever hope to see Him? They must have talked about the Lord Jesus who had done so many wonderful miracles.

Just before Jesus entered the little village near where they lived, the ten lepers saw Him coming. As they always had to do, they called out, "Unclean! Unclean!" But to their amazement, this Man kept right on coming toward them. Was He not afraid of catching leprosy? Soon He was close enough so that they could see His face. Why, it was the

very One they had hoped to see! "Jesus, Master," they all cried at once. "Have mercy on us!" What were they asking? To be healed, of course.

They did not ask Him if He could heal them. They knew He could, if only He would. "Mercy" is the grace of God in action. Would He show His grace to them and heal them? Jesus knew all about these lepers. He knew that most of them would think only of themselves if He should heal them. They would go on their way, back to their homes and loved ones, with never another thought about the One who had done so much for them. Yet in spite of that, He healed them all. Did His grace go into action? It certainly did!

God's grace is offered to all in salvation as well. Even though He knew many people would not accept Him as Savior, the Lord Jesus died for everyone in the world. Jesus stopped and looked at these poor, helpless men. He did not say, "I will make you well." He did not give them some special medicine, He did not even touch them. He only said, "Go and show yourselves to the priests" (Luke 17:14). He did not have to do anything but say a word. The power of His word made them well. When the ten lepers heard what the Lord Jesus said, they knew He had promised to heal them. How did they know?

In the Law that God had given to Moses many years before, He made provision for everything that concerned His people. His provision included the handling of lepers (Lev. 14). God Himself taught His people the laws of quarantine, that is, isolating people with a contagious disease so that it would not be passed along to others.

Leprosy was a very ugly disease. The skin turned white and rotted away in spots. Nobody knew any cure for it, but sometimes lepers were healed on their own. Before any healed lepers could return to society and to their homes, the Law stated that they had to visit the priest in the Temple. The priest was to decide if the disease was gone. Then the healed lepers would submit to a ritual as a sign they were cleansed of their leprosy (Lev. 14:2–32).

These ten lepers knew the Mosaic Law as it applied to them; they knew what it meant for Jesus to send them to the priest. It meant He would heal them.

All ten men obeyed the Lord's command and went off toward the city. As they went, something most wonderful happened to them. Their skin became as clear and new as a baby's. Perhaps one of the men suddenly noticed that his leprosy was gone. He stopped walking. He looked again. Yes, it was really true! We can imagine all of them stopping, looking at themselves, and each one exclaiming, "Me, too!" as he discovers that his awful disease was completely healed. Suddenly one leper realized that he had forgotten something. Quickly he turned and ran back to where the Lord Jesus was standing. While he ran, he kept praising God with a loud voice. He was just shouting for joy, he was so happy. He threw himself down before the Lord Jesus. He came to do now what he had forgotten to do before—to say "thank you" (Luke 17:15–16). He was truly

thankful in his mind, and that thankfulness had to be expressed.

I am sure that the Lord was happy to see this thankful man. What a day of thanksgiving this must have been for him. Then the Lord Jesus asked the man a question: "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they?" (Luke 17:17). Of the entire group of ten lepers, only one remembered to thank and praise God for His grace.

What God Wants Me to Know

The other nine men were so anxious to have the priest in the Temple pronounce them well so that they could go back to their families, they did not think about God's kindness toward them and His answering their plea for mercy. God wants us come to Him any time we need His help, day or night (Ps. 34:15). He is always ready to hear us and take care of us. But if you want the Lord to hear you when you call to Him for help, you must come to Him with the attitude of thanksgiving (Ps. 100:4; Phil. 4:6). This is one of the steps of correct prayer. The first step is rebound; thanksgiving is the second. Few of us forget to ask for things, but many of us forget to be thankful for them. Thinking thankfulness should be a habit and pattern in your life.

It is so much easier to get into the habit of whining and complaining over disappointments than it is to establish the habit of giving thanks. How do you make being thankful a habit? First, you must remember that complaining and thanklessness are sins (Num. 11:1; Eph. 5:4; Jude 16). What should you do, then, if you find yourself complaining instead of thanking the Lord? You must rebound using 1 John 1:9. Why is it a sin to complain? Because it means that you do not believe the promises of God; you do not believe He is taking perfect care of you and working out all things for your own good. It also means that you do not appreciate the good things God does for you every day.

After you rebound, the next step in making thanksgiving a habit is to learn in God's Word just what He has done and is doing for you. I want you to look up some verses and think about what they teach you to be thankful for. Second Corinthians 9:15 (the gift of Jesus Christ to all mankind); 1 John 1:9 (God's faithfulness in forgiving our sins); Jeremiah 33:3 (answers to prayer); John 14:26 (the Holy Spirit as our Helper); Romans 5:17 (God's righteousness to us at salvation); Ephesians 2:8 (grace gift of salvation); John 1:16 (the grace of God); Jeremiah 31:3 (the love of God); James 1:17 (all things provided by God); Psalm 119:143 (times of trouble or difficulty); Deuteronomy 10:17 (who and what God is); 1 Thessalonians 2:13 (the Word of God); Philemon 1:4–5 (other believers); Colossians 1:17 (God the Son holds our universe together); Psalm 31:15 (God holds our life in His hand); Deuteronomy 31:6 (the faithfulness of God, He will never leave us or forsake us); Philippians 4:19 (God supplies all our needs); Joel 2:26 (plenty of food).

This is only a start, but “if you know these things, you are blessed if you do them” (John 13:17). Another way to show your thankfulness for what God has done for you is to share it with others, telling them that He can and will do the same for them. If you are always thankful, it will show in your life and you will praise and glorify God by your words and actions.

In Luke 17:19 of our story, Jesus said to the one thankful leper, “Rise, and go your way; your faith has made you well.” What did Jesus mean? Well, He was talking about a sickness far worse than leprosy. Do you know what this sickness is? It is sin-sickness, a sinful condition into which we are all born. “Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so [spiritual] death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). No medicine, no doctor, no hospital can heal sin-sickness. The terrible thing about this sickness is that all people are born with it (Rom. 3:23). Just as lepers were unclean, so our sinful condition makes us unclean also. We are unclean to God. The Bible says that we are all “like one who is unclean” (Isa. 64:6). We can scrub with soap and water, but it will not wash away this awful sin stain (Jer. 2:22).

Sin-sickness bars us from God’s home in heaven and from a relationship with Him, just as lepers were sent away from their homes and loved ones. But God knew of our sad and hopeless condition. Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save sinners (Luke 19:10; 1 Tim. 1:15). In His grace, Jesus died for all sinners; He bore the terrible punishment for our sins that separate us from God (Isa. 53:5). Because of His substitutionary spiritual death for us, we can be healed of our sin-sickness and drawn together with God. We do not have to ask Him for mercy, for He has already had mercy on us (Titus 3:5). By a simple act of faith in Christ, we can be saved.

All the ten lepers had heard of Jesus. They must have known He was the Son of God, because only God can perform such miracles. Yet, most of them went away and did not glorify Him as God: “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened” (Rom. 1:21). In their negative volition they departed from the Lord Jesus and did not return. Do not let this be true of you. You have heard about God and about salvation through Jesus Christ. Now which way is your volition going? Only one leper had positive volition toward Jesus Christ. Jesus showed him that the sin-sickness in his soul needed cleansing, too. The leper believed that Jesus could do that as well as heal his body, so he believed in Him right then and there. That is why Jesus said that his faith had made him well. Now the leper was healed in both body and soul.

Will you show your thankfulness that the Lord Jesus Christ died for your sins by believing in Him as your Savior? He will make you well too, just as soon as you believe in Him. And from the moment you believe, every day can be thanksgiving day for you!

Memory Verse

“In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” (1 Thess. 5:18)

Chapter Twenty-Five

Christmas: Good News of a Great Joy

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Christmas: Good News of a Great Joy—Luke 2:1–38

B. Lesson Title: The Good News Proclaimed and Received

C. Story Objective:

Although well-known and beloved, the Christmas message is forever new and thrilling to every believer's heart. In it, God's grace toward mankind is expressed in the giving of His Son to redeem a sinful world (John 3:16). Formed in eternity past (Eph. 1:4), the plan of salvation came to fruition "when the fulness of the time came" (Gal. 4:4a), and God "sent forth His Son, born of a woman" (Gal. 4:4b), fulfilling the long-awaited promise of a Savior.

To those who anticipated His coming, the Savior's birth was indeed "good news of a great joy" (Luke 2:10), "TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:79).

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: symbolize
2. Doctrinal Concepts:

a. Birth of the Savior (Luke 2:1–7)

1) Angelic announcement to the shepherds (Luke 2:8–20)

2) Purpose of His birth

a) To die on the cross (Phil. 2:5–8)

b) To save from sin (Matt. 1:21; 1 Tim. 1:15)

c) To redeem His people (Gal. 4:5; Titus 2:14)

d) To bring peace with God (Eph. 2:16–17)

b. Dedication of the Holy Babe (Luke 2:21–22)

c. Adoration in the Temple by Simeon and Anna (Luke 2:25–38)

E. *Source Book* Keywords: Christ (birth, presentation in the Temple), Christmas

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals: none

2. Games, Songs, Worksheets

3. Memory Verse: "For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11)

4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON GOOD NEWS OF A GREAT JOY

All over the world, daily newspapers are printed to inform their readers of the latest happenings. It seems that most of the news is bad and often terrifying. Yet, no matter how big the news may be, the papers can do no more than announce it in great, big letters. But even today's big news is forgotten as soon as the next news story breaks.

This is not true of the biggest and best news story the world has ever heard. It is just as good and new today as it was the day it was first announced. And how did God choose to make the "good news" known? Listen, and you will find out as we watch the 'Editor' of the Bible, God the Holy Spirit, tell of the great event that meant the fulfillment of God's salvation plan.

Setting the Scene

One special night, over two thousand years ago, began just like any other. As darkness settled over the land of Palestine, people left their work and went home to rest. But before this night was over, some would find more than rest for their bodies; they would find rest for their souls. In the town of Bethlehem, the inns were overflowing with travelers who had come from near and far. These travelers had returned to their hometown to be counted and taxed according to the law of the Roman Empire.

So it was that when Mary and Joseph finally arrived in Bethlehem, the city of David, every room had been taken, and the innkeepers had already hung out their "No Vacancy" signs. But Mary and Joseph were thankful to find shelter for the night in a stable. There, in the quiet warmth of the stable, a Son was born to the virgin Mary. What a lowly place of birth for the Son of God! The Lord could have chosen a palace and the softest cradle for His bed, but He had left His riches in heaven to put on the human body God the Father had prepared for Him (Heb. 10:5b). He who is the Lord of the universe had "emptied Himself, . . . being made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7; John 1:14). He had become a human being like you and me. What news! God in the flesh! God visits man! Salvation's plan come true! What headlines that would make in the 'Jerusalem Herald'! But God had not chosen to tell the news of His Son's birth in the papers of that day. He planned something quite different, something spectacular!

While Mary tenderly wrapped the Baby in cloth normally used for burial, and laid Him upon the hay in the manger, God's messengers were on their way to earth from heaven. Mary looked down on her firstborn Son as her

own, and yet not her own! She called His name softly for the first time—"Jesus," which means "Savior." Joseph stood by in wonder, and they both remembered the angel's words, "You shall call his name Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Unlike all others, Jesus was born to die. His very name and the clothes in which He was wrapped cast the shadow of the cross over His little manger bed.

The Shepherds Receive the Good News

Out in the fields, in the still of the night, some shepherds stood watch over their flock to guard them from the dangers of the night—thieves and wild animals. Why were these sheep out in the field, while all others had been brought into the safety of the sheepfold? We know from the Mishnah, the historical records kept by the scribes and the Pharisees, that these were no ordinary sheep. They belonged to the Temple and had to be kept separate from all other sheep. They had been chosen for their perfection, grazing year-round in the open fields outside of Bethlehem, not in the pastures of the wilderness as did all the other sheep. These sheep would be sacrificed in the Temple to symbolize the sacrifice of Jesus Christ who would die for the sins of the people.

Not only were these sheep different, but also their shepherds. They, too, belonged to the Temple. Surely the shepherds talked during the long night hours, since they must not drop off to sleep while looking after the sheep. Maybe they talked about the time to come, when no more sacrifices would be needed, when God's own Lamb would come to take away the sins of the world. It could well be that the shepherds quoted verses to each other, for the Jews knew all about their Savior from the records of the Old Testament prophets. "All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him," one of the shepherds might say (Isa. 53:6). And another might say, "Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth" (Isa. 53:7b). Still another would say, "By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living, For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke *was due*?" (Isa. 53:8). Then they would shake their heads and wonder, "To think that He would do this for us! Oh, that we might live to see that day!"

And see that day they did! For suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to them, dazzling in the brightness of God's glory. The shepherds stared at the angel with fear and amazement. And then they heard the angel say, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this *will be* a sign for you [this is how you will know Him]: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths, and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10–12). Then "a multitude of the heavenly host [countless elect angels in the Lord's army]" joined the first angel and praised God (Luke 2:13). The heavens rang with their voices: "Glory to God [the Father] in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased" (Luke 2:14).

With whom is God pleased? Look up Romans 5:1 and Hebrews 11:6. Do you know now with whom God is pleased? Yes, with those who believe in His Son. Those are the ones who have peace with God and peace within themselves.

As miraculously as they had appeared, the angels vanished from sight. The heavenly 'newspapers' had been folded and taken back into heaven, and the night was once again dark and silent around them. The shepherds looked at each other. Why, they had just heard the very thing they had hoped for—good news of great joy, joy such as the world had never known before! They said, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us" (Luke 2:15b). The thought of guarding their sheep was forgotten, as the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem.

The shepherds reached the manger and found all as the angel had said. The Baby was lying in a manger in the stable, a fitting place for the Lamb of God. They dropped to their knees to worship the Savior of the world. "And when they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child" (Luke 2:17). The news was too good to keep to themselves. This was the news the world needed to hear, and they must share it with others.

Simeon and Anna Hear the Good News

Quite possibly the shepherds told the wonderful news in the Temple when they brought their sheep in for sacrifice. And there, too, God had people who were waiting eagerly to hear the joyous tidings. They were Simeon and Anna, two very old people who longed for the day when they would see God's promised Savior. They must have been glad to hear the report of the shepherds. Simeon knew that he would see the Christ-child before he died, for the Holy Spirit had promised so (Luke 2:26).

Eight days later Mary and Joseph brought the Baby into the Temple to dedicate Him to God. Now the Holy Spirit directed old Simeon to go to the Temple. Simeon recognized the family at once. He reached for the Infant, and, cradling Him in his arms, old Simeon praised God for His faithfulness. "For my eyes have seen Thy salvation, Which

Thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Thy people Israel," he exclaimed joyfully (Luke 2:30–32). He knew that on this Baby depended the salvation of the world! How sad to think that so many did not want God's salvation (John 1:11).

The widow, Anna, "was advanced in years" (Luke 2:36). She came into the Temple just as Simeon finished speaking, and like Simeon, she recognized the Savior and praised and thanked God for His coming. She "continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption [salvation] of Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38).

What God Wants Me to Know

Let us review once more how God made the "good news of a great joy" known. He sent angels to announce the Savior's birth. He used lowly shepherds who knew the Word. He chose an old man and an old woman, Simeon and Anna, to tell of His plan of salvation. Did you notice that not one of God's messengers dragged their feet? The angels flew swiftly. The shepherds said, "Let us go straight to Bethlehem" to see the Savior, then ran in haste to tell what they had seen. Simeon came when the Holy Spirit told him to come and did not delay. He saw the Lord and made Him known. Anna spoke of Him to all, readily and without hesitation.

Down through the years God has used others to spread the Good News, which is never outdated but always new. Now He wants to use you. You have learned all about God's plan of salvation. What better time is there to tell others the Good News of salvation than Christmastime? People know that Christ was born in a manger, but do they know why? What a perfect opportunity to tell them that He is the Lamb of God who came to take away sin! People know that He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, but few know that these were actually grave clothes normally used to wrap the dead. This shadowed His death on the cross that would occur 33 years later.

God's "good news of a great joy" is for "all the people." Are you doing your part in making it known? What does the Good News mean to you? Can you think of a better gift to receive this Christmas than the gift of eternal life? Are you still among those who have not received Him (John 1:11b)? Would you like to be among those who have received Him and became "the children of God" by believing in His name (John 1:11–12)? To all who will accept God's gift of salvation, He says, "I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish" (John 10:28a). God loves you and gave you His Son. Will you refuse or accept His gift?

Memory Verse

"For today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."
(Luke 2:11)

Chapter Twenty-Six

Easter: Angels and the Resurrection

OVERVIEW

A. Subject: Easter: Angels and the Resurrection—Matthew 27:50—28:10

B. Lesson Title: The Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ

C. Story Objective:

The elect angels had the joy of announcing to mankind the events of the incarnation and glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ. As angels observed each successive phase of the plan of salvation, they learned about the wisdom of God's grace to an undeserving race of fallen humanity.

Among the resurrection appearances of our Lord, one of the first was to the fallen angels in Tartarus, who had been cut off from all communication with heaven and earth since their incarceration after the attempt to destroy true humanity (Gen. 6:1–7; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Christ's message to the fallen angels was not one of salvation, for they had already made their decision concerning that issue, but one of condemnation (Heb. 2:9–16; 1 Pet. 3:18–20). They heard of the defeat of Satan and of their own doom.

The emphasis of the story in this lesson is the part angels played in the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

D. Vocabulary and Doctrinal Concepts:

1. Vocabulary: vile
2. Doctrinal Concepts:
 - a. Resurrection narrative (Matt. 27:50—28:10)
 - b. Paradise, the compartment of Hades, where the soul of Christ resided during the three days and three nights (Luke 23:43; cf. Ps. 16:9–10)
 - c. Appearances on earth after the resurrection (John 20:1–18; Acts 1:3)
 - d. Angels after the ascension (Acts 1:9–11)

E. *Source Book* Keywords: angels (work of elect angels), cross (burial, resurrection, ascension, and session), Easter, resurrection

F. Activities:

1. Suggested Visuals:
2. Games, Songs, Worksheets
3. Memory Verse: “And the angel answered and said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said.’” (Matt. 28:5–6)
4. Opening and Closing Prayer

LESSON

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

All of His life the Lord Jesus Christ was beheld by (observed by) angels (1 Tim. 3:16). Both holy and evil angels watched the Lord Jesus in His earthly ministry. The holy angels were ready at any moment to come to His aid and to minister to Him. Did you know that more than twelve legions of holy angels, that is over sixty thousand angels, stood by in heaven and waited to hear an order from the Lord Jesus to come and destroy those who arrested Him and put Him on the cross (Matt. 26:53)? The call never came, because the Lord Jesus made the decision to go to the cross to die for our sins. He did not want the holy angels to rescue Him, for God's plan for us must come to pass as He had promised (Matt. 26:54). The angels had to stand back and do nothing. But I am sure that they must have been in agony to see Him being treated like a common criminal by those He created to glorify and to praise Him.

How it must have hurt the holy angels to watch vile men spitting at the Son of God and screaming, "You who *are going to* destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matt. 27:40). But the angels could do nothing unless the Lord gave them the order. Instead, they heard Him say, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34a). Angels could not strike His enemies in judgment while the Lord Jesus was forgiving them. They just watched in amazement to see the Son of God provide salvation for unworthy sinners.

The evil angels also watched, because if Christ died on that cross, their doom was sealed. On Satan's orders, they waited to see what they could do to change their fate. But neither good nor bad angels could do anything to keep the Lord Jesus from taking our place on the cross and bearing our sins on Himself. As the earth began to quake and the sky grew as dark as midnight, perhaps even the angels had to hide their faces while He was being punished for our sins.

The Veil of the Temple

When Christ's work on the cross was complete and He had dismissed His spirit, God the Father sent a sign to all the people: "And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook; and the rocks were split" (Matt. 27:51). God the Father caused an earthquake so violent that the very rocks broke in two. At the same time, "the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Matt. 27:51). What was this veil? It was the

curtain in the Tabernacle, sixty feet long and thirty feet wide, that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies where the presence of God dwelt above the two cherubim (Ex. 26:33b; Isa. 37:16). Figures of cherubim were embroidered on the veil as a reminder that sinful men cannot come into the presence of God without the blood of a sacrifice.

But now that the Lord Jesus Christ had become the once-and-for-all sacrifice for sin, the way into God's presence had been opened for all (John 14:6). The ritual of the Mosaic Law was removed; no longer would a priest need to come with sprinkled blood (Heb. 9:12). The great veil was ripped by God from top to bottom to show that Christ's work on the cross removed the barrier between God and man. Anyone can come to God by just believing that Jesus Christ died for his sins.

By nightfall, the body of Jesus had been taken down from the cross and buried in the tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea. The stone had been rolled in front of the entrance, and everyone had gone back to their homes. The friends of Jesus were in great sorrow, for they believed that all was over. They did not seem to remember His promise that He would rise again after three days, even though He had told them many times (Mark 8:31).

The enemies of Jesus Christ, however, did not forget (Matt. 27:62–66). They went to Pilate and said, "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I *am to* rise again.' Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure." Just think, they called the Lord of glory "that deceiver"! The Bible tells us that if they had known He was the Lord of glory, they would not have done what they did (1 Cor. 2:8). This is why He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34a). Pilate told the men they had permission to make the tomb as secure as they could. So "they set a seal on the stone" at the tomb entrance and placed soldiers by it to stand guard day and night (Matt. 27:66).

A Triumphal Announcement

Now, while all this was going on outside, what was going on inside the tomb? True, Jesus' body was lying there quite still and dead. But the Lord Jesus Christ had a soul and a spirit, just as we do. Where were they? Do you remember our chart of Hades from the story of Lazarus and the rich man? The Lord's spirit went to be with the Father

(Eccl. 12:7; Luke 23:46), while His soul went to Hades (Ps. 16:10; Luke 23:43; 1 Pet. 3:19).

Tartarus, the third section of Hades, is the location of the fallen angels that tried to destroy the human race by marrying “the daughters of men” (Gen. 6:1–2). These angels are imprisoned there, in thick darkness, cut off from any knowledge of what is going on in the world. They were hoping that Satan would win his battle by preventing the Lord Jesus from going to the cross, and thus free them from their prison. But it was not to be, for as soon as Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, He made a trip down to Tartarus to announce to them that Satan and his fallen angels had been defeated (1 Pet. 3:18–20a). The Lord Jesus did not go to the fallen angels to preach salvation. They had already made their decision. His message was one of judgment; their doom was sealed! For believers and the holy angels, it was a message of victory and triumph.

Angels at the Resurrection Day Events

After the three days and three nights had passed, Jesus rose from the dead just as He said He would. His spirit and soul rejoined His resurrected, glorified body in the tomb, and He arose by the combined power of the Father and Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11; Eph. 1:20). The tomb was still shut and sealed when Jesus arose and left the tomb. His body was no longer limited to the barriers of this earth.

At the tomb, the guards, thinking all along that His body was still in the grave, were suddenly startled by a great earthquake. Then, an angel from heaven whose “appearance was like lightning” came and rolled away the stone—not to let Jesus out, but to let the world see that He was risen indeed! The soldiers fainted from fright at this display of power and radiance (Matt. 28:2–4). If Jesus had not risen from the dead, He could not be our Savior. A dead person cannot save. By His resurrection from the dead, He conquered death. Now because He lives, we, too, will live—not just in our human bodies while on earth, but also in our resurrection bodies for all eternity.

After the guards fled, Mary Magdalene along with other women arrived to anoint the body of Jesus with spices. As soon as Mary Magdalene saw that the stone was rolled away from the tomb she thought immediately that the body had been stolen. Without looking further, she ran to tell this awful news to the disciples (John 20:1–2). But the other women proceeded into the tomb and were shocked and amazed to discover that the body of Jesus was gone, and two angels “in dazzling apparel” were there instead (Luke 24:3–4). Perhaps these angels shook their heads as the women entered the tomb and looked, not for a risen Christ, but for a dead body. How could they have forgotten that He had said He would rise from the dead? I am sure that angels shake their heads at us, too, when we forget the promises of God’s Word.

The women heard the joyful message of the angel: “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who

has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said” (Matt. 28:5b–6a). What good news! Then the angel instructed, “Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going before you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you” (Matt. 28:7). And as the women ran to tell His disciples, the Lord Jesus Himself met them on the way (Matt. 28:8–9).

In the meantime, Mary Magdalene found Peter and John and told them that the body of the Lord had been stolen out of the tomb (John 20:1–18). Of all the disciples, these two should have calmed Mary and reminded her of Christ’s promise to rise again; but they, too, became excited and raced to find out what had happened. God did not send an angel to tell Peter and John the good news. He wanted them to see something else and remember His promise on their own. Do you know what it was? Yes, the linen grave clothes or strips of cloth used to wrap the body of Jesus (John 20:5–7). If someone had stolen His body, His clothes and all would have been taken. Even if the grave clothes had been removed, they could not have been left as Peter and John saw them— still wrapped as though the body was in them! But the resurrection body of Jesus came right through the grave clothes leaving them in perfect form.

Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb and sorrowfully stooped down and looked inside at last. Two angels, one at the head and the other at the feet of where the body of the Lord had lain, asked her why she was weeping. Mary’s eyes were so full of tears, she did not seem to be startled when the angels spoke to her. She stepped back from the tomb to hear another voice ask her why she was weeping and for whom she was looking. Thinking it was the gardener, she asked Him to take her to the place where the body of Jesus was. “Mary!” the voice said. At this, Mary recognized the voice of her Lord and whirled around. “Teacher!” she cried, and she hugged Him with all her strength. And Jesus said to her, “Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God’” (John 20:17). In effect, Jesus was saying, “I want you to leave me now, Mary, and go to my disciples and tell them I am about to go back to heaven.” While Mary Magdalene would like to keep on clinging to Jesus and enjoying this moment, the plan of God must go on. She has a job to do. The message of His resurrection must be proclaimed.

The Ascension and Session

Then, after forty days, the time came for Jesus to go back to heaven. He gave the disciples His last message, then up, up He went into the clouds, to be seen no more. As He arrived in the presence of God the Father in the third heaven, I am sure that the angels held their breath. What would happen? No human being had ever entered into the Father’s presence before. Jesus is God, but He was now

also man. Would the Father accept a man in heaven? Much depended on this, because along with the Lord Jesus were the souls of all the believers who had died up to this time (Eph. 4:8–10). They were being transferred from Paradise to the presence of God in heaven. If Jesus were accepted, it would mean that the Father had accepted His sacrifice for sin, and believers, too, would be accepted.

God the Father said to the Lord Jesus, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND” (Heb. 1:13). Yes, His sacrifice for us was accepted. Jesus had made the way for mankind to live in the presence of God. I imagine the angels shouted for joy once again! They realized that heaven would be filled with glorified believers with resurrection bodies like that of the Son of God. The Lord did not forget the disciples left behind on the earth. He sent two angels down to say, “This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11b). This will be when our Lord returns at the Second Advent.

What God Wants Me to Know

As the God-man, our Lord is both deity and humanity in one person forever. The resurrection, ascension, and session all deal with the true humanity of Jesus Christ. Just as only the humanity of Christ could provide our salvation by receiving the judgment for our sins in His own body, so only the humanity of Christ could be resurrected, ascend, and sit at the right hand of God the Father. The Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, is glorified.

We learned that Jesus Christ has promised to return to the earth; but before His return at the Second Advent, He will call all the Church Age believers up to be with Him in heaven. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ when He calls, you will be in that resurrection and have eternal life forever with Him.

Those who do not believe in Jesus Christ will not go up in the resurrection with Church Age believers. There will be another resurrection for them called the “resurrection of judgment” (John 5:29). This will occur just before eternity begins. All unbelievers will be raised from their graves to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ. There will be no place found for them either in heaven or on earth (Rev. 20:11). They chose their own works instead of the work that the Lord Jesus did for them on the cross. Their works were human good and human good is never acceptable to God (Eccl. 7:20; Isa. 64:6). “According to their deeds” the unbelievers are cast alive into the lake of fire for all eternity (Rev. 20:12–15).

Do not be one of those people who hear this warning and then pay no more attention to it. If you ignore it now, one day it may be too late! “Now is ‘THE ACCEPTABLE TIME’, behold, Now is ‘THE DAY OF SALVATION’” (2 Cor. 6:2b). Will you believe right now? It’s your opportunity. You can offer a silent prayer right where you sit: “Father, I am trusting Christ as my Savior.” Will you do it? It’s up to you. You can have eternal life if you want it. “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved” (Acts 16:31a).

Memory Verse

“And the angel answered and said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said.’” (Matt. 28:5–6)

VISUAL AIDS



ABEL'S OFFERING



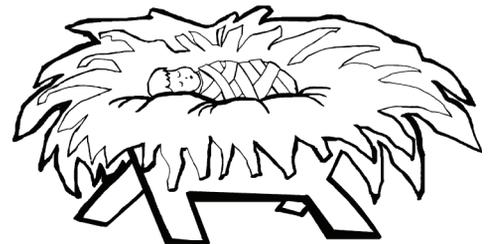
ABRAHAM



CAIN'S OFFERING



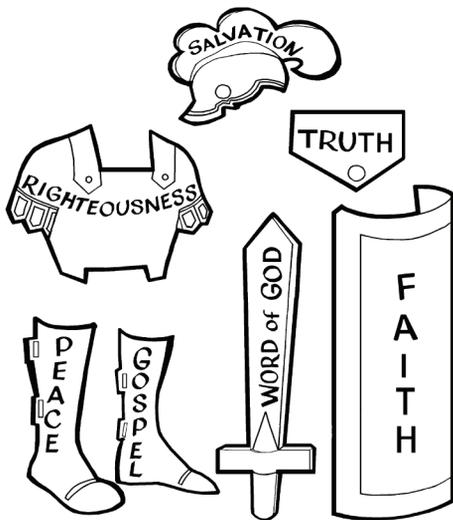
CHERUB



CHRIST IN THE MANGER



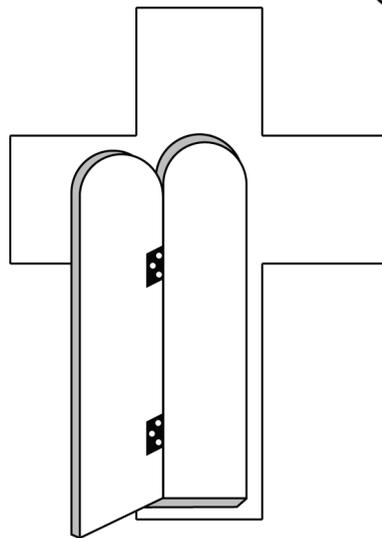
CHRIST AT THE RAPTURE



THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOR



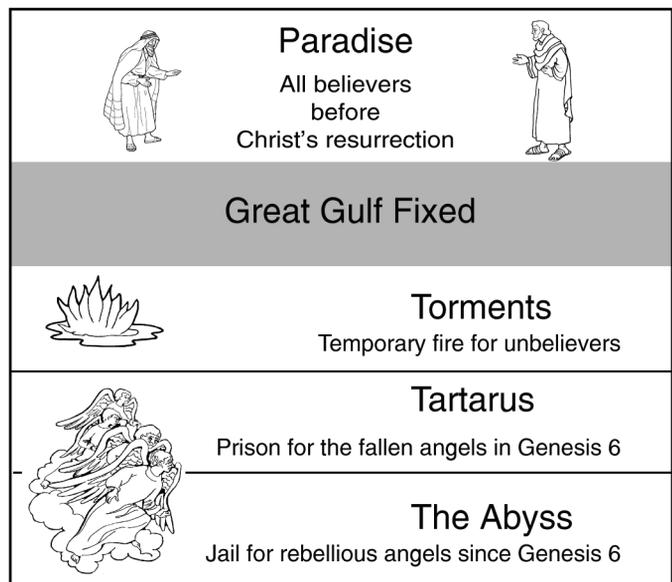
CHRIST IN SESSION



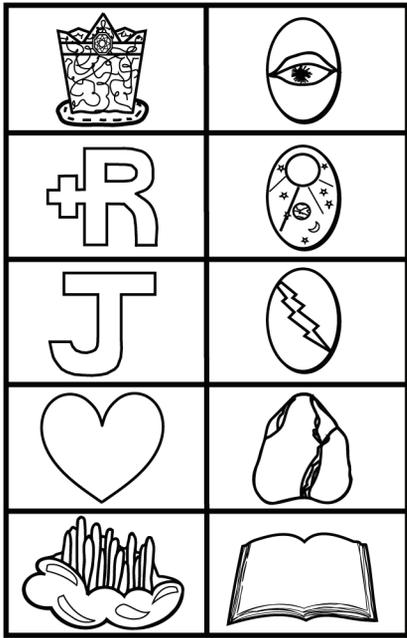
CROSS WITH OPEN DOOR



CHRIST ON THE CROSS



COMPARTMENTS OF HADES



ESSENCE BOX



ELECT ANGELS



GUARDIAN ANGEL



FALLEN ANGELS



INDWELLING OF
GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT



JONAH



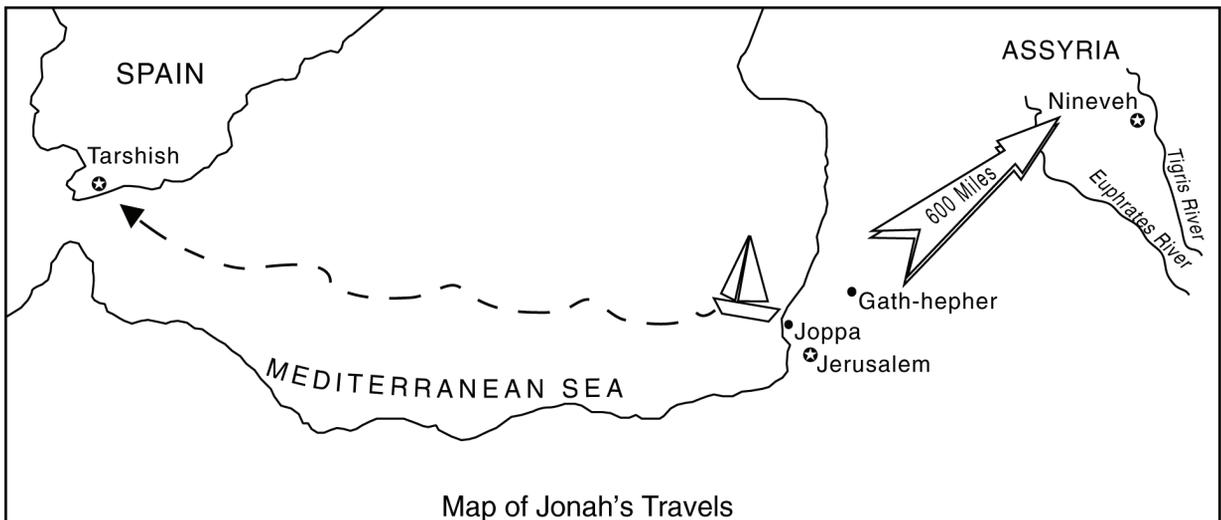
KING DAVID



LUCIFER



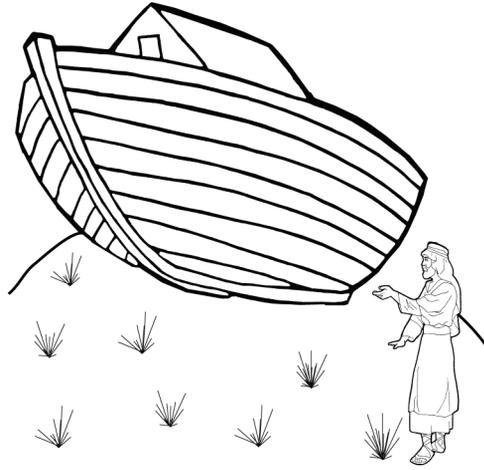
THE LAKE OF FIRE



Map of Jonah's Travels



MOSES



NOAH AND THE ARK



NOAH AND HIS FAMILY



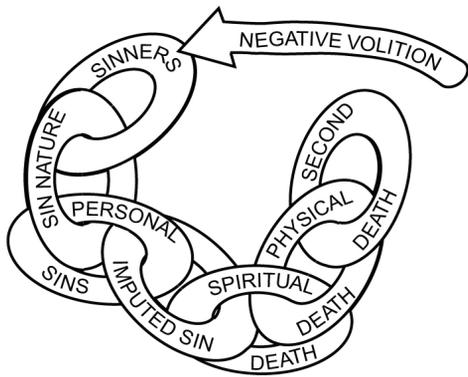
RICH MAN



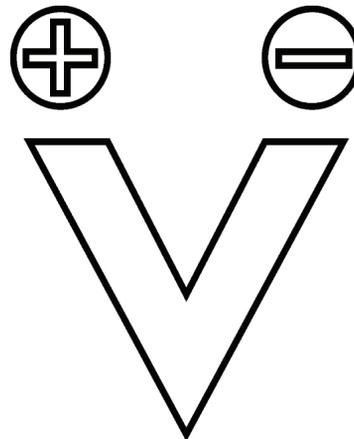
SATAN AFTER HIS FALL



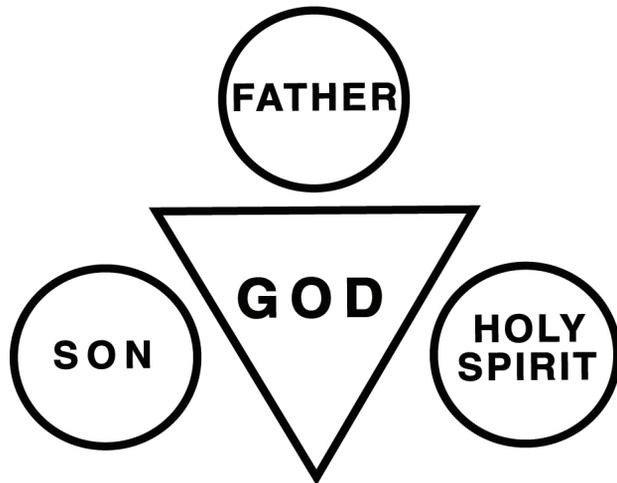
SERAPH



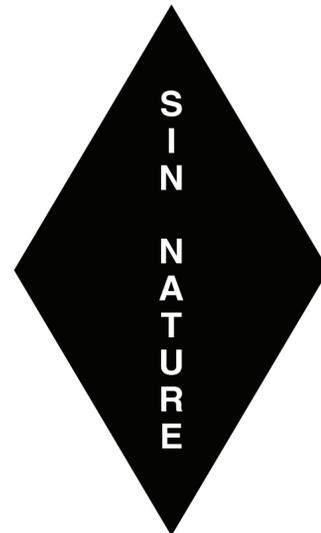
SIN CHAIN OF NEGATIVE VOLITION



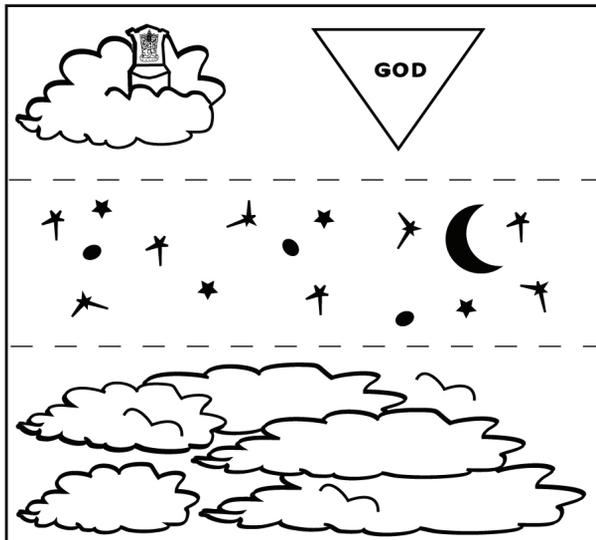
VOLITION



TRINITY



SIN NATURE

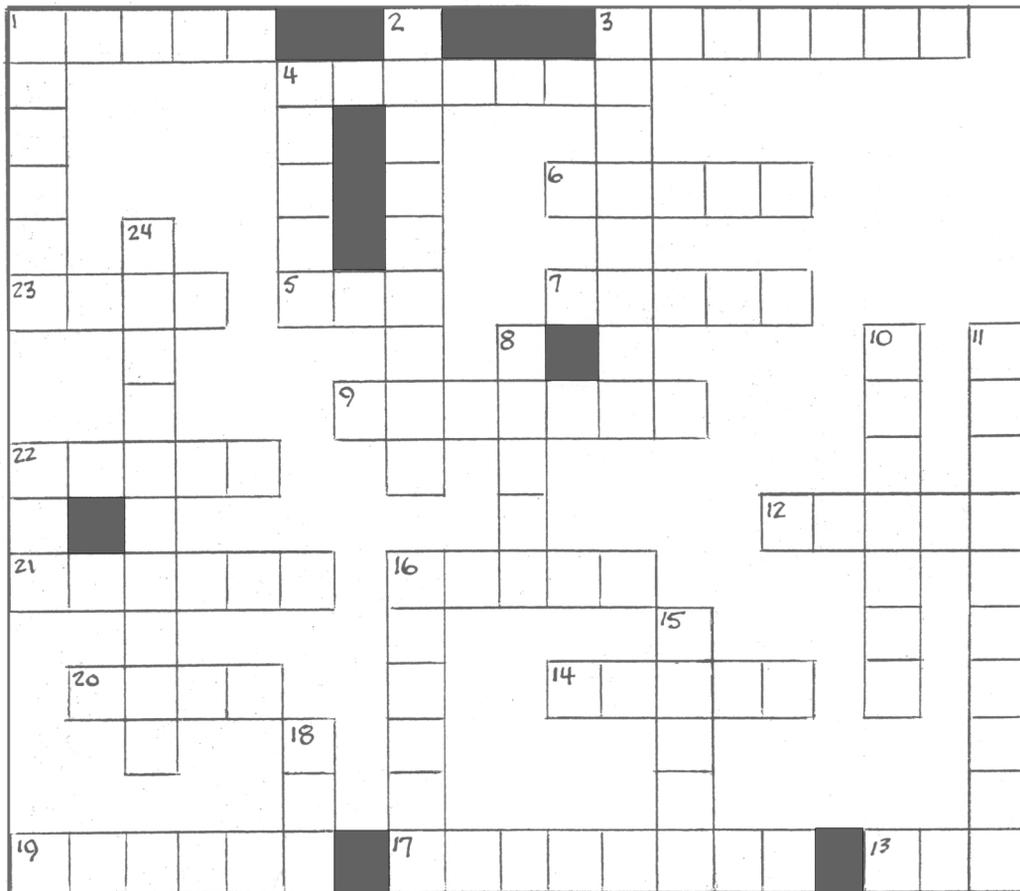


THE THREE HEAVENS



THE WOMAN AT THE WELL

Crossword Puzzle: ANGELS



ACROSS:

1. Another name for Satan (John 8:44)
3. What Satan is called when he rattles on us (Revelation 12:10)
4. Angels are _____ beings (Colossians 1:16)
5. Satan tempts us to _____
6. Job's illness (Job 2:7)
7. Weapon to resist Satan (Ephesians 6:16)
9. Satan's volition _____ against God
12. The first sin (1 Timothy 3:6, KJV)
13. First person Satan deceived
14. Satan has three _____ (Isaiah 14:12)
16. Angels like to _____ believers
17. Angels _____ to believers (Hebrews 1:14)
19. Lucifer guarded God's _____
20. Satan said, "I _____" five times (Isaiah 14:13-14)
21. Satan _____ men's minds (2 Corinthians 4:4)
22. Angels announced His birth
23. Goes about as a roaring _____ (1 Peter 5:8)

DOWN:

1. An angel protected him in the lions' den
2. Meaning of the word "angel"
3. Jesus is our _____ when Satan accuses us (1 John 2:1)
4. Place where Satan was defeated (Colossians 2:14-15)
8. Poses as an angel of _____ (2 Corinthians 11:14)
10. Satan's name before his fall (Isaiah 14:12, KJV)
11. Satan's final doom (3 words) (Revelation 20:10)
15. Another name for good angels (1 Timothy 5:21, KJV)
16. Angels learn the _____ of God from us (Ephesians 3:10)
18. Our eyes cannot _____ angels
22. A man Satan was allowed to test
24. Greater is He who is in you (2 words) (1 John 4:4)

Crossword Puzzle: JONAH

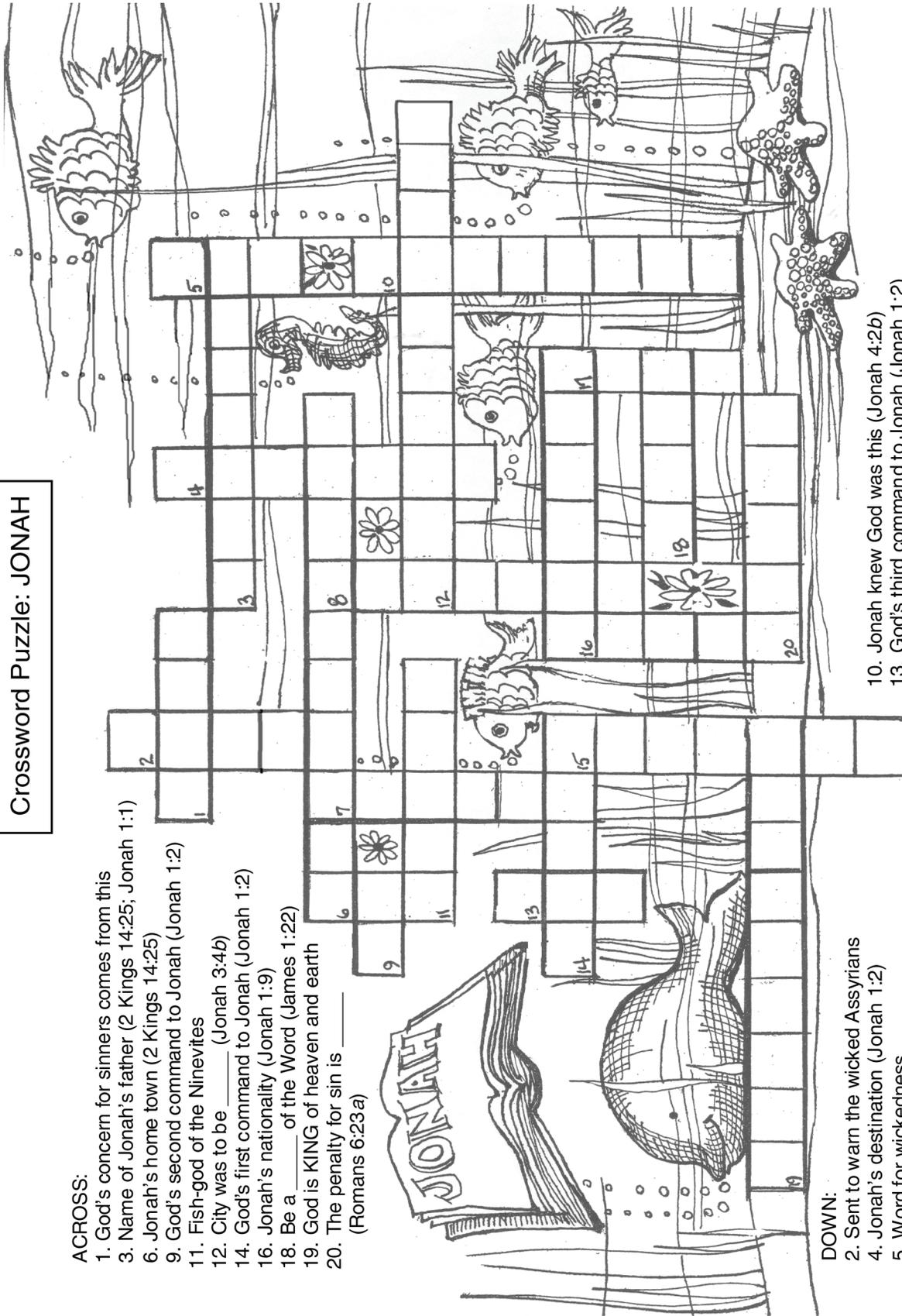
ACROSS:

1. God's concern for sinners comes from this
3. Name of Jonah's father (2 Kings 14:25; Jonah 1:1)
6. Jonah's home town (2 Kings 14:25)
9. God's second command to Jonah (Jonah 1:2)
11. Fish-god of the Ninevites
12. City was to be _____ (Jonah 3:4b)
14. God's first command to Jonah (Jonah 1:2)
16. Jonah's nationality (Jonah 1:9)
18. Be a _____ of the Word (James 1:22)
19. God is KING of heaven and earth
20. The penalty for sin is _____ (Romans 6:23a)

DOWN:

2. Sent to warn the wicked Assyrians
4. Jonah's destination (Jonah 1:2)
5. Word for wickedness
6. Another name for the Lord
7. Nineveh was close to this river (Genesis 2:14)
8. Jonah's job (Matthew 12:39)

10. Jonah knew God was this (Jonah 4:2b)
13. God's third command to Jonah (Jonah 1:2)
15. Everlasting
16. Thoroughly disliked
17. This came to Jonah (Jonah 1:1)



Answers to Crossword Puzzles

Angels (on page 177)

Across

1. devil
3. accuser
4. created
5. sin
6. boils
7. faith
9. decided
12. pride
13. Eve
14. falls
16. watch
17. minister
19. throne
20. will
21. blinds
22. Jesus
23. lion

Down

1. Daniel
2. messenger
3. Advocate
4. cross
8. light
10. Lucifer
11. lake of fire
15. elect
16. wisdom
18. see
22. Job
24. Holy Spirit

Jonah (on page 178)

Across

1. love
3. Amittai
6. Gath Hopher
9. go
11. Dagon
12. overthrown
14. arise
16. Hebrew
18. doer
19. sovereign
20. death

Down

2. Jonah
4. Nineveh
5. sin
6. God
7. Tigris
8. prophet
10. gracious
13. cry
15. eternal
16. hated
17. word

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