

GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN



Lesson 1

Introduction

As you are probably aware, much confusion exists in the world today about God. What is He like? What's important to Him? Why does He allow certain things? Is He really good? Does He even exist? Your views of and answers to these questions are of the utmost importance, for what you believe about God is affecting your life today AND will also affect your life for eternity. Another aspect that is very important in coming to understand Who God really is and what He is like is having all the facts or having all the information. Many today have very wrong views of what God is actually like that have been shaped by knowing only part of the story.

Here is an example of why knowing the full story is so important. I witnessed a young man push an old lady to the ground. Right away, you would begin to have questions and make judgments about this young man without knowing the whole story. You would drastically change your view of the young man if later you found out the reason why the young man pushed the old lady to the ground. She was hard of hearing and didn't realize she was stepping out in front of an oncoming car. The young man had only enough time to shove her out of the way and to the ground.

So it is with God. In order for us to know what the heart of God is really like, it is imperative that we have all of the information. We can't just look at His actions from a few isolated Bible stories. We must look at the big picture of Who He's revealed Himself to be by His statements about Himself and by what He reveals about Himself through His interactions with mankind.

Therefore, we will begin this study at "the beginning"—eternity past.

The Existence of God

It's important to note that the Bible simply begins with God and His existence.

Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

There is no argument or proof given for His existence mainly because the Bible was written many, many years after God had already proved His existence by creating the heavens and the earth and all that it contains.

If you are walking through a forest and come upon a small shack, you know without a doubt that someone built it. You wouldn't for a moment think that over a period of many, many years, as dead branches and leaves fell from the trees, the wind blew them all together into the shape of a shack.

In the same way, if I were walking along a riverbank somewhere in America where Native Americans used to live and I looked down and found an arrowhead, I wouldn't think that piece of flint had become shaped over time by wind, rain, and rubbing on other rocks and stones. I would know without a doubt that someone had created it.

So it is with the heavens, the earth, and all that it contains. This universe is too vast, diverse, and intricately detailed to believe that it all came into being on its own or by chance and happenstance. To look at this world and all that it contains and to think there is no creator? The Bible has one thing to say in *Psalm 14:1*—“***The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.***” Here are some other verses that all speak of the fact that God is eternal, that there was never a time when God did not exist, and there will never be a time when He ceases to exist.

1. *Psalm 90:1-2*
2. *Psalm 102:12, 26-27*
3. *Isaiah 40:28*
4. *Revelation 1:8; 22:13*

The fact that God is eternal and that only He existed from eternity past is extremely important because it leads us to understanding other important attributes that also must be true about God.

If only God existed from eternity past, then He alone knows the truth about all things and how everything came into existence.

If only God existed from eternity past, then He reigns supreme above all other beings.

If only God existed from eternity past, then He had no beginning and will have no end. He is the only being that was not created. All other beings were brought into existence at a certain point in time. Therefore, God is originator and creator of all things and thereby the rightful owner of all things.

If only God existed from eternity past, then He is completely independent of all things. He doesn't need anything to continue to exist. He is self-existent. We humans are the exact opposite. The ways in which we are dependent are too numerous to list.

God Is a Spirit

God doesn't have a physical body like we do. Although God is a spirit, this doesn't make Him an impersonal force in the universe as some describe Him. He is a spirit being with His own personality, mind, and will. More importantly, *1 John 4:7-8* says ***that God is love***. This doesn't mean that He HAS love or He MANIFESTS love; it says that **HE IS LOVE!** This means there is nothing He can do or allow to come into our lives that is devoid of His love. We will actually see this love of God become more and more lived out as we proceed through these lessons. The fact that God is Spirit makes it difficult for us as finite human beings to become convinced of His existence for we can't see Him with our own eyes.....unless.....unless He chooses to

reveal Himself. As we proceed through these lessons, God's revelation of Himself will become increasingly more evident to us.

God Is Omnipresent

Another attribute that God has revealed about Himself is the fact that He is omnipresent, that He is everywhere at the same time. We can only know this to be true about God by His own choosing to reveal it. He is spirit and we can never look with our own eyes and see where He is. Therefore, because "He is love," He wants us to know He is always near. Some important Bible passages that reveal His omnipresence are:

1. *Psalm 139:7-12*
2. *Proverbs 15:3*
3. *1 Kings 8:27*

The fact that God is omnipresent is very important and has tremendous ramifications for our lives, which we will be talking much more about as we proceed through the lessons.

God Is Omniscient

Not only is God everywhere at the same time but also He is all-knowing. He is all-knowing in two regards. First, He is all-wise. He is the source of all wisdom and knowledge. This means that He is the creator of all wisdom and all there is to know. When He created the giraffe, He didn't first obtain the knowledge of what a giraffe is and then create it. He designed it. He was the One that decided what a giraffe would be.

God created science and all the laws of the universe when He created the heavens and earth. He is the all-knowing One.

Secondly, He is all-knowing in the sense that there is nothing He does not know. There is nothing that can be hidden from Him.

1. *Genesis 6:5*
2. *Hebrews 4:13*
3. *Psalm 44:21*
4. *Psalm 139:1-12*

God Is Omnipotent

Another very important attribute of God that has tremendous ramifications upon our very existence is that God is all-powerful. He has unlimited power. This means God has the ability and the power to do anything He wills without any effort on His part.

1. *Deuteronomy 3:24*
2. *Job 26:11-14*
3. *Jeremiah 32:17, 26-27*

4. *Psalm 33:6*
5. *Isaiah 40:25-26*

Other Attributes of God

God is self-sufficient – *John 5:26*
God is faithful – *Deuteronomy 7:9; 2 Timothy 2:13*
God is good – *Psalm 34:8*
God is just – *Deuteronomy 32:4*
God is merciful – *Romans 9:15-16*
God is gracious – *Psalm 145:8; Matthew 5:45*
God is loving – *1 John 4:7-8*
God is holy – *Revelation 4:8*

God Is Immutable

Whenever talking about the attributes of God, I like to conclude with the fact that He is immutable or unchangeable. God does not change. Who He is never changes. What He is like never changes. The attributes that have been true of Him from eternity past will remain true of Him on into eternity future.

Malachi 3:6 - "I the Lord do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed."

The fact that none of God's attributes will ever change carries with it great and tremendous ramifications not only for our daily lives but also, more importantly, for the rest of eternity. As we continue to proceed through the next few lessons, we are going to see that God has an eternal plan with eternal promises that He has planned and promised us. The fact that He is ALL of these things and will never change is what gives us full assurance that His plans will never fail and all that He has ever promised will be fulfilled.

Lesson 2

Who God Is – Continued

As you can see, we have begun this study with an effort to reveal Who God is and what His attributes are. With Lesson 2, we will continue on and begin to move into more of what His heart is like, has been like, and will always be like...for remember, what is true about Him will never change for eternity.

It's extremely important that we first spend this time getting to know Who God is and what He is like before focusing on the things we see Him doing, saying, and promising in the Bible. To reverse this order will lead to much confusion and misunderstanding as to what He is really like. Bottomline, for us to trust what someone says, we have to first know the person and be confident in who they are and what they are like.

God Is a Triune God

A reality about God that is very hard to understand and explain is that God is a trinity. This means that He is one God, but three persons. As we continue with this study, the reality of the Trinity will become increasingly clear; although there is only one God, there are three persons who are equally God (*Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14*).

The Trinity is beyond our understanding; all human examples break down (egg, water, etc.) However, the amazing fact of the Trinity is just one of the many things that show us the greatness of God. There truly is none like Him and if we, with our finite little human brains, could fully know and comprehend Who He is and what He is like, then He wouldn't be that awesome and amazing, would He?

One last important point about God being a Trinity before moving on to more of what His heart is like is that all the attributes and characteristics that have been emphasized as being true of Him are equally true of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Right now, the significance of that fact may not be clear to you, but it will become clearer and clearer as you continue through the study.

The Trinity in Eternity Past

Our goal in these first couple of lessons is to establish the fact of Who God is and what He is like. Because He is a spirit being, the only way we can really know for sure what He is like is for Him to reveal it to us either by telling us or by showing us. Therefore, our plan is to look at both.

God is an eternal God Who had no beginning and will have no end. To begin with the earliest revelation of what He has been like, we need to begin with what He has been like from eternity past before the world and all that it contains came into being.

There are many verses in the Bible that tell us and show us that God is eternal. However, the only section that really reveals what His heart was like and what was important to Him in eternity past comes from John 17, which is a recorded prayer of Jesus Christ.

For Jesus' prayer to make sense, it's important to understand that He is God the Son who was sent down to this earth to fulfill an eternal plan of God. The details of this plan will become more and more clear as we proceed through this study. For now, just know that the reason why Jesus speaks of Himself as having a relationship with God the Father from eternity past is because He is God the Son.

John 17:1-5 "...glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

There are two main things that I want to emphasize from these verses with Jesus' prayer. First, He calls God "Father." God the Son is praying to God the Father. Second, notice the last part of verse 5: *"...glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."* Here He is acknowledging that He existed with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit from before the "world was" or from eternity past. To be restored to the glory with which He had together with them at that time is to be restored to the full essence of Who they were together as the Trinity. There is a lot that Jesus is implying in this first part of His prayer.

The context of their relationship as God the Father and God the Son and the type of relationship that exists between them as a Trinity.

That there was an aspect of sharing together in their glory as a Triune God that they greatly enjoyed together.

It speaks of unity, a oneness in glory.

It speaks of a relationship they enjoyed together.

John 17:20-24 – Notice Jesus' prayer for His future followers is that *"they all may be one as you Father are in Me, and I in You"* (vs. 21), *"and the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one; I in them and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one"* (vs. 22-23).

The main point here again is that Jesus is referring to a oneness, unity, and communion that exists between Him, God the Son, and God the Father, and by implication, God the Holy Spirit.

Finally, notice what He says at the end of verse 24 – ***"For You loved me before the foundation of the world."*** He is specifically emphasizing the love that has existed between them for each other from eternity past.

What Was the Trinity Doing in Eternity Past?

Because God is a spirit being and we want to look at what He was doing back in eternity past when only He existed, only He can tell us what He was up to. He does just that in a number of different passages throughout the Bible.

2 Timothy 1:9 – This verse tells us multiple things about what the Trinity was doing in eternity past. The fact that they “bestowed a plan and grace upon US through Christ before time began” reveals:

God was planning to create a human race.

Because God is all-knowing, before He created the human race, He knew we would become sinful.

His plan for taking care of mankind's sinfulness would be based on His giving us what we don't deserve, and this grace would be given through Jesus, God the Son.

1 Peter 1:18-20 – This passage gives us more details about the plan God created in eternity past.

It is a plan for our redemption. Redemption means to “buy back.”

Our redemption would be purchased by the very blood of Christ, the Son of God.

His redeeming of us was foreordained from eternity past.

Titus 1:1-3 – These verses tell us that, God, Who cannot lie, promised eternal life for the human race before time began, before there was a world and anyone living in it.

1 Corinthians 2:7 – This passage references that there has been a “hidden wisdom” of God, which God ordained before the ages for our glory. It is speaking of a plan of redemption for the human race that the Trinity ordained before anything else existed.

Hebrews 13:20 – This verse talks about the “Blood of the Eternal Covenant” or “The Everlasting Covenant.” So, a couple of things about what this means:

A covenant is a binding agreement between two or more parties.

The fact that it's called the “eternal covenant” means it was a binding agreement that took place in eternity past and will remain on into eternity future.

The fact that it had to have taken place in eternity past means it took place when only God Himself was present or in existence. Mankind was not involved in the agreement.

It also implies the reality that God is a Trinity and the eternal covenant was a covenant that the three persons of the Trinity made amongst themselves on the behalf of mankind.

So, all of this begs the question, “How can we know for sure that all of this is true?”

The Bible – The Word of God

As was stated in the earlier lesson, God is a spirit being; therefore, where He is, what He is doing, and what He is like cannot be physically observed. So, if that's the case, how can we be so sure of any of this? How can we know for sure that all we've stated to be true of Him in the last two lessons is all really true?

We know that it's true because God has given us a written record of it all called the Holy Bible. The Bible is an autobiography of Who God is, what He is like, what He has done, what He continues to do, and what He promises to do in the future.

There have been many skeptics throughout history all claiming various levels of errancy in the Bible and saying that it was written by man and not God. However, here are some proven historical facts that help give us confidence that the Bible is truly from God Himself and all that it contains is absolute truth.

1. The first and most important reason why God would give us a written record of Himself and His doings is because HE IS LOVE. Love is the essence of Who He is. We as sinful human beings want our children to know us and love us. We love them and desire for them to love us in return so that we can enjoy close relationships with them. The Triune God that has been experiencing a relationship of close oneness, unity, and love from eternity past, how much more would He desire for us to know His love for us and love Him in return in order to enjoy that same relationship with Him? Therefore, it makes perfect sense that He would provide for us a written record of Himself, what He is like, and His doings.
2. Archaeological Discoveries. There have been many archaeological discoveries through the years that provide historical evidence for places and events recorded in the Bible. In **Genesis 14:2**, there are five cities listed that people have claimed never existed. Recently, ancient records have been found listing these cities as being part of ancient trade routes. (<https://biblearchaeology.org/research/chronological-categories/patriarchal-era/2364-the-discovery-of-the-sin-cities-of-sodom-and-gomorra>)
3. Textual Consistency and Uniqueness. The Bible is miraculously self-consistent. There are no contradictions within any of its pages.

"Of special importance in the matter of biblical infallibility is the consistent transmission of the biblical manuscripts. Technically speaking, the inspiration of the Bible is limited to the original autographs. However, a study of the history of the Bible's manuscripts (called textual criticism) reveals an extremely high degree of accuracy in the copying and preservation of the sacred text.

The Dead Sea Scrolls include approximately 200 copies of Old Testament books dating from 2,000 years ago. These manuscripts prove the amazing consistency with which the Hebrew text was copied and its accuracy safeguarded through the centuries.

For the New Testament, more than 5,000 manuscripts and manuscript fragments exist in the original Greek text. The earliest fragments are only one generation removed from the original copies. Today's scholars note that every original word of the New Testament text is either already in the text or in one of the alternative readings in the footnotes. The New Testament has more early copies to support its accuracy than any other ancient writing." (<https://www.gotquestions.org/prove-infallibility-Bible.html>)

This truth is nothing short of miraculous, especially when you consider the details of how God gave us the Bible. More than 40 men, from different cultural backgrounds, occupations, and time periods (over more than 1,600 years) were all inspired by God the Holy Spirit to put into written form God's revelation of Himself. These men wrote about the history of the world, where

everything came from, Who God is, what He is like, what He has promised, the sinfulness of man, and the eternal plan for restoration that God foreordained before the world began. Even though there was such diversity among the writers of the Bible, there is not one word of contradiction among any topic within any of the books that has ever shown up in any of the more than 5,000 manuscripts that exist. These facts can only prove one thing—the Bible came from God and has been truly preserved by God out of a desire for mankind to know Him and His heart for us.

Conclusion

Psalm 115:3 – “But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.”

Psalm 135:6 – “Whatever the LORD pleases He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places.”

These verses speak of the sovereignty and supremacy of God. He is supreme above all other things; therefore, He has the authority and the ability to do whatever He pleases. So, what was He pleased to do in eternity past?

Because God IS love and because He is relational, He was “pleased” to create a human race that would become the object of His love and one that could be brought into oneness and relationship that God as a Trinity was already enjoying in eternity past.

For the human race to really participate in a relationship with God, we would need to have the capacity to learn, understand, know, love, and choose to reciprocate or choose to NOT reciprocate.

Because God is all-knowing, before He created mankind, He knew full well that we would become sinful and that would result in a separation between us and God and thereby would prevent Him from enjoying a relationship with us and prevent us from enjoying a relationship with Him.

Again, because He is love and gracious and merciful and kind, rather than choosing to NOT create humanity (that He knew would become sinful and separated from Him), the Trinity was “pleased” to foreordain an “Eternal Plan” that would become the ultimate revelation of the depth of His love, grace, and mercy!

Then in eternity past when the Trinity decided that it was time to begin the process of carrying out their eternal plan for fulfilling their eternal covenant, we come to ***Genesis 1:1 – “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth...”***

“In the Beginning” – when the Triune God began the process of preparing for the fulfillment of their Eternal Plan.

Lesson 3

God Creates the Spirit World – *Colossians 1:16*

Genesis 1:1 – “In the beginning God...”

There are many stories about the beginning of time, the beginning of this world we live in, and how mankind came into being. Which story is true? Shouldn't we ask someone who was there from the very beginning? God's Word begins with His story of how time began and how all things came into being. His story is the true creation story because He was there and He is the Creator of all things. “In the beginning, God...” He was there in the beginning; therefore, His creation story is the only true creation story.

“In the beginning...” When the triune God began preparations for the fulfillment of His foreordained eternal plan of redemption, His first step is to create. Based on *Job 38:1-7*, it seems very apparent that before God created the physical world and all that we can see, He first created the spirit world and that which we cannot see. When God first created them, they were created as angels, which means messenger. They were created to be God's messengers who serve and worship Him - *Nehemiah 9:6; Psalm 103:20-21*. Because they were created to be God's servants, this gives a clue then as to why God would create them before creating all of the physical world, for it gave them the opportunity to witness the power and wisdom of God with their own eyes. Remember Lesson 1—from before the foundations of the earth, our triune God has existed in and enjoyed an eternal relationship. He is always after relationship, even with His created beings.

When God created spirit beings, He chose not to give them physical bodies. Because spirits do not have physical bodies, they can move about wherever they want. Spirits are not everywhere at the same time as God is. They can only be in one place at a time.

Although spirits do not have physical bodies like us, there are times when God has allowed them to take on other forms, such as animals or human beings, etc., to be used for His specific purposes (*Hebrews 13:2*).

Other Facts about Angels

God created them all perfect. None were evil. *Ezekiel 28:15*

God created them with great wisdom and strength. *Psalm 103:20*

God created them with intelligence. *1 Peter 1:12*

God created them with emotions. *Luke 2:13*

God created them with a will. *Jude 6*

God created them with great power. *2 Peter 2:11*

God created an innumerable number of angels. *Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 5:11*

God created them for different roles and has given them different levels of authority:

- Lucifer, “the anointed cherub who covers” – *Ezekiel 28:11-15*
- Michael, “the archangel” – *Jude 9*
- Seraphim, who worship God – *Isaiah 6:1-3*
- Cherubim, who guard the holiness of God – *Genesis 3:22-24*

God Creates the Physical World – *Genesis 1:1-2:4*

Genesis 1:1 – “God created the heavens and the earth...”

If step one is God’s preparation to fulfill His eternal plan of redemption, then step two was His creation of the physical world and all that we can see. That word “created” means “to make out of nothing.” If an artist creates a painting, they must use a brush to put paint of various colors on a canvas. Mankind can create but **always** must have material or something in order to create. That is not the case for God. When God created, He did not use any raw materials to create with, for there were no raw materials in existence at that time.

Genesis 1:3-4 – “Then God said...”

Genesis 1:3 is the first account of God speaking. He said, “Let there be light” and there was light. God himself spoke light into being. Not like turning on a light switch or a flashlight where the source is electricity but rather God creating light that would penetrate darkness by His Words and His power alone. Note that the sun, moon, and stars were not yet created. *Hebrews 11:3* describes this creation of “seen” by words that are “unseen”: “...by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.”

God could have brought this light into existence any way that He wanted. He could have just willed it into being without speaking; but He specifically records that HE spoke it into existence, thereby proving to us that He was the creator of light.

Verse 4 goes on to tell us that the light which God created was “good.” It was perfect and without blemish. This is because God Himself is perfect and holy. He would not be God if the things He created and the things He did were not perfect. For the first time, we hear God speak, and what He says comes into being, and that thing is good.

On the first day of creation God created light, separating the light from the darkness.

On the second day God created the atmosphere and the sky.

On the third day God separated water from dry ground creating the oceans and land. He also created an abundance of plant life in the waters and on land, plant life that would reproduce seed after its kind.

On the fourth day God created the sun, moon, stars, galaxies, and the vast universe. He also set them in order and in proper orbit.

On the fifth day God filled the waters with all living creatures that live under the water and filled the skies with all living creatures that fly. He created them to reproduce after their own kind and to multiply and fill the earth.

On the sixth day God created all living creatures on land, and in the same way creates them to reproduce and multiply after their own kind. God also created mankind on the sixth day.

On the seventh day God rested because He was finished. **Genesis 2:2** tells us that God ***“ended His work...”*** This means that God decided what would be created and when it was finished. As author and Creator, He alone has the right to decide what “is” and how it “shall be.”

On each of the six days, “God said,” “it was so,” and “it was good.” God is omnipotent (all-powerful); there is nothing beyond His ability. From the vast expanse of the universe too far away to see, to the micro-organisms too small to see, God created it all from nothing. God spoke it all into being; and because He is perfect and holy, His creation too was perfect. **Genesis 1:31 – *“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good...”***

Genesis 1:26-30 – “Let Us make man in Our image.”

The climax of the creation story is the creation of mankind. God did not create mankind like the other living creatures, but rather He created mankind with a mind, will, and emotions. This gave mankind the capacity for relationship and the ability to fellowship. The Triune God of eternity past that existed in perfect union and fellowship with one another created mankind in such a way that mankind would join in this divine fellowship.

Notice, too, that before creating mankind, God in His infinite wisdom first creates all that mankind will need in order to survive. This also makes God the ultimate provider. Everything that mankind would EVER need (including a plan of redemption), God created it all before creating mankind.

As image bearers, mankind was able to fellowship with his Creator and grow in his relationship with Him. However, for there to be relationship, there also has to be the ability to walk away from that relationship. With a mind, will, and emotions, mankind had the freedom to choose to turn away from God and to break fellowship with Him.

“Let them have dominion over...” God also put mankind over all creation. He honored mankind and elevated mankind to a position of royalty as man was to fill, rule over, and subdue the earth. God is the Creator and has the authority to decide the roles that His creation will have.

“See, I have given you...” God gave all herbs, plants, and fruits that is good for food to mankind to eat and enjoy. Take a moment to think of all the kinds of foods and flavors that you enjoy, not to mention all the foods from the rest of the world. God created an abundance of food and gave it all to mankind. He is a generous God who loves to give good gifts. He is not a God who withholds good things but rather delights in giving of His love and Himself.

Genesis 2:8-17 – “the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food...”

Out of God's abundant love and generosity, He planted a beautiful garden for Adam. When He had the garden ready, He took Adam and placed him there. He didn't ask Adam if he wanted to live there, He just took him and put him there. Because God had created Adam, He had the right to put Adam wherever He wanted. Adam belonged to God and what was right for Adam to do was what God said was right. But all throughout history we see mankind doing what is "right in his own eyes" rather than what the Creator says is right (***Deuteronomy 12:7-8***).

Genesis 2:16-17 "you shall not eat..."

God planted two very important trees in the middle of the garden and gave Adam clear instructions. He didn't leave it up to Adam to decide which things were right and wrong. As Author and Creator, only God can decide right and wrong. He spoke to Adam clearly and told Adam what he must do or he would die. Similarly, God clearly instructs us through His Word and has not left it up to us to decide between right and wrong.

Although God knew what was best for Adam, He decided to give Adam a choice about whether or not to obey. A loving relationship includes the freedom to walk away from that love. He could eat from the tree of life and live forever, or he could eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil and die.

What did God mean when He told Adam he would die?

Adam would be separated from God. This is a spiritual death where the fellowship with the Creator would be broken. Adam would be removed from the divine fellowship.

There would also be a physical death. Not immediately but the human body would begin to decay and die. Like a broken tree branch that has been separated from its source of life, it stays green for a time but gradually withers and dries up.

The third death that Adam would have to experience if he chose to disobey God would be separation from God in the Lake of Fire. This is an eternal separation, a relationship lost that cannot be mended. This is the same Lake of Fire in Revelation 20:10.

The penalty for disobeying God would be death, a spiritual death, a physical death, and an eternal death. It is this way because God said it to be so, for when God speaks, what He says takes place, and it is right and good.

Genesis 2:18-24 – "But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him..."

God decided that Adam should not live alone. He had created him and knew what was best for him. As before, God didn't ask Adam what Adam wanted. He just made the decision for him. Not only did God make the decision for Adam but He also helped Adam to see his own need for a companion. God brought all the animals to Adam so that Adam could name them. Remember, God honored Adam by making him ruler and gave Adam dominion over all of creation. God gave Adam the authority to name the living creatures and revealed to Adam that there was not another creature that was compatible to him. There was not another creature created in the image of God that could join in relationship and fellowship. God then creates Eve and brings her before Adam, creating the first marriage between man and woman. This relationship was designed and created by God and, like the rest of creation, is good.

Conclusion

Life was good for Adam and Eve. God had given them everything they needed. He was their friend, He loved them, and they were very happy. He had surrounded them with beauty and abundance. They were able to communicate directly with God. He had made them rulers over His creation. Their work was not hard. Neither was there any sickness. What an awesome position to be in.

The Creator has the authority to do as He sees fit.

As the Creator and Author of all things, God has the authority and the right to create and design as He pleases. He had the right to make angels how He wanted with whatever beauty, power, wisdom, and authority He wanted to create them with. He had the right to make animals, male and female, to reproduce after their own kind. He had the right to create the seasons and determine the length of the days. His power and magnificence can be clearly seen in both the vastness of the universe as well as the details of the smallest molecule. This universe that we live in is a small picture of the beauty and majesty of a loving God.

The Creator knows the true origin story.

God existed before the beginning of time and therefore knows the true story of creation. Not only did He create the universe but also He authored the creation story so that we may know the true story. The creation story reveals the Creator to us; and as we continue on in the biblical stories, we will see more of our Creator.

God is a generous God.

The generosity of God is on full display as He creates in abundance and gives it all to mankind to subdue and rule over. He gives Adam an abundance of delicious foods to eat—not only Adam but us as well. God is a loving God whose love is for sharing and not for keeping. He created a human race that would be able to enter into fellowship with Him and be recipients of His unimaginable love.

All of creation is good, only as God created and designed it.

“And it was good.” God spoke, and out of nothing all things seen and unseen, living and not living, came into being. This is a demonstration of not only God’s power and sovereignty, but also a demonstration of His perfection and holiness as He saw that all He had created was good. Creation was without flaw or blemish. It was just as He designed it and it was perfect. Marriage, for example, was not an invention of man but a creation of God. It was God’s perfect plan for Adam and Eve.

Lesson 4

Fall of the Angels

As we saw in the previous lesson, God did not create all the angels exactly the same. Some were more beautiful, more intelligent and wiser than others. The greatest angel was called Lucifer, which means “morning star,” and God gave Lucifer power and authority over the other angels. He was called “*the anointed cherub who covers*” (*Ezekiel 28:17*).

God created Lucifer with great wisdom, intelligence, and beauty so that he would praise, honor, and worship God; but the opposite happened. These gifts of God that He had blessed Lucifer with actually caused Lucifer to become proud, even to the extent of thinking that he could take God's place (*Isaiah 14:12-15*).

Many of God's angels followed Lucifer, their leader (*Matthew 25:41; Luke 8:30; Ephesians 6:12; 2 Peter 2:4*).

How could this happen? We saw from our last lesson that clearly God created the angels with a mind, will, and emotions, and then He in His sovereign plan and wisdom gave them the freedom to choose to obey and follow Him or choose to rebel.

We know without a doubt that Lucifer and the other angels' rebellion did not surprise God. Not only did He know what they were thinking before they actually rebelled (*Isaiah 14:13; Hebrews 4:13*), but He also already knew from eternity past before they were ever even created (*Colossians 1:16*).

God's word tells us that because Lucifer and his followers tried to rebel against God, He removed them from Heaven and stripped them of their roles and positions as the servants of God. Then through God's judgment and sentencing, they became Satan and the demons, and God created the lake of fire as the place of their eternal punishment (*Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:16-17; Jude 6; Matthew 25:41*).

The very first thing that Lucifer's rebellion accomplished was that it revealed the power and authority of God. It revealed that he truly is under God's authority and his only option is to submit to it. Not only was he removed from Heaven, stripped of his position, but God also changed his name from Lucifer (“son of the morning”) to Satan (“enemy,” “adversary”).

Even though Satan is under God's authority, sentenced and doomed to an eternal punishment in the lake of fire, he still hasn't given up on his quest to become God. After his attempted rebellion failed, Satan's next attempt to become God would be by seeking to lead God's creation into sin and thereby under his authority.

Fall of Man – *Genesis 3:1-8*

Genesis 3:1 – “Has God indeed said...”

Life in the garden of Eden was pleasant for Adam and Eve because everything was perfect, just as God had created it. This was something that God's enemy Satan hated. Satan knew about

God's warning to Adam concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As God's enemy, he wanted to destroy the relationship man and woman had with God and that God enjoyed so much.

What do we know about Satan? Let's see what the Bible says about him.

2 Corinthians 11:3 tells us that Satan is a deceiver and is crafty.

Revelation 12:9 describes him as the one "who deceives the whole world."

John 8:44 describes Satan as a murderer and liar. It says that from the beginning he was a murderer, meaning it is his character and identity, not just that he kills. John also elaborates on Satan as a liar saying "there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it." For Satan to do something good would be to act outside of his character and identity and he would not be Satan. Just as God cannot do anything without love, Satan cannot do anything that is motivated by love.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 tells us that Satan takes what is true and good and makes it appear evil, and he takes what is good and from God and makes it appear evil. Listen to what people say about abortion, for example. It is often described as something that is beneficial, life giving, and loving, when the truth is that it is murder simply for the sake of convenience.

In **Genesis 3:1**, Satan disguises himself and asks Eve a question: "**Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'**" Satan knew what God had told Adam and Eve and he knew that God had in fact generously given every tree in the garden to Adam and Eve except the one tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan was seeking to cause Eve to doubt God's goodness and His heart for them.

Eve responded to Satan in **Genesis 3:2-3** saying that God had given them all the trees in the garden to eat for food except for the tree in the middle of the garden. But then she adds to God's command saying that they could not even touch the fruit on that tree. Eve was confused and Satan knew it. In **Genesis 2:17**, God commanded Adam not to eat of the tree in the middle of the garden and never said that they could not touch it. God had not spoken directly to Eve about the tree of knowledge of good and evil. His command had been given to Adam but was also meant for Eve. Similarly, God spoke His Word to people thousands of years ago, but it still applies to us today.

In **Genesis 3:4-5**, Satan responds to Eve calling God a liar. The father of lies tells Eve that the God who made her in His own image lied to her and is withholding good things. Satan describes God as a fearful God who is afraid His creation will rise up and become God. This is the same loving God who created Adam and Eve in His own image so that there could be intimate relationship and fellowship between God and his image bearers. Satan tells Eve that God is not generous and is actually withholding knowledge, blessing, and power as if the creation could become God.

Remember, we saw that Satan had rebelled against God when he wanted to take God's place; now he is suggesting to Eve that she should also rebel against God and be like God, knowing good and evil.

Proverbs 3:5 says, ***“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding.”*** All evil in this world is God's creation doing what is right in their own eyes, a perversion of God's perfect creation and design. Satan deceived Eve into thinking that God did not know best and she would be better off depending on her own understanding rather than what God said.

Genesis 3:6 clearly shows that Eve was deceived. God had given Adam and Eve freedom to eat from all the trees that were good for food. The tree of knowledge of good and evil was not good for food, nor did it make one wise. However, Eve now “saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise...” and she disobeyed God. She chose to believe Satan rather than God, and Adam then disobeys and eats as well.

1 Timothy 2:14 tells us that Adam was not deceived. God had told him directly that he cannot eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and he deliberately disobeyed God. He also chose to ignore God's Word and instead to do what was good in his own eyes.

Genesis 3:7-8 – ***“Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God...”***

What did God say would happen if they ate the forbidden fruit? ***“...For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17).*** As we previously discussed, there are three kinds of death that would take place if they disobeyed God.

1. They would be separated from God. This is a spiritual death where the fellowship with the Creator would be broken. They would be removed from the divine fellowship.
2. There would also be a physical death—not immediately but the human body would begin to decay and die. Like a broken tree branch that has been separated from its source of life, it stays green for a time but gradually withers and dies.
3. The third death that they would have to experience if they chose to disobey God would be separation from God in the Lake of Fire. This is an eternal separation, a relationship lost that cannot be mended. The same Lake of Fire that Revelations 20:10 speaks of.

Adam and Eve immediately experienced the first kind of death—a separation, a barrier between them and their Creator. The fellowship that they once had with the triune God of the universe was now broken, and so they hid themselves. Isaiah describes this kind of death that took place: ***“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).*** Because God is holy, righteous, and is love, He hates sin because of the separation that it causes between Him and mankind, and He allows mankind to receive its consequences in an effort to cause us to realize our need for a Savior.

Romans 6:23 says, ***“For the wages of sin is death...”*** Adam and Eve had taken sides with God's enemy, Satan, and they too were now enemies of God. Though it looked like Satan had succeeded in destroying God's relationship with mankind, little did he know that God had already made a plan from eternity past for the dealing with mankind's sin.

Separated from God

When Adam and Eve sinned, there were some immediate consequences and changes that took place. These and others are examples of the death that God had warned about and was the result of Adam and Eve's disobedience.

Their attitudes toward their bodies changed: ***"And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:25).*** Later, ***"they knew that they were naked..." (Genesis 3:7).*** Their minds became evil and their attitude toward their bodies changed, and they became embarrassed by their nakedness. From *"it is good"* to their bodies being a shameful thing.

They no longer trusted God to provide for their needs: ***"And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves covering" (Genesis 3:7).*** They began trying to meet their own needs and live independently of God. Their sin made them ashamed, and they attempted to remedy that by making clothing for themselves.

Before they ate the forbidden fruit, they loved God and looked forward to His visits, but now their attitude toward Him had changed and they hid from Him. ***Genesis 3:8-9*** describes this foreign behavior of Adam and Eve. God had created them with the ability to fellowship and enjoy relationship with their Creator. There was now separation between God and mankind which made Adam and Eve desire **not** to see God and walk with Him in the garden.

Before they had been of one mind with God; now they were of one mind with Satan. They could no longer know and understand God. They didn't love Him anymore but rather feared Him and were now under Satan's control.

Conclusion

Lucifer and the angels were part of God's plan.

Colossians 1:16 is proof that Lucifer and the angels who are now Satan and the demons, have been a part of God's eternal plan of redemption from before the foundations of the earth. From the time of his rebellion, all the through the Old Testament, all through history, and to this very day in which we live, all of Satan's attempts to ruin God's plans and desires become used by God to reveal Himself, His authority, and His grace over and over and over.

Sin and disobedience cause separation.

When our children deliberately disobey us, do they want to be near us? No, they want to hide from us and avoid us. Their fellowship with us is broken and strained. Likewise, when Adam and Eve sinned, their relationship with a perfect and holy God was broken. The sin brought death and fear, which turned them away from God.

God's Word as final authority.

Satan put God's Word into question and Eve chose to believe Satan's words instead. God had spoken and what He said is good and true. Anything contrary to God's Word is only a perversion of the truth.

Mankind is unable to help himself.

Adam and Eve hid themselves and tried to cover their shame with leaves. Their relationship with God was broken and their attempts to mend their sin was not acceptable.

The stage is being set as mankind now needs a Savior.

Now that the relationship between man and God is broken and mankind was and is unable to help themselves, mankind must turn to God for their only hope. As **2 Timothy 1:9** says, ***“Before the foundations of the earth God planned to save mankind by grace through Jesus Christ.”*** Adam and Eve’s disobedience created the need for a Savior, for whom God had planned from before the foundations of the earth.

Lesson 5

Consequences of Man's Sin – *Genesis 3:9-23*

Genesis 3:9 – “the Lord God called to Adam...”

When God comes to the garden of Eden after Adam and Eve had sinned, they hid themselves from Him. God then calls out to Adam asking where he is. This was not because God did not know but because He is interested in the relationship. The deed was done, and God could have just punished them right then and there, but instead He calls out to Adam.

God already knew that Adam and Eve had sinned, but He wanted for them to know they had sinned and to realize that they had become sinful and would now be receiving the wages of sin, death. **2 Peter 3:9** tells us more of God's patience and desire for mankind, which is reflected here with his interaction with Adam: ***“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.”*** God had an eternal plan of redemption that He had foreordained from eternity past; in order for man to recognize his need for the fulfillment of the plan, he would first need to recognize his sinfulness. That's what God's questioning was about.

God is still calling out to men and women all over the world because He desires a relationship and fellowship with them. He does this through various means. **Psalm 19:1-4** describes creation as declaring the glory of God, and through creation one can begin to know the Creator. God also calls to mankind through His Word, suffering, difficulties in life, and other people such as missionaries. God calls out to us—even though we have become His enemies, He desires for mankind to enter back into the divine fellowship that was broken.

Genesis 3:10-11 – “I was afraid...”

God calls out to Adam and asks where he is. Adam's response reveals a stark change that had taken place after Adam and Eve had disobeyed. Adam said that they were afraid and so they hid. The results of their sin are fear, guilt, and shame. No longer were they confident in the love of their Creator and excited to be with Him. Adam and Eve had to answer to God for what they had done because they belonged to the One who created them.

Likewise, we too were created by God and belong to Him; and like Adam and Eve, we have to answer to God for our sins. Our disobedience toward a perfect and holy God separates us from having a relationship with Him. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they took on a sin nature under the control of Satan. They went from an identity of perfect image bearers of God to image bearers that were now enemies of their Creator. This was an identity change, not just an outward behavioral change.

Not only do we all commit sin daily, but we are also born with a sin nature. Like the rest of creation that reproduces after its own kind, Adam and Eve reproduced children with a sin nature, and everyone who descended from Adam and Eve (the entire human race) inherited a sin nature. Therefore, we all are born into an identity filled with guilt, fear, and shame, separated from God.

God then asks Adam in verse 11 if he had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Again, God already knew the answer and did not need Adam to confess his wrongdoing. Rather He was giving Adam the opportunity to agree with God and to change his mind. This does not mean that a proper response would have been sufficient to reconcile the wrong that was done; however, it does show that God was more concerned about the relationship and fellowship than the physical act of disobedience.

Genesis 3:12-13 – “The woman...You (God)... the serpent...”

When God asked Adam and Eve if they had eaten the forbidden fruit, they both cast blame elsewhere. Adam blamed Eve and God; Eve blamed the serpent. Already we see sinful mankind making what is good appear evil. Remember that out of an abundance of love, God gave Eve to Adam—a perfect companion to live alongside Adam in a beautiful union that God created as a loving gift for both of them. Now Adam is blaming both the gift as well as the gift giver for his own choice to sin. Adam was viewing Eve not as a gift but as a stumbling block. He was viewing God not as a generous loving God but rather someone who is trying to cause fear and shame.

When Eve was asked about eating the forbidden fruit, she likewise threw blame elsewhere. She blamed the serpent that had deceived her. Like Adam, she did not take ownership of her own choices but rather acted as though she was not responsible. This is what we do in our sin nature as well—we try to find a way out by casting blame thinking that will remedy our shame and guilt.

Genesis 3:14-19 – “He shall bruise your head...”

The result of Adam and Eve’s sin was death and separation.

There was immediate separation as their relationship was not what it once was.

There were delayed consequences as their physical bodies would one day age and die.

There were eternal consequences where they would spend eternity in the lake of fire, separated from God forever.

There would also be consequences on this earth while they live out their days in a fallen sin-cursed world.

To Adam, God said that the ground will be cursed, and it will be through difficulty that Adam will plant and find food. Thorns and thistles would also grow easily and make life on earth more difficult. The perfect environment that Adam once enjoyed would be no more. We see evidence of this sin-cursed world wherever we go, and all of mankind has suffered from this curse to this very day.

People all over the world struggle with sickness, pain, weakness, hard work, insects, pests, weeds, thorns, sorrow, and grief. All are a direct result of Adam and Eve’s disobedience. God’s promise of physical death is another result of Adam’s disobedience, and God tells Adam that his body will return to the ground from where it came. The penalty for disobeying the holy God is death, and physical death is part of that.

To Eve, God said that her pain in childbirth shall be increased and that her natural desire would be to rule over her husband, but he will have authority over her. Her natural willing submission would be corrupted and this will bring conflict, pain, and sorrow.

To the serpent, God cursed it because it had been used by Satan. We are not told what the serpent was like before Satan used it, other than where **Genesis 3:1** says it was “more crafty.” However, we do know that it did not slither on its belly when God created it.

God continues and in **Genesis 3:15** makes a promise that He will send a Deliverer, an enemy of Satan, who will overcome Satan and deliver mankind from Satan’s power. This Deliverer would not go unscathed but will receive a minor blow to the heel while delivering a fatal blow to the head of death and sin. God gave this promise for He had already foreordained the eternal plan of redemption from eternity past.

In **Genesis 3:6**, Adam and Eve disobey God, and the relationship is broken. Like a great chasm, sin separated Adam and Eve from their holy Creator. Only nine verses later, God promises to send someone who will restore the relationship and bridge the chasm between mankind and God. Even though God waited nine verses to give the promise, we know from **2 Timothy 1:9** as well as other passages that this Deliverer was a part of God’s plan from before He created anything. God also planned that the promised Deliverer would be the child of a virgin woman. **Genesis 3:15** calls Him the Seed of the woman—even though typically it is the father that carries the seed, not the woman.

The God of the universe, Creator of the heavens and earth, is truly a merciful God who deeply loves mankind. He could have just left Adam and Eve to die and go on to everlasting punishment, which is what they deserved but instead He promised a Savior who would deliver them and all of mankind from Satan’s control and bring them back to Himself. **Psalms 136**, **Psalms 145:8-9**, and **Lamentations 3:22-23** are great passages that highlight God mercy.

Genesis 3:20 – “...the mother of living.”

Even though people speak different languages and have different colors of skin, we all descended from Adam and Eve. Adam calls his wife “Eve” because she is the mother of all who come after her. **Acts 17:26** tells us that God has made every race and nation from one man, Adam. Just as we all are descended from Adam, we all die physically and spiritually because of Adam. **Romans 5:12** is very clear about how the sin and death passed to all mankind:

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”

The disobedience of Adam and Eve resulted in consequences that were passed on to us today—guilt, fear, and shame that come from a broken relationship with a perfect and holy God, physical bodies that will die, eternal death and separation from God. We also must endure the consequences of living in a sin-cursed world where we experience all the pain, sorrow, and hardship this world has to offer. This is what we all have inherited from our father and mother Adam and Eve.

Genesis 3:21 – “...God made tunics of skin, and clothed them.”

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, their minds were corrupted, and they became embarrassed to have God see them naked. They made coverings from fig leaves in an attempt to remedy their embarrassment, but their efforts were not acceptable to God. It was impossible for Adam and Eve to mend what was broken, impossible for them to pay the penalty for their disobedience so they could go back to how things were before. Their nakedness and shame could not be made acceptable by their own efforts; God had to step in and provide an appropriate covering for them. There was also death required for that acceptable covering to be made. God had to kill an animal

and take the skins from that animal to make acceptable coverings for Adam and Eve. God wanted them to know that there was nothing they could do through their own efforts to make themselves acceptable to Him.

Through this picture of God sacrificing two animals in order to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve, God was also providing a physical picture or a type of the Deliverer that God promised would come and redeem mankind out of his sinfulness.

Genesis 3:22-23 – “...the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden...”

God never intended for Adam and Eve to know evil, they were only to know of good. They were to depend on God and trust God; they were not to find out for themselves what evil was. God then sends Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden so that they can no longer eat from the tree of life. Adam and Eve are now living in sin-cursed bodies and in a sin-cursed world. Out of His love and mercy towards them, God removes the ability to live forever because of their new sinful condition. God did not want them to remain separated and remain in sin and death forever. Instead, He had already foreordained another plan and that its fulfillment will result in mankind becoming restored to oneness with God forever.

Conclusion

God will always pursue a relationship with mankind.

We see God pursuing Adam and Eve after they had sinned. Already knowing what they had done, He comes to the garden in the cool of the day and calls out to them and asks what they had done. God's desire is for relationship and fellowship with mankind; this is why He came and spoke with Adam and Eve after they sinned, promised to restore the relationship through the Deliverer, provided clothing for them, and sent them out of the garden of Eden. Rather than just letting them go, God immediately pursues mankind once they had turned their backs on Him.

Sin always leads to fear, guilt, and shame.

After Adam and Eve sinned, they were afraid and tried to hide their shame and themselves from their loving Creator. God had told Adam that the penalty for disobedience would be death—death to the relationship with the triune God, physical death, and eternal death. Life on earth as God created it was traded for life full of pain, sorrow, fear, shame, and heartache.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Every tribe, tongue, and nation descended from Adam and Eve and inherited a sinful nature that agrees with Satan and is under his control. As descendants of Adam and Eve we are born into separation from God and need God's help to restore that relationship.

A promised head crusher will come.

Before the foundations of the earth were laid, God created the eternal plan of redemption to invite a sinful and separated race back into fellowship with the Triune God. God created everything and it all was good and without blemish. Mankind enjoyed fellowship with their Creator but then turned their back on that relationship and followed after God's enemy instead. Then in **Genesis 3:15**, God promises that One would come, the Seed of the woman. Though He will be bruised on the heel, He will be victorious and deliver the fatal blow to the serpent.

Only God can cover our sin and shame.

After Adam and Eve had sinned, they attempted to remedy their shame and nakedness by covering themselves with fig leaves. Their attempt was not acceptable, and God had to provide appropriate coverings for them. He killed an animal and used its skin to make clothes for them. An acceptable covering for Adam and Eve could only be provided by the Creator, and it required the sacrifice of a living creature. This is a picture of the promised Deliverer who would come and pay the penalty for the sins of the world. For mankind to be saved from the penalty for his sins, God will have to divinely intervene, and there will need to be a death sacrifice.

Lesson 6

God Accepts Abel's Offering but Rejects Cain's – *Genesis 4:1-24*

Introduction

In the last lesson we saw how sin came into the world which ended up in mankind becoming a sinful human race. It began with Lucifer and the other angels' attempt to rebel against God and seek to take His rightful place as God. This resulted in Lucifer becoming Satan and the angels that followed him, demons. Lucifer's sin led to him being given a new identity through the just judgment of God. He was created as "the Morning Star," the "anointed cherub that covers," but through judgment became Satan, the enemy and adversary of God.

Even though Satan clearly and undeniably received the just consequences for his rebellion, it didn't result in any change in him whatsoever. He was still seeking to rebel against God and thwart the will and plans of God. Therefore, he showed up in the garden (allowed by God) to tempt Adam and Eve and lead them into sin.

We saw Adam and Eve's response to Satan's temptation to disobey God and eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They ate, became sinful, and were removed from the garden, the presence of God, and were now receiving the wages of sin, death.

This next story about Cain and Abel proves two main points for us. First, it illustrates that indeed mankind has truly become sinful. Second, God begins the process of revealing His foreordained eternal plan of redemption, that it will be provided through a substitute sacrifice and is brought in faith.

Genesis 4:1-2

First, it's important to notice where Adam and Eve were located before sinning and after becoming sinful. Second, notice where they were located when they began to have children. We see from this passage that Cain and Abel were both born after Adam and Eve had become sinful and outside of the garden away from the tree of life. Because their father had sinned and was put out of the garden, now both of them were born sinners and under Satan's control.

Not only was Cain and Abel born sinful outside of the garden and separated from God but so has every single person of every generation of mankind ever since.

We have seen that God is the giver of life; however, we are not born into friendship or oneness with God but instead are born enemies of God because of the sinful human nature that we are all born with. Furthermore, Satan has taken God's place as natural man's spiritual father (*John 8:40-44*).

Many people like to think that all people are God's children. It is a very comforting thought and sounds very loving and religious, but it is a lie of Satan. This kind of teaching is just the opposite of what the Bible teaches. Yes, God created us, but we are not born children of God, but rather children of Satan and cut off or separated from God.

Because of Adam and Eve's sin, there was no way Cain or Abel could go into the garden of Eden and fellowship with God. Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel—they were all sinners now. There was nothing they could do or give to God to pay for their sins.

Remembering God's Foreordained Eternal Plan

Do you remember when we looked at these passages back in Lesson 2 and what they revealed to us?

1. *2 Timothy 1:9*
2. *1 Peter 1:18-20*
3. *1 Corinthians 2:7*
4. *Titus 1:1-3*
5. *Hebrews 13:20*
6. *Revelation 13:8*

These verses all revealed to us that long before God created man, He knew full well that man would be sinful and separated from Him. Therefore, because He is love, He created an eternal plan of redemption that will enable us to become restored to oneness with Himself.

And because this has been God's foreordained plan from before the foundations of the earth, after Adam and Eve sinned and had become sinful, along with the giving them the consequences of sin, He also gives them the promise of a coming Deliverer in ***Genesis 3:15***.

And after giving the promise of a coming Deliverer, He then gives a picture of how that future promise will be fulfilled by Himself killing two animals and using their skins to clothe Adam and Eve.

Now here with Cain and Abel, we see God continuing to keep His promise of redemption through a Deliverer for mankind by instructing them in how they can have their sins "covered" while waiting for the promised Deliverer to come.

Genesis 4:3-5

God gave Adam and Eve the promise of a coming Deliverer and then He showed them how this promised one would eventually bring about their spiritual redemption by sacrificing two animals in their place. We also believe that it's quite obvious that Adam and Eve passed this instruction on to Cain and Abel.

Here is what Adam and Eve must have told their two sons:

When you go to God, take a lamb as an offering to Him.

Kill the lamb in such a way that the blood will run out.

Now we know that the blood of a sheep does not pay for man's sin (***Hebrews 10:4***). Then why did He tell them to kill a lamb?

God wanted them to always remember that the punishment for sin is death.

He wanted them to remember that they would die and go to everlasting punishment unless God himself saved them.

If they agreed with God that they were sinners and that only He could save them, then they were to bring a lamb and kill it as God had told them.

Believing God's instruction and bringing an acceptable sacrifice was what God gave them as a way to have their sins covered while waiting on the promised Deliverer to come and accomplish it once and for all.

Cain's and Abel's Sacrifices

We see in **Genesis 4:4** that Abel brought one of his sheep as an offering to God. It was the first born of its mother, just as God has said. He believed and agreed with God. Again, it's important to understand that the blood of animals could never pay for sin. God did not accept Abel's lamb as the payment for His sin, but he did forgive and accept him because Abel believed God and he believed God's promise to one day send a promised Deliverer.

Next, we see in **Genesis 4:5** that Cain did not believe God. He also brought an offering, but he brought things he had grown instead of a lamb like they had been instructed. The result was that God did not accept Cain or his offering.

God will not accept anyone who comes to Him on his own terms. It's not up to us to determine what is and what isn't acceptable to God. That instruction comes from Him. Everything that originates with man is unacceptable to God.

Cain brought the wrong sacrifice because he did not believe God! He did not trust in the way that God had told him to come.

Remember when God rejected the fig leaves that Adam and Eve made for themselves? He wanted to show them that they could not make themselves acceptable to Him by coming up with their own solutions. Now He is rejecting Cain for the same reason.

It's important to note here that faith is the reason why Abel brought an acceptable offering, and unbelief is the reason why Cain brought an unacceptable offering. This was not a matter of obedience. It goes deeper than that.

Example of the Dead Branch

Remember that we discussed if we were to break a branch off a tree, it will die after a while because it is separated from the life it received from the tree? What if we tried to rejoin the dead branch back onto the tree? If we tied the dead branch back onto the tree, would it come back to life again? Would the leaves turn green once again and begin to grow? No, we cannot join a dead branch back onto a live tree so that it will live again.

However, it seems like many people spend a good part of their lives trying to find a way to reattach themselves to God. Some of man's ways include activities that seem very religious:

Going to church

Giving money to the church

Doing all sorts of good deeds

Being a good person

Since all of mankind are born sinners, we are all detached from our source of life who is God, and there is absolutely nothing we can do on our own that will restore us to God. Sin has broken us off from Him just like the limb was broken off from the tree.

Isaiah 59:2 says, *“Your sin has made a separation between you and your God.”* That is how it was with Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel. Because Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they were all separated from God.

Genesis 4:6-16

This story of Cain and Abel and God's interaction with them reveals to us two very important foundational truths about mankind and about God.

First, Cain reveals to us what the heart of mankind is like:

We are all sinful and all need to have our sins paid for.

Cain was born sinful outside of the garden before he ever brought a wrong sacrifice or committed murder.

Because of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we have become independent of God.

We think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think and we think that we can come up with our own ways for making ourselves acceptable to God.

We blame others for the consequences of our own sin.

We will always choose religion over grace.

Second, God reveals the following about Himself and His heart:

God is all-knowing.

God knows that mankind needs salvation and that we can't help ourselves.

God wants mankind to be saved. He desires that “no man perish.”

God faithfully communicates how mankind can become delivered from their sin and receive eternal life.

By grace, God reasoned with Cain after he, on his own, chose to disregard God's instruction and brought his own sacrifice.

After Cain kills Abel, God again offers him grace and the opportunity to repent and bring an acceptable sacrifice.

Every Generation Continues to Prove the Sinfulness of Mankind

Genesis 4:17-24

Cain's descendants followed his example of seeking to live independently of God. God was not a part of their lives. They lived without thinking about God. Instead, they filled their lives with material things. They built towns, raised cattle, and made tools and musical instruments. There is nothing wrong with these things in themselves; what was wrong was that they concerned themselves with these things and excluded God.

They filled their minds and time doing the things they wanted to do. They had no interest or time for God. They were under the control of Satan. Again, this kind of independence from God only comes from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

What a terrible effect unbelief and disobedience to God had brought into the world. Because Adam and Eve sinned...

All their descendants were born sinners.

Both were separated from God.

Neither would listen to His words.

Cain's children and their children, along with each ensuing generation, also have gone their own way instead of God's way.

Man's Sin Cannot Prevent God from Fulfilling His Promises

Genesis 4:25-26

God gave Adam and Eve another child in place of Abel. Remember in the garden God promised that He would send a Deliverer who would overcome Satan? This Deliverer was to come through the line of Abel who had trusted in God. But Satan led Cain to kill Abel. Why? To destroy God's plan to send the Deliverer.

However, this wasn't the end of God's plan and promise. He always does what He promises. He doesn't give up or change because of the things Satan does, but He actually uses Satan's actions to reveal His own sovereignty all the more. In place of Abel, God gave Adam and Eve another son (Seth).

Seth was also born (a sinner) separated from God, but he trusted in Him just as Abel did.

Lesson 7

God Floods the Earth – *Genesis 5:1-8:2*

Introduction

In the last lesson we saw the aftermath of the fall—terrible results of sin passed down from one generation to another. Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel. We must keep in mind that none of this surprised God. He knew exactly what mankind was going to become like from eternity past.

As we continue to go through these Old Testament stories, there are two main things that we want to highlight. First, what do we see God revealing about Himself? His heart? Second, how do we see Him preparing mankind and setting the stage for the Deliverer to come and fulfill the eternal plan of redemption that He foreordained from eternity past?

From Adam to Noah – The Earth's First Ten Generations

Genesis 5:1-32

In this chapter, we have recorded each generation from Adam to Noah, ten generations that became the line of Seth. With each generation, God names the person, how many sons and daughters they had, how long they lived, and then ends with “and they died.” Each generation ends with “and they died,” “and they died,” “and they died,” “and they died.”

In this way, God was proving that mankind indeed had become sinful and had received the wages of sin—death—just as He had warned Adam if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of God and evil.

BUT...we also know that from before the foundations of the earth, God had foreordained an eternal plan of redemption that would be by grace and through a Deliverer. Therefore, one thing that we will constantly see all through Old Testament is that even in the midst of God allowing mankind to receive the just judgment for his sin, He is always faithful to keep the promise of the coming Deliverer. Here in *Genesis 5*, God does this two ways.

First, in the middle of listing each generation from Adam to Noah and stating that each ended in death, there is one man who didn't die, one who God just took to Heaven without dying. That was Enoch. Enoch was delivered from death by the divine intervention of God. This is a physical picture of spiritual truth. Just as the only way Enoch could be delivered from physical death was by God divinely intervening, so the only way mankind will be able to be delivered from spiritual and eternal death will be by God's divine intervention—The Eternal Plan of Redemption.

Second, it's interesting to notice the names of each man listed and their meanings and the message that God was communicating through them:

Seth (appointed)

Enos (mortal man)

Cainan (sorrow)

Mahalalel (the blessed God)

Jared (come down)

Enoch (teaching)

Methuselah (His death shall bring)

Lamech (despairing)

Noah (comfort).

Putting the names together in a sentence, it would read this way: "It is appointed to mortal man sorrow, but the blessed God will come down teaching that His death shall bring the despairing comfort." What an amazing message hidden in the middle of a chapter that emphasizes the fact that man indeed has received the wages of sin...death!

The World at the Time of Noah

What we will be studying now tells about God's grace to Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth, and their families. This story of Noah took place 1,500 years or more after the creation of Adam.

Genesis 6:1 explains that by the time of Noah, Shem, Ham and Japheth, there was a large population living on the earth. Assuming current population growth figures, there could have been over three billion people living on the earth at this time. The vast majority were interested only in having what they thought was a good time. According to **Genesis 6:2**, they were obsessed with immorality.

God wanted the people in Noah's time to change their minds. He wanted them to admit they were wrong and to believe in Him. He was constantly telling them, but they would not listen.

Genesis 6:5, 11

The majority of the people followed the godless ways of Cain. They were proving their sinfulness more and more through the continual committing of sin. They refused to believe God's message and to trust in Him and His mercy.

Genesis 6:5 tells us that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually. Their minds were focused on material things and on their bodies and on their ambition for self-advancement.

They were proud, self-centered and boastful.

They were jealous of and hateful to other people.

They argued and fought.

They were cruel and many were even murderers.

They constantly tricked, lied and deceived one another.

They were ruthless in their business practices.

They continually gossiped and were totally unrestrained in their sexual passions.

Genesis 6:11-12 explains that God saw all their sin. They may have hidden their lies, adultery, stealing and murder from others, but none of it was hidden from God—He saw it all. He has known about their sin from before the foundations of the earth. ***“All things are naked and open to His eyes” (Hebrews 4:13).***

Even though they loved their sin and had no use for God, we know that God was continuing to set the stage for the future arrival of the One that would come to fulfill His foreordained eternal plan of redemption.

In this story, God was setting the stage for His future fulfillment of the eternal plan by two main ways:

First was by revealing the depth of mankind's sinfulness. **Genesis 6:5-7** very vividly describes the seriousness of mankind's sinfulness, to the point of it sounding like God was surprised by how sinful mankind had become and He was regretting even creating man in the first place. We know that's not true, for God is all-knowing. He describes it this way to show how serious an issue mankind's sinfulness is in order to reveal how desperately mankind needs a Savior.

Second, God is setting the stage by revealing that salvation will be by grace. He does this by choosing to use Noah to reveal there is only way to receive deliverance from our just judgment and that is by grace and grace alone (**Genesis 6:8-10**).

- Now remember Noah was born a sinner under Satan's control just like all of Adam's descendants. He did not deserve to be saved by God. However, Noah believed God, and Noah came to Him bringing the blood of animals like Abel, Seth, and Enoch.

Genesis 6:13-21

God told Noah that He was going to send a great flood which would cover the whole earth, but he did not just say, “Noah, I am going to judge the world. I am going to send a great flood. You had better do something about it. Start building an ark.” Instead, God instructed Noah exactly how to build it. He did not leave it up to Noah to figure it out for himself.

Remember, after Adam and Eve sinned, they made clothing for themselves. The clothing they made was not acceptable to God. Their clothing had to be what God wanted. Cain's and Abel's offerings also had to be according to the way God had said. Now the ark must be built according to God's plan. God knew exactly how that ark should be built, so He gave Noah careful instructions. He had created the universe; He set up the laws that control flotation, so He had no problem creating the perfect design for a huge ship.

Important Details about the Ark

The ark was a perfect nautical specimen, meaning that it was sea worthy.

The approximate size was 450 feet long by 75 feet wide by 45 feet high.

It could carry approximately 14,000 tons of cargo.

Its carrying capacity equaled that of 522 railroad boxcars, each of which can carry 240 sheep.

It is estimated that there were 17,600 species of animals making 45,000 a likely number Noah took on board the ark.

There is one very important point we need to especially remember about the way God told Noah to build this boat. In **Genesis 6:16**, God told Him to put only one door in the side of the ark. There was to be only one way to get inside. Every person and every animal that was to be saved from God's judgment had to come into the ark through this one and only door.

By this, God was providing another physical example of the coming fulfillment of the eternal plan of redemption...that it is the ONE and ONLY way for mankind to receive deliverance from His just eternal judgement.

Genesis 6:22

Noah believed God. He trusted in and depended on God to save him and his family. Remember, there had never been rain in the world, much less a flood. Until this time, the world was watered by a mist, which rose up from the ground (**Genesis 2:6**). Nevertheless, Noah believed that God could not lie when He said He would send rain and a flood. Noah believed God, so He obeyed and built the ark just as God had said.

Noah also warned the people of God's coming judgment, but the people did not believe God's words. They refused to agree with Him that they were wrong and that they deserved His punishment. They did not believe that God would destroy the world with a great flood. God had waited patiently for 120 years for them to change their minds, but He would wait no longer. It was time for God to allow them to receive their just judgment.

Important Points About the Heart of God

It is His heart's desire that no one perish. He foreordained the eternal plan of redemption from eternity past.

He goes to great lengths to reveal to mankind his sinfulness and need for deliverance.

He is very long-suffering and patient, desiring that no one perish.

He makes the way of deliverance undeniably clear because it's His will that no one perish.

Eventually there does come a time when God will allow mankind to receive his just judgment.

Genesis 7:13-16

Noah and his family all went into the ark through the one door. This was the only way anyone could be saved from the flood and God's wrath against sin. All the animals also came into the boat by the only door. Notice that then it says, ***"God shut the door."***

When Noah, his family, and all the animals were safely on the ark and God shut the door, it meant two very important things.

It meant salvation and deliverance for everyone and everything that was on the ark.

It meant death and destruction for everyone and everything that was outside of the ark.

The reason why it was God who shut the door was because only He has the authority and right to bring about just judgment or to give grace and deliverance from one's just judgment.

Once God shut the door, it was too late for those outside to change their minds. It's possible that many changed their minds about the coming Deliverer that Noah no doubt was telling them about; but in terms of deliverance from the flood, it was too late.

Genesis 17:17-23

After God had shut the door of the ark, He sent the rain. Remember God has control over all creation. He made it all, and He controls it all. There was so much water that it covered the whole world—even the highest mountains.

Where did all the water come from?

Do you remember what the world was like when God first made it? It was darkness and deep water was covering the whole earth. On the first day, God created the light. On the second day, He made the air and the blue sky, and He put much of the water, which had been on the earth, up above the sky (**Genesis 1:6**).

Now when God's time to flood the earth had come, He opened the windows of Heaven and for the first time there was rain on the earth. The waters also came from underground sources (**Genesis 8:2**).

God can do anything. Nothing is impossible for Him. He alone is almighty. It rained for 40 days and nights until the whole earth was covered with water. Every man, woman, and child outside the ark died in the flood—approximately 3 billion.

God is holy and righteous. He is a God of love and grace and mercy. But He is also a just God Who will allow mankind to receive his just judgment by rejecting His grace and offer of deliverance.

Lesson 8

The Tower of Babel - *Genesis 11:1-9*

Genesis 11:1-4

Many years had passed since God saved Noah, his wife, their three sons and their sons' wives from the great flood, and once again, many people lived on the earth. The majority of these people soon forgot about God's terrible judgment on the earth by the flood and once again deliberately ignored Him.

They did not want to know about or believe in the Lord like Abel, Seth, and Noah. They refused to consider His will for their lives. They were under Satan's control and just like Satan, they wanted to be great and exalt themselves. They were unthankful and did not give God the honor that He deserves. They deliberately turned away from what they knew to be the truth about God.

Who were these folks thinking about? Who were they worshipping? These men were full of themselves. They should have been interested in exalting God's name, not their own. But look again at the last part of this verse: *"lest we're scattered."*

What else was wrong here? Do you remember what command God gave to Adam and then repeated to Noah and his descendants? *Genesis 1:28; 9:1* – *"Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."* Even though God told both Adam and Noah that they were to multiply and fill the earth, these people deliberately disobeyed the command. They did not want to be scattered into different parts of the world as God commanded. So, they congregated in one place, built a city, and began to erect a great tall tower in order to make a name for themselves.

No one can rebel against God and win. When Satan was in Heaven, he tried to rebel against God, but he lost. The other angels who followed Satan also lost in their rebellion against Him. Adam and Eve lost in their rebellion as did Cain and the people of Noah's time.

So, what do you think will happen here?

Genesis 11:6-9

Man chose to ignore God's command to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth and decided to congregate in one location and exalt themselves. What does God do? He simply divinely intervenes and forces mankind to fulfill His command.

God did this by causing the people to speak different languages. Because men could no longer understand one another, they separated into their various language groups and moved away to different parts of the country. Over the years, they moved to other parts of the world, which really was God's original plan.

Man was to populate the whole earth, not just one region. This passage in Genesis tells us how the different nations and races began.

The Old Testament is so important as it gives us insight into what God is like and how He deals with man. These old stories sound a lot like the pattern of life today—men and women continue to

rebel against God; however, God never changes. He is still using the consequences of sin to draw people to Himself and to reveal their need for a Deliverer.

God Calls Abram – *Genesis 11:11-12:5*

Genesis 11:11

Here we see the beginning of the genealogy of Shem, one of Noah's sons. In verse 27, we are introduced to a man named Abram who was a descendant of Shem. Abram lived close to where the people had begun to build the tower of Babel.

Genesis 11:27-30

As we see here, Abram married Sarai, but they did not have any children. In those days, the inability to have children was considered to be a disgrace. Couples who had no children were looked down on by society. Male children were most desirable so that a man might have heirs to carry on his family name. However, Abram and Sarai did not even have a daughter.

Genesis 11:31-32

Terah, who was Abram's father, moved from Ur (Mesopotamia) and traveled up to Haran and took along with him Abram, Sarai and Lot. He had planned to go into Canaan, but they got only as far as Haran, where they stayed until he passed away (*Genesis 12:1*).

It is interesting to note that God had told Abram to leave his own country and go into the land of Canaan long before he had moved with his father to Haran (*Acts 7:2-3*). So it would appear that when Abram left his homeland to head to Canaan, he left because he was following his father Terah and not because he was obeying God's command.

Another important note about Abram is that he lived in Mesopotamia where the people worshipped idols. They were not people who knew and worshipped God. *Joshua 24:2* specifically tells us that Abram's father Terah worshipped idols. It's highly likely Abram did, too.

However, God had a plan for using Abram in the carrying out of His foreordained eternal plan of redemption. It would require Abram being led away from his homeland in order to become a God worshipper. Therefore, God told him to leave his homeland and go to the country to which He would guide him.

Did God have the right to tell Abram what to do? Yes. Why? Because God created him, Abram belonged to God.

In this lesson with the life of Abram, we are just fourteen generations from Adam and already we are seeing a pattern with God and as well with mankind.

With God, He foreordained the eternal plan of redemption from eternity past. He then creates the world and all that it contains. Then with Adam and Eve, Cain, Seth, Enoch, Noah, and now Abram, we continue to see God revealing the seriousness of man's sinful condition and the promise of grace and deliverance.

With mankind, we see mankind seeking to be independent of God and go his own way.

We see a pattern of God choosing to use various individuals in carrying out His eternal plan, NOT because they ask or even desire to be used, but solely because of His grace and sovereign will. Abram is a really good example of this.

Let's read God's promises to Abram in **Genesis 12:1-2**. Notice God said, ***"I will make you a great nation."*** Even though Abram and Sarai did not have any children, God still promised Abram that he would become the father of a great nation. This was probably one of the main reasons why He was choosing Abram and Sarai in this way because their barrenness would reveal God's divine intervention all the more.

Genesis 12:3

God here is promising that He would bless those who help Abram, but He would bring evil on anyone who mistreated him. Let's take a closer look at the end of verse 3: ***"...in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."*** This is the greatest of all the promises given to Abram because it is about the Deliverer.

Remember our study of the Garden of Eden and how God promised He would send a Deliverer into the world to crush the power of Satan? God now promised that one of Abram's descendants would be that Deliverer. All families of the earth would be blessed through Abram's descendant.

Genesis 12:4-5

Abram had become a very wealthy man and had many servants, cattle, sheep and goats. When he left Haran for Canaan, he took all that he owned with him.

It's important to remember that when God first told Abram to leave his homeland for Canaan, Abram didn't leave. He didn't leave until he was following his father Terah. Once Terah died, God again told Abram to leave Haran and go to Canaan. This time, Abram made the decision to go, so we can see his trust in God was growing. Abram's nephew Lot also believed God and trusted in His promises, so he went with Abram and Sarai.

Genesis 13:5-9

In this passage we see a problem arise between Abram's servants and Lot's servants. Both men had become very wealthy and had so many animals to tend that it was no longer working for them to stay together. So, Abram gives Lot first choice saying that whichever direction Lot chooses to go in, he will go the opposite direction.

Looking at this interaction at face value, we would say that Abram died to himself and was considerate of Lot but that Lot was self-centered and took what appeared to be the best for himself. We will see, though, that what appeared to be a “smart” decision for Lot, really turned out to be a foolish one.

Even though it appears Abram got a bad deal and that Lot ends up in a mess because of his self-centered decision, in the next lesson we will see the divine intervention of God and how He is able to use any and all situations for the accomplishment of His plans and purposes.

Lesson 9

Sodom and Gomorrah/Abraham's Faith – *Genesis 13:11-13; 18:20-19:29; 21:1-22:19*

Genesis 13:12-13

Down on the plains that Lot chose were two wicked cities, Sodom and Gomorrah. The people who lived there didn't want to know about God or what He wanted them to do. They were only thinking of themselves and of the evil things they were doing. God knew this, but it seemed like Lot ignored God and chose what looked the best to him. In doing so he took a tragic step away from God.

Once again, we are going to see that even though Lot seems to disregard God, make his own decision, and end up in a mess, God still uses it as an opportunity to reveal more about Himself and His grace.

Abram Believes God's Promise

Genesis 15:6

While Lot had settled near the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and his life was becoming increasingly intertwined with the people in those cities, God was continuing to reveal Himself and communicate more of His plan and purpose for Abram.

We need to remember that Abram was living in a very idolatrous and sinful world. He came from a family that did not worship God. Men and women who scorned God and followed after their own evil desires surrounded him.

Also remember that Abram and Sarai were childless. However, in spite of his environment and the appearance of impossible circumstances and the peer pressure, Abram believed God's promise. He believed that God would send the Deliverer and that the Deliverer would be one of his descendants.

God's declaring of Abram as being "righteous" here in ***Genesis 15:6*** is extremely important and provides a very foundational picture for how the human race will receive deliverance from their own sinfulness...namely, by faith in God's promise.

Genesis 18:20-21

Jumping ahead here, we see the Lord speaking to Abraham regarding the situation in Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot had moved down near these two wicked cities. The sinfulness of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah had grieved the heart of God long before Lot moved there. For a long

while, God had been long-suffering with these people, but now He decided that it was time for Him to use them as an opportunity to reveal the sinfulness of mankind.

All human beings are born as equally sinful before God as those of Sodom and Gomorrah, and in and of ourselves, there is no way that anyone could ever escape the judgment of God. Do you remember how the Lord patiently waited for the people to change their minds in the days when Noah lived? The day finally came when God decided He had given the people sufficient time to repent. Not one of those who refused to agree with God escaped His punishment.

Though it may be true that the people in Noah's day and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were committing more sin or different sins than you and I, the truth remains that we are still all EQUALLY sinful and all EQUALLY in need of Someone to deliver us from our sin. God was using these two groups of people to prove the sinfulness of ALL of mankind and its seriousness.

Genesis 19:1-7

Remember Lot's earlier choice of the good land? It now appears a bit different in light of this awful scene. If God had not sent His angels, what a horrible end Lot and his two daughters would have had. The Bible tells us that Lot believed God, and God rescued him (*2 Peter 2:6-9*).

Genesis 19:8-17

God didn't save Lot and his wife and daughters because they were good but because Lot believed the promises given to Adam and Abraham about the coming Deliverer.

So, God's angels led Lot out before the cities were destroyed. God always saves those who agree with Him and trust in Him. Remember Abel? He agreed with God and trusted in Him, and God accepted Abel. Noah agreed with God and trusted in Him, and God saved Noah from the flood. Now Lot agreed with God and trusted in Him and God delivered him before Sodom was destroyed.

Do you remember the eternal plan of redemption, back in Lessons 1 and 2 where we showed that God had foreordained for mankind before man even existed? God was using this story of delivering Lot and his family as an example of that future eternal deliverance that was yet to come. The main points He was revealing are:

Mankind is sinful and separated from God.

Mankind cannot deliver himself.

God wants mankind to be delivered.

Only God can provide a way of deliverance.

God's deliverance is by grace, and man does not deserve it.

Genesis 19:24-26

Once Lot was safely outside the city, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Just as he destroyed the world by the flood in the time of Noah, He now destroyed these two wicked cities, but this time it was with fire.

Remember *2 Peter 2:6? "Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes making them an example to those who will live ungodly."* So, then this begs the question—were the people of Sodom and Gomorrah more “ungodly” than any other human being? The answer is NO. All humans are born with the same sinful human nature that makes us sinful. Therefore, everyone is born as sinful as you can possibly be.

The point Peter is making is that this judgment of sin that the people of Sodom and Gomorrah received is the same judgment that every human being deserves and WILL receive if they don't accept the eternal deliverance that God foreordained before the world was created.

Lastly, when the angels took Lot, his wife, and his two daughters out of Sodom, they told them not to look back, just run to the mountains. But Lot's wife turned to look. God knew what was in her heart. She was like Cain. She did not trust in God and she liked the sinful ways of the people of Sodom. God turned her into a pillar of salt. This is another clear example that when man deserves destruction, God offers grace; but when man rejects that grace, God will allow him to receive the destruction.

The Ultimate Manifestation of Abraham's Faith

Genesis 21:1-3

From the time in Genesis 12 when God first promised descendants to Abraham until this time when Isaac was actually born, it had been approximately 75 years. As you can imagine, there were many times during those years that Abraham and Sarah wondered if God was really going to fulfill His promise to them. Obviously, God could have fulfilled this promise immediately after making it. But like with everything that God does, He always has His purposes.

It was God's plan that was being fulfilled and not Abraham's.

It was God Who chose to use Abraham and not Abraham who chose God.

By God allowing Sarah to be barren and then to cause them to wait until they were way too old to have children only worked to make it more clear that Isaac was truly from God.

All glory must go to God and not to Abraham and Sarah.

Genesis 22:1-2

As we continue to look at the life of Abraham and his interactions with God, it's much more important that we focus on what is being revealed about God rather than what is being revealed about Abraham. God is using His interaction with Abraham to reveal Himself and what He is like as well as to reveal more and more about His foreordained eternal plan of redemption.

Beginning in Chapter 22, we see God all of a sudden command Abraham to do something that had to just shake Abraham to the core. Go and sacrifice his son Isaac—the one that God had promised would be born and that Abraham and Sarah had waited 75 years for. The one that God gave them miraculously He was now calling him to go and sacrifice.

What a surprise this must have been to Abraham. He was probably wondering if God had changed His mind about Isaac and His promises. How could God's promises be fulfilled through Isaac if Abraham killed him?

Through all the years of waiting for God to fulfill His promise to Abraham, God continued to communicate and reveal Himself in many ways to Abraham. Through this process, Abraham discovered just what each person needs to discover for themselves; namely, God never fails to do the things He has promised to do. We can fully trust Him. This is what God wants most—for us to believe Him.

Hebrews 11:17-19

This passage in Hebrews reveals to us what Abraham thought regarding God commanding him to sacrifice Isaac. Hebrews tells us Abraham believed that even if God did have him kill Isaac, God would raise him from the dead.

The reason why he was so confident of this was twofold. First, God promised that His promise of a Deliverer would come through Isaac's line. Second, God had proven His faithfulness to Abraham over and over and over throughout his life.

Genesis 22:3-5

What do you see here that would indicate that Abraham believed God would either not kill Isaac or that He would raise him from the dead? *The clue is in verse 5.*

Genesis 22:6-8

Consider Isaac's situation. He had undoubtedly witnessed many sacrifices. He probably could not understand why they had not taken a sheep with them to sacrifice. Do you think that Abraham had told Isaac what God had said? What are your thoughts?

Abraham had absolute total faith and trust in God and that is why he obeyed this command of God. It wasn't Abraham's obedience that was the focus here but the fact that his obedience came from his faith in God.

If you were sick and went to the doctor and he prescribed medicine, would it be any benefit to you if he only told you about the medicine and how it could heal you but never gave it to you to take? Just listening to him tell about it would not heal us.

Likewise, neither will only listening to God's word help us. We must also believe.

Genesis 22:9-10

There was no escape for Isaac. He was bound and laid on the altar. Abraham had lifted up the knife to kill him. It was the same when God shut the door of the ark after Noah. Noah's family and all the animals and birds were safe inside, but there was no escape for the people outside the ark who didn't believe God and were shut out.

And there was no escape for the people in the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah when God sent down fire on them.

There was no escape for Lot's wife when she failed to believe God and looked back at the city of Sodom.

God saved Noah and his family from the flood. God saved Lot and his daughters from the fire, which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Only God could save Isaac.

It is the same for us today. There is no way we can save ourselves from death and everlasting punishment for our sins God. Only God can make a way out for us.

Genesis 22:10-13

Abraham completely obeyed God. Just as he was about to plunge the knife into Isaac, God stopped him from following through. God caused the ram to be caught by its horns in the bush. If it had been caught by any other part of its body, it would have injured itself by struggling and trying to get free.

If it had been injured, it would not have been an acceptable offering to God (*Exodus 12:5; Leviticus 22:19-22*). God would accept only a healthy, strong animal as a sacrifice. Why? Because God is perfect, He will only accept whatever is perfect. God provided an acceptable, perfect sacrifice in place of Isaac.

You know God is so faithful. He kept His promise to Abraham just as He said. Now through Isaac, God would give Abraham many descendants. Abraham took Isaac off the altar and put the ram, which God had provided, on the altar. The ram died instead of Isaac. The ram was his substitute. God saved Isaac by providing the ram to die in his place.

Genesis 22:14-19

Abraham trusted God and God provided a ram to die instead of Isaac. Just as God had provided the perfect sacrifice to die as Isaac's substitute, God was also revealing that He would one day provide the perfect sacrifice to one day die as our substitute and thereby deliver us from the dominion of Satan and sin.

Lesson 10

Isaac's Sons, Esau and Jacob/Jacob's Son Joseph – *Genesis 25:19-29:1; 37:1-46:7*

Genesis 25:19-34

It had now been twenty years since Isaac was on the altar. He married Rebecca and God gave them twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Esau spent his time hunting and killing wild animals out in the fields. The promises concerning the Deliverer would have ordinarily been passed on to Esau because he was Isaac's first-born son. The right of inheritance was bestowed on the first-born son to be the family leader. Therefore, the Deliverer from God would naturally be one of Esau's descendants.

But notice what God told Isaac about his twin sons back in verse 23: ***"Two nations are in your womb...one people shall be stronger than the other and the older shall serve the younger."*** This is a reference to which son the promise of the Deliverer would be carried out through—the younger and not the older.

This passage in *Genesis 25* along with *Hebrews 12:16* reveals that Esau was a profane person who had no regard for God or his birthright.

On the other hand, *Romans 9:13* reveals that God had actually chosen the younger son Jacob to be the one through which the line of the Deliverer would come. This is God proving that HE is the One Who is carrying out His plan.

The two nations that would come through the twin sons: Israel (the line of the Deliverer) would come through Jacob and the Amalekites would come through Esau. Here are some interesting historical facts that were true of the people who came through the one that had no use for God or his God-given birthright.

Esau had a grandson named Amalek, and Malachi tells us that the descendants of Esau were a people whom the Lord had contempt forever (*Malachi 1:4*; also, *Exodus 17:16*). Why? Dwelling in the Amalekites was the sin of Esau, the man who refused his birthright.

In *I Samuel 15:3*, we see this again. However, in verses 7-9 Saul spared king Agag. It is interesting that Haman in the book of Esther was a descendant of Agag (*Esther 3:1*). Notice the number of times he is described as Haman *"the enemy of the Jews"* (*Esther 3:10; 9:10*; and *9:24*).

If we were to follow this on through to the New Testament, Herod, who attempted to kill Jesus by ordering the destruction of all the children in Bethlehem who were two years old and younger, was also an Edomite—a descendent of Esau (*Matthew 2:16*).

Esau was a hunter, but Jacob lived quietly in his tent and kept sheep and cattle. In contrast to Esau, Jacob was a believing man like Abraham and Isaac.

You know each one of us needs to ask ourselves, “Am I turning away from God and following my own way like Cain and Esau? Or am I like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—admitting that I am a sinner and trusting in God’s way, trusting in Him to provide a Deliverer, rather than trying to make my own way?”

Because of the great differences between Esau and Jacob, problems between the two brothers increased to the point that Esau threatened to kill Jacob.

Jacob’s Dream

Genesis 28:10-12

Therefore, Jacob left his father and mother’s home and began the long trek back to Mesopotamia, the land from which his grandfather Abraham had come.

It was a long way from Canaan to Mesopotamia, so on his way Jacob had to sleep out in the mountains. Night after night Jacob slept like this; but then one night as he slept, God gave him a dream. (Before the Bible was written, God would often speak to people through dreams, but now that His word is completed, He speaks to us through the Bible.) Through this dream, God was showing Jacob that the coming Deliverer would bridge the gap between man and God. God is the only one who can make a way for us to come to Him.

Remember the people at the tower of Babel. All their good effort could not bridge the gap between God and man that was caused by sin.

Think back now to the beginning. Adam and Eve were in fellowship with God, walking with Him. They were friends with God. When they disobeyed Him, they and all of their descendants, including you and me, were separated from Him.

The stairway or the way to God had been removed; there was no way that people could come back and be in fellowship with Him unless God made a way.

But God promised a Deliverer who would destroy Satan and reconcile man to God.

The Deliverer would be like the stairway that Jacob saw reaching from earth to Heaven.

Because all people have been separated from God and because of Satan’s lies and Adam’s unbelief and disobedience, God planned to send the Deliverer who would make it possible for God and man to be reconciled and reunited.

Genesis 28:13-15

God was continuing to work out His plan to send the Deliverer. Many years had passed since God gave the first promise of the Deliverer in the Garden of Eden. Abraham, whom God had called to be the forefather of the Deliverer, was now dead. But God had not forgotten His plan or His promises.

In **Genesis 28:14** God promised Jacob that the Deliverer would be one of his descendants. Jacob now knew for sure that the promises given to his grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac belonged to him.

Genesis 29:1

Jacob returned to Haran, married, had 12 sons, and God changed his name from Jacob to Israel (**Genesis 32:28**).

Jacob's Son Joseph

Let's turn now to Genesis 37 and focus our attention on Joseph, a son of Jacob.

Genesis 37:1-3

Joseph's older brothers hated him because Joseph was his father's favorite son.

Genesis 37:5-11

God knew exactly what was going to happen to Joseph's family. Joseph could not see his future, nor did he know how his dreams would be fulfilled; but God knew and He made it clear that Joseph would become the leader and ruler over the family.

Genesis 37:12-14; 18-20, 24, 28; 39:1

Joseph, the one whom God had promised would become a leader, was now a slave in Egypt. You know God always carries to completion every promise He makes. He knows everything and none of this caught Him by surprise.

One of the main characteristics that is true about the heart of God is His desire for relationship. We clearly see this desire manifested through continual effort to reveal Himself and make Himself known to mankind.

One of the ways that we see Him over and over working to make Himself known is through orchestrating impossible situations. He allows impossible situations (like we see here with Joseph) to come into people's lives to provide opportunities to reveal Himself through providing a way of deliverance.

Genesis 39:1-20

As we see in this scripture, for a short time everything went well for Joseph in the home where he worked. His master was truly blessed because of him and Joseph was exalted.

But then God allows another impossible situation to arise in Joseph's life in which he becomes unjustly treated and imprisoned. This provides another opportunity for God to reveal His greatness and His sovereignty by showing that He can even use the sin and injustices of man to bring about His will and blessings in our lives.

The reality was that God had a wonderful plan for Joseph and his future descendants, but He carried that out through some pretty impossible situations to show that it was truly He Who was carrying out His Own plan.

Genesis 41:1-8

Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, did not know or worship the true and living God. The Egyptians worshipped the sun, moon, stars, animals, creeping creatures, and the Nile River. Even though they did not worship God, God planned to use this king and his country to fulfill His purposes.

God is ruler over all kings and nations even though they may not know or worship Him. He can use anyone in whatever way He chooses to fulfill His purposes (*Proverbs 21:1*).

Because He is the giver and sustainer of life, we rightfully belong to Him (*Psalms 24:1*).

Here in Genesis 41, we see God working through the lives of an unbelieving Egyptian pharaoh and an Israelite prisoner in order to carry out His will for His people.

Genesis 41:9-36

This story provides amazing revelation about Who God is and what He is like.

Our fallen world, sin-cursed earth, and all that goes along with it is used by God to reveal Himself and His attributes more clearly.

There is not one thing or any person who can prevent God from carrying out His plans and purposes.

The sinfulness of man and injustices toward Joseph were used by God to reveal Himself in and through Joseph.

Joseph's brothers, Potiphar and his wife, the butler and baker, and Pharaoh were all used by God in His plan to reveal Himself through the life of Joseph without them even knowing that they were in His plan.

Genesis 41:37-43

God's Word is true! Remember the dreams which God had given Joseph as a youth? They were about to be fulfilled (*Genesis 37:7–brothers and family bowing down*).

God always does what He plans. No one can stand against Him. When it was time for Him to do what He planned, He brought Joseph out of prison and gave him a high position, just like He had shown him through his dreams when he was a boy (*Daniel 4:17; Genesis 41:56-57*).

In Chapters 42 and 43 of Genesis, we have the record of Jacob sending his sons down to Egypt to buy grain, for the famine was also severe where they were living in the land of Canaan. At first the brothers don't recognize Joseph and he doesn't reveal himself to them. But later in Chapter 45 he finally does reveal to them that he is Joseph, their little brother whom they had sold into slavery.

Genesis 45:1-9

Notice in verses 1 and 2 that Joseph wept when he revealed himself to his brothers rather than treating his brothers as they deserved.

Joseph had a God-centered worldview. This means that he had such a big view of God that regardless of how people treated him, he had seen God use it all for accomplishing His own purposes in Joseph's life. This enabled Joseph to love and forgive his brothers instead of resenting them.

Joseph invited his brothers to return home and move all of their families to Egypt so that he could provide for them during this time of famine. Seventy people in all, including their father, Jacob moved down to Egypt.

After Jacob died, Joseph's older brother became worried that Joseph might seek revenge on them for how they had treated him in the past, but his gracious response reveals his God-centered worldview (*Genesis 50:15-21*).

Lesson 11

God's Preservation and Deliverance of Israel from Egypt – *Exodus 1-4*

Introduction

We have finished the book of Genesis with the life of Joseph. We are going to move on to Exodus, the second book of the Bible. The word Exodus means “going out.” This book records how God led His people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.

As we study this amazing story, let's keep in mind these things:

First, remember that the Bible is a true history. The events of Genesis and Exodus are mentioned many times throughout the entire Bible and many of the details of these two books have been confirmed by archeological discoveries.

Second, let's keep our eyes on what God is doing. We will learn a great deal about God from this book. Just as our actions reveal our character, so God's actions reveal His character.

Third, remember that God is the same today as He was at the time this story took place. He never changes. God is still holy, all-powerful, all-knowing, faithful and sovereign.

We left off with Jacob and his 11 sons and their families coming to Egypt to live because of famine. In time Jacob died, but Joseph, his brothers, and their families continued to live in Egypt after their father's death even though the famine had ended. They did not return to the land which God had promised to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. However, eventually Joseph and all that generation died in Egypt.

About 350 years passed between the time that Jacob's family (Israel) came down to live in Egypt and the time that the story picks up again here in the book of Exodus. The Israelites have been living in Egypt all that time.

Exodus 1:6-7

The children of Israel prospered in Egypt. Their numbers increased rapidly, and they also became very rich. They had many cows, goats and sheep, and there was plenty of grass for their animals. The king also was good to them, but things were about to change.

Exodus 1:8-11

Who was guiding pharaoh in this evil plan? Satan! Remember, he hates God and he hates man. Satan knew that God had promised to send a Deliverer who would destroy him and deliver man

from his power. He also knew that God had promised that this Savior would be born through the nation of Israel (*Genesis 12:2-3; 28:14-15*).

Satan knew the Deliverer would be a descendant of Abraham, so he wanted to destroy the nation of Israel because they were the people God had chosen to fulfill His plan for the world.

Exodus 1:11-2:4

It doesn't make sense that the parents of this child would seek to hide him in the very river in which all the male children were ordered to be drown in, but that's exactly what God led them to do.

Exodus 2:5-10

Here are a few main points that are important:

The very river that was intended to destroy this child is used to save him.

The mother he is to be taken from he is given to, and she is paid to nurse her own son.

The one who is trying to kill Moses ends up raising and educating him, so that one day he can do the very thing that he is trying to stop by drowning the children.

Just like God chose Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph, now we see Him choosing Moses to be used to deliver Israel from Egypt. Just as in all of their stories, God could have chosen and raised up Moses any way that He wanted to. But, once again, we see Him orchestrating impossible circumstances only to become greater opportunities to reveal Himself all the more.

God is greater than everyone and everything. He is greater than Satan. No one and nothing can stop Him from doing whatever He plans. Their efforts to hinder His plans only result in opportunities to reveal Himself all the more.

Exodus 2:11-15

The Israelites were held captive by the evil pharaoh and they couldn't escape. Moses did all he could to help them but he failed. No human being could release these people. Only God could save them.

Just as the Israelites were held captive by pharaoh, so all humans are born into and held captive by Satan. We cannot deliver ourselves from him and the future eternal punishment for our sinfulness. No teacher or preacher can deliver us; no other human being can deliver us. Only God can deliver us from the bondage of Satan.

Exodus 3:1-10

God had a plan for using Moses to deliver Israel out of slavery in Egypt. God being all-knowing, knew that at this point in time, Moses' fear of Pharaoh (for this was why he was even in Midian in the first place, fleeing Pharaoh) was greater than his trust in God.

In order to increase Moses' faith in Him, God reveals His greatness because Moses is going to need to know and trust Him.

God miraculously reveals His power and authority by speaking to Moses from a burning bush that wasn't being consumed by the fire.

Then God reveals His holiness by commanding Moses to remove his sandals.

Finally, God tells Moses that He has chosen him for a special purpose—to go back to Egypt and deliver his people from slavery.

As we will see in the next few verses, this wasn't enough to convince Moses to return to Egypt, and he begins to come up with excuses, five excuses in all.

1. **Exodus 3:11** – Excuse #1: ***“I’m not capable...I’m a nobody.”*** God answered, ***“I will be with you,” (Exodus 3:12),*** and here's a sign that will be proof. Moses didn't need to be capable; this was to be God's work that HE would be carrying out through Moses.
2. **Exodus 3:13** – Excuse #2: ***“Who do I tell the Israelites that it is that has sent me?”*** Meaning, on who's authority do I have the right to go and do this? God answered, ***“You tell them I AM has sent you” (Exodus 3:14).***

During the times written about in the Bible, names had great meaning. A person's name emphasized some personal characteristic or quality. For example, Moses' name meant “to draw out of” because he was taken out of the water when the king's daughter found him. But God could not give Himself just one or two names. It was impossible because God is so great. He is the Almighty Creator, the All-Seeing One, the All-Knowing One, the Almighty One, the Faithful and Unchanging One, the Mighty Judge and Avenger of All Evil, the Loving, Kind and Gracious Savior who alone can provide a way to save men from Satan and sin and death. He is all of these things and many more.

What one name could God give to Himself that would tell the Israelites all the things there are to know about Him? It could not be done. Therefore, God told Moses to tell Israel that “I AM” had sent him.

“I AM” includes so much that we cannot understand it completely. It means that God is the self-existent one. Do you remember the first words in the Bible? *“In the beginning, God...”* God was already there in the beginning. He had no beginning and can have no end. He never was and never will be dependent on anyone.

However, all are dependent on Him. He has control over the earth, the rain, wind, rivers, the moon, stars, and sun. All things are under His control. He is the great “I AM.”

Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and even Satan could not hold God's people when the great “I AM” decided to deliver them (*Exodus 3:15-18*).

Exodus 3:19-20 – Notice God knew exactly how the king of Egypt would react. God knows our thoughts, words, and actions before we ever think, say, or do them. He knows everything about us from birth to death and even after death.

But Moses was still not convinced!

3. **Exodus 4:1** – Excuse #3: ***“But what if they don’t believe me?”*** God answered with three miracles for Moses to perform as proof that truly the Great I AM has sent him (*Exodus 4:2-9*).
4. **Exodus 4:10** – Excuse #4: ***“But I am not a good speaker.”*** God answered, ***“Who is the One Who made man’s mouth? It is I and I will be with you and I will tell you what to say”*** (*Exodus 4:11-12*). Moses was trusting in himself and his own abilities, but God was working to transfer his trust to God.
5. **Exodus 4:13** – Excuse #5: ***“Send someone else, I am not willing to go.”*** Again, at this time, Moses fear of Pharaoh was way greater than his trust in God. God answered, ***“Here, I will send your brother Aaron along with you to be your spokesperson”*** (*Exodus 4:14-17*).

Exodus 4:27-31

Lesson 12

God Delivers Israel Out of Slavery in Egypt – *Exodus 5:1-12:36*

Introduction

We ended with God sending Moses and Aaron down to Egypt. In this lesson we will see why. The Israelites were enslaved in Egypt by a powerful Pharaoh.

Through this story, God is giving us a physical picture of spiritual truth. In the same way that Israel was enslaved in Egypt, so we too have been born as slaves to sin. Just as it was only God that could deliver them, so it's only God Who can deliver us from our slavery to sin.

Exodus 5:1-3

Keep in mind that Pharaoh was the title given to all the rulers of Egypt during this period. We are not told in the Bible which Pharaoh was in power when Moses became Israel's leader. However, we do know from verse 2 that this Pharaoh did not know the only true and living God.

As we mentioned before, the Egyptians did not worship God; they worshipped things that God had made.

They worshipped the Nile River, the largest river in their country.

They also worshipped the sun, moon, and many different kinds of animals.

They had many, many gods.

In addition, the Egyptians worshipped Pharaoh as a god.

Something for us to keep in mind is that the generation of Israelites living in Egypt when Moses returned there had not seen any evidence of the Lord's greatness and power. They had only heard about the Lord and what He had done for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

So, the Lord decided to use this evil Pharaoh and his rebellion to display His power and wisdom to this generation of Israelites so that they would know how mighty He is and how much He loves and cares for them.

Exodus 5:4-23

Moses' and Aaron's obedience to go and confront the Pharaoh only resulted in making Pharaoh angry and causing him to create more pain and suffering for Israel. The increased pain and suffering then caused them to turn against Moses and Aaron.

God knew all along what Pharoah's response would be. Though Moses, Aaron, and the Israelites were surprised by it and were even reacting to it, God was using it to set the stage for Him to reveal Himself and His power to Israel all the more (*Exodus 6:1-8*).

Keep in mind that the Egyptians were intelligent, highly skilled people, capable writers, mathematicians, chemists, military and civilian leaders, architects, artists, craftsmen, etc. But spiritually they were blind and dead. Even though they held Israel in slavery, the Egyptians themselves were the ones hopelessly enslaved—held captive and completely under the control of Satan.

Therefore, this set up of the circumstances for God to reveal Himself was just as much for Him to reveal Himself to the Egyptians as it was for Him to reveal Himself to Israel. God loves the “whole world” and not just Israel. It's His desire that all humans turn to Him and receive eternal life. Therefore, He was going to show the Egyptians that only He is the true and living God, not all the idols and false gods they were worshipping.

Exodus 7:3-7

It is very beneficial and important for us to look at this story from the standpoint of two difference perspectives—man's and God's.

Man's Perspective

We have a sinful human race living in a sin-cursed, fallen world from which no one can do one thing to deliver themselves.

Every human is born separated from God and has no desire in and of themselves to even care to know Him.

The result is that we have sinful man abusing sinful man.

We have sins and crimes being committed by us, as well as to us.

There is a spiritual enemy who is seeking our destruction both physically and spiritually.

God's Perspective

Even though mankind exists in such a sinful, hopeless, and helpless state, we have a loving, all-knowing, almighty, sovereign Creator, Who was not only NOT surprised by any of it, but Who we actually see using all of it to reveal Himself and His holy and loving plans and purposes for mankind!

Exodus 7:10-14

Because the king of Egypt refused to release the Israelites, the Lord began to show His great power. Because of time, we will not read all the details of what happened. If you want to take the time on your own, you will find the story in *Exodus 7:14-10:29*.

In summary, here's how God began to reveal Himself through Pharaoh's stubbornness.

First, the Lord turned the water in their river into blood.

Next, He sent plagues of frogs...

And lice (gnats)...

And flies...

Then God caused the Egyptians' horses, cattle, sheep, camels, and donkeys to become sick.

Next, the Lord caused all the Egyptians to have terrible boils.

This was followed by a terribly destructive hailstorm...

Then a plague of locusts...

Then three days of thick darkness in all the places where the Egyptians were living.

Pharaoh and the Egyptian people could not save themselves from these terrible plagues sent by the Lord. Neither could their false gods save them.

Interestingly, God was very strategic in what kinds of plagues He sent on the Egyptians, for each of the plagues pointed to a false god of the Egyptians. For example, they had a frog god, a sun god, and a storm god.

The Lord protected the Israelites so that none of these terrible things happened to any of them even though they were living in the same country (*Exodus 9:4-6, 25-26*).

Did the Lord protect the Israelites because they were without sin? NO! He protected them because of His love, mercy, and grace and also because of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

We can point to three main reasons why God was protecting the Israelites:

1. First, He was revealing Himself and what He is like to His chosen people, Israel.
2. Second, He was revealing Himself to the Egyptians, demonstrating that He and He alone is the only living and almighty God.
3. Third, He was protecting His promise and plan to send the Deliverer into the world (through Israel) to fulfill His foreordained eternal plan of redemption.

With each of the plagues, the pattern of response was the same. Each time the Lord sent a plague, Pharaoh called for Moses and asked him to remove the plague, claiming that he would

then let Israel go. When Pharaoh said he would set them free, then the Lord removed the plague. But as soon as He removed it, Pharaoh would harden his heart again and would not let them go (*Exodus 9:23-35*).

God knew all along that Pharaoh would be stubborn. Even before He sent Moses back to Egypt, He had told Moses that this would happen. God is never surprised by what people do. He always knows everything before it happens, and He has His plan worked out so that He always wins, no matter what people say or do. This wicked king could not stop God from delivering the Israelites. The Lord knew that after the final plague, Pharaoh would let the Israelites go.

The Final Plague

Exodus 11:1-10

God sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh one last time to ask him to release Israel, but in verses 9 and 10, God tells Moses that Pharaoh again won't release them and He tells him why—because God is going to “harden his heart.”

The temptation is to view this as judgment or punishment, but it was actually more about grace and mercy than it was punishment. Had Pharaoh complied and let Israel go from the very beginning, there never would have been an opportunity for God to reveal Himself like He did through the nine plagues.

Had Pharaoh complied after the ninth plague and said, “Okay, okay, you win. I'll let them go,” there wouldn't have been this one last opportunity for God to impact both the Israelites and the Egyptians in the depth of their souls the way that the tenth and final plague did.

The purpose for the impact that God was after was that they would turn to Him for salvation and redemption. God does not delight in judging sinful man. From before the foundations of the earth, He has always been about the salvation and redemption of man.

To bring about salvation and redemption is always the purpose for all that God does and allows.

In this tenth plague, God was not only going to use it to reveal Himself and His greatness to mankind, but He was also going to use it as a physical picture of the eternal and spiritual deliverance that He would also one day provide through the coming of the promised Deliverer. Therefore, He gave Moses and Aaron very specific instructions that every Israelite household would have to believe and follow in order to be delivered from this last and final plague.

Exodus 12:1-13

The lamb or goat had to be perfect, without blemish.

Do you remember the ram that was to be offered instead of Isaac? It was caught by the horns in a thorny bush. Why was it caught by the horns? God is perfect, and everything He says and does is perfect. He would never accept as an offering an animal that was sick or hurt.

Secondly, these animal sacrifices were pictures of the ultimate and eternal sacrifice that would one day be sent to fulfill the eternal plan of redemption. Just as these animals had to be physically perfect, so the future Deliverer would be spiritually perfect—sinless.

The lamb was to be kept until the day specified by the Lord, which was the fourteenth day of the month, and they were to kill the lamb in the evening of that day (*Exodus 12:6*).

When the Israelites killed the lambs and the blood flowed out, the people were reminded that the punishment for sin is death. Just as the ram died instead of Isaac, so too the perfect lambs which were chosen and killed by the Israelites died instead of their firstborn children.

Other Important Notes to Keep in Mind

It was the blood of the lamb that would save the firstborn (*Exodus 12:7, 22-23*).

They were not to break a bone of the lamb (*Exodus 12:46*).

These were God's instructions for Israel. They had to do everything exactly as the Lord had told Moses. God has always been the same. He will never let anyone save themselves their own way.

Do you remember that He refused to accept the clothing that Adam and Eve made for themselves in the Garden of Eden? God also refused the offering that Cain brought because it was not according to His instructions. God told Noah to make the ark exactly as He had instructed him.

In the same way, everything had to be done by the Israelites exactly as God had told Moses. God is still the same. He has not changed. We cannot come to God according to our own ideas. We can only come to God according to His way.

Consider This: What do you think would have happened if an Israelite had said, “I am not going to kill one of my good lambs. I have a sick one. That will do.” Do you think God would have accepted the blood of a sick lamb? No.

What if one said, “Instead of killing my lamb and painting its blood around the door, I’ll just tie it alive to my door posts.” Would God have accepted that? No.

The lamb had to be perfect. It had to die. The blood must be shed. Why? God was showing them that the wages for sin is death.

Exodus 12:28-30

Every firstborn Egyptian child and the firstborn of all their livestock died. Remember the punishment for sin is death. God always does what He says.

He said He would destroy the firstborn in the Egyptian homes and He did.

He said He would pass over every house where He saw the blood and He did.

He is faithful to carry out ALL of His promises—both His promises to judge and punish and His promises to save and deliver.

Exodus 12:31-36

Lesson 13

God Delivers Israel through the Red Sea and Wilderness – *Exodus 13:17-17:6*

Introduction

Before we turn our attention to the content of this lesson, it's important that we remind ourselves of the big picture context in which this story exists.

In eternity past, the Godhead foreordained an eternal plan of redemption that would be carried out by grace and through a Deliverer.

Beginning in Genesis, God begins to set the stage for the Deliverer to come and fulfill the plan.

God in His wisdom, decides to bring the Deliverer into the world through a nation that doesn't yet exist. The way that He decides to do this is through Abram and Sarai, a barren couple who worship idols.

God uses His interaction with Israel throughout their history to provide much revelation of Who He is, what He is like, as well as many examples, types, and foreshadowing of how the promised Deliverer will fulfill His eternal plan of redemption.

In the last lesson, God revealed His love and care for His chosen people and the fact that He will always be faithful to fulfill His promises no matter how long He allows it to take.

He has also revealed over and over that only He can provide the deliverance that mankind needs, both physically and spiritually.

God delivered Israel out of slavery and now we will see Him deliver them through every obstacle that they face while traveling through the wilderness to the land that He promised them.

Genesis 13:17-22

The number of Israelites had grown tremendously. When they first went to Egypt, there were only seventy of them. Now 430 years later, there were about two and a half million Israelites!

God directed them where He wanted them to go by a cloud and He kept the cloud before them at all times.

It was God Who created them.

It was God Who chose them to be His people.

It was God Who heard their cry for deliverance.

It was God Who raised up Moses and sent him to deliver them.

It was God Who miraculously delivered them.

And now it was God Who provided a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire to lead them through the wilderness night and day.

God was showing them that He loved them and that He would always be faithful to them. He was protecting them so that the great Deliverer Savior would one day be born into the world through them.

All while God is setting the stage for the future Deliverer to come, Satan was trying to prevent it from happening—so he put in Pharaoh's heart the idea to go after them and recapture them. But like always, every time Satan tries to hinder the will of God, God simply uses these circumstances to reveal Himself and His authority all the more.

Exodus 14:1-14

God tells Moses to have the people camp at a certain location. God was going to once again harden Pharaoh's heart and cause him to pursue Israel and seek to destroy them. WHY it is that God said He was going to do this?

“Then I will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will pursue them; and I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord” (Exodus 14:4). God was doing this so that a people who were NOT His chosen people would know and become convinced that He is God! Everything that God does is for the purpose of revealing Himself to mankind so that people will turn to Him and receive deliverance from their sinfulness.

Though God had told Moses His plan, the people themselves did not know. All they knew was the Egyptian army was trying to destroy them while they were trapped at the Red Sea. They became afraid and began to blame Moses. Even though they had just witnessed some clear and undeniable manifestations of the greatness of God on their behalf, they still were not at a place where they could trust Him.

Here again, we see God's mercy. Even though the Israelites sinned and didn't trust in the Lord, He was merciful and planned to deliver them. They couldn't deliver themselves. The sea was in front of them, mountains were around them, and their enemies were behind them coming to destroy them. Only God could save them. Where have we seen this before?

Remember when God put Adam and Eve out of the garden, away from Him? There was no way back into the garden, and they could not make things right between them and God. Only God could provide a way so that they could be accepted once again by Him.

It was God who provided a way for Abel to be accepted by God.

Only God could save Noah and his family from the flood.

When Isaac was bound and placed on the altar and his father had the knife raised above him, only God could save him.

The parents of the firstborn children of Israel could not save their children from death unless God chose to provide a way.

Likewise, Israel could not escape from the Egyptians unless God made a way for them.

It is the same with us. We cannot make a way to escape the wrath of God. We cannot make things right between God and us by the things we do. Only God can save us from the everlasting punishment we all deserve.

Exodus 14:15-18

It was God Who created the oceans and the seas, so He had the authority to control them. Remember back in Genesis 1, the whole earth was covered with water? Remember how the Lord caused the water to move back so there was dry ground? The Lord has not changed. He's as almighty today as He was when He spoke all of creation into existence. Here again He commands the sea to move back so His people could walk on dry land to the other side (*Exodus 14:19-30*).

Exodus 14:31

When Israel saw the great things which the Lord did, they believed in Him.

God Uses Every Obstacle in the Wilderness to Reveal Himself

Exodus 16:1-15

The Israelites had just witnessed God miraculously lead them out of Egypt. Then they witnessed Him part the Red Sea, lead them through on dry ground, and drown the whole Egyptian army. But even though they had witnessed God do these great and mighty things, they still could not trust Him.

After crossing the Red Sea, they were faced with another obstacle: no food. So, they murmured and grumbled and blamed Moses and Aaron. They didn't deserve anything from the Lord, but in His grace (free gift), He promised to give them food.

God helps the helpless; He delivers those who have no way of escape.

When Adam and Eve sinned against God and were therefore separated from Him, God promised to send a Savior to deliver them.

They tried to make clothing from leaves, but God provided them with the skins of animals.

God, in His mercy and grace, accepted Abel's offering.

God saved Noah and his family from the flood.

God called Abraham out of idolatry.

God protected Jacob's family from starvation through Joseph.

God called Moses to deliver the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

God opened up the sea for Israel's deliverance.

Now He promised to give the Israelites food.

None of these people deserved the things that God did for them. He did it all because He is merciful and gracious.

Exodus 16:35

Although the Israelites were thankful for the Lord's provision of food, they soon forgot about His great power, and they began to complain again. This time it was because there was a lack of water.

Exodus 17:1-6

How long can a man live without water? Only a few days. The Israelites were afraid they were all going to die there in the desert. Can you imagine the burden Moses felt? He had no way of supplying water to these people. **Only God** could help them.

God could have provided water for Israel in the wilderness any way He wanted to. He could have led them to an already existing spring or stream or river. He could have told them to dig a well. Though all of these other options would have made sense, they wouldn't have revealed His greatness to the same extent that providing it miraculously did.

Water doesn't just come out of a rock, especially in the desert. God wanted the Israelites (and us) to know that only God was able to save them from death. Moses had to do it God's way. Every time they had an impossible situation, God told them exactly what they must do.

And it is the same for us today. He does not leave it up to us to work out our own way to escape from our sin, Satan's power, and everlasting punishment. God saves all of us who will turn from trusting in ourselves to trusting only in Him.

By faith, Moses struck the rock and immediately a great stream of water flowed out.

We do not know the exact number of Israelites at this time. Only the men over twenty were counted in the census recorded in the Bible, but we can estimate from this census that there were perhaps two and a half million people at that time. While crossing the desert, every day there was enough water for all of them and their animals! *Psalm 105:41* says, ***“He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river.”***

Only an Almighty God could give water from a rock in the wilderness . Enough water for 2.5 million people and their animals. It has been estimated that they would have needed 11 million gallons of water per day in order to survive.

God used these circumstances in the history of Israel as opportunities to reveal much truth about Himself, His heart, His eternal plan, mankind's hopelessness to save himself, and our desperate need for His divine intervention.

God was revealing these things about Himself in the “preparation stage” of the big picture context as preparation for mankind to see his need to depend upon God and His grace for deliverance from our slavery to sin.

Lesson 14

God Prepares Man for the Fulfilled Plan by Giving the Law – *Exodus 19:1-20:2*

Introduction

In your mind, how should we Christians view the ten commandments? Are they a set of rules for us to live by? We are going to see what God says about the Ten Commandments, but first let's take a look at how He prepared His people Israel for receiving these laws.

Let's also keep in mind that this lesson falls in the "preparation stage" of God's big picture context. In this lesson He is preparing Israel, as well as the rest of mankind, for the fulfillment of the eternal plan of redemption by the giving of the law.

The way in which the law will prepare Israel and all of humanity for the fulfillment of the plan is that it will reveal mankind's sinfulness. In order for anyone to recognize their need for the fulfilled plan, they must first know that they need it.

Therefore, God gave the law for the purpose of revealing sin, so that everyone will realize they need the eternal plan of redemption to be fulfilled on their behalf.

Exodus 19:1-6

Verses 1-2 – The Israelites didn't decide for themselves when they would travel or where they would go. God made these decisions for them. They were to accept Him as their ruler, protector, and provider.

Verses 3-4 – Do you remember that Mount Sinai (also called Mount Horeb) was the place where Moses saw the burning bush? At that time, the Lord had promised Moses that He would one day bring him and the Israelites back to this mountain to worship Him (*Exodus 3:1-2, 12*). Once again, the faithfulness of God is so evident. He can be completely trusted to do everything He promises.

Another important thing to note about the heart of God is how He describes His deliverance of Israel in verse 4: ***"I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself."*** This description clearly communicates His heart for His people and His desire for relationship. The relationship was His main reason for bringing about the deliverance.

Verses 5-6 – This is what God told Moses to tell the people. That He promised to bless them if they trusted and obeyed Him perfectly. If they did everything that He told them, then He would accept them and give them all the good things they needed.

It's important to notice the difference in what God was saying in verse 4 compared to what He is now saying in verses 5-6. When God delivered Israel out of Egypt, there were no conditions. It

wasn't based on their obedience. It was all His doing by grace, even though they murmured, complained, and doubted.

But now in verses 5-6, God is putting the condition of ***“obeying My voice and keeping My covenant, then you will be a special treasure to Me above all other people.”***

Israel's Response to God's Offer

Exodus 19:7-8

Upon hearing God's conditional offer, the people thought that they could obey God well enough so that He would give them everything they needed. They didn't yet realize that their hearts were full of sin and that they could not please God by their own efforts. They were like Cain who thought that he could please God by the things which he gave to God.

The people of Israel did not realize that, under this agreement, God would no longer unconditionally bless them or give them the good things which they needed. The agreement was that if they obeyed God perfectly, then He would accept them and bless them; but if they disobeyed, then they would be cursed and punished by God. The people foolishly accepted this new agreement. They should have refused it and cried out to God for Grace and Mercy. They should have asked God to just keep “carrying them on eagle's wings.”

Exodus 19:9-25

So, Moses gave Israel God's conditional offer. They responded with confidence that, “all that God commands us we will do.” Moses then relays their response back to God.

It is interesting to note that when Israel chose the Law, God became unapproachable. Now after Moses had returned to the bottom of Mount Sinai, God spoke to the Israelites from the mountain. He is holy and mankind is sinful; therefore, God was revealing this by the separation between Him and them and that they were unworthy of even touching the mountain while His glory was present.

We can't lose sight of the fact of what it was that God was achieving through this interaction. He was proving that mankind is sinful and needs a Deliverer.

God Gives the Ten Commandments

The mountain was still shaking and billowing smoke. Lightning flashed, thunder rumbled, trumpet blasts pierced the air. No wonder the people trembled with fear and kept away from the mountain! Then the Lord spoke to them and gave them the ten commandments.

It's important for us to note that it's not the breaking of any of these commandments that makes anyone sinful. The reality is that everyone is already born sinful and that is why we all constantly break the commandments. The breaking of the commandments simply reveals that we are already sinful.

Exodus 20:1-17

Here are the ten commandments God gave to Moses:

1. **Verse 3 – “You shall have no other gods before me.”** *Isaiah 45:5* says, ***“I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me...”*** Anything we place ahead of God becomes our God and proves that we are sinful and in need of a Deliverer.

What are some things that man places ahead of God? Money, cars, houses, jobs, and people.

Even if we praise God with our mouths and yet do not give Him first place in our hearts all of the time, we have still broken this commandment and it proves that we are sinful.

2. **Verses 4-6 – “You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven.”** God gave this second commandment to the Israelites so they would always remember that He is supreme and sovereign and greater than all the things He has created.

Consider Who God is and what He is like. God is spirit. He does not have a material body. He had no beginning and will have no end. He is everywhere all the time. He knows everything. He is all-powerful. He is absolutely holy and perfect. He is supreme, greater than all.

No part of God's creation, no man-made idol is worthy of worship . Only God is to be worshipped.

Something else to think about is no one knows what God looks like, so God said that we should never try to make anything that we think resembles Him.

Therefore, all those who follow false religions, who worship idols and other beings, they are breaking this commandment and proving that they are sinful and need a Deliverer.

3. **Verse 7 – “You shall not use the Lord's name in vain.”** With the third commandment, God told the Israelites that they must always respect God, acknowledging He is their Creator and rightful ruler, and never speak or use His name in a careless way.

It is wrong to say evil things about people or to refuse to give them the respect they deserve. A child should show respect for his or her parents. A wife and husband should show respect for one another. A young person should show respect for his or her elders.

To insult a human being is bad, but how much more evil it is when we have shown disrespect for the true and living God or used the name of God in an incorrect way?

To disrespect and dishonor God and use His name in vain only reveals that we are already sinful and in need of a Deliverer.

4. **Verses 8-11 – “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”** In the fourth commandment, God told them to keep the seventh day as a special day of rest in honor of Him, the one who created all things in six days. Do you remember what God did on the seventh day, the day after He finished creating the world? He rested because He had finished everything that He had planned to make.

When you think about it, this fourth commandment is really tied into the first commandment to have no other gods before us. One of the main reasons why people back in the Old Testament wouldn't have kept the Sabbath holy was because of the temptation to work and make money. Therefore, their money or their livelihood had become more important to them than God.

5. **Verse 12 – “Honor your father and your mother.”** Every human being has broken this commandment at some point in their lives. Again, this proves the fact that we are born sinful.
6. **Verse 13 – “Do not commit murder.”** To murder someone is sin against God, for He is the Creator of all people. He is the One Who gives life to every person. No one has the right to take another person's life unless God says so in His Word.

God also makes it very clear in His Word that if a person hates someone else, he has committed murder in his heart.

Even if a person thinks about killing someone, he is already a murderer and is condemned by this commandment (**Matthew 5:21-22**).

So, hating and killing, the breaking of this commandment only shows that we are already sinful and in need of a Deliverer.

7. **Verse 14 – “You shall not commit adultery.”** In the seventh commandment, God says that it is sin to have any sexual relationship with anyone except one's own wife or husband. Many people today say that this commandment is old fashioned and out-of-date. But God does not change. Sin is still sin. God has not changed His mind about adultery.

Just like murder, adultery and all types of sexual sins are also committed in the mind (**Matthew 5:27-28**).

8. **Verse 15 – “You shall not steal.”** In the eighth commandment, God said they must never take anything belonging to someone else. God is the one who gives each person the right to work and to keep his own property. *Acts 17:25* says that God **“giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.”** If a person takes something which belongs to someone else, then he has sinned against God and proves that he needs a Deliverer.
9. **Verse 16 – “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”** In the ninth commandment, God said they must always tell the truth about everything. God never lies, and He commands us not to lie.

It's important to note that Satan is the liar. He lied to Adam and Eve in the garden. He lied to our forefathers and is still telling lies to people all over the world. Satan is the father of lies (*John 8:44*).

Some people start rumors and make up stories. Others carry them on and add to them. Many people like to gossip. What may begin as a true incident is distorted or expanded to include things that are not true. All of this is lying, the breaking of this commandment, and proves that we are sinful and in need of a Deliverer.

10. **Verse 17 – “You shall not covet.”** God's tenth commandment said that they must not covet. That is to not be satisfied with what you have and to want what other people have.

This was Satan's sin. He was proud and envious of God's position.

Many people are greedy and jealous of others' possessions. They dislike those who have more things than they have, and they covet other people's property.

They are never satisfied with what they have. They always want something better.

When we are coveting, we are placing others' things above God. In reality, we are breaking two commandments at the same time, doubly proving our sinfulness and need for a Deliverer.

These are the Ten Commandments which God gave to the Israelites, and His commandments are the same for all people everywhere. God gave these commandments to Israel, through Moses, long after mankind had already become sinful.

From the time of the fall in garden until this time of God giving these commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai, every generation was already born sinful, outside of the garden, separated from God.

Therefore, the breaking of these commandments isn't what makes anyone sinful, but it simply shows that mankind is already sinful.

Likewise, the giving of these commandments was really an act of mercy by God. Without these commandments, mankind would never know that he is sinful and in need of deliverance.

If we don't know that we need deliverance, we will never see our need for God and turn to Him.

Lesson 15

The Tabernacle – *Exodus 24:12 - Leviticus 16:3*

Introduction

As we continue through the lessons, it's very important that we keep in mind we are still in the "preparation stage" of God preparing the world for the fulfillment of His foreordained eternal plan of redemption.

The last lesson ended with the giving of the law or the giving of the ten commandments, and we know that God's purpose in giving these commandments was to reveal humanity's sinfulness and need for a Deliverer. With this next lesson on the tabernacle, God is going to give some "pictures" or "foreshadowings" of what will happen when the coming Deliverer arrives and fulfills the eternal plan of redemption.

Exodus 24:12-18

Before mankind can recognize the need for salvation and the need for a Deliverer, we must first know that we are sinful and are hopeless to do anything about it ourselves. God calls Moses up on the mount and gives him the ten commandments for him to take back teach to Israel as God's holy standard.

God knew from before the foundations of the earth that Israel would never be able to faithfully keep these commandments and that they would actually accomplish their intended purpose, which was to show the people their sin and need for salvation.

It's interesting to note that while Moses was up on the mount receiving the commandments, the people were back in the camp fashioning for themselves an idol made of gold and calling it the god who led them out of Egypt. Before Moses could even get back to camp with the commandments, they were already actively breaking commandment #1: "***Thou shall have no other gods before Me***" (*Exodus 32:1*).

Again, this didn't catch God by surprise. This is exactly what He expected from mankind and the reason why before even creating a single thing, He first foreordains the eternal plan of redemption.

Exodus 25:1-9

After God gives Moses the commandments that He knew no human could ever keep and that would prove their sinfulness, He then gives Moses instruction for a way in which their sinfulness can be temporally "paid for or covered" until the Deliver comes and accomplishes it once and for all.

This instruction begins with the building of what we call the tabernacle, tent, or dwelling place. God said that this tabernacle is where He would dwell among His people. We know that God is already omnipresent, so He was already with His people; but there were three main reasons why God had Moses create the tabernacle.

It revealed His heart for His people. He wanted a relationship with them and desired to dwell among them. This was what He said back in Chapter 19 about His deliverance of them out of Egypt: ***"I carried you on eagle's wings and brought you to Myself."***

The layout of the tabernacle will provide a clear picture of the fact that mankind's sinfulness puts a separation between us and our Creator Who loves us.

The furnishings that God instructs Moses to build and place in the tabernacle, along with the sacrificial system and offerings that God instructs them to bring and sacrifice at the tabernacle, will all provide much foreshadowing of the promised coming Deliverer and how He will fulfill the eternal plan of redemption.

It all had to be built and done God's way. Remember Cain? He refused to come to God in the way God had said, so God would not accept his sacrifice. But Noah was different. Unlike Cain, he believed God and built the ark exactly as the Lord told him. God accepted and saved Noah and his family. We can't tell God how we will come to Him. We must always come the way He teaches us. Now God told Moses how to build the tabernacle. It was to be built mainly with animal skins and goat hair and would have two rooms.

The first room, which was entered from the outside, was called the holy place. I want to say this: This holy place was a room set apart by God to be used only for Him and His chosen priests when they were serving God. We will study more about the priests in a little while.

The second room, the inner room, was even more important. This was called the most holy place or the holy of holies. This room was set apart just for God except for once a year when the high priest was allowed to enter. God's presence would be in this inside room. This was the special room where God promised to live.

Exodus 25:10-11, 17

The Lord also directed Moses to make a box which was to be placed inside the second room, the most holy place. This box, called the ark of the covenant, must be made from the wood of a particular tree which was chosen by God. After they made the ark of the covenant, they were to cover it with gold.

Moses was told to make a lid of pure gold and place it on top of the ark in the inner room. The lid was called the mercy seat. The mercy seat was the most important part of the whole tabernacle. This was the place where God promised to dwell among the sinful Israelites and show them mercy. Mercy is God's provision for sinners to escape the punishment that they deserve for their sins. Mercy can be defined as not getting what we deserve.

Exodus 25:18-20

Do you remember when we last heard about cherubim? God put cherubim outside the garden of Eden so that Adam and Eve would not be able to return to the tree of life. The two cherubim were to be placed facing one another at either end of the mercy seat. Their wings were to be made so they would stretch out toward one another over the mercy seat. Their faces were to be looking down on the cover of the box.

Exodus 25:21-22

The ark was to be placed in the inner room just inside the curtain. The Lord told Moses to place the two tablets of stone inside the ark of the covenant under the mercy seat. These were the two tablets upon which God wrote the Ten Commandments that He knew would result in condemning mankind for his sin and thereby prove the need for a Deliverer.

God promised that when everything was finished just as He had commanded, He would come into the inner room. His presence would be seen to be a very bright light between the cherubim. This bright light is referred to as the Shekinah glory or presence of God.

Exodus 26:31-34

God told Moses he was to hang a beautiful thick curtain as a divider between the two rooms. This curtain was to remind the Israelites that they were separated from God because of sin.

By instructing Moses to build the tabernacle, God was revealing His heart for relationship and to dwell among His people; but the thick curtain revealed that mankind's sinfulness actually causes a separation between us and Him.

God also told Moses to make a fence of cloth curtains held upright between posts and to place it around the tabernacle.

Exodus 27:1-2

Just inside the entrance of the curtain fence, they were to place an altar, which God said was to be made of wood covered with brass.

When a person wanted to approach God, his first step was to bring a burnt offering to the Lord. He was to bring it to the brazen altar just inside the gate and place his hand on the head of the animal and then kill it. By doing this, he was admitting to God that he was a sinner and deserved to die. Placing His hand on the animal symbolized the transfer of his sin to the animal who would then die as his substitute. He was asking God to accept the animal's death in place of his own.

In preparation for God to one day send the promised Deliverer to fulfill the eternal plan of redemption, He first gave Israel this temporary way of animals being offered as a substitute sacrifice to serve as picture of what was to come.

Exodus 28:1-4

The Lord appointed Aaron as high priest and his sons as priests. Only Aaron, the high priest, was allowed to go into the inner room, the most holy place where God was. If anyone else had gone behind the curtain and entered the inner room, he would have been killed.

Aaron could only go into the most holy place once each year on the Day of Atonement, which means the “day of covering.” (The word atonement means payment or satisfaction.) The only way he could enter was to come with the blood of an animal which had been sacrificed.

Leviticus 16:2-3, 34

Before Aaron entered the holy of holies, he had to kill an animal and catch its blood in a basin. Then, after he passed behind the heavy curtain which hung between the two rooms, Aaron was to sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat, the pure gold cover of the ark of the covenant. If everything was done the way the Lord had told Moses, then God promised to forgive the sins of Israel for the past year.

Could the blood of animals pay for their sins? No! The punishment for sin is death. Sin must be paid for in full. Nevertheless, God promised to hold off the judgment they deserved and forgive their sins for the past year if they came to Him in the way He had told them.

Do you remember God's promise in Genesis 3:15 to one day send a Deliverer? While they waited for the promised One to come, God was instructing them to come to Him believing and bringing a blood sacrifice for their sins. God will only accept those who believe and come to Him in the way that He says.

Exodus 39:42-43; 40:17, 34-35

If they had not made it exactly as God told them, God would not have come to live with them. Because Moses and the Israelites did everything the way God instructed them, God came to live in the center of the Israelites' camp in the most holy place of the tabernacle.

The Israelites could now come to God in the way that He had taught them. Each year, Aaron, the high priest, could enter the most holy place and sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat under the cherubim. Why did the high priest have to repeat this every year? Because the blood of animals cannot pay for sin and this served as a temporary provision until the promised Deliverer was to come.

Lesson 16

**Israel's Example – Knowing God = Faith / Doubting God = Unbelief –
*Numbers 13:1-21:9***

Israel in the Promised Land Under Judges and Kings – *Judges 1:1-2 Chronicles 5:1*

Introduction

As we continue through the lessons, keep in mind that we are still in the “preparation stage” of God preparing the world for the fulfillment of His foreordained eternal plan of redemption.

One of the most hotly debated doctrinal topics in Christendom has been the debate over the sovereignty of God vs. the free will of man.

Beginning with the extreme views, at one end, God is so sovereign that He predetermines all that man does and every outcome.

Then at the opposite end of the spectrum, all of the emphasis is on man and his having a free will. God is not predetermining anything but simply allows man to make any and every choice he is going to make and then receive the consequences whether good or bad.

This lesson clearly reveals the reality of both the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. In the big picture context, we have God carrying out His eternal plan of redemption that He indeed did foreordain before the foundations of the earth. Within that big picture context, we have a sinful human race that:

He wholeheartedly desires to receive eternal life.

To whom He continues to reveal Himself and His plan.

Some respond to His revelation in belief and receive deliverance and others respond in unbelief and receive judgment.

God is using these Old Testament examples of people receiving the consequences of their belief or unbelief to reveal Himself and His eternal plan to all future generations.

We can see God using both man's decisions to believe and obey as well as his decisions to reject and rebel within the context of His carrying out His eternal plan of redemption.

Spying out the Promised Land

God now lifted up the cloud from Mount Sinai where He had given the Ten Commandments. The people followed the cloud when it moved, and the Lord led them right to the edge of the land He had promised to give to them.

Numbers 13:1-3

Moses obeyed the Lord and sent the twelve men to look at the land and the people who were living there. It's important to note that God didn't have to send spies into the land to spy it out ahead of time. He had promised to give it to them and He could have just removed the inhabitants and given it right over to Israel.

But it's also important to keep in mind things that we already know to be true about Him. Love is Who He is; it's the essence of Who God is and He is always after the relationship. He is a triune God Who has been enjoying an eternal relationship from eternity past, and it's what He is after with us as well, the relationship. By God telling Joshua to send forth the twelve spies, God knew exactly what they would see and He was thereby raising up another opportunity for them to be taken to a deeper level of knowing and trusting Him.

However, when they returned, notice what they said in ***Numbers 13:25-33***.

These men were telling the truth. Strong people owned the land, and some of them were huge. But ten of the men had forgotten all the great and mighty things that the Lord had done for them. They had forgotten that nothing is impossible to God. They had forgotten all the miracles He had done in Egypt and how He had delivered them from slavery. They didn't believe that God was strong enough to overcome the people of Canaan and give them the land.

However, two of the spies, Caleb and Joshua, believed God. They, like the others, had seen the strong walls surrounding the cities in Canaan. They had also seen the size of the people; but they remembered the mighty things that God had already done, and they believed He would drive out the people of Canaan and give the land to the Israelites just as He had promised.

Numbers 13:30 – Who do you think the Israelites will follow?

Numbers 14:1-4

The Lord heard everything the Israelites said. Actually, He knew what they would decide and do long before the foundations of the earth. He knew that they did not believe Him. What they were really saying was that God is a liar. He had promised to give them the land, but they refused to believe Him even though He had already gone to great extremes to reveal Himself and His faithfulness to them over and over again. God was using Israel in this circumstance to reveal the sinfulness of mankind.

We must keep in mind that God is NOT a transactional God! What He does is not a reaction to mankind's decisions. He has known from before the foundations of the earth what every person

will ever choose to do in every situation that comes into their live, but He is after the relationship. He created man with the capacity to know Him, and He uses every circumstance to show us our need for Him.

Refusing to Believe God's Revelation of Himself

Numbers 14:26-32

All those who were twenty years old and older who did not believe God would die in the wilderness except for Joshua and Caleb—because they believed. After forty years when they had all died, then God would take their children plus Joshua and Caleb into the land to possess it.

Remember when Satan told Eve that she would not die if she ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Satan called God a liar, and Eve believed him.

Cain also did not believe God and he came to God in his own way. God rejected him and his offering.

When Noah told the people that a great flood was going to be sent by God, they refused to believe God. They would not enter the ark, and they were all destroyed.

The Egyptians also did not believe that the God of Israel was the Almighty and the only true God. They trusted in their idols to deliver them. But God destroyed their land, killed their firstborn and drowned their armies in the sea.

And now here with Israel, God wanted to bring them right into the promised land of Canaan. However, because of their unbelief, He made them wander in the wilderness until all the unbelieving adults died in the desert.

God goes to great lengths to clearly and undeniably reveal Himself and His ways of deliverance to mankind. Man's only part is to simply believe the revelation that God gives. Believe it and be delivered or reject it and receive just judgment.

Israel's Response to No Water

Numbers 20:1-6

In every circumstance we see Israel encounter, we need to remember that God could have done this any way that He wanted. He knows they need water. Why didn't He just lead them to where there already was water? Or why didn't He just miraculously provide it without them first experiencing the need for it?

Again, it's because He is after the relationship. Whenever mankind has a need that he can't meet himself in some way, he will usually turn to God. It's our neediness that show us our need for God.

Instead of turning to God in dependence, the Israelites blamed Moses and Aaron because they didn't have any water. Why didn't they ask the Lord for water? He had given them water from the rock when they needed it before. The reason they didn't ask the Lord is because they did not trust Him. At this point in Israel's history, the things that God provided or didn't provide was more important to them than God Himself. God desperately wanted a relationship with them. He wanted them to turn to Him in trust and dependence, but they didn't have the same value for a relationship with Him.

So, what was God's response to such unreasonable complaining and lack of faith?

Numbers 20:7-12

The Lord commanded Moses to speak to the rock. Previously, when they had needed water, the Lord had told Moses to strike the rock (*Exodus 17:5-6*). But this time, the Lord told him to just speak to the rock. Notice that each time, God told them exactly the way it should be done.

Moses and Aaron reacted in anger instead of trusting the Lord. God wanted to show the people that He was faithful to provide water for them, just as He had promised. He always keeps His promises because He is perfect and holy. Instead of showing God's faithfulness and holiness to the people, Moses and Aaron showed the people their own anger.

It's important to note that the Israelites' complaining and lack of faith and Moses and Aaron's display of anger and disregard for God's instruction didn't prevent God from being faithful. God used this manifestation of their sin to reveal His heart for them all the more.

Yes, there were consequences for their sin, but without the consequences we wouldn't recognize the sin. Without the recognition of sin, we wouldn't recognize the manifestation of the love, grace, and mercy of God.

Israel Continues to Murmur and Complain

Numbers 21:4-9

Jumping ahead in our story of Israel's wilderness journey, we come to a time when they were tired, discouraged, and sick of eating manna every day. Not only did they complain about their circumstances, but they also accuse Moses and Aaron along with God of malice.

God had heard their cry while they were slaves in Egypt and He delivered them by "carrying them on eagle's wings to bring to Himself" in the promised land.

God had wonderful and amazing plans in store for them that He had already declared and promised them.

But they in turn called Him a liar and accused Him of having evil intentions in leading them out of Egypt and into the wilderness.

God's response was to send poisonous snakes among them. The temptation is to view this as simply God judging man for his sin. However, there was much more to what God was revealing here than that. Through this interaction with Israel, God was providing a physical picture of spiritual truth.

Up to this point, God had done nothing but reveal His love, grace, and tender mercy for Israel over and over. He had revealed His faithfulness to them in many undeniable ways. What did Israel do with God's revelation of His heart for them? They spit in His face!

- And so, God gives them what they deserve—poisonous snakes to inflict them. This wasn't just for the purpose of punishing their sin, but it was more importantly for the purpose of making them realize that they HAD sinned and needed to turn back to God in humility and faith.
- The purpose of the consequence for their sin was the restoration of their relationship with God.

This story took place during the “preparation stage” of God carrying out His eternal plan of redemption. He was preparing Israel for the future fulfillment of His eternal plan by providing a physical picture of spiritual truth.

The history of mankind began with a clear revelation of God's love and heart by creating an unbelievable world for us to live and exist in. What did mankind do with God's revelation of His love and heart for them? Spit in His face and chose to believe the serpent instead God!

- The result was that mankind became sinful and would now receive the wages of sin, death—spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death. Just like with Israel, God's purpose in the consequences of sin is not just for punishment but is more importantly for revealing to us our need for the eternal plan of redemption that God had foreordained from before the foundations of the earth.
- Therefore, we can see that the consequences of sin are really an act of God's mercy. For without them, there would be no recognition of sin; without the recognition of sin, we would never recognize our need for salvation.

Israel Living in the Promised Land under Judges

This pattern of God using Israel's sin and the just consequences as opportunities to reveal to them Himself and His heart for a relationship with them continued on even after they were settled and living in the land of Canaan.

The Israelites had wandered around in the wilderness for forty years, and all the generation who refused to believe that the Lord could give them the Promised Land had died. Just as God had told Moses and Aaron, they also died before Israel entered the Promised Land (**Deuteronomy 34:1-6**). God appointed Joshua to be the new leader of His people.

Joshua 1:1-2

The children of those who didn't believe God were now adults and it was now the Lord's time to take them into Canaan. Although Satan and Pharaoh had tried to stop the Israelites from leaving Egypt and even though the Israelites had doubted God many times, He still did what He had promised. He made a way for them through the Red Sea. He led them, protected them, and gave them water and food for forty years while they wandered in the wilderness. The Lord did not fail to do any of the things He had promised them.

Joshua 11:23 – ***“Joshua took the whole land.”*** Before his death, Joshua said this to the Israelites in **Joshua 23:14**. Notice Joshua's warning to the people in **Joshua 23:16**.

While Joshua was alive, the Israelites remembered the Lord. After He and the generation that had seen the Lord's miracles in the wilderness had died, the Israelites forgot Him and they followed the ways of the nations that did not know the true living God.

They made idols and worshipped them instead of the Lord.

God had wanted them to drive out the idolatrous Canaanites, but Israel refused to believe and to obey God.

So, God allowed some of the Canaanite people to remain in the land with Israel and be used by God to reveal the sinfulness of Israel and their need for a Savior. Instead of trusting God in the Promised Land, Israel eventually adopted the evil practices of the Canaanites (**Psalm 106:34-42**).

Their turning away from God then resulted in God giving them their just judgment by allowing enemies to come in and conquer them. This in turn would make them desperate, see their need for God, and cause them to turn back to Him again.

All throughout the book of Judges we see the following pattern. The Israelites forgetting and turning from God; then God would raise up an adversary to fight against them, conquer them, and make them realize their need for God. Then Israel would repent and turn to God for help. God would then choose a man or woman to deliver them from their enemies. These deliverers were called Judges.

Judges 2:14-19

Even though the Israelites were disobedient to God and He would allow them to receive their just consequences, He still loved them and remained faithful to them.

Remember back in the Garden of Eden, the Lord had promised that He would send a Savior who would destroy Satan and deliver the world from Satan's power.

God also gave this promise of a Deliverer to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob assuring them that the Savior would be one of their descendants.

Therefore, God protected Israel for it was through Israel that God planned to fulfill all His promises of the Deliverer.

Furthermore, God wanted the world to know about Him. His plan would be to reveal Himself through a written record of Himself called the Bible. It was through Israel that God gave us this Bible. Remember, all but one of the writers of the Bible were Jews, so God took great care to preserve Israel so that His Word and the story of the Deliverer could be taught down through the ages.

Israel Living in the Promised Land under Kings

Let's move on now from the time of the Judges to the time of the Kings. Of all the nations of the world, Israel was most fortunate, for their ruler and king was God Himself. However, after a time Israel rejected God and asked for a king like the nations around them (*1 Samuel 8:4-7*).

God granted their request and from this time on many kings ruled over Israel. A few of them believed God and trusted in Him but the majority did not. The ungodly kings worshipped idols and led the people of Israel to sin against the commandments of God.

Saul was the very first king and also the first king to turn from God's way in unbelief (*1 Samuel 15:1-28*).

The second King was David.

2 Samuel 5:3-4

Unlike many of the other kings who ruled over Israel, David truly believed in the Lord and wanted to obey Him in everything, although many times He did not. David, like all of us, was born a sinner. The big difference was that David knew he was sinful and that the wages of sin is death. He knew his only hope was in God's mercy and forgiveness. By faith He offered blood sacrifices for his sins. Because David trusted in the Lord, he was accepted and forgiven just like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, and many others. Something else for us to think about is that God gave David the same promise He had given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Lord promised David that the great Savior of man and conqueror of Satan would be from his family (*2 Samuel 7:13-16*).

Before He died, David gave his son Solomon the responsibility of building the house of the Lord, but David himself gathered and prepared the building materials.

1 Chronicles 22:5-6

Solomon became king over all Israel after his father David had died.

1 Chronicles 29:26-28

Solomon built the house of the Lord in Jerusalem (*2 Chronicles 2:1; 5:1*). Now there was no further need for the tabernacle which the Israelites had constructed in the wilderness using animal skins and cloth. This new house of God was called the temple.

The temple of the Lord had the same two inner rooms and the same furniture as the tabernacle. The thick curtain was hung in front of the most holy place, the inner room where God was to dwell. This curtain was there as a “DO NOT ENTER” sign for everyone except the high priest. It was a symbol of the separation between holy God and sinful man.

When the temple was dedicated and sacrifices offered to God, the glory of God came and entered the most holy place of the temple, just as He entered the tabernacle (*2 Chronicles 7:1-3*).

It's important to remember that the high priest was allowed to enter this inner room only once a year on behalf of the people. The Israelites could not come to God themselves. The only way they could be accepted was to depend on the high priest and the animal blood he offered for them. Every year the high priest took the blood of animals into the most holy place in the temple and sprinkled the blood on the mercy seat, the pure gold cover of the Ark of the Covenant (*Leviticus 16:2-3, 34*).

The Israelites were never to forget that they were sinners, that God is perfect, and that the punishment for sin is death. Because the blood of animals could not pay for their sin, the blood had to be placed before God yearly. Every year God forgave their sins and held off His judgment.

All of this was designed by God to be a foreshadowing of the time when a perfect and complete payment for sin would be made by the promised coming Deliverer.

After Solomon's death, the nation of Israel argued over who should be king, and they split into two kingdoms (*1 Kings 11:9-13, 31-37*).

The ten northern tribes were called Israel, and the two southern tribes were called Judah.

Lesson 17

God Sent His Prophets to Israel in Preparation for the Promised Deliverer's Arrival, the Birth of Jesus – *Luke 1:5-38*

Introduction

While Israel was living in the land of Canaan under Judges and then Kings, God was continuing to “set the stage” in preparation for the Promised Deliverer to come and fulfill the eternal plan of redemption. During this time, there were three main points of preparation that God was continuing emphasize and reveal.

First was the sinfulness of mankind. God was revealing the sinfulness of the world through His interaction with the nation of Israel. They were constantly turning away from Him to follow false gods. If the chosen and privileged people of God were proven to be sinful, then all the rest of humanity would most assuredly be sinful.

Second, through interacting with a sinful human race, God was at the same time also revealing His heart of love, compassion, mercy, and grace. Along with giving examples of the judgment for sin, we also have His continual promises and provision for deliverance.

Third, through the prophets, He began to give many Messianic prophecies so that when the Messiah Deliverer did come, everyone would know without a doubt Who He is. (See *Chart 1 – “Messianic Prophecy Chart”*)

The last Old Testament prophet to speak for God was Malachi. Malachi reminded the Jews that God's promised Deliverer would come to save them. He also told them that before the Deliverer came God would send another prophet (***Malachi 3:1***).

This prophet's work would be to teach the people and to prepare them for the coming Savior. After Malachi, however, four hundred years passed during which God did not speak through any prophet. Referred to as the silent years, quietly and unnoticed by most men, God was making preparations for the fulfillment of His great promises to send a Savior for the whole world.

He made the Greek language common to most of the world. He linked distant cities with Roman roads. He dispersed His people to many countries where they built synagogues and taught His word. But now finally the time had come. God was ready to do what He had been planning from before the foundations of the earth—send the long-awaited Deliverer.

The Announcement of John's Birth

Luke 1:5-6

Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth were Jews who trusted in God and believed His Word. They offered sacrifices at the temple while they waited for the promised Deliverer to come, just as God had commanded Moses. Because they believed God and came to Him the way he had told them, God accepted them just as He had accepted Abel and all others who had faith in His promise from the beginning of the world.

Both Zacharias and Elizabeth were now old and they had never been able to have any children. Zacharias was one of the priests in the temple in Jerusalem. Listen to what happened to Zacharias while he was doing his work as a priest in the temple (***Luke 1:7-17***).

The Lord knew all about Zacharias' son even before Elizabeth became pregnant. Remember God had foretold that Zacharias' son John would go ahead of the Deliverer to prepare the way for Him. Notice in ***Luke 1:16*** that the angel called the coming Deliverer "the Lord their God." What he is saying is that the coming Deliverer, the Savior of men, was to be God Himself!

Luke 1:24-25

What does she mean by "take away my reproach"? In those days, the Jewish people looked down on couples who were not able to have any children. Zacharias and Elizabeth were going to have a son in their old age, so now, they would no longer be looked down upon.

The Announcement of Jesus' Birth

It was now God's time to fulfill all of His promises regarding the Deliverer. God sent an angel to tell a virgin (not sinless, just a virgin) named Mary that God had chosen her to be the mother of the Deliverer. Mary was just an ordinary young woman who was also a sinner but who believed God's promise to send the Deliverer.

Luke 1:46-47

Mary was not sinless; she also needed a Savior. God chose Mary to be the mother of the Deliverer because God does whatever He wants to do. He does not ask anyone or have to answer to anyone for what He does. He is God, He is sovereign, He is almighty, He is all knowing, and He is everywhere at all times.

We read in ***Luke 1:26-31*** Mary's son was to be that long awaited promised Deliverer and His name was to be Jesus, which means Savior or Deliverer. Thousands of years had passed, but God had not forgotten His promise to send the Deliverer. He loves the whole world, and He wants all sinners to be delivered from the punishment we deserve. This has been His desire and plan from before the foundations of the earth.

The angel Gabriel also told Mary some amazing things about her future son (**Luke 1:32**). Mary's son was not only to be her son, but He would also be the Son of God. It is amazing to think six hundred years earlier God had announced these things to His prophet Isaiah (**Isaiah 9:6**).

Through the Prophets, God made promises like this regarding the future coming Deliverer for two main reasons: First, He wanted man to know and believe the promise of His coming. Second, when the Deliverer did come, everyone would recognize Him and turn to Him for salvation.

When we began studying these lessons, we learned about the Trinity. We learned that, although there is only one God, God is three persons who are equal in every way. These three who are the one God are God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit never had a body as we humans do because God is Spirit and does not need a human body. However, the Savior had to be a human being just as we are. He also had to be sinless in order to be an acceptable sacrifice to God.

An important fact for us to know is that, in order for God's plan about the Deliverer to be fulfilled, God the Son had to be born as a human being. This Savior who was God the Son, had to come down from Heaven to be born on the earth as the child of Mary. Therefore, Mary's son would be both God and man in one body. This son Jesus would be fully God and fully man! (Look again at **Isaiah 9:6**.)

Furthermore, the angel told Mary that because the Deliverer would be a direct descendant of King David, He would be king over Israel (**Isaiah 9:7**).

Let us look back at **Luke 1:32-33** again. God was going to do what He had promised David. We can trust him to keep His promises (**2 Samuel 7:12-17**).

Luke 1:34-35

Mary could not understand how she could have a child who would not have a human father. The angel said that God the Holy Spirit would perform this miracle, which is very important here.

Remember that back in the book of Genesis, we determined that because we are all descendants of Adam, we are all born sinners. So, if Jesus had been born with a human father, He would not have been born sinless but would have also been born with a sin nature.

Every person born into this world has inherited Adam's sin. We are all sinners because the sin of Adam who was the father of the human race was passed down to us. But Jesus' Father was God. God is perfect and holy, without sin. Jesus did not inherit Adam's sinfulness! He was the perfect Son of God, holy and sinless!

Luke 1:36-38

It's important for us to know that God could have brought both John and Jesus into this world anyway that He wanted. He could have chosen any woman to be their mothers but notice both HOW He did it and WHO it was that He chose to use.

He chose two women you wouldn't expect Him to choose—an old barren woman who can't have children and a young virgin who had never slept with a man.

In both cases, He did it miraculously.

This is a pattern we have seen of God all the way through the Old Testament. He constantly works in miraculous ways, choosing to use people that no one would expect. This makes it all the more clear that it is He who is carrying out His plan. The plan to send a Deliverer and fulfill the eternal plan of redemption was not a plan of any man.

Lesson 18

God Sends John as the Forerunner for the Messiah – *Matthew 1:1-2; Luke 1:57, 67-80*

God Fulfills His Promise to Send Jesus, the Deliverer – *Matthew 1:18-25; 2:1-15, 19-23; Luke 2:40, 52*

Luke 1:57

God did what he had promised. Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth had a son and they named him John just as the angel had instructed.

Luke 1:67-77

The Deliverer, the Savior, for whom John was to prepare the way, was to be God Himself. No ordinary man could deliver us from Satan, sin, and death. The Lord is the great Deliverer of all who trust in Him.

Who delivered Noah and his family from the flood?

Who delivered Isaac from death and provided a ram to die in his place?

Who delivered Lot from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah?

Who delivered Joseph from prison in Egypt?

Who delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt?

Who saved the Israelites from Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea?

Who delivered the Israelites from death by providing them with water and food in the desert?

God alone is the great Deliverer. There is no other Savior, but Him (*Isaiah 43:11*).

Luke 1:78-79

The Deliverer would come like the sun rising in the morning. Think about this for a moment. How would we feel if we went for a walk in the wilderness and got lost? When the sun went down, we would be not only lost but would not even be able to see where we were or where to go.

In a similar way, Adam and Eve's sin put all of us into darkness. When they sinned, their sin separated them from God. They were cast out of the garden. Now they were in the dark, separated from God and unable to find their way back to Him. All of their children and all of their descendants, including you and me, were born in the darkness of sin.

But from before the foundations of the earth, God planned a way for mankind to become delivered out of the darkness! Zacharias said that the Deliverer would come just as the sun rises after a dark night and gives light to all people everywhere.

Something to consider is how many suns give light to this earth? Only one. The same sun gives light all over the world. How many Deliverers did God promise to send into the world? Only one. God did not promise to send different Deliverers, one for us and another for people in other parts of the world.

God promised only one Deliverer who would make it possible for us to come to Him. He would bring "light" to the whole world, like the rising sun!

For hundreds of years, God had given His prophets messages about the coming Savior. He planned everything that would happen to Him before He came into the world (*Isaiah 9:6-7*).

Jesus, the coming Deliverer, was to be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. God had promised them that the Deliverer would be from their family.

God Fulfills His Promise to Send the Deliverer

Matthew 1:1-6

This is the fulfillment of God's promise to David and also the fulfillment of the words God spoke to Isaiah—the Deliverer, the Savior, Jesus Christ.

Remember the angel Gabriel had come to a young virgin named Mary to announce that she was to be the mother of Jesus. However, she had already been promised to marry a man called Joseph. When Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant, he knew he was not the father of this baby.

According to Jewish law, Joseph could have made a public announcement and Mary would have been killed for being pregnant with a child that was not Joseph's (*Deuteronomy 22:20-21*).

But Joseph loved Mary, so he decided to break off their engagement quietly.

Matthew 1:18-23

Joseph was going to do what made sense to him. He found out that Mary was pregnant, he knew that the child was not his, and he was going to divorce her quietly. What Joseph didn't realize was that God was using him and Mary in His foreordained eternal plan of redemption. God divinely intervenes and sends an Angel to explain to Joseph what is going on.

God had faithfully brought about what He had revealed to the prophets—that the promised Savior would be born of a virgin. This Old Testament prophecy was given in **Isaiah 7:14**.

Matthew 1:24-25

First, we saw Joseph's gracious response to finding out that Mary was pregnant, and now we see him believing God's message that was given to him by the angel. Rather than divorcing Mary, Joseph follows through with taking her as his wife. Joseph's actions show the trust and reverence He held for God and His promise to send a Deliverer.

Jesus the Deliverer is Born

Luke 2:1-7

Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, but scripture prophesied that the Deliverer would be born in Bethlehem (**Micah 5:2**). God used Caesar, an ungodly king, to ensure that Mary and Joseph were in the town of Bethlehem in time for Jesus' birth.

With Mary being nine months pregnant and them being forced to make this trip, Joseph very easily could have groaned and complained about this stupid census the Romans required, focusing only on man. Little did they know at the time, God was using this ungodly king to fulfill Messianic prophecy.

The Announcement to Shepherds

Luke 2:8-20

It is interesting to note the humility of our Lord. He did not choose a palace to be born in. He didn't reveal His arrival to the high and mighty but instead to lowly shepherds. God didn't send just one angel to make the announcement, but He sent "the whole host of Heaven." He was making it undeniably clear that the long-awaited promised One has come.

The Wise Men

Matthew 2:1-16

Jesus was born in Bethlehem just as the prophets of God had said many years earlier (**Micah 5:2**). **Matthew 2:1** describes the fulfillment.

Note the reason the wise men traveled so far: to worship the One who was born king of the Jews. These wise men had come from the east. They were not Jews and so were not given all the promises and messianic prophecies concerning the Deliverer's coming like the Jews had been given. However, the "sign" of the star was enough to convince them of the Deliverer's arrival.

Their seeing the star and coming in faith and worship was proof that God had made the promised Deliverer's arrival plain and clear.

Herod, just like the Egyptian Pharaoh during the time of Moses, did not want anyone to rule over him. Herod was afraid that he would lose his position as king when this baby grew up to be a man, and so he wanted to get rid of him. We also know that Satan was playing a part in his scheme to have Jesus killed, for he was trying to prevent God from fulfilling His eternal plan of redemption.

BUT...Neither Herod nor any other power in Heaven or on earth could stop God from carrying out His plan to save people from their sins. Jesus was taken to Egypt just as the prophets had said long before (*Hosea 11:1*) with the fulfillment described in *Matthew 2:14-15*.

What we have here is God using the evil plot of Satan and King Herod to kill the Deliverer to actually bring about the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy.

When Herod was dead, the Lord sent one of His angels to tell Joseph to take Mary and Jesus out of Egypt back into the land of Israel and thereby fulfill another Messianic prophecy (*Matthew 2:19-23*).

Jesus, a Boy in Nazareth

Luke 2:40

Jesus grew from a baby into a young boy. His Father God protected and guided Him in everything that He thought, said, and did. He obeyed every command of God. He never sinned because He was not born a sinner.

Jesus Grew into Manhood

Luke 2:52

Jesus Christ, who was really God, was born into this world as a man in a human body so He could be the Deliverer, the Savior, for all of mankind!

In His humanity he grew to be a wise man. God was pleased with Him, and people liked Him. His character as a man was really the character of God:

He was sinless and holy.
He always kept His word.
He was faithful in everything He did.
He was completely righteous.
His knowledge was perfect.
He was merciful and gracious, loving and kind. No wonder Jesus found favor with God and men.

Lesson 19

John's Baptism of Repentance and John Baptizes Jesus – *Matthew 3:1-9,13-17; John 1:24-37*

The Temptation of Jesus – *Matthew 4:1-11*

Introduction

It's important for us to keep in mind the fact that we are still in the "preparation stage" of God's fulfillment of His eternal plan of redemption. This stage began in Genesis 1 with the creation of the world and all that it contains. Here's a list of some of the key components of preparation that we have seen God put into place.

Creation of the spirit world

The fall of Lucifer and the other angels

Creation of the world and mankind

The fall of man

Man removed from the garden and fellowship with God

The promise of a coming Deliverer

Many proofs of mankind's sinfulness: corrupt mind, will and emotions, shame, fear, the need to bring an acceptable sacrifice, murder, and much manifestation of sin.

Noah and the flood

Choosing of Abraham and God's promise to send the Deliverer through the nation of Israel (Abraham's descendants)

God's deliverance of Israel out of Egypt

The giving of the law as proof of sin and need for salvation

Giving of the tabernacle, its furnishings, sacrificial system, Levitical Priesthood and their duties. All these things provide types and foreshadowing of the eternal plan of redemption that is to come.

Over 300 Messianic prophecies that God gave through the Old Testament

The announcement and birth of John the Baptist

The announcement and birth of Jesus—God did it in such a way that it couldn't be missed.

Remember that John was raised up by God to be the forerunner of the Messiah, the one to prepare the way just before the Messiah would be revealed. The way that God used him to prepare the way was to send him throughout the land of Israel preaching a message of repentance.

Matthew 3:1-2

John was proclaiming that ALL are sinful and in need of salvation. Anyone that believed his message and recognized their need for a Savior would then be baptized by John. By their willingness to be baptized, they were stating that they were sinful and needed to be saved. The baptism they received did not save them; it simply showed they agreed with John's message that they were sinful and needed the coming Deliverer to deliver them.

Matthew 3:4

John was poor. He ate the things he found in the wilderness and his clothing was that of a poor man.

Some people say that if you put your faith in God, He will give you all the money and possessions you want. They say that wealth and possessions are a sign of God's blessing. They will even say that if you are not getting all the money and things you want, you probably do not have enough faith.

But God does not promise that a person will become rich if he believes Him. Many of God's greatest prophets and people who believed were very poor. Later we will see that even Jesus, God's Son, was a very poor man when He was here in the world.

Matthew 3:5-6

Many of the Jews believed God's Word which John preached and went to him to be baptized. Their baptism was an outward act revealing their belief in John's message. They were admitting their own sinfulness and need for salvation.

Baptism will not make us acceptable to God nor will it wash away our sins before the eyes of God. Being baptized cannot pay God for our sins. The payment for sin is death. Baptism is just a sign to show to others that a person agrees with God's message and that he is trusting only in God to save him.

John's Words to the Proud and Unrepentant

Matthew 3:7

Most of the leaders of the temple were proud. Let's take a look at these leaders and consider what the Bible tells us about them.

Scribes

All that Moses and the prophets had written was now on scrolls. The men who copied the words of God onto these scrolls were called scribes. They were also called "lawyers" and "teachers of the Law" because they were the men who were supposed to know and be able to explain the real meaning of the words of God.

Many scribes were very proud because of their education. They thought they were pleasing to God just because they could remember and explain the meaning of many parts of God's Word. Their pride blinded them to their own sinfulness and need for salvation.

Pharisees

Some of the other leaders of the Jews were called Pharisees. The Pharisees tried to please God and be accepted by Him by obeying many different rules which they themselves had written. The Pharisees added to God's Word. They did not think they were sinners like other people. They kept themselves separate from anyone who was not a Pharisee. They thought they were good enough to be accepted by God because of all the things they were doing.

Sadducees

The Sadducees also went to the temple and claimed to worship God. However, they did not believe many things which God had written in His Word. The Sadducees took away from God's Word some truths, which were in it.

For example, the Sadducees did not believe in the existence of angels nor did they believe in the resurrection of the dead. They rejected everything except the first five books of the Old Testament from Genesis to Deuteronomy.

They were interested in keeping in good standing with the Roman government and making sure they kept their own position as leaders of the Jews. They did not really trust in God from their hearts. Many of these religious leaders would not admit that they were sinners. They thought that they were good enough for God to accept them.

Because the Pharisees and Sadducees were so proud, John's words to them were very strong. God sets Himself against people who are proud and who will not agree with Him. God does this not as punishment but so that people will recognize their need for Him. On the other hand, God promises to help and deliver those who agree that they are sinners and who acknowledge that only He can help them.

Matthew 3:8

John told the Pharisees and the Sadducees that if they really accepted God's thoughts about them as spoken through John, then they must show it by their actions and come and be baptized.

Matthew 3:9

Many of the Jews were proud that Abraham was the father of their nation. They thought that God would accept them because they were the descendants of Abraham. God accepts no one on the basis of who their parents are or what church they attend. God judges everyone individually, not by his family, and neither by his works nor his church affiliation.

John told the Pharisees and Sadducees bluntly that in themselves they had nothing about which to boast.

What John Said about the Deliverer

John 1:24-27

Back in John's time, men of high rank had servants to do all of their work. The important man would not put his own shoes on or take them off. That was the work of the servants. John said that he was not even worthy of being the servant who would take off the Deliverer's shoes. The Deliverer was the Son of God. He was the Creator of the world—the one who had given John his life.

John Baptizes Jesus

Matthew 3:13-17

Luke 3:23 tells us that at this time, Jesus was 30 years old. It's important to note that Jesus' coming to John to be baptized was not because He was a sinner and needed a Savior like all the others who were baptized by John.

Jesus was born perfect. He lived in full agreement with God. Jesus came to be baptized because this was God's command to all Jews who accepted John as God's prophet. If Jesus was not baptized, people would think that He did not obey God's commands. People might have concluded that Jesus did not believe that John had been commanded by God to baptize.

Look again at verse 16. The Holy Spirit came to be with Jesus to enable Him to do everything that God the father had planned. Remember, Jesus really was God; but when He became a man, He chose to depend on God the Holy Spirit for power to do the work of the Deliverer here on earth.

In verse 17 God provides another clear and undeniable proof for Who Jesus really was. God the Father, with an audible voice from Heaven, called Jesus His son. Jesus was a man, but He was also God the Son who came down from Heaven; and God was fully satisfied with Him.

John 1:29-37

When John saw Jesus, he said that Jesus was the lamb who was given and sent by God. John previously did not know who the Deliverer would be. All he knew was that the Deliverer was

coming. When he saw this sign from God, he knew for sure that Jesus was the Savior of the world, the long-awaited promised One.

Jesus' Temptation

Through all of the stories that we have looked at so far, we have been stating that God has been preparing and setting the stage for the Deliverer to come and fulfill His eternal plan of redemption. The main focus of this preparation was in helping mankind see his own sinfulness and therefore the need for a Deliverer.

The story of Jesus' temptation provides another aspect of God's preparation for the eternal plan to be fulfilled. This is the preparing of Jesus to be the Deliverer and fulfill the plan.

Matthew 4:1

Notice that verse one begins with the fact that it was the Holy Spirit Who initiated this opportunity for Satan to tempt Jesus. This didn't happen by Satan deciding for himself that he was going to show up and try to tempt Jesus to sin.

God was using Satan in His plan to fulfill the eternal plan of redemption. Before Jesus could fulfill the plan, He had to first prove that He was worthy of being the Deliverer. God did this by using Satan to tempt Him and Jesus choosing to not sin.

Satan's purpose in tempting Jesus was to cause Him to become sinful and thereby unable to be the Deliverer and fulfill the eternal plan of redemption. He didn't actually know that it was God Who was using him to fulfill His own purposes.

The First Temptation

Matthew 4:2-4

Although Jesus was God, He was also a man. In His humanity He became hungry. Satan was trying to make Jesus prove that He was the Son of God, so he asked Jesus to do something which God the Father had not told Him to do.

We need food to keep our bodies alive, but God says there is something much more important than food. We need God's Word to show us the way to everlasting life.

You know, our bodies need food and without it we will die. But what benefit would it be if we have healthy bodies but die without God and suffer everlasting punishment? We also need to hear and believe God's Word so that we will be able to live forever with God.

The Second Temptation

Matthew 4:5-6

Satan was quoting portions of ***Psalms 91:11-12***. It is interesting that Satan knows the words of God in the Bible, but he uses them for the purpose of tricking and deceiving rather than to reveal the truth. He twists God's words in order to make his lies more believable.

Satan is a liar and a deceiver (***John 8:44***). He is still using this approach today. He tries to make people think they should demand that God perform miracles to prove Himself to us. He tries to draw our attention to the spectacular and the miraculous and at the same time tries to keep us from giving attention to what God really says in His Word. Satan told Jesus to throw Himself down from the temple to test God who had promised to take care of His Son.

Matthew 4:7

Did Jesus have to test His Father to see if He would take care of Him? No! God the Father had promised to take care of His Son, so Jesus simply trusted His Father's words. Down through the ages, God has proven Himself faithful. Like Jesus, we can trust Him.

The Third Temptation

Matthew 4:8-10

Satan could offer Jesus control over the people in this world because when Adam rebelled against God and followed Satan, Satan became the god of this world (***2 Corinthians 4:4; John 12:31***).

Satan tried to get Jesus to worship him. Do you remember that in the beginning, Satan tried to take God's position as the ruler of the whole universe and he failed? Many angels followed him.

Then he deceived the human race and caused all of mankind to be placed under his authority as the wages of their sin. So, now Satan was still trying to take God's place by trying to tempt Jesus to worship him.

Jesus is far greater than Satan. He is God. In the beginning, God created Satan as Lucifer, an important and beautiful angel who should have served God. Instead, he chose to rebel, and one day Jesus will throw Satan into the Lake of Fire which God prepared for him and all his followers as their just eternal punishment.

You may have seen movies, videos, or even heard Bible teaching that presents the struggle between the so-called forces of good and evil. Often this struggle is presented as if there were two equal forces battling against one another—sort of a “horizontal” battle.

This is man's idea of the battle, but God's Word tells us that God is supreme. He is the sovereign Creator, and Jesus is God. Something else to think about—Satan could not make Jesus sin. Satan is a strong enemy, but he is no match for Almighty God. The battle is not at all like men show it. God is not a “force”; He is a Spirit. When Jesus came, He was God in a human body. God is totally superior to Satan in every way.

Matthew 4:11

Satan knew he was defeated, so he left Jesus for a more opportune time (***Luke 4:13***). But Satan came back many times and tried in every way he could to get Jesus to disobey God. He tempted Jesus with every temptation people have ever faced, but Jesus never sinned (***Hebrews 4:15***).

Jesus is the only one who has ever fully obeyed God and resisted the Devil. Jesus Christ was fully man; He is also God. He is the only one who can deliver us from sin, Satan, and death.

Lesson 20

Jesus Began His Ministry – *Mark 1:14-42*

You Must be Born Again – *John 3:1-20*

Introduction

In this lesson, Jesus is now thirty years old and about to begin what we call His earthly public ministry. This is the time when God really begins to clearly and publicly reveal that this Jesus of Nazareth is truly the long-awaited promised Deliverer.

Remember the purpose for John the Baptist's ministry? He was used by God to help people see their sinfulness in order to prepare them to trust in Jesus the Deliverer.

King Herod, on the other hand, who was living a very sinful life, did not like some of the things which John said. So, Herod put John in prison and later had him beheaded (*Matthew 14:1-12*). Before he was killed, John had finished his work of preparing the way for the Lord.

Revealing Jesus as the Messiah Increases with His Public Ministry

It was now time for Jesus to begin teaching (*Mark (1:14-15)*). As we mentioned, Jesus was now about thirty years old. He began to teach the people by telling them, “*The Kingdom of God is at hand. Recognize your sinfulness and need for salvation.*”

If we want to be accepted by God, we must believe Him and trust in what He has revealed to us in the Bible.

How was Abel accepted? By believing God and bringing an acceptable sacrifice.

How was Noah accepted? By believing God and building the Ark as He instructed.

How did Abraham become righteous? By believing God's promise that through him He would send the Deliverer for the world.

How did the first-born Israelites become delivered from the angel of death in Egypt? By their parents believing God and doing what He had instructed them to do.

All of these things were meant to be a “type” of how mankind would receive eternal salvation from the judgment of sin—by believing God's revelation of the gospel.

The word “gospel” means “good news.” Jesus told the people that they must agree with God and believe the Good News because God's rule on earth was soon to begin.

Remember Satan had become the ruler of this world when Adam disobeyed God and followed Satan. When we were born into this world, all of us were born into Satan's kingdom and

under his control. Jesus said the only way for anyone to escape Satan's control is to agree with God and believe His Good News.

Mark 1:16-22

Once it became time for Jesus to be revealed as the Messiah, the promised One, there were three main ways in which God began to make it abundantly clear.

1. **By His teaching** – The Jews met in places called synagogues. They had built synagogues in all the towns throughout Israel and even in surrounding countries. There in the synagogues, the writings of Moses and the prophets were read and taught to the people.

The people who heard Jesus speak were surprised by the authoritative way in which He explained the meaning of God's Word.

Jesus taught differently from the way the scribes taught. The scribes were the men who wrote copies of the Old Testament. They were also the teachers of God's Word.

But the majority of them did not really have faith in God and believe His Word. They trusted in their own good works and their own supposed knowledge of His word to save them. They knew a lot about God's Word, but they did not really know God.

However, Jesus is God. He knew His Father and He clearly understood God's Word.

When Jesus taught, He told the people exactly what God was saying to them through the writings of Moses and the prophets.

2. **By Revealing His Authority (*Mark 1:23-28*)** – We know that in the beginning, God created the demons as angels, ministering spirits; but through their choice to follow Lucifer in his rebellion against God, they became Satan and the demons.

So, they were created by God and then judged and sentenced by God. Whether good or evil, all spirit beings are all under the authority of God.

Mankind in and of himself has no authority over any part of the spirit world. So, when Jesus commanded the demon possessing the man in the synagogue and the demon had to obey Him, Jesus revealed He was God, the Promised Deliverer.

Demons can only live in and control people who are unbelievers AND only when allowed by God. That's exactly what we have in this story—man who God allowed

to become possessed by a demon right at this time to be used by God to reveal the Messiah!

It's interesting to note that Satan and the demons know Jesus is God, their Creator. The demon also knew that someday he would be thrown into the Lake of Fire, and he knew Jesus had the power to throw him into the fire right then!

Jesus commanded the demon to be quiet. This demon would be used by God to reveal the Messiah but not through his words or proclamations. It would be through his forced submission to Jesus' authority.

3. **By His Miracles (Mark 1:34-42)** – Jesus Christ is an all-powerful, compassionate loving God, and He felt compassion for these sick and demon-possessed people. He is also concerned for you and for me. He has not changed. He is still the same today. His desire is to rescue every one of us from Satan's control.

Next, Jesus healed a man with leprosy. Lepers were outcasts in the Bible times and no one would even go near them let alone touch them. But Jesus touched this man. He reached out His hand, touched the man, spoke, and the leprosy was gone. He could have merely spoken and the man would have been healed, but he did not. Instead, He touched him, why? Why would He do that? To show God's great love and compassion!

By revealing Jesus had authority over the spirit world and all diseases, things that mankind has no authority over, He was revealing that He is God, the long-awaited promised Deliverer.

Conclusion

We should be able to identify with that leper. Because of our sins, we are also unclean and there is nothing we can do by ourselves to remove the guilt and penalty for sin. Sadly enough, those people who possibly could help may not want to because they may have rejected us, just like the leper was rejected. However, God knows every horrible detail of our lives and still wants to be our Savior. He not only cares and is willing to reach out to us but He alone has the power to save us.

You Must Be Born Again

John 3:1-2

Nicodemus was sure that God had sent Jesus. He knew that the great miracles which Jesus had done could only be accomplished by the power of God. Most of the other Pharisees hated Jesus and were saying that He did His miracles by the power of Satan.

Notice in verse 2, he came to Jesus by night. Why? Nicodemus probably came at night so that the other Jewish leaders would not see him.

John 3:3

The Jews, and especially the Pharisees, were very proud that they were the descendants of Abraham. They thought that they were in God's family because they were Abraham's children. The Pharisees did not realize that every person born into this world has been born under Satan's rule (into Satan's kingdom) and is therefore Satan's child.

Remember when God created Adam and Eve, He made them in His own image? He gave them minds so they could know and understand Him. He made them so they could love Him. But when Adam and Eve sinned, they died to God. They were spiritually dead. They were separated from God.

They still had minds; but, because of their sin, they were unable to know God and understand His words. Neither were they able to love or obey Him. Their minds, hearts, and wills had become corrupted and were now under the control of Satan.

Cain and Abel and all people born into the world since that time have been born unable to know, understand, love, or obey God. Jesus told Nicodemus that the only way a person can escape Satan's power and rule and be able to know, love, and obey God is to be born again.

Being born again involves receiving the Holy Spirit so that we can know and understand God, as Adam and Eve could when God created them.

How is it possible for a person to be born again? How can someone be changed so that he can be under the rule of God and no longer under the rule of Satan? Can we change ourselves? No, we cannot.

Here is a key thought: Was it something we did that caused us to be born into this world under Satan's authority? No, Adam sinned, and everyone who was born after Adam inherited his sin.

We did not do anything to cause ourselves to be born under Satan's control. Neither can we do anything to escape Satan. It is impossible for us to bring ourselves back into oneness with God. Only God can do that. He is almighty. Nothing is impossible for Him. By His power, He causes people to be born again—a new birth into His family.

John 3:4

Nicodemus was very surprised when Jesus said that a person must be born again. Until he talked with Jesus, He probably felt that his first birth was quite sufficient to put him in a right relationship with God.

He was a descendant of Abraham.

He was a Pharisee and he was a ruler of the Jews.

He also seemed rather confused about what the term "born again" meant.

John 3:5

The water of which Jesus spoke is not baptism. Baptism cannot make us children of God nor can it wash away our sin. I believe Jesus is speaking of being born again by the washing of the water by the Word.

When Jesus said that every person who becomes born again must first be born by water, Jesus meant that the only way a person can receive a new mind, be able to love and obey God, and be given new life is by hearing, understanding, and believing the Word of God. Notice He says born of water and the Spirit.

John 3:6-7

Jesus told Nicodemus not to be surprised that he must be born again. God says that there are only two categories of people in the world—not those who are rich and those who are poor, not those who are good and those who are bad; but rather those who are born once and those who are born twice.

Born once – those who have been born only once and are still under Satan's rule...born once and die twice.

Born twice – those who have been born a second time and are now under God's rule...born twice and die once.

John 3:8-9

Nicodemus still could not understand how he could be born into God's family.

John 3:14-15

Jesus goes on to explain to Nicodemus by reminding him of what happened to the Israelites in the wilderness.

Remember in *Numbers 21:5-9*, the Israelites had sinned against God; so, God sent poisonous snakes to bite them, and they began to die. When they repented—changed their minds and admitted their sin—God told Moses to make a brass snake and put it on a pole. God promised that whoever was bitten and looked at the brass snake would be healed.

Now here is Nicodemus trying to obey God's laws. He did not realize that his efforts were totally unacceptable to God. He needed to do what the Israelites had done and simply put his faith in the Lord.

What about us? Our situation, too, is like that of the Israelites in the wilderness. Satan, the old serpent, is our great enemy. He is out to destroy us. Just as the Israelites could not save themselves from the snakes, neither can we save ourselves from Satan and death. God delivered the Israelites, and only God can deliver us.

Jesus said there is only one way we can be delivered from Satan, sin, and death and be born again into God's family. Jesus said that He must be lifted up, just as the brass snake was in the wilderness, and that whoever trusts in Him will be born into the family of God.

John 3:16

The Bible contains both bad new and good news. The bad news is that man is a sinner: ***“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).*** The penalty for sin is death: ***“For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).***

The good news is that Christ paid the death penalty for man: ***“But God demonstrated His love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).*** Man can be saved through faith in Christ: ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8-9).***

When a man, woman, or child believes God's words and trusts in Jesus as his or her Savior, God gives that person a new life. That person will no longer be Satan's child or under his rule but will become a child of God, will not perish, and have eternal life.

John 3:17

This is God's promise. Can God be trusted? Yes! We have read over and over how He has always done exactly what he has promised. We have read through thousands of years of God's good promises, and not one of them has failed.

John 3:18

No one needs to wait until he dies to know if he will be accepted or rejected by God. Those who refuse the Savior are condemned and rejected by God right now ***(1 John 5:10-13).***

There is only one Savior who has been given by God for sinners, and that Savior is Jesus ***(Acts 4:12).***

Lesson 21

Revealing Jesus Is the Promised One through His Transfiguration – *Mark 8:27-9:8*

Jesus Is the Only Door to Eternal Life – *John 10:7-11; 14:6*

Introduction

In this lesson, God is continuing the process of revealing more clearly that Jesus is truly the long-awaited Promised One. Who you believe Jesus is will be the most important decision that you will ever make, for it will determine where you spend eternity.

Children enjoy make-believe stories and so do many adults; but when we consider where we will spend eternity, we need to have the truth, not make-believe. All over the world, people follow beliefs and ideas that are not truth but lies of Satan designed to draw men, women, and children away from God. When we read the Bible, we are reading the truth that was given to us by God Himself who does not lie.

Mark 8:27-28

Do you remember King Herod had imprisoned and killed John the Baptist? When Jesus began to reveal Himself through His teaching and miracles, some people thought that Jesus was John who had come back to life from the dead. Others thought that Jesus was Elijah.

Elijah was a prophet who had been taken to Heaven by God about 850 years before Jesus came into the world (*2 Kings 2:10-11*). Some people thought that Jesus must be Elijah come back down to the earth.

However, Jesus made it really clear to the people who He was. He told them He was the Son of God, the Deliverer whom God had promised from the beginning of the world. He had shown them His power by mighty miracles He had done.

But the great majority of the Jews still did not believe on Him. It is very important who we believe Jesus was. Was He just a good teacher who did some miracles? Was He just another prophet as some of the Jews said He was? Did He speak the truth? If not, then He was a liar.

God does not give us the option to believe only part of what He says and reveals about Jesus. If anything Jesus said was not true, then He could not be God the Son, because God is holy and perfect.

Remember Jesus said that He was God: *John 1:1, 14; John 10:30; John 14:7-9*

Mark 8:29-30

From reading verses 27 and 28, Who Jesus really was still wasn't clear to everyone, for some thought He was John and others Elijah. When Jesus asked His disciples directly, "...***Who do YOU say that I am?***" Peter reveals he had seen enough evidence to believe Jesus was truly the Promised One, the Son of God.

After Peter makes this statement about Who he believes Jesus is, Jesus strictly warns them to not tell anyone about Him. If God's purpose was to reveal that Jesus was the Messiah, then why wouldn't Jesus want His disciples to tell anyone about Him?

Just as we see from verses 27 and 28 that there was still confusion about Who Jesus really was, so it's likely that not all of the disciples were as convinced as Peter was. Jesus didn't want His disciples to tell anyone about Him until they were assured in their own hearts as to Who He really was.

Mark 8:31

Jesus knew He must die. He knew that Satan would use the Jewish leaders to kill Him because they did not believe He was God's Son, the Deliverer. He also knew that although He would die and be buried, He would come out of the grave after three days.

Can we tell what is going to happen to us tomorrow? Are we going to get sick? Where will we be one year from now? How long will we live on earth? We do not know the answers to any of these questions, but Jesus knew His complete future. God knows everything.

Hundreds of years earlier, the prophets had foretold many exact details of what would happen to Jesus—He would suffer many things, the Jewish leaders would reject him, He would be killed, and He would be raised from the dead.

Jesus' Transfiguration

Mark 9:2-3

Jesus had a human body just as we do. He was a real man, but He was also truly God. As people looked at Him, He looked like any other man; but what He did and said showed that He was different.

This is the only time while Jesus was on earth that the "God part of Him" showed through His human body. His human body usually hid the fact that He was truly God.

Do you remember the tabernacle, which God told Moses and the Israelites to build for Him when they were at Mount Sinai in the wilderness? The outside of this building was covered with the skins of animals. When the people looked at it, they saw only the old dried-up skins. But inside the inner room, underneath the skins was the very bright light which showed that God was there.

That is how it was with Jesus. His human body looked like that of an ordinary man, but inside He was the great, almighty, all-knowing God who created the heavens and the earth. Did you know that in the book of Matthew we are told that up there on the mountain, Jesus' face began to shine like the sun? (*Matthew 17:2*)

Mark 9:4-8

Elijah was a Jewish prophet, but Elijah did not die like other men. God took him to Heaven about 850 years before Jesus came to earth.

The Bible tells us in *Deuteronomy 34:5-6* that Moses died and was buried by God. Moses' death took place approximately 1,400 years before Jesus came to earth. God did not take him to Heaven in the same way as He took Elijah. Moses left his body when he died, and his body was buried.

Now think about this...to this point both Elijah and Moses had been with God for hundreds of years. When they were alive on the earth, they had believed God's Word and they had trusted in God and the coming Deliverer. Because of this, when they left this world, they were not separated from God in hell. God accepted them along with Abel, Seth, Enoch, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Joshua, David, and everyone else who had agreed with God that they were sinners and trusted in Him to send a Savior.

Let's be clear about what God is doing here. God the Father led Jesus to go up on the mount with His three closest disciples in order for them to experience three specific things that would undeniably convince them of Who Jesus really was.

First, they saw Jesus transfigured. This means that His glory as God was allowed to shine through and not be hidden by His outside human body.

Second, Elijah and Moses appeared from the dead and were talking with Jesus. This was revealing that all that was prophesied about Jesus from "Moses and the Prophets" (the Old Testament) was true.

Third, they heard God the Father speak audibly from Heaven and say that Jesus is His Son.

Jesus is the Only Way/Door to Eternal Life

Through His teaching and the relevant cultural examples, Jesus was revealing who He truly was. One cultural example He used to show He is the only way to receive eternal life was the "sheep pen."

Much of the land of Israel is dry and barren, and sometimes it was very hard to find grass for the sheep. Often, the shepherds had to leave their homes and lead their sheep a long way in search of

food. Many times they had to sleep out in the fields or mountains with their flocks. It was dangerous to sleep out in the open because there were robbers who would try to steal the sheep, and there were wild animals which would kill them.

So, before the night came, the shepherds would find a cave where the sheep would be safe, or they would make places where they could put their sheep for the night. The places which the shepherds built were usually enclosures with walls of thorn bushes and stones. There was only one door into the sheepfold and that was where the shepherd would lay so that anyone who entered in had to pass over the shepherd first.

John 10:7

Jesus meant that He was the way into the place of safety and security. Outside in this world are Satan, his evil spirits, sin, and death. They are compared to robbers and wild animals which kill and eat the sheep.

Remember Satan's fight against God? He is a liar and deceiver and he hates man. He seeks to make what is bad look good and what is good look bad. To those "outside the sheepfold," Satan gives the message that it is much safer out in his territory. After all, would a person not have to give up a lot of life's pleasures to step inside that door? What would other people think if someone began to believe in Jesus instead of following the crowd? That could make life really difficult. That person might get a lot of pressure and even lose some of his friends.

These are some of the thoughts that Satan places into people's minds as they consider putting their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Think about this: What if a person had every pleasure this life could offer him, but one day he died and went to Hell? Satan has been deceiving people for thousands of years and his only purpose is to destroy us so we will be separated from God forever. He does everything he can to make his way look best.

That is the way of death, separation, and eternal punishment. There is only one door or gate into the sheepfold, the place of safety, security, and life. Jesus Christ is God; He is the Savior and He is the only door to eternal life. There is no other way.

John 10:8

Before Jesus was born, other men had come to the Jews, each one claiming to be the Deliverer sent from God. Jesus said that these people were not the true promised One; therefore, they were like the robbers who came at night to steal and kill the sheep.

John 10:9

Just as there was only one door into the sheepfold, so Jesus is the only door into eternal life. You know some people may say to you that what the Bible teaches is all right for Christians, but there

are other religions that also lead people to God. That is a lie of Satan. There are not many ways or many doors to acceptance and oneness with God. There are not many ways to eternal life.

There is only one door to God and to eternal life. Jesus Christ is that door. He came to be the Savior of all people, in every place no matter what language they speak or how they live.

Remember when God told Noah to build the ark because God was going to punish the whole world? God commanded Noah to build only ONE boat and to put only ONE door in it. Only those who came through that ONE door into the ONE ark were saved from God's judgment. God was using the ark as a physical picture of the promised coming Deliverer.

John 10:10

Jesus said that He is not like Satan who only wants to destroy people. Jesus came into the world to give life in the fullest way. One of Satan's lies is that his way is the best, the most interesting and fun way to live. He gives people just enough pleasure to make them think that his way is better than the way offered by Jesus Christ. What a terrible lie!

Jesus said clearly here in **John 10:10** that He gives us life and gives it in the fullest way. His promises are true. The life Jesus gives is the best way and it is never disappointing in the end.

John 10:11

Jesus had already told His disciples that the leaders of the Jews would not believe He was the Son of God and the Savior, and they would kill Him. He is telling them here that He is the good shepherd who loves his sheep so much that he will die for them in order to save them from the robbers or the wild animals that want to kill them. It is interesting that Isaiah the prophet, many years before, said Jesus would suffer and die for others – **Isaiah 53:3-5**.

There is only one God, one Savior for the whole world, for you, and for me. There is no other way to be saved.

Lesson 22

Jesus Raised Lazarus from the Dead – *Luke 11:1-48*

Jesus Loved Children and Taught the Rich Young Ruler – *Mark 10:13-24*

Introduction

All of the stories we find in the Bible we know God chose to have each of them recorded for a reason. In the Old Testament, many of the stories are used by God to show us what He is like by revealing Himself through His interaction with mankind.

Here in the gospels, we are looking at the life of Jesus. Jesus, Who is God the Son, was the One that the Godhead agreed would be the One to one day come and fulfill their foreordained eternal plan of redemption. Before actually fulfilling the plan, God orchestrated many situations that would clearly reveal that He was the promised One. This story of Lazarus is one of those stories.

John 11:1-6

Jesus was on the other side of the Jordan River. Even though He was a long way from where Lazarus was, He still knew all that was going to happen to Him because Jesus is God. There isn't anything He doesn't already know and there is nothing He can't do.

He could have healed Lazarus without even going to where he was. He could have gone immediately to Lazarus to heal him before he died. Instead, Jesus waited two days because He knew this situation was going to be another opportunity for Him to show His mighty power and prove that He is truly the Son of God.

It may seem as though Jesus didn't love Martha, Mary, and Lazarus and that it didn't really bother Him that Lazarus died; but that is not true. He loved them and was concerned for them. He truly loves every person and wants every one of us to trust in Him as our Savior. More than wanting people to live a long life, He desires that we live for eternity!

Through Lazarus' death, Jesus was going to show His power to give life to those who believe.

John 11:7-16

The disciples did not understand what Jesus meant. They thought that Jesus was going to allow the Jewish leaders to kill Him so He could be with Lazarus (*John 11:17-22*).

Martha believed that Jesus had the power to heal her brother and that God, His Father, would do whatever Jesus asked Him to do. Read *John 11:23- 25*.

Jesus meant for Martha to understand that He intended to bring her brother back to life right away, but she thought Jesus was referring to the time at the end of the world when all people will be brought back to life.

Jesus wanted Martha to understand that Lazarus did not have to remain dead until the day of God's judgment of all people. He is the giver of life and therefore has the power to restore life to the dead. He is the only one who can give life to the dead. Satan cannot give life to those who are dead. Only God can give life for He is the Almighty Creator who gave life to everyone and everything in the beginning.

Some people today believe in reincarnation. They think that someone who dies comes back to live on earth again as another person or as an animal or other creature. This also is a lie of Satan. He wants people to think they don't need to be delivered from their sins. He wants them to believe there is no Hell and no judgment.

If he can get people to believe there is another life for them right here on earth, then they will think they don't need Jesus and they don't need to be saved from God's righteous punishment. Satan is a deceiver and the lie of reincarnation is another of his attempts to keep men away from God and eternal life. No matter how cleverly this lie of reincarnation is presented, it is not true.

Jesus said that although those who trust in Him as their Savior die physically, they will not die eternally. They are never separated from God to be punished for their sins. They only leave this world to go and live with Him in heaven (*John 5:24; 11:27*).

Martha was not like most of the people who only followed Jesus because they wanted healing or food or political freedom. They were not interested in knowing Him as their Savior. However, Martha truly believed and trusted in Jesus as the promised Deliverer who had come from God.

John 11:28-38

Jesus knew He was going to bring Lazarus back to life again and He wept because He felt the grief of the people who were grieving over Lazarus. Do you remember that God made man in His image? He gave man emotions because He has emotions. Jesus Christ is God, and He feels sorrow and grief. He is able to identify with us when we grieve. Jesus cried, not because He had no hope of seeing Lazarus alive again in this world but because He identified with the grief of the people, and He grieved for all men because of the horrible results of sin. This was the very reason He came into the world—to deliver men, women, and children from death and to give them eternal life.

John 11:39-44

Jesus is God. There has never been any other man like Him. He is almighty. In the beginning, He, with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, created all things. They created all things just by speaking. Now, Jesus stood at the entrance to the tomb and spoke. He commanded Lazarus to come back to life.

John 11:45-48

Many Jews believed Jesus was the promised Deliverer when they saw His power demonstrated in the raising of Lazarus from the dead, but the priests and the Pharisees were only interested in

keeping their position of power and their wealth. They were afraid the people might make Jesus their king. So, the scribes, priests, and Pharisees planned to kill Him.

Satan was leading these men. Satan does not want anyone to believe on Jesus and be saved from his power. He is still trying today to keep people deceived so they won't believe.

What It Takes to Receive Eternal Life

In the last few lessons, we've shown how God has been preparing mankind for the fulfillment of the eternal plan of redemption by clearly revealing that Jesus is the Promised One. He now uses little children to reveal the next important step of preparation. All it takes is childlike faith.

Mark 10:13-16

The disciples didn't think Jesus would want to take time out of a busy schedule for children, but Jesus loves children. He wants them to believe His Word and trust in Him, too.

Not only was He revealing His love for children, but through these children, He was teaching that anyone who is unwilling to come to God and trust in Him like a little child will not enter Heaven.

So, what does it mean to come to Him like a little child? A little baby just rests in His mother's arms. He's not afraid of being dropped. He trusts her to hold him and take care of him. As we grow older, we become more independent. Certainly, we should become responsible as adults.

But God did not design us to be independent of Him. He made man in His image, to know, love, and depend on Him; but as sinners, we cannot do that because we are separated from God by our sins. We are naturally independent and self-centered; and to make matters worse, we think that if there is any change to take place in our lives, it is up to us to make the changes.

That is not the message of the Bible. Jesus Christ came to save sinners. He said we must be born again. Just as it is impossible for anyone to bring about his own physical birth, it is also impossible for us to bring about our spiritual birth (*John 1:12-13*).

God alone is able to give us new life...He alone can save us from the penalty of sin.

Because we are so independent and want to be in control of everything that happens to us, many people find it very difficult to accept the simplicity of the Gospel. That is why Jesus said we must come to Him in childlike dependence. Multitudes are going to hell because they simply will not believe what God has so clearly revealed about their sinfulness and need for Jesus as their Savior.

But when anyone humbles himself and believes like a little child, that Jesus is their only way to obtain eternal life, then God in His grace saves them.

No One Can Be Good Enough to Obtain Eternal Life

Mark 10:17

This young man thought he could please God and gain entrance to God's kingdom by his own goodness and obedience to God's laws. This is why he asked Jesus what he had to do to earn everlasting life.

Remember how Cain thought that by bringing the things he had grown as an offering to God, he could obtain God's favor? Did God accept Cain? No!

Mark 10:18

This young man did not understand that no man has ever been good (*Romans 3:10-18*). He didn't realize that God is the only One who is good.

When Jesus answered him, He wasn't denying that He Himself was good or that He was God. Jesus wanted the young man to realize that no ordinary man is good.

Mark 10:19-20

This young man did not realize that he was born a sinner and under Satan's control and that he could never perfectly obey God's laws and please Him. God tells us there is not one person on earth who is good and does what is right in His sight. No one, except Jesus Himself, has perfectly obeyed God's laws.

This man thought he had kept the Ten Commandments perfectly because he had obeyed them outwardly. But even if he did obey the laws of God outwardly, he had not obeyed them in his heart. Look what Jesus taught (*Matthew 5:21-22; 5:27-28*). God doesn't judge a person according to his outward acts alone. He knows a person's inner thoughts, attitudes, and desires. If a person plans to take something which belongs to someone else, it's as if he has actually stolen.

If an adult or child outwardly submits to someone's authority but is angry in his heart or obeys grudgingly, he has sinned before God.

God did not give His laws to Israel because He thought they could obey them. Rather, God gave the Ten Commandments to prove to them and to us that all have sinned and come short of God's standard of goodness. This is a very important part of what God was doing to prepare mankind for Jesus to come and fulfill the eternal plan.

It is impossible for us to please God by our own efforts because we are born descendants of Adam and are born separated from God. God looks at our hearts and sees the wickedness. We will never earn God's favor by our own efforts.

Mark 10:21

“Then Jesus beholding him loved him...” Jesus loved this young man even though the man was proud and did not see himself as a sinner as God saw him. God loves each of us, even though He knows we are sinners. He does not want anyone to be separated from Him forever.

Jesus goes back to the wealthy man's original question, “What must I do?” Jesus told this wealthy man to sell all of his possessions and give the money to the poor. He knew that the man was covetous and loved his riches more than he loved his fellow man. He was trying to show him that he had broken God's law which says that we must love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves.

His purpose for this was not to judge or condemn the man but because He wanted the man to be saved. He wanted him to admit that he was a sinner and needed a Savior. He knew that this man was blind to his own sinfulness that was manifested by the fact that he loved his wealth more than he loved God.

This great commandment of God says that we must not put anything or anyone in the place of God. Jesus was trying to help this young man realize he had put his wealth in the place of God. He had broken God's laws which in turn proved he was already a condemned sinner in the sight of God.

Mark 10:22-24

This rich young ruler had made his choice. He chose his riches which he could only enjoy in this life, and he turned away from life forever with God. He was sad because although he wanted eternal life, he loved his money more than he loved God.

Lesson 23

Eternal Life Should Be More Important than Riches – *Luke 12:15-16:31*

Introduction

As fallen human beings, we can be very, very short sighted at times. We are often more focused on the here and now rather than the future. This is what the Israelites did while they were in the wilderness. Rather than looking toward their future hope of one day entering the promised land, they focused on their undesirable circumstances in the wilderness and complained against God and Moses.

We Christians often do the exact same thing. Our tendency is to focus on and think more about our daily circumstances than we do about what God has in store for us in eternity. We often hope more in opportunities to get more money, a nicer car, a better job, or a bigger home than we do in the promises that God has given us in His word about eternity.

It was the same in Jesus' day. Not only was He preparing people for His fulfillment of the eternal plan by revealing Who He was and proving their sinfulness, but He also told parables that were designed to help people realize that there is nothing we could obtain that would be more important than receiving eternal life.

Luke 12:15

Many people want the things of this world more than anything else. They are jealous of what other people have. They think they would be happy and satisfied if they were rich. Jesus told these people a parable. A parable is a story about things in this world, but it teaches us something about God and our relationship with Him. This is what Jesus wants us to know about riches:

Even if a man had all the wealth in the world, it would be of no benefit to him if he went to hell.

Luke 12:16-19

This farmer thought he had all that he needed. He thought he had nothing to worry about because he was a very rich man. He thought he could ignore God and live his life the way he wanted. He did not consider that God is the one who gives life and the one who takes it away.

This farmer made his plans as to what he would do, but God had different plans for him—that very night.

Luke 12:20

When God decides it is the time for a person to die, he will die. No one can do anything to keep that person from dying. Here was a very prosperous businessman, but God called him a fool. Why? He made plans without recognizing God and lived only for the riches of this world.

Luke 12:21

The things of this world last for only a short time and we never know when we may have to leave them all behind; but the things God gives to those who accept Jesus as their Savior will last forever.

Luke 16:19-21

Unlike the story we just read, this is not a parable. How can we know that? One way is that Jesus uses real names here. At some time prior to when Jesus told this story, these two men actually lived on this earth. When we look at them, it would certainly seem the rich man was better off than Lazarus was.

The rich man seemed to have everything he needed and more; but Lazarus was sick, didn't have enough food, and apparently his body was covered with sores.

Luke 16:22

Did the rich man's wealth keep him from dying? Were his riches any benefit to him after he died? Where did Lazarus go when he died? He went to the place where Abraham was. Abraham's Bosom was Jewish slang for the presence of God.

What about the rich man? Did he go where Lazarus went? Jesus said that the rich man's body was buried. Where did he go when he left his body?

When people die, they either go directly to be with God or immediately to the place of punishment. What we are when we die, we will be for eternity...we will either live forever with God in heaven, or we will be forever in the place of fire and punishment. Let's see where the rich man went.

Luke 16:23

Lazarus went to the place of happiness and acceptance with God, but the rich man went to the place of fire and everlasting punishment. Right now, perhaps two thousand years later, the rich man is still in hell, and he will suffer for all eternity. But poor old beggar Lazarus is still with God and will be with Him for all eternity.

Luke 16:24

There is great suffering in hell. All who refuse to believe what God says in His Word go there and suffer. All sin must be paid for in full.

Luke 16:25

Did Lazarus go to the place of happiness and acceptance with God because he was poor on this earth? Did the rich man go to the place of punishment because he was wealthy? Does God reject the rich and accept the poor? No! That is not what made the difference between the two men.

The rich man went to hell because he did not believe God's promise to send the Deliverer. He was deceived by his riches and blind to his need for a Savior. He just lived his life on this earth to enjoy his riches. He lived for himself.

On the other hand, Lazarus agreed with God that he was a sinner, and he trusted in God and His promises to send the Savior just as Abraham did when he was alive.

Luke 16:26

Once a person dies and goes to hell, there is no way he can be delivered. There is no escape...he is locked in forever! Those who die separated from God by their sin remain separated from God forever.

Luke 16:27-28

Even though he was in terrible suffering, the rich man still remembered his brothers and his relatives. People in hell still remember this world. They remember what they did when they were alive and they remember the relatives and friends they have left behind.

Why did the rich man want Abraham to send Lazarus back to the home of the rich man's five brothers? Was Lazarus allowed to return to this world? No! God will not allow the dead to return.

Luke 16:29-31

Abraham told the rich man that his brothers should take notice of the things which Moses and all of the prophets wrote in the Bible. If people refuse to believe God's written Word, they will not believe even if God sends someone back from the dead to warn them. Think back—when Jesus raised His friend Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha, from the dead, did the Jewish leaders believe? No.

The enemy has really deceived people about living for today. Money, possessions, and even health seem more important than God does. About two thousand years have passed since Jesus told the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Both of these men are still in the same state as when Jesus told the story—Lazarus is with God and the rich man is in hell.

It was too late; they could not change places now. Their future was decided while they still lived on earth. Lazarus believed God. The rich man didn't, at least not while he was on the earth. Once he was in torment, he cried out to Abraham; but there was nothing Abraham or Lazarus could do. What about us? What about our unsaved relatives? Eternity is a long time!

Lesson 24

The Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem – *Mark 11:1-14:26*

Introduction

Let's begin in Mark 11. As we have mentioned before, crowds of people followed Jesus everywhere He went. Some wanted healing for physical problems. Others wanted political freedom from the Romans. Very few were thinking about their spiritual needs and were willing to admit that their greatest need was to be saved from Satan and sin and death.

As Jesus and His disciples walked toward Jerusalem, they came to the little town of Bethany, just outside of the city of Jerusalem. Bethany was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Only a short time before, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead.

Mark 11:1-10

The crowds welcomed Jesus as the promised Deliverer from God. They praised Him as the one whom all the Old Testament prophets had promised that God would send to be their king. Unfortunately, most of the people did not trust in Jesus to save them from Satan's power, their sins, and God's punishment. They only wanted Jesus to be their king so He would deliver them from their enemies, particularly from the Romans who ruled their country.

Mark 14:1-2

The Jewish leaders were determined to kill Jesus, but they were afraid of the crowds. Think about how popular He must have been because of all the great miracles He had done.

Mark 14:10

Judas was one of the twelve whom Jesus had chosen to be His disciples, but Judas was not concerned about his own sinfulness before God. He did not trust in Jesus as the Savior of sinners. Judas followed Jesus for his own personal gain. ***Note: John 12:4-6 sheds some light on Judas' character.***

When it appeared that Judas wasn't going to receive any personal benefits from following Jesus, he was willing to sell Him to His enemies. What God had prophesied about the coming Deliverer in His Word was coming true (***Psalms 41:9***).

Satan was up to his old tricks again. He was guiding Judas to betray Jesus. Satan thought that if he could get the Jewish leaders to kill Jesus, he would stop God's plan to deliver sinners out from under his dominion.

Matthew tells us that the Jewish leaders promised to pay Judas thirty pieces of silver (***Matthew 26:14-16***). Here is something for us to think about—thirty pieces of silver was the price of a

common slave in those days. Over five hundred years earlier, God had told His prophet Zechariah that this was exactly what was going to happen to the Deliverer (***Zechariah 11:12-13***).

Mark 14:12-18

Jesus knew that the disciples would meet a man carrying a water jar. This was an unusual thing to see because the work of getting and carrying water was usually left to women.

The Lord knows everything before it happens. God knew five hundred years before it happened that Jesus would be sold for thirty pieces of silver. He knows even the small and insignificant things (***Matthew 10:29-30***).

Jesus knew without anyone telling Him that Judas was going to betray Him, yet Jesus loved him and was very sad to think Judas would do this.

Mark 14:19-21

Jesus often called Himself “the Son of man,” for although He was the Son of God, He was also a real man. Jesus knew that He had to die just as God had foretold through the prophets in the Old Testament. But even though Jesus had to die, it did not excuse Judas.

God did not make him betray Jesus. Judas was born a sinner just like every human being. We see this evidenced in his sinfulness, love of money, his part in the murder of an innocent man, but most of all in his refusal to trust Jesus Christ as His Savior. The fact that he would betray Jesus was evidence that he did not believe Jesus was the promised Deliverer.

Mark 14:22-26

Jesus broke the bread and then explained that, just as He had broken the bread, so His body would soon be broken by evil men.

Jesus said the wine which He poured out for them to drink was a picture, or illustration, of His blood which, when He died, would flow out of His body to make payment for the sins of man.

It's impossible for us to imagine the deep love of Jesus. He had never sinned, yet He was going to die for sinners. Everyone at that table needed what He was going to do; furthermore, everyone, everywhere past, present, and future, also needs what He was going to do.

As the time got closer for Jesus to actually fulfill the eternal plan of redemption, we can see that His teaching of the details of how He would accomplish it became more and more clear and more and more specific.

Lesson 25

Jesus' Fulfillment of the Eternal Plan Begins with His Arrest – *Mark 14:32-15:19*

Introduction

In preparation for this lesson, we need to go back to the first couple lessons of this study where we highlighted the fact that, back in eternity past, the Godhead foreordained an eternal plan of redemption. One of the main verses we looked at was 2 Timothy 1:9. This verse points out three main characteristics that would be true of this eternal plan.

First, it's eternal. It began in eternity past and the results will be sure through eternity future.

Second, it would be on the basis of grace and not merit. It would be carried out by God giving man what he doesn't deserve.

Third, it would be fulfilled or carried out by Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus would receive a punishment He doesn't deserve so that a sinful human race can receive an eternal salvation none of us deserve.

Mark 14:32-36

Even though Jesus was God, He was also a man. In his humanity it was very difficult for Him to face the terrible things He knew He had to suffer (***Luke 22:41-44***). Jesus knew that in order to fulfill the eternal plan of redemption, He would have to go through more terrible suffering than anyone has ever endured. As we study further, we will see what it was that brought the most grief to Jesus.

Mark 14:37-49

In this event, we have four main characters: God the Father, God the Son, a sinful human race, and Satan. How this is all taking place and all the interaction that occurs provides us with a really clear picture of the greatness of God.

1. ***God the Son*** – Jesus, the promised Deliverer, had come in the form of a man and God had begun to reveal His identity in preparation for Him to fulfill the eternal plan of redemption.
2. ***Sinful Human Race*** – The Pharisees rejected Jesus as the Deliverer and sent Roman soldiers out to arrest Him. Judas, one of His own disciples, betrayed Him.

3. **Satan** – Satan was using sinful men in an attempt to accomplish his own purposes, which was to try and get rid of the Deliverer.
4. **God the Father** – God was using the choices and actions that both mankind and Satan were making to reject, arrest, and try and get rid of Jesus, to actually fulfill scripture and bring about the fulfillment of His eternal plan of redemption.

Mark 14:50-52

The disciples all ran away and left Jesus, just as He had predicted they would. They were afraid, disappointed, and confused. They thought Jesus was the Savior sent from God, but they couldn't understand how He could be the Savior if He was going to be killed by His enemies. They thought He was coming to deliver them from the Romans and set up the earthly kingdom God had promised to Israel by living and conquering the Romans. What they didn't understand was that He was actually coming to deliver mankind from Satan, sin, and death through His own death.

Mark 14:53-55

Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin, the high court of the Jewish people. Jesus hadn't done anything wrong. Therefore, they couldn't find any lawful reason to condemn Him. They didn't have any reason to hate Jesus except that they loved their own sinful ways and did not want to obey God's words, which Jesus had told them.

This is one of six false trials suffered by Jesus. Three of the trials were before the religious leaders. Three were before Roman officials. All of these trials were illegal because of the way they were conducted and/or the use of false witnesses.

Mark 14:56-59

God's prophets had said that false witnesses would tell lies about the Deliverer. God had caused David to write this prophecy nearly one thousand years earlier (***Psalm 27:12***). Now, as Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin, the exact words David wrote were being fulfilled.

Mark 14:60-62

When they told lies about Him, Jesus was quiet and wouldn't answer. He was trusting in God, His Father, to do what He had planned for Him (***1 Peter 2:23***). He knew everything that would happen to Him was according to the Godhead's eternal plan so that we could be delivered from the power of Satan, sin, and death.

When they asked Him if He really was the Christ (meaning the promised Deliverer) and the Son of God, Jesus answered very plainly that He was.

Do you remember at the burning bush, the name God gave to Moses when Moses asked Him what he should tell the people in Egypt about who sent Him? In **Exodus 3:14** God said, ***"...I AM THAT I AM...say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me..."***

In the account of Jesus' arrest given in John 18, the men said they were looking for Jesus of Nazareth: ***"As soon as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward and fell to the ground" (John 18:6)***. The Jewish leaders were well aware of God's name, I AM. And they were also well aware that Jesus was telling them that He was God.

Mark 14:63-64

When the Jews wanted to show that they were very angry or distressed, it was their custom to rip their clothes. The high priest was very angry because, by His answer, Jesus had said that He was equal to God. When the high priest ripped his clothes, this was a clear display of his unbelief that Jesus is the Son of God.

Mark 14:65

This is exactly what God's prophets had said would happen to the Savior (**Isaiah 50:6**). Isaiah wrote this almost seven hundred years before Jesus suffered these things. Jesus bore his sufferings willingly, just as Isaiah had predicted.

Mark 15:1

The Romans who ruled Israel would not allow the Jews to kill anyone unless they gave permission. Caesar, the Roman emperor, had appointed Pilate to be the governor of Samaria and Judea. So, the Jewish leaders took Jesus to Pilate hoping, with the false charges they had prepared, Pilate would sentence Jesus to death.

Mark 15:2-5

The Prophet Isaiah had said the Savior would be silent when He was falsely accused (**Isaiah 53:7**). Here that prophecy was fulfilled, providing another proof that Jesus was truly the Messiah.

Mark 15:6-11

It was a custom at the Passover that Pilate, the Governor, would release one prisoner for whom the Jews asked. Pilate knew that Jesus hadn't done anything wrong. He knew that the Jewish leaders wanted to kill Jesus only because they were jealous of His popularity. Pilate hoped that the Jews would choose to let Jesus go free rather than Barabbas who was an insurrectionist.

Mark 15:12-14

Crucifixion was used by the Romans for the very worst of criminals. What made crucifixion torturous was that the person who was crucified usually did not die immediately. They typically suffered for hours and sometimes days in intense physical agony before dying.

One by one, the Old Testament prophecies about the Deliverer were being fulfilled in Jesus Christ. God had said through His prophet Isaiah that the Jews would hate the Deliverer even though there was no reason for them to do so.

He said that they would reject Him. Everything God said through His prophets about the coming Deliverer was fulfilled. What happened to Jesus proved He is truly the Messiah, the Promised One (*Isaiah 53:3*).

Mark 15:15

Records from this period tell us about scourging. The whip consisted of many lashes of leather. Pieces of sharp metal and bone were tied onto the lashes so they would cut the back of the prisoner when he was beaten.

He couldn't escape; the prisoner was tied down with arms extended. Repeated blows of the lash laid open the skin, cutting flesh, muscle, and nerves, often putting the victim in severe shock. Some prisoners died from the scourging itself. *Isaiah 52:14* tells us that the Deliverer would be beaten and whipped until He was unrecognizable.

Mark 15:16-19

After the terrible scourging, the soldiers mocked Jesus. They dressed Him in a purple robe. (*This was the color which kings wore during that time.*) They made a crown of twigs which had large sharp thorns and put the crown on Jesus' head.

Note in *Genesis 3:17-18*, when Adam and Eve had sinned, God cursed the earth and said that thorns would grow. Jesus came to suffer and die to deliver us from God's curse. God allowed Jesus' enemies to place these thorns on Jesus' head as a sign that He was going to die for the sins of the world.

This was yet another proof that Jesus was truly the long-awaited promised One Who was coming to fulfill God's foreordained eternal plan of redemption.

Lesson 26

Jesus Was Crucified and Buried – *Mark 15:20-46*

Introduction

Of all the events of history, the one we are going to study in this lesson is the most important. Nothing else has ever or will ever affect the lives of men and women as this one event. This event was the fulfillment of the eternal plan the Godhead had foreordained from eternity past.

Mark 15:20-24

Golgotha (this word means “skull”) was just outside the walls of Jerusalem. The drink that was offered Jesus while on the cross was prepared by women of Jerusalem as an act of mercy to help deaden the pain of those who were being crucified. Jesus was not willing to lessen any of the suffering He would endure while paying for our sins.

When they had crucified Him, nails were driven through Jesus’ hands and feet into the wooden cross. The cross was then placed in an upright position. Do you remember Jesus telling Nicodemus that, just as Moses in the wilderness lifted up the serpent on a pole, even so Jesus, the Deliverer, had to be lifted up so that sinners could be saved from punishment? (*John 3:14*)

Nearly a thousand years before, God had guided King David to write that the Deliverer’s hands and feet would be pierced. David also said that the Deliverer’s clothes would become the prize in a gambling game (*Psalms 22:16-18*).

Mark 15:25-26

Usually, a sign was put above the criminal to indicate what crime he had been found guilty of committing. But Jesus had committed no crime. Pilate could find nothing with which to charge Him.

Think about this: Jesus was dying for sins...my sins, your sins, and the sins of the whole world. He wasn’t dying for His own sin. You and I are the ones who deserved to be on that cross. He was taking our punishment. He was taking on Himself all the shame and the full punishment for every one of those sins. He was paying the full price for us. He was paying the death penalty—for me, for you, and for every other human being that has ever walked the face of this earth.

Mark 15:27-32

Through Isaiah the prophet, God said that the Deliverer would die in the company of evil men (*Isaiah 53:12*).

Another Messianic prophecy God had given through David was in ***Psalms 22:6-8***, stating that the Deliverer would be mocked. These people who were standing before Him in their sinfulness, while He was dying for them on the cross, God used their sinful act of mocking Jesus as another proof that Jesus was truly the Messiah! What an amazing God we have!

Jesus Paid for Sin by His Death

God could never forgive us for our sin and accept us unless the punishment for our sin was completely paid. What is the punishment for sin? Death. (***Genesis 2:15-18; Romans 6:23***)

We know that when God told Adam he would die, He was not only talking about physical death, but also spiritual death that would result in an eternal death or an eternal separation from God in hell. Therefore, the only way Jesus could deliver us was for Him to take our punishment...which was death.

Here is something else for us to think about. Jesus did not have any of His own sins for which He must die. He was perfect. When John baptized him, God the Father said from heaven that He was pleased with Jesus (***Matthew 3:17***). This meant that He was “acceptable to God.”

From the time that Adam sinned in the garden, God said that whenever a person offered a lamb or other animal to God, the animal had to be without fault. It must not be sick or injured. It had to be perfect (***Exodus 12:5***). Remember Isaac's substitute ram? It was caught by the horns so that it wouldn't become injured and thereby could be used as an acceptable substitute sacrifice for Isaac.

Because Jesus was without fault before God, He was able to offer Himself to God in our place. Just as the ram died in place of Isaac, so Jesus came into the world to take our place before God and to die instead of us.

Let's think a bit about all that Jesus went through. He had been betrayed by His own disciple, falsely arrested, falsely accused, tried without a just cause, rejected by the very people who should have received Him as their King and Lord. He was mercilessly beaten, scourged, and crucified. Now, He hung on the cross, exhausted, bleeding, and in agony. However, none of these things were as difficult as what He now would face to complete the punishment for our sins.

Mark 15:33-34

Why was the light of the sun blotted out? Why was there darkness for three hours? Was it because God turned His back on Jesus? Did God turn away from Jesus and leave His beloved Son completely alone?

Why did God do such a terrible thing to Jesus? Jesus had always obeyed God. Jesus had never done anything wrong. He had obeyed all of the laws of God. Why did God leave Him like this? God was punishing Jesus for my sins, for your sins, and for the sins of the whole world.

What is the penalty for sin? Death and separation. If Jesus was going to pay for our sins, then He must be separated from God.

Jesus suffered the complete punishment for our sins so that God could freely, without any cost to us, forgive and accept us as His children.

Think back now to the beginning. God told Adam that if he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would die. This meant that Adam would be separated from God who had given him life. Sin must be paid for by separation from God. This is why Jesus had to be separated from God. It was the only way He could pay for our sins and He was willing to do it, for this had been His foreordained eternal plan from before the foundations of the earth.

Mark 15:34-37

Jesus died and gave His life for us. He did all that was necessary for our deliverance from Satan, sin, and death. Mark tells us that Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up His spirit. Mark doesn't tell us what Jesus said. However, in the book of John, we are told what He said: *"...It is finished..." (John 19:30).*

What do you think Jesus meant by that statement? Did He mean that He was finished? That He had had enough? Did He mean that He was done? No, He had said that He would rise again after three days.

What then was finished? The work He had come into the world to do was completely finished. Jesus came into the world to deliver sinners from Satan, sin, and death. He finished this work by being separated from God and by giving His blood and His life as the full payment for our sins. What He meant was finished was His fulfillment of the foreordained eternal plan of redemption.

It is comforting to know there is no longer any need for anyone to be separated from God. Jesus Christ did for us what we could not do ourselves. The work Jesus did for us by dying on the cross for our sins is the only work that God will ever accept as the payment for our sins.

Remember back in the Garden of Eden, God promised He would send a Deliverer. God kept His promise. Jesus finished the work which His Father had given Him to do for us. Adam's sin separated all men from God, but Jesus Christ's death on the cross reunited with God forever all those who put their faith in Christ (*Romans 5:12-21*).

Mark 15:38

Remember the thick curtain or veil that had hung in front of the inner room in the tabernacle that the Israelites built as God's house in the wilderness? Later, when the temple was built, this great curtain was hung in front of the inner room in the temple. God had told the Jews to put the curtain in front of the inner room so they would never forget that, because of sin, they were shut out of God's presence (separated from God).

Behind this curtain shone the Shekinah glory, and this was the place where the high priest came every year to sprinkle the blood of animals.

Who do you think ripped this curtain from the top down to the bottom? God Himself did! He did it to show that He was fully satisfied with the payment that Jesus made to Him for sinners. The way back to God was now open because Jesus gave His blood as the complete payment for sin.

God has promised that all those who agree with Him and trust only in Jesus and His payment for their sins will be fully accepted by God, and they will never go to hell (*John 3:16*).

Mark 15:39-46

Even as Jesus was buried, prophecy was being fulfilled. Joseph of Arimathea was a rich man. Jesus was entombed in the burial cave which belonged to Joseph. Many years ago, God gave another Messianic prophecy through the Prophet Isaiah stating that the Deliverer would be buried in a rich man's tomb (*Isaiah 53:9*).

Conclusion

Jesus Christ lived on earth without ever sinning. He completely fulfilled all of God's righteous laws. He endured the horrible punishment you and I deserve. On the cross He was separated from God because the penalty for sin is death (separation) and **IT IS FINISHED**. The full payment has been made. Nothing more needs to be done or can be done to pay for our sins. The veil was torn. The way is open to God through Jesus Christ to all that believe.

Lesson 27

Jesus' Resurrection, Ascension, and Promise to Come Again – *Luke 24:1-48; Acts 1:9-11*

Introduction

Through all the lessons covered in this study, we have been unfolding the Grand Story of God's foreordained eternal plan of redemption. In the last lesson, we saw how Jesus fulfilled that eternal plan by actually giving Himself to be crucified on the cross and shed His blood as the once and for all payment for sin.

In this lesson, God is going to prove that the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross truly satisfied His justice AND truly paid for ALL of the sin of the world! These two things will be proved through His resurrection and His ascension.

Remember, Jesus was dead and buried in a tomb for three days and three nights. Then on the morning of the first day of the week, some of the women who had believed in Jesus and had been present when He was buried, returned to the burial cave.

Luke 24:1

It was the custom of the Jews to put fragrant spices on the bodies of the dead before they were buried. Jesus' burial was very rushed because the Jews were in the midst of their Passover celebration. Therefore, they hadn't had time to put the ointments on His body; and because the next day was their Sabbath, they weren't allowed to do any work.

Therefore, they had to wait until the first day of the week to come and anoint His body with the spices. These women came early on Sunday morning to do this and they expected to find His body still in the tomb...but what a shock when His body wasn't there.

Luke 24:2

The women didn't know that God had sent His angel to roll the heavy stone away from the entrance to the grave where the body of Jesus had been buried (*Matthew 28:1-4*).

Luke 24:3-7

The body of Jesus was not in the tomb! To add to their shock, two angels greeted them. The angels told them Jesus had risen from the dead just as He said He would. Remember, Jesus is God and He came down to earth and became a man to deliver us from Satan, sin, and death. He knew before He left heaven that He must give His life for our deliverance and He also knew that He would rise again.

Jesus rising from the dead fulfills another Messianic prophecy God gave through David in ***Psalms 16:10***.

Luke 24:8-12

All of His followers should have been waiting for Him and expecting Him to rise from the dead because He had told them many times already that He would rise on the third day. Either they didn't understand or remember what He had said, or else they just didn't believe that it was possible He would come out of the grave alive. Regardless of how impossible it may seem, God always does what He promises.

The fact that God raised Jesus from the dead proves to us two things—first, He is truly God and second, His death and shed blood truly satisfies the justice of God.

Remember, the Jewish leaders crucified Jesus because He claimed to be the Son of God, the Deliverer. God raised Him from the dead so that everyone would know He was who He claimed to be. God made it really clear that He was fully satisfied with the payment which Jesus made for our sins.

One of the ways He made it clear was that just before Jesus died, He called out, “It is finished,” and then God ripped the curtain in the temple from the top to the bottom. He did this to show that the way back to Him was now open. God was demonstrating that He was satisfied with the payment for sin that had been made by Jesus' blood.

There is something else that assures us that God was completely satisfied with the payment and that is when He raised Jesus from the dead. God would not have raised Him if He had not been fully satisfied with the payment which He had made.

Example – If a man is put into prison by a judge, he must stay there until he is released. If he breaks out, then the police will recapture him and put him back in prison because the punishment for his crime has not been paid in full. But if the man stays in prison and finishes the time to which he was sentenced by the judge, then He is released because he has taken the full punishment for his crime (***Romans 4:24-25***).

God showed us there is no more to pay by releasing Jesus from death and raising Him back to life. If God the Judge had not been satisfied, He would not have released Him from death.

So how can we be delivered from Satan, sin, and everlasting separation from God? We must put our complete trust in the Lord Jesus, believing that He gave His blood as the full payment for our sins and rose again from the dead to give us eternal life.

Jesus' Resurrection was Witnessed by Many

Luke 24:13-24

Even though Jesus was there with them, they did not recognize Him. The Bible does not tell us why, but they did not. It's interesting that Jesus taught them, just as we have been doing here through this study, using the Old Testament to progressively open their eyes to reveal Himself.

Luke 24:25-32

Many times before they had sat together and watched Jesus break the bread! Now, as He again broke the bread, they suddenly realized that it was Jesus! Later, when the disciples were gathered together, He appeared to them again (**Luke 24:35-44**).

Jesus' Ascension and Promise to Come Again

Luke 24:45-48

This was Jesus' promise, not only to His original disciples, but also to all those who believe in Him and accept His payment for them. Jesus died for all people, so God wants everyone to know they can be delivered from Satan, sin, and death. God doesn't want anyone to suffer everlasting punishment (**2 Peter 3:9**).

Acts 1:8-9

Jesus' last promise to His disciples was that the Holy Spirit would come upon them and He would enable them to become witnesses of Jesus in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the whole world.

It was God Who planned the eternal plan of redemption. It was God Who prepared for its fulfillment. It was God Who sent His Son and fulfilled it. Now God was promising to empower the disciples to proclaim the gospel so that all of the world can receive the results of the fulfilled plan, eternal life, and all that goes along with it.

After Jesus gave this last promise to His disciples, He ascended up to Heaven. Jesus' resurrection proved that the justice of God was fully satisfied by His payment for our sin. Now Jesus' ascension and sitting down at the right hand of God proves that our sins are paid in full. It proves there will never need to be another sacrifice for our sin.

Remember the Levitical Priests back in the Old Testament and their duties of offering sacrifices for people's sins. We know that while they were on duty, they never sat down in the tabernacle because their work of offering sacrifices was never done. There was always another sacrifice that needed to be made.

So, it's very significant that after Jesus' resurrection, He ascended to Heaven to sit down at the right hand of God. It proves that our sins are paid in full and there never needs to be another sacrifice.

Acts 1:10-11

Jesus is coming back to this earth again; but when He comes, it will not be to deliver sinners from Satan, sin, and death. Jesus has completed that work. Remember, it is finished!

God now commands everyone to repent, to agree with God that they are helpless sinners deserving His punishment, and to trust only in the payment which Jesus has made for them on the cross.

The next time Jesus comes, it will be as the great almighty judge of the whole earth. Remember what Jesus told the leaders of the Jews before they had Him crucified (***Mark 14:61-62***). When Jesus comes again as the almighty judge, all those who have not changed their minds and trusted in Jesus and His payment for them will be thrown along with Satan and all his demons, into the everlasting fire (***Revelation 20:15***).

Conclusion

God's message to us is very clear. All of Jesus' disciples (with the exception of Judas who betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver) believed in Him. They knew He was the one whom God had promised to send. They saw His miracles, they saw Him die, they saw Him alive again, they saw Him go up into the clouds, and then they waited for the Holy Spirit to come upon them.

After all this, the disciples went out and began to proclaim to others this good news about Jesus and many thousands believed their message. Historians have recorded that all of Jesus' disciples died after being punished by men for their faith in Christ. Some of the disciples were tortured. Some were crucified; one died in prison.

Would these men have given their lives for a lie? No. They died for what they had seen to be true. They had truly become His witnesses through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit just as Jesus had promised them in ***Acts 1:8***.

The fourth stage of God's Grand Story, "The Results of the Fulfilled Plan," begins with Jesus' ascension. As you continue to study God's word from Acts Chapter 2 all the way through to the end of Revelation, every doctrine, every promise, every event, and every command is all true and relevant because Jesus fulfilled the foreordained eternal plan of redemption.

THE PROPHECY CHART

WHAT GOD SAID WOULD HAPPEN TO THE DELIVERER

Isaiah 9:7	“David descendent”	Fulfilled in Matthew 1:1, 6, 17
Isaiah 7:14	“Born of a virgin”	Fulfilled in Matthew 1:18
Micah 5:2	“Born in Bethlehem”	Fulfilled in Matthew 2:1
Hosea 11:1	“Flee into Egypt”	Fulfilled in Matthew 2:14
Isaiah 11:2	“Some of His Characteristics”	Fulfilled in Luke 2:52
Isaiah 53:4-5	“Suffer for others”	Fulfilled in Matthew 8:17
Psalms 41:9	“Betrayed by a friend”	Fulfilled in Mark 14:10-11
Zechariah 11:12-13	“Sold for 30 pieces of silver”	Fulfilled in Matthew 26:14-16
Psalms 27:12	“Accused by false witnesses”	Fulfilled in Mark 14: 56-57
Isaiah 50:6	“Smitten and spat upon”	Fulfilled in Mark 14:65
Isaiah 53:7	“Silent when accused”	Fulfilled in Mark 15:3-5
Isaiah 53:3	“Rejected by Jews”	Fulfilled in Mark 15:9-14
Psalms 69:4	“Hated without a cause”	Fulfilled in Luke 23:4 and John 19:6
Psalms 22:16	“His hands and feet pierced”	Fulfilled in Mark 15:24
Psalms 22:18	“His clothing gambled for”	Fulfilled in Mark 15:24
Isaiah 53:12	“Died with the wicked”	Fulfilled in Mark 15:27
Psalms 22:6-8	“Mocked and insulted”	Fulfilled in Mark 15:29-32
Isaiah 53:9	“Buried with the rich”	Fulfilled in Mark 15:43-46
Psalms 16:10	“Rise again”	Fulfilled in Luke 24:6
Psalms 68:18	“Go back to heaven”	Fulfilled in Acts 1:9