

# The Bible

## Advanced Bible Studies, Lesson 1 of 8

*"I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing" ([Hosea 8:12](#)).*

This is the beginning of a very important study. It will enable you to know the blessings of this life and what you must do for eternal salvation in the life which is to come. Those who do not have this knowledge are lost, but those who have this knowledge and do not act upon it are in a worse condition, for the Bible says;

*" . . the last state is become worse with them than the first. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them" ([2 Peter 2:20-21](#)).*

*"And that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. And to whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more." ([Luke 12:47-48](#)).*

Therefore, prepare yourself to receive these things gladly, with an open heart, and with all readiness of mind. If you will believe and obey, you will be greatly blessed.

This is a study of the Bible. If you do not have a Bible, do all within your means to secure one. It is the world's most amazing book. It took a longer time to write this book than any other book ever written, and it contains some of the oldest writings in the world. It has been translated into more languages than any other book, and it is the first book that was ever printed. The impact that it has had on the world is greater than any other book, and it has the power to change your life.

The Bible claims to be the word of God:

*"knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" ([2 Peter 1:20-21](#)).*

*"But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth..." ([1 Corinthians 2:12-13](#)).*

*"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)).*

While other writings may make this claim, only the Bible has evidence necessary for confirmation. For example, the Bible was written by about 40 men, on three different continents, in three different languages, over a period of 1,600 years. Some of these men were kings, some were captives, some were prophets, some were scribes, some were doctors, some were shepherds, some were scholars, some were fishermen. They were from all walks of life. Yet, when one puts all of their writing together, one has one book.

There are 39 books in the Old Testament, 27 books in the New Testament, 66 books in all; yet, when one puts them all together they are one book. No single book of the Bible is complete without the whole, and the whole is incomplete without every single book. Together it has a theme, a plot, a conflict, a climax and a conclusion. It is the longest thread of thought woven in the fabric of history. These men wrote on some of the most controversial subjects in the world, yet all their writings harmonize. There is not one clash or contradiction in all they have to say.

Their writings make reference to the disciplines of science, history, geography and topography; and in all cases the references are amazing in their accuracy. Archaeologists often use the Bible as a

reference book and have come to appreciate its reliability. In the field of science the Bible writers often spoke beyond the bounds of the human learning of their of time, and their statements were found to be correct only by later discoveries.

In the field of history they often recorded events which had not yet taken place. This recording of history before the events happened is called prophecy. These were not mere guesses and broad general statements. They involve the foretelling of hundreds of episodes in detail of both major and minor events which were not fulfilled until hundreds of years after the prophecies were made.

Unity, harmony, accuracy, and fulfilled prophecy of the Bible are but four of the reasons it is impossible for this book to have originated with men alone. There is no other book like this. This is a book from God.

Yet the greatest proof of all is in the message that it brings. Here God reveals to man things which he cannot know through his own wisdom.

*"But as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, And which entered not into the heart of man, Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" ([1 Corinthians 2:9-10](#)).*

This book tells us who we are, where we came from, why we are here and where we are going. Here God reveals to us that He was our creator, that He is our ruler, and that He will be our judge. He shows us His favor and His wrath, His power and His patience, His judgment and His mercy. This is the greatest story ever told, the wonderful story of love. You will see as you come to a knowledge of its contents, that no man could write a book like this.

This study of the Bible will consist of eight lessons. This first lesson concerns the Bible itself. The next lesson will teach you the message and purpose of the Old Testament. This will be followed with lessons

on ***Jesus Christ, The Gospel, The Church, The Christian Life, Sound Words***, and ***The Hope Set Before Us***. You are encouraged to complete all these lessons, to learn, to believe and to obey that you may enjoy the best of this life, and in the end, everlasting life.

# The Old Testament

## Advanced Bible Studies, Lesson 2 of 8

*"Ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me" ([John 5:39](#)).*

In the statement above, Jesus was referring to the Old Testament. This is a very important part of the Bible. In fact, three-fourths of the Bible is in the Old Testament, and only one-fourth of the Bible is in the New Testament. In order to properly understand the Old Testament, it is necessary to study both the Old Testament and what the New Testament says about the Old Testament. This lesson will serve as a brief introduction to this part of God's Word.

*"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" ([Genesis 1:1](#)).*

This is the way the Bible begins. The Bible teaches us that in six days God made the heaven and earth and all that is in them, that He created man and woman in His own image, and that He placed them in a garden of delight. The **Patriarchal Dispensation** is a system of religion in which God made known His will to the families of the earth through their fathers.

That old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, entered the garden and beguiled the woman so that she sinned against God by violating His law. After the man followed her into sin, God cast them out of the garden, but unto the serpent He said:

*"...and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" ([Genesis 3:15](#)).*

At the time, the meaning of these words was a mystery, but hidden in them was the hope of an atonement for sin through a conflict between the man-child of woman and the work of Satan.

It came to pass that the wickedness of man became so great that God covered the earth with water, destroying the world with water, sparing

only Noah and his family. After the children of Noah were scattered unto all the earth, God said unto Abraham:

*"...and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" ([Genesis 12:2-3](#)).*

This was part of the mystery. Abraham had no children at the time, but later there was born to him a son by his wife's handmaid, and his name was Ishmael. But, God appeared to Abraham and said:

*"...Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his seed after him" ([Genesis 17:19](#)).*

Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau, and the promise passed to Jacob. God changed Jacob's name to Israel, and through God's providence Israel and his twelve sons came to live in Egypt. This was the beginning of the twelve tribes of Israel. Before Jacob died, he blessed each of his sons, and to his son Judah, he said:

*"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh come: And unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be" ([Genesis 49:10](#)).*

The children of Israel grew into a nation in Egypt and were made to serve Egyptians with bitter and hard bondage. God raised up Moses to deliver them and to lead them to the foot of Mount Sinai in the wilderness. Here God gave this nation a special law. This was the beginning of the **Mosaic Dispensation**, a system of religion in which God made His will known to the nation of Israel through Moses and the prophets.

After the death of Moses, Joshua led the Israelites into the land of Canaan. For a time they were ruled through judges, but the people desired a king like the nations around them; so God had His prophets anoint first Saul, then David, then Solomon to be king. After the death of Solomon, the nation divided and there were two lines of kings,

northern and southern. Under the leadership of these kings, the nation forsook God, rebelling against Him. They were carried away into captivity and seventy years later returned under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Through the history of this rebellious people, God sent prophets among them to warn them to repent and to hold forth the promise of a Savior to come, saying:

*"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this" ([Isaiah 9:6-7](#)).*

The immediate purpose of the Old Testament was to keep the nation of Israel separate and apart from all other nations. This was necessary because it was through this people that God was going to fulfill the promises made unto the fathers of a redeemer to reconcile the world to God. Thus, the law of Moses was never intended to be an everlasting law for all the world, but a temporary law for Israel only. This old law is spoken of as being blotted out, taken out of the way, and nailed to the cross ([Colossians 2:14](#)). The law to which the world is now subject is the law of Christ, the New Testament. As Paul explained, "...so that the law is become our tutor to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor" ([Galatians 3:24-25](#)). **A failure to understand this difference between the Old and New Testaments has led to much confusion in the study of the Bible.** However, the Old Testament does have an ultimate purpose for all the world. The apostle Paul wrote of the Old Testament, saying:

*"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope" ([Romans 15:4](#)).*

There are many things we may learn from studying the Old Testament. The Old Testament gives us "shadows" and "figures" of the great truths that are more fully revealed in the New Testament. It served the purpose of teaching man the exceeding sinfulness of sin and enabled man to realize his need for the grace and mercy of God. The things which happened to the men and women of the Old Testament serve as examples for us. And the Old Testament prepares us for Christ. Jesus said:

*"For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words" ([John 5:46-47](#))?*



# Jesus Christ

## Advanced Bible Studies, Lesson 3 of 8

Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be the Christ of God. Once in a synagogue, He read a prophecy from Isaiah about the promised Messiah and said:

*"...To-day hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears" ([Luke 4:21](#)).*

When a woman spoke to Him of the coming Messiah, He replied, *"...I that speak unto thee am he" ([John 4:26](#)).*

When Jesus asked his disciples, *"...But who say ye that I am? And Peter answering said, The Christ of God" ([Luke 9:20](#)).* This was the answer Jesus accepted; this was who Jesus declared Himself to be. He went on to say in another place:

*"...I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me" ([John 14:6](#)).*

This was quite a claim. He was born in the midst of poverty, grew up in the insignificant village of Nazareth, and spent most of his adult years as a carpenter. After He made this claim, the leaders of the people mocked Him, ridiculed Him, and laughed Him to scorn. As He continued to make His claim, they became so angry with Him that they nailed Him to a cross and crucified Him. Yet, He maintained His claim to the death. Was He a fool, was He a fake, or was He the Christ? The truth is found in an honest examination of the evidence.

**(1) The nature of His birth** identified Jesus as the Christ. When the angel appeared unto Mary and told her that she would have a son, she asked, *"...How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God" ([Luke 1:34-35](#)).*

Joseph, who was to be her husband, upon hearing that she was with child, wanted to put Mary away quietly; but, while he thought on these

things, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him and said, "...Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit" ([Matthew 1:20](#)). Matthew the apostle went on to explain:

"...all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, And they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us" ([Matthew 1:22-23](#)). This was not a man that was begotten of man; this was God's "only begotten Son" ([John 3:16](#)).

**(2) The events of His life** identify Jesus as the Christ, for they were the fulfillment of prophecy. He was of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, of the house of David, and born of a virgin. He was born in Bethlehem, called out of Egypt, and raised in Nazareth. He would visit the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, teach in parables, and be rejected by His own people. He would be sold for thirty pieces of silver and the money would be used later to buy a potter's field. He would be smitten on the cheek and spat upon. Some would cast lots for His garments and give Him vinegar to drink. He would be crucified with the wicked, not a bone of His body would be broken, and He would be laid in a rich man's tomb. He would arise from the dead and ascend into heaven. This was all the fulfillment of prophecy. There are over 300 prophecies of Christ fulfilled in the life of Jesus. It is impossible to conclude that He was an imposter.

**(3) His teachings** identify Him as the Christ. There is no greater sermon in history than the Sermon on the Mount. The moral standards presented in it are so high, they could not have come from the lips of a liar. The wisdom expressed in it is so great, it could not have come forth from the mind of a fool. The Lord's enemies were unsuccessful in their attempt to ensnare Him in His words. While the high and mighty turned against Him, the common people heard Him gladly. They recognized that He taught them as one having authority, and they were astonished at his doctrine.

Once, when officers were sent to arrest Him, they returned empty-handed, saying, "Never man so spake" ([John 7:46](#)). This knowledge,

wisdom, and authority could not have originated in a carpenter's shop. Jesus attributed His words to God, saying, "...as the Father taught me, I speak these things" ([John 8:28](#)).

**(4) His miracles** identify Him as the Christ. Matthew the apostle wrote:

*"Now when John heard in the prison the works of the Christ, he sent by his disciples and said unto him, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them" ([Matthew 11:2-5](#)).*

Even His enemies did not deny the fact of His miracles. They charged Him with violating law because He healed on the Sabbath. They claimed His power came from the Devil. Some of them asked, "...How can a man that is a sinner do such signs?" ([John 9:16](#)). One ruler of the Jews came to Jesus by night and confessed, "...we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him" ([John 3:2](#)).

**(5)** While each of these evidences identifies Jesus as the Christ, the greatest proof is the fact of **His resurrection**. Christ had spoken before that the sign He would give would be that He would lie in the grave for three days and nights and then would come forth from the dead. One fact that cannot be denied is that the apostles were convinced without a doubt that Jesus arose from the dead. They could not have been mistaken. They were with Him while He lived, they witnessed His death, and they ate and drank with Him after He arose. They were so certain that just fifty days after Christ was crucified, in the very city in which he was tried, in the very presence of those who had slain him, they declared that this same Jesus whom " ...ye by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay...God raised up..." ([Acts 2:23-24](#)).

Although it meant hardship, persecution, and death, the apostles carried this message to the uttermost parts of the earth. His resurrection is the concluding testimony of all four of the accounts of

the Gospel. The book of Acts begins by telling us that "...he also showed himself alive after his passion (suffering) by many proofs..." ([Acts 1:3](#)). The apostle Paul began his writings in the New Testament by saying that Jesus was "...declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead" ([Romans 1:4](#)). This sets Jesus apart from every other religious leader who has ever lived. **They** all died—**Christ arose!**

After Jesus had shown Himself openly for forty days, He ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God exalted.

*"far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" ([Ephesians 1:21-23](#)).*

He now reigns as "...the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" ([1 Timothy 6:15](#)). His law is **the** law, His Gospel is **the** Gospel, and His church is **the** church.

The apostle John wrote: "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" ([John 20:30-31](#)).

# The Gospel

## Advanced Bible Studies, Lesson 4 of 8

*"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" ([Mark 16:15, 16](#)).*

In Lesson 2, the Patriarchal Dispensation was defined as the system of religion in which God made His will known to families by the fathers—a family system. The Mosaic Dispensation was defined as the system of religion in which God made His will known to the nation of Israel through the Law of Moses and the prophets—a national system.

The **Christian Dispensation** is that system of religion in which God makes His will known to all the world by the Gospel. It is an international system. This is why Paul wrote:

*"...For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" ([Romans 1:16](#)).*

The Gospel is described as a "system" deliberately. It is not just a random collection of wise sayings and good advice. Neither is it an expression of an abstract philosophical concept. It is a system of **facts** to be believed, **commands** to be obeyed, and **promises** to be received. Paul, the apostle, summed up the facts of the Gospel to the Corinthians, saying:

*"Now I make known unto you brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures" ([1 Corinthians 15:1-4](#)).*

Notice that Paul said Christ died for our sins. It is impossible for man to appreciate the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ until he realizes that he is lost in sin without the Gospel. The Bible plainly teaches that *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of*

God" ([Romans 3:23](#)), and that *"the wages of sin is death"* ([Romans 6:23](#)). The God we serve is true and holy and just and cannot ignore sin. He is also loving and gracious and merciful and does not desire that men should suffer death. The mystery of the gospel is: how could a righteous God save a sinful man. The answer is: *"...God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son..."* ([John 3:16](#)). *"who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross"* ([Philippians 2:6-8](#)).

While Jesus dwelt among men He was *"...in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin"* ([Hebrews 4:15](#)). Therefore, when He was slain, He died not for His own sins, but for the sins of the world, that the world through Him might be saved. So the requirements of justice were satisfied, and the grace of God was extended to man. While Jesus died for all the world, all will not be saved, because all will not obey the Gospel. The apostle Paul wrote: *"...and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might"* ([2 Thessalonians 1:7-9](#)).

The Gospel includes commands to be obeyed. Salvation is a free gift of the grace of God, but this gift is given only to those who meet the given conditions. Jesus proclaimed, *"...All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth"* ([Matthew 28:18](#)). Jesus said: *"...except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins"* ([John 8:24](#)); *"...except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish"* ([Luke 13:3](#)); *"...Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven"* ([Matthew 10:32-33](#)); and, *"...Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"* ([John 3:5](#)).



While faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are necessary for salvation, they do not merit or earn our salvation. Rather, *"...when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants..."* ([Luke 17:10](#)). Paul explained the commands of the Gospel to the Romans this way:

*"Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But thanks be to God, that, whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness"* ([Romans 6:16-18](#)).

Notice, they were servants of sin before they obeyed, they were servants of righteousness after they obeyed, and they were freed from sin when they obeyed. That which they obeyed was *"that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered."* As has been shown from [1 Corinthians 15:1-4](#), the teaching which Paul delivered was *"...that Christ died for our sins...and that he was buried, and that he hath been raised on the third day...."* Paul had just explained the *"form of teaching"* which they had obeyed, saying:

*"Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life"* ([Romans 6:3-4](#)).

The Gospel also includes promises to be received. Isaiah, the prophet, had spoken of them before, saying, *"...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* ([Isaiah 1:18](#)). Peter preached, *"...every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins"* ([Acts 10:43](#)). Paul wrote, *"Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* ([Romans 5:1](#)). And John the apostle testified, saying, *"...this is the promise which he promised us, even the life eternal"* ([1 John 2:25](#)).

The sum of these promises is **salvation**. That is why the Gospel is called "*the gospel of your salvation*" ([Ephesians 1:13](#)). In fact, that is why the Gospel is called the Gospel, for the word "gospel" literally means "good news"!

Therefore, what you must do to be saved is:

**BELIEVE:** [John 8:24](#); [Mark 16:16](#); [Hebrews 11:6](#).

**REPENT:** [Luke 13:3](#); [Acts 2:38](#); [Acts 17:30](#).

**CONFESS:** [Matthew 10:32-33](#); [Romans 10:10](#); [1 John 4:15](#).

**BE BAPTIZED:** [Mark 16:16](#); [Acts 2:38](#); [1 Peter 3:21](#).

**Then**, the promises of the Gospel shall be yours.



# The Church

## Advanced Bible Studies, Lesson 5 of 8

*"...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" ([Matthew 16:18](#)).*

This promise Jesus made to His disciples before He was crucified. The "rock" of which He spoke was the truth that His disciples had just confessed, saying, *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"* ([Matthew 16:16](#)). Though He was crucified before He built His church, this did not prevail against it. He broke through the "gates of Hades," arising from the dead, and showed Himself alive *"by many infallible proofs"* ([Acts 1:3](#)). He ascended victoriously into heaven to sit on the right hand of God exalted ([Acts 2:33](#)). When this was preached in Jerusalem, they who had crucified Him were *"... Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* ([Acts 2:37-38](#)). The text explains, *"They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls"* ([Acts 2:41](#)). This chapter concludes by saying, *"And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved"* ([Acts 2:47](#)).

The church of Christ is the most glorious institution that ever has or ever will exist on this earth. It was in the mind of God before the foundation of the world ([Ephesians 1:4](#)). It was promised to the patriarchs ([Genesis 12:3](#)), prophesied by the prophets ([Daniel 2:44-45](#)), purchased with the precious blood of Christ ([Acts 20:28](#)), established with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit ([Acts 2:1-4](#)), and in the end shall be delivered up to God in glory forever ([1 Corinthians 15:24](#)).

The Bible teaches us about the church through various figures. Just as a precious stone must be viewed from all directions to see its full

beauty, so the church must be seen through these various figures to grasp its full glory.

The church is called a **kingdom** ([John 3:3](#)) to teach us of its government, with Christ as the king, Christians as the subjects, the New Testament as the law, and the new birth as the requirement for entrance. The church is called **the one body** ([1 Corinthians 12:20](#)) to teach us of its unity, with Christ as the Head and Christians as the members of the body. The talents and abilities of Christians are to be used to build up the body and benefit every member. This is the way Christians are to work together in love. The church is called a **household** ([Ephesians 2:19](#)) to teach us of the relationships within the church, with God as the Father, Christ as the elder brother, and our fellow Christians as brothers and sisters. The church is called a **temple** ([Ephesians 2:21](#)) to teach us of the holiness of the church. It is a spiritual building, with Christ as the foundation and Christians as the building stones. The church is called a **vineyard** ([Matthew 21:33](#)) to teach us of the work of the church, with God as the husbandman, Christians as the workers, the fruit as the results of their labors, and heaven as the reward at the end of the day. The church is called **the bride of Christ** ([Ephesians 5:25](#)) to teach us of the glory and beauty of the church, the love that Christ has for the church, and the submissiveness of the church to Christ. The word "church" literally means "the called out, " and it is used in the Bible to refer to those who are called out of a world of sin by the Gospel. In other words, the church is the saved.

Some mistakenly believe that after one is saved there is something else one must do to "join" the church. This is not what is taught in the Bible. According to the Bible, those who believed that Jesus is the Christ ([Acts 16:31](#)), repented of their sins ([Acts 2:38](#)), confessed their faith ([Acts 8:37](#)), and were baptized ([Acts 2:41](#)), were added to the church by the Lord ([Acts 2:47](#)).

We read that those who were added to the church in a given community came together on the first day of the week ([Acts 20:7](#)). They ate the Lord's Supper, which consisted of unleavened bread to

remind them that Christ had become flesh and dwelt among them ([1 Corinthians 11:24](#)), and the fruit of the vine to remind them that Christ had shed His blood for their sins ([1 Corinthians 11:25](#)). They sang together psalms and hymns and spiritual songs ([Colossians 3:16](#)). They prayed together unto God ([Acts 2:42](#)). They received instruction from God's Word ([Acts 20:7](#)). As they had been prospered, they gave of their money for the carrying out of the work of the church ([1 Corinthians 16:1-2](#)).

The work they had to do was great. They were to evangelize the lost ([Mark 16:15](#)). They were to edify the saved ([Hebrews 10:24-25](#)). As they had opportunity, they were to do good unto all men through benevolent deeds ([Galatians 6:10](#)).

The organization of the church in the New Testament was very simple. Christ was the head of the church ([Ephesians 5:25](#)). He communicated His will to His people first through the spoken words and then through the written words of His apostles and prophets ([Galatians 1:11-12](#)).

There was no universal organization of the church other than this. Where Christians assembled, locally qualified men were appointed as elders, bishops, or pastors ([1 Timothy 3:1-7](#)). These were not three separate offices, but three descriptions of the same work. They were called elders because of their spiritual maturity, bishops because of their overseeing authority, and pastors because of their shepherding responsibilities. Their authority was limited to matters of judgment and expedience. To assist them in their work they chose qualified men as special servants called deacons ([1 Timothy 3:8-13](#)). This was the complete organization of the church as God gave it. Under the oversight of the elders, all Christians were expected to use their talents as best they could in preaching, teaching, singing, praying, providing, visiting, caring, loving, and helping each other as they went about their work. It is important to know that, in the worship, work, and organization of the church, they did only that which they were authorized to do in the name of Christ ([Colossians 3:17](#))—that is, by Christ's authority.

To establish the church in your community, you must first obey the Gospel. You then make an effort to find others who have done the

same, or teach others to do so. Then, taking the New Testament as your guide and the New Testament church as a pattern, worship as they worshipped, work as they worked, and, as you are able, organize as they organized. This will enable you to be more effective in teaching others, it will help you and encourage you as you help and encourage others, and you will be counted by God as among the churches of Christ.

*"The churches of Christ salute you" ([Romans 16:16](#)).*

# The Christian Life

## Advanced Bible Studies, Lesson 6 of 8

*"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them:...And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day" ([Genesis 1:26-28,31](#)).*

Man, as God created him, was the crown and glory of creation. As it is written, *"...For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet" ([Psalm 8:5-6](#))*. Yet, the prophet cried out, *"...For we are all become as one that is unclean, and all our righteousnesses are as a polluted garment: and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away" ([Isaiah 64:6](#))*. The difference between man crowned with "glory and honour" and man "as a polluted garment" is sin. *"Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, so that he will not hear" ([Isaiah 59:1-2](#))*. It is because of sin that man has become *"the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked" ([Revelation 3:17](#))*.

Part of the glory of the Gospel is that it has the power to make man what God intended him to be when he was created. *"Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new" ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#))*.

Man's problem is in his heart. The wise king, Solomon, wrote, *"For as he thinketh within himself, so is he" ([Proverbs 23:7](#))*. Jesus taught: *"...But the things which proceed out of the mouth come forth out of*

*the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, railings: these are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man..." ([Matthew 15:18-20](#)). This is why the apostle Paul wrote that we are "transformed by the renewing of your mind" ([Romans 12:2](#)).*

On the day of Pentecost, when those who had crucified Christ realized their wickedness, they said, "... Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you..." ([Acts 2:37-38](#)). Repentance occurs when a man determines in his heart to turn from his former ways to serve God. Since baptism is a command ([Acts 10:48](#)), true repentance will be followed by baptism. When in faith man obeys God in baptism, his former sins are washed away ([Acts 22:16](#)), and up from the watery grave of baptism man is raised to "walk in newness of life" ([Romans 6:4](#)).

The apostle Paul describes the Christian life with these words: "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory.

*"Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience: wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things;*

*"but now do ye also put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth: lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all.*

*"Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye: and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful" ([Colossians 3:1-15](#)).*

The Christian life is a life of growth. Paul said, "...our inward man is renewed day by day" ([2 Corinthians 4:16](#)), and that we are changed "from glory to glory" ([2 Corinthians 3:18](#)). After many years of faithful service to God, he said: "Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." ([Philippians 3:13-14](#)).

The apostle Peter taught us to grow, saying: "Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue; whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in that world by lust.

*"Yea, and for this very cause adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-control; and in your self-control patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he that lacketh these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into*



*the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" ([2 Peter 1:2-11](#)).*

There are things which we must do in order to grow. We must study the Bible. Peter said: *"as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation" ([1 Peter 2:2](#))*. We must pray for such things as help, strength, boldness, deliverance, and wisdom. Paul admonishes, *"In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" ([Philippians 4:6](#))*.

We are to come together on the first day of the week to be encouraged and to encourage others as we worship. The Bible says, *"...and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh" ([Hebrews 10:24-25](#))*.

And we are to put into practice the things which we learn, that *"ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God" ([Romans 12:2](#))*.

The Christian life was summed up in the words of Paul, as he said, *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" ([Galatians 2:20](#))*.



## Sound Words

### Advanced Bible Studies, Lesson 7 of 8

*"Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" ([2 Timothy 1:13](#)).*

These were the words of Paul, the older preacher, to Timothy, the younger preacher. Timothy had been Paul's companion for many years, and Paul had come to love him as a son. Paul knew that he did not have long to live and that Timothy would have to carry on much of the work which Paul had begun. He wrote this letter to the young man to charge him to *"be strong"* ([2 Timothy 2:1](#)), to *"continue thou in the things which thou hast learned"* ([2 Timothy 3:14](#)), and to faithfully *"preach the word"* ([2 Timothy 4:2](#)).

By *"sound words"* Paul meant the pure, true, wholesome words of the Gospel which he had preached. Paul was *"not ashamed of the gospel of Christ"* ([Romans 1:16](#)); he called it *"the glorious gospel of the blessed God"* ([1 Timothy 1:11](#)). He knew its source, and he had written to the churches, *"But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ"* ([Galatians 1:11-12](#)).

We read much about the works of Paul in the book of Acts. He had been chosen by God to preach the Gospel to those who had never heard it ([Acts 9:15](#)). He immediately began this work, and it carried him on three missionary journeys. Many to whom Paul preached heard, believed, and were baptized ([Acts 18:8](#)). Those who were saved in those days were called Christians ([Acts 11:26](#)), and through Paul's labors, churches of Christ were established throughout the Roman world ([Romans 16:16](#)). Paul was not alone in these efforts. Other men went throughout the world preaching the same Gospel. Several of them wrote their words by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and their writings make up the 27 books of the New Testament. By studying these writings, we can know what they preached.

By the words *"hold fast,"* Paul meant to hold securely, to retain, to keep. Paul so admonished Timothy because he knew that, *"...the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables"* ([2 Timothy 4:3-4](#)). Paul knew that since the Gospel came from God, no man had a right to add to it, take from it, or change it in any way. To do so would take away from it the power to save man. Therefore, he wrote: *"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed"* ([Galatians 1:6-9](#)).

John the apostle later taught the same thing when he wrote: *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds"* ([2 John 9-11](#)).

The tragedy of the New Testament church is that they heard the truth, but they did not heed the warning. *"For there are certain men crept in unawares..."* ([Jude 4](#)), and from among their own selves men arose *"speaking perverse things"* ([Acts 20:30](#)). *"By good words and fair speeches"* they deceived *"the hearts of the simple"* ([Romans 16:18](#)). They were *"teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake"* ([Titus 1:11](#)). Jews were bringing over into Christianity the elements of Judaism; the Greeks, the elements of human philosophy and paganism; and the Romans, the elements of Romanism. The simple organization of the church was lost, and the *"elders in every church"* ([Acts 14:23](#)) were replaced with a single pastor. The pastors in a city chose a chief bishop, and when the chief bishop of Rome had

himself declared the Catholic pope, the eastern churches divided from the western churches. The church of Rome became the major influence in the West. It became so powerful and corrupt that it persecuted to death all who would not submit to its rule. During this time, brave and noble men arose and challenged the authority of Rome. They attempted to reform the church by writing creeds for their own peculiar beliefs. The result was further division into numerous sects and denominations. These divisions are still multiplying to this day, and most of that which is called Christianity is not what Christ taught at all.

Paul told Timothy to *"Hold fast the form of sound words"* ([2 Timothy 1:13](#)). In other words, Paul's teachings were to be used as a pattern for Timothy so that he might teach the same things. He further instructed Timothy that *"...the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also"* ([2 Timothy 2:2](#)). The church went into apostasy because men failed to follow the pattern of sound words. From time to time, men have returned to sound words and the church has been restored. Obedience from the heart to the teachings of the Bible is all that is necessary for you to become and remain a faithful Christian. Paul told Timothy, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works"* ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)). There is no need to add man-made creeds to the Bible.

Neither is there a need to divide the church into man-made denominations. Before Christ died on the cross, He prayed concerning those who would believe on Him, saying, *"that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me"* ([John 17:21](#)). Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, *"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment"* ([1 Corinthians 1:10](#)). We can be one in Christ today if we will speak where

the Scriptures speak and be silent where the Scriptures are silent. Peter taught the same thing when he wrote, *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God"* ([1 Peter 4:11](#)). The same seed planted in good soil will produce the same fruit regardless of where or when it is planted. The same Gospel received in good hearts will produce Christians in the 20th century, just as it did in the first century. If we will preach what they preached, believe what they believed, and do what they did, we will be what they were. We will be Christians, nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else.

## The Hope Set Before Us

### Advanced Bible Studies, Lesson 8 of 8

There are two purposes for this lesson. For those of you who are not Christians, it is written to persuade you to become obedient to the faith. For those of you who have obeyed, it is written to comfort and strengthen you as you begin to live and grow as a Christian.

Becoming a Christian does not free you from all the difficulties, trials, and sorrows of this life, but it does enable you to live with them, become stronger by them, and eventually to rise above them. One of the ways it does this is by setting before us **hope**. As it is written, *"...we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us... stedfast"* ([Hebrews 6:18-19](#)). Here hope is compared to an anchor. In the midst of a stormy sea, the shipmen depend on the anchor to prevent the ship from being driven into the rocks along the coast. So also in the storms of life, the Christian finds comfort in the anchor of hope. Paul put it this way, saying, *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward...For in hope were we saved..."* ([Romans 8:18, 24](#)).

Concerning the things of this life, the Christian has the same kinds of hopes as do other men. The Christian has a natural desire for peace, comfort, happiness, health, and a long life. However, many have had to give up these things in order to become Christians. Paul wrote, *"If we have only hoped in Christ in this life, we are of all men most pitiable"* ([1 Corinthians 15:19](#)).

The hope of a Christian is the return of Christ. The last time Christ was with His disciples on this earth, it is said: *"...And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were looking stedfastly into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven shall*

so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven" ([Acts 1:9-11](#)).

A Christian must work for the necessities of this life as do others. However, he does not become overly concerned with the material things of this world, because it is written: "...the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up" ([2 Peter 3:10](#)). Though a Christian sorrows at the death of a loved one, at the death of a fellow Christian he sorrows not as others who have no hope. Paul wrote: "...But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" ([1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#)).

Christians have a natural desire to live and enjoy life, but they do not fear death as the final end. Paul assures the Christians, "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" ([1 Corinthians 15:49-53](#)).

At the return of Christ there will be the great judgment. Paul wrote concerning this, saying, "...But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? or thou again, why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of God. For it is written, As I live,



*saith the Lord, to me every knee shall bow, And every tongue shall confess to God. So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God" ([Romans 14:10-12](#)). Christ said, "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" ([John 5:28-29](#)). This judgement spoken of here is described elsewhere as a place of "outer darkness," where there shall be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" ([Matthew 25:30](#))—a place "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" ([Mark 9:44](#)).*

Those who are condemned to hell are those who do not obey the Gospel. It is written: "...and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might" ([2 Thessalonians 1:7-9](#)). Those of you who have obeyed may take comfort in the precious promise of Christ who said,

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

That is the hope set before us as an anchor for the soul, both sure and steadfast. And it is upon this hope that we must "lay hold." Once Christ was asked, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" ([Luke 10:25](#)). The answer was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself" ([Luke 10:27](#)). Then Christ said, "...this do, and thou shalt live" ([Luke 10:28](#)). Love for God is not just an emotion we feel; it is also something we must "do." It is written, "...this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" ([1 John 5:3](#)).

We are commanded to **believe**: "...whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" ([John 3:16](#)); to **repent**: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" ([2 Peter 3:9](#)); to **confess**: "...Every one who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God" ([Luke 12:8](#)); to **be baptized**: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" ([Galatians 3:27](#)); and to **be faithful**: "...Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" ([Revelation 2:10](#)). If you fail in this, you are without Christ, without God, and have no hope ([Ephesians 2:12](#)). But, if you obey from the heart, you may "...rejoice in hope of the glory of God" ([Romans 5:2](#)).