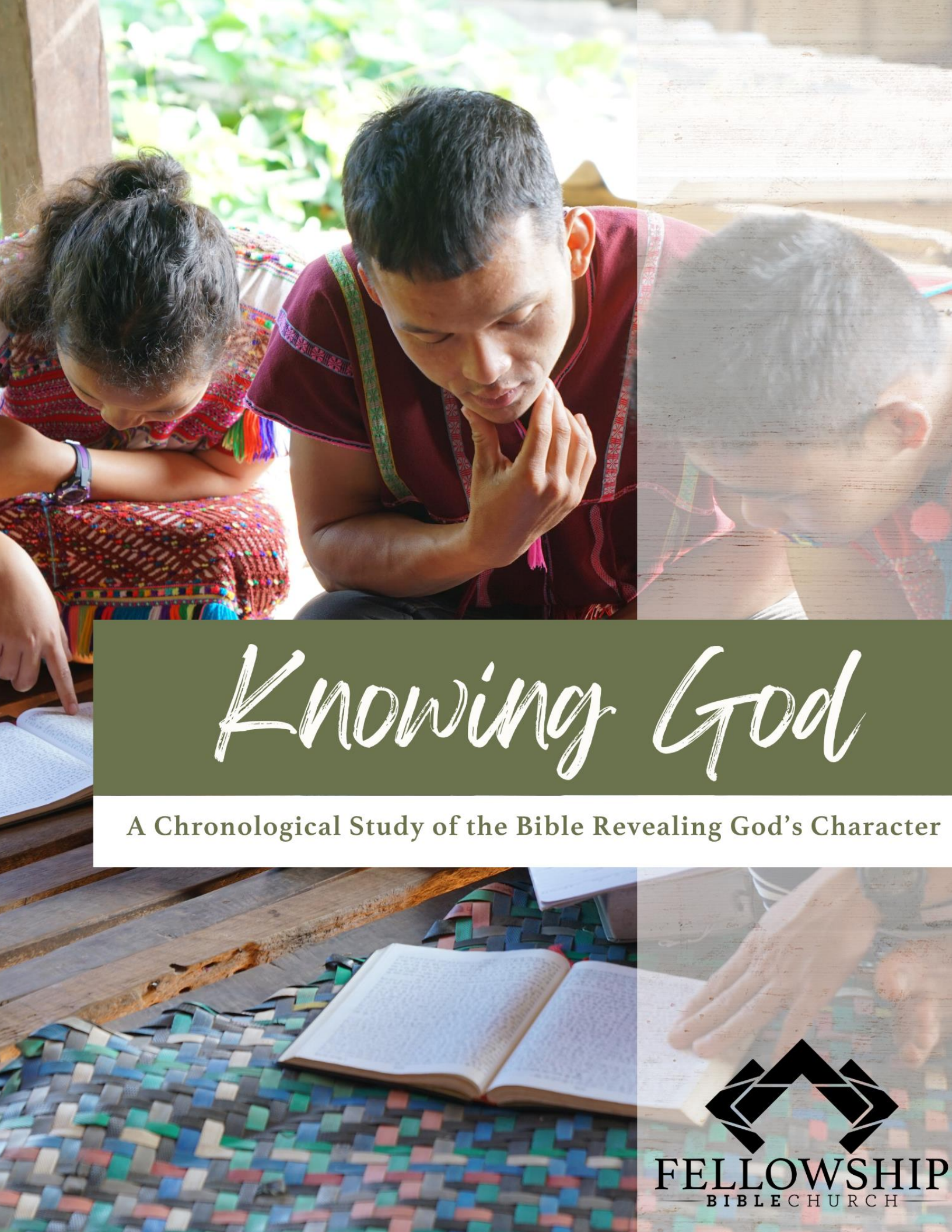

Knowing God

A Chronological Study of the Bible Revealing God's Character

FELLOWSHIP
BIBLE CHURCH

Acknowledgments

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The Meta–Narrative Context

As we all know, this world is probably filled with as many different worldviews as there are different races and ethnicities of people. When we talk about someone's worldview, we are talking about the fundamental orientation of their lives. What is at the center of their belief system that is determining their values, beliefs, and outward actions.

It's probably safe to say that for the majority of the world, it's the religion that they follow that is determining their worldview and in turn determines their values, beliefs, and outward actions.

Among us as Christians then, we can even have varying Christian worldviews that are shaped by our view of God and what we think the Christian life is all about. Our view of Who God is, what God is like, and what we think is most important to Him will greatly shape what we believe He expects of us. This will greatly determine our goals and purposes for living the Christian life, as well as how we seek to fulfill those goals and purposes. What we believe about God in terms of Who He is and what is important to Him will also greatly affect our interpretation of God's word and how we seek to apply it to our lives.

As Christians, we can have a "Man centered Christian Worldview", or we can have a "God centered Christian Worldview". It's safe to assume that the majority of Christianity is preaching and following a man centered Christian worldview, but we are after a "God centered Christian Worldview".

Obtaining a Proper Christian Worldview

In order for us to obtain a proper Christian worldview that consists of accurate views of God, Who He is, what He is like, what is important to Him, and what He expects of mankind (both as unbelievers and believers) it's extremely important for us to understand that there is a God-centered or God-directed context that this world exists in. We call this God-directed context, "The Meta-Narrative Context", which means "The Grand Story", "The Big Picture".

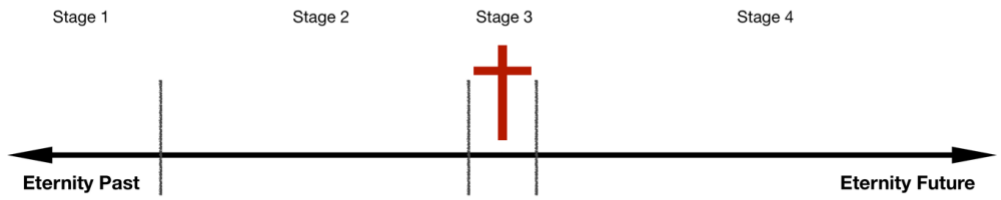
So, what we are saying is that there is a big picture context, a grand story context that begins with God Himself, is directed and determined by God, and ends with the fulfillment of all of His plans and purposes.

From the word of God, we can see that God has revealed that there are 4 main stages to His directed Grand Story:

Stage 1 - "The Planning Stage"
Stage 2 - "The Preparation Stage"
Stage 3 - "The Fulfillment Stage"

Stage 4 - “The Results of the Fulfilled Plan Stag

The Meta-Narrative Context



Beginning the Context in the Right Place

Like any story, in order to understand the context of the story you cannot begin in the middle. You cannot start at the end, then jump to the beginning, then jump to the middle in some random order. You have to begin at the beginning and follow the whole story through in sequential order. The problem for most Christians though is that they are beginning their view of the Christian context at the wrong place. And when you begin your context at the wrong place, you will be led to many wrong views about God, what He is like, and what is important to Him.

- *Example: Explain what happens to your perspective of God, what He expects of mankind, and how many OT stories will be interpreted when you begin your context in Genesis 1.*

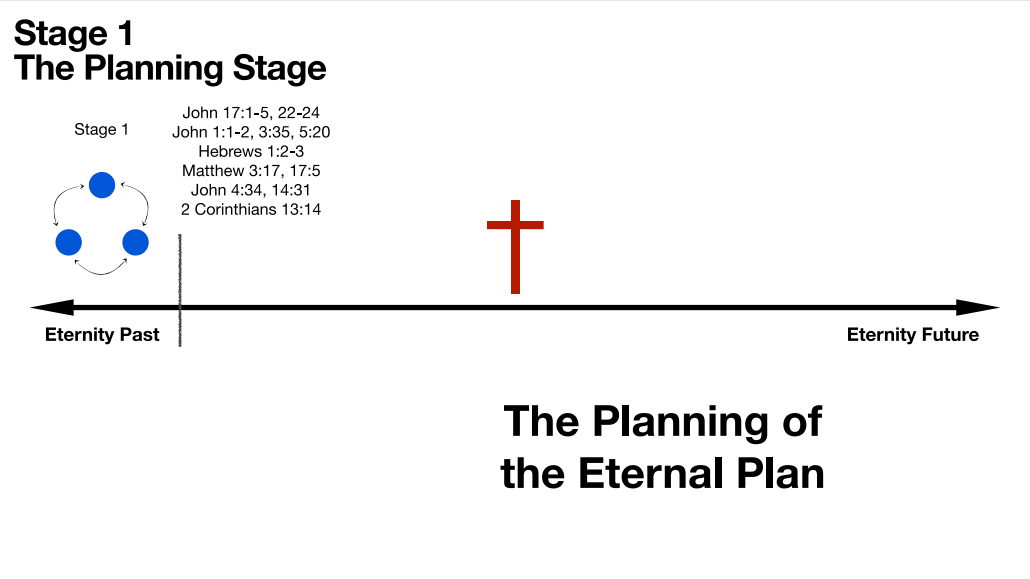
Most Christians begin their context in Genesis 1 with creation. But, there are many passages of scripture that clearly show us that the context of our God-directed grand story actually begins with Himself, the Godhead, in eternity past before the foundations of the earth;

Godhead’s Eternality

1. *Gen.1:1*
2. *Ps.90:1-2*
3. *Ps.102:12, 26-27*
4. *Isa.40:28*
5. *Rev.1:8; 22:13*

Godhead’s Relationship

1. *Jn.17:4-5, 20-26*
2. *1Jn.4:8*

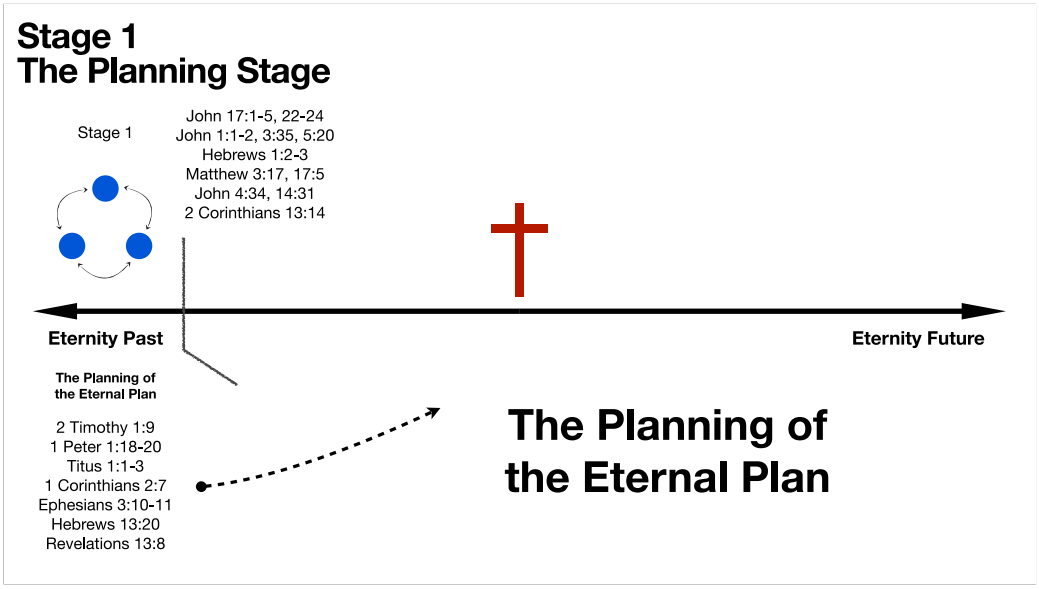


The Planning of the Eternal Plan of Redemption

It's out of these factual realities of who the Godhead is and what Their relationships were like from eternity past that the God-directed grand story flowed out of. <u>That because of Who God is and what He is like, the Godhead was moved to create a Grand Plan, an Eternal Plan that would become the ultimate manifestation of His love, grace, and wisdom.</u>

Stage 1 - The Planning of the Eternal Plan

1. *2Tim.1:9*
2. *1Pet.1:18-20*
3. *Titus 1:1-3*
4. *1Cor.2:7*
5. *Eph.3:10-11*
6. *Heb.13:20*
7. *Rev. 13:8*



Putting all of these passages together with the passages above regarding the eternality and relationship of the Godhead, we can clearly see that before God spoke the world and all that it contains into existence, He first predetermined an eternal plan of redemption that would ultimately lead to bringing a fallen human race into the same oneness, intimacy, and love that the Godhead has been experiencing from eternity past. This would be accomplished by grace and through Christ.

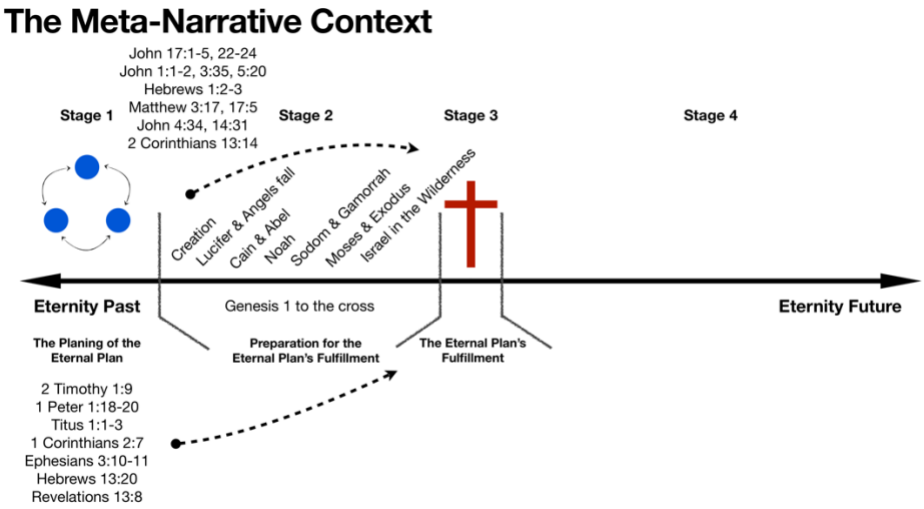
God's eternal plan of redemption began in His heart, in eternity past, so we know that it was not a reaction to Adam and Eve's sin. In order for mankind to be redeemed, they needed to be in a place to be redeemed from and this was all part of God's plan that came from His loving relational heart. It was never to be based on the faithfulness of mankind, but only based on the faithfulness and predetermined plan of God. In fact, God was planning on man's unfaithfulness and sin and not their faithfulness and obedience.

Stage 2 - Preparation for the Eternal Plan's Fulfillment

In between the Godhead planning for the Eternal Plan in stage 1 and Jesus actually coming and fulfilling it in stage 3, a whole host of things needed to be brought into being, the first of which was the world and all that it contains. So, the first thing God does in the preparation stage is to create the place where the eternal plan will be carried out and the one's for whom it will be carried out for.

Very quickly then, sin enters the world through Lucifer and his follower's rebellion, and then we also have the fall of mankind when Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Hence, now we have the need for the fulfillment of God's eternal plan of redemption.

As we continue through the Old Testament to the death of Christ then, God is working to show mankind their need for the coming deliver. God is not trying to get mankind to be faithful and obedient. He is not trying to get the Nation of Israel to do the right thing, but He is trying to get them to see their need for Him and rest in His relationship with them and trust in His plan for the coming deliverance and redemption. When we begin to look at each OT story within the context of God's directed grand story, we will begin to see them all from a different perspective.



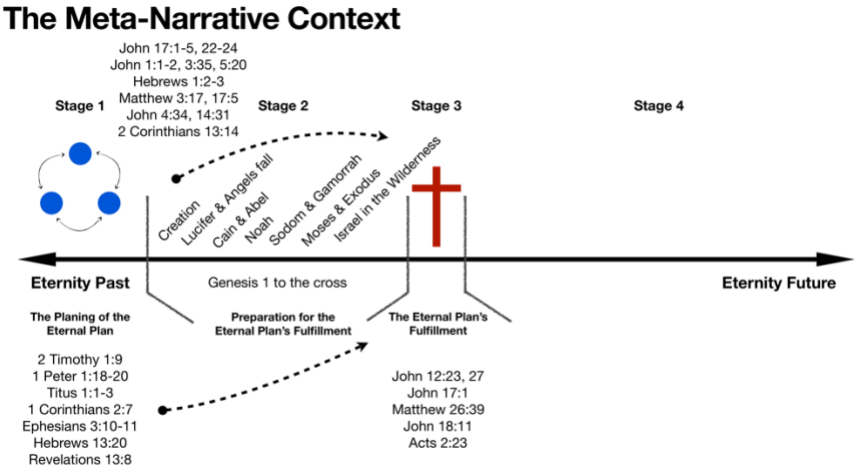
1. *Adam and Eve's sin - showing them they need God - preparing them for redemption*
2. *Abel's murder - showing him his need for God - preparing him for redemption*
3. *Noah's time - showing the people their need for God - preparing for redemption*
4. *Babel - God uses their sin to set up with the world with every tongue, tribe, and nation.*
5. *Abraham - Manifesting that it's all about God and His purposes and who HE wants to use in His plan.*
6. *Moses and Israel in slavery in Egypt - Very clear physical picture of spiritual truth*
7. *Giving the Law - Proving mankind's sinfulness and therefore need for the fulfillment of God's eternal plan of redemption.*
8. *Building the Tabernacle and all of it's furnishings and sacrifices - All pictures of the Deliverer and the redemption that He will provide.*
9. *Sodom and Gomorrah - Proof that mankind had become exactly what God knew they would become.*

God uses all these accounts to show people their need for the coming deliverer. God is wanting them to trust in relationship with Him and the redemption that He is bringing.

Stage 3 - The Eternal Plan's Fulfillment

Picture the excitement when a husband and wife are expecting a baby soon to be born. This is what it was like when the time came for Jesus to be crucified on the cross. Certainly, it was painful for both the Father and the Son for they had such a deep and wonderful relationship that had continued on from eternity past. In the garden, Jesus asked if it be possible, that maybe there could be another way, showing the reality of the pain. Ultimately though, He didn't want His own way, but His Father's way and this led to God turning His back on His Son, Jesus while on the cross.

It's our sinfulness that separates us from God. So, when the sin of the world was placed on Jesus as our substitute on the cross, the fact that it caused God to have to separate and turn away from the Son was proof that indeed, ALL of our sin was genuinely placed on Him. Even though this separation was a truly painful process for God the Father and God the Son, they both knew that this RELATIONAL plan of REDEMPTION was the way they had planned it in eternity past - ***Acts 2:23*** The fulfillment of God's plan came at the exact hour that God had planned.



1. *John 12:23 & 27*
2. *John 17:1*
3. *Matthew 26:39*
4. *John 18:11*

God had fulfilled His eternal plan and certainly it was painful, but what a glorious day it was because now God could enter into eternal RELATIONSHIP those who believe in Him.

Stage 4 - Results of the Fulfilled Plan

Immediately following Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and ascension….His fulfillment of the eternal plan of redemption, every event, promise, doctrine, command, and all instruction that we find in the word of God between Acts 1 and Revelation 22, ALL finds it's relevance in the fact that Jesus fulfilled the eternal plan of redemption (that the Godhead had predetermined from eternity past). Take away the fact of His fulfillment and it all becomes irrelevant, untrue, and impossible.

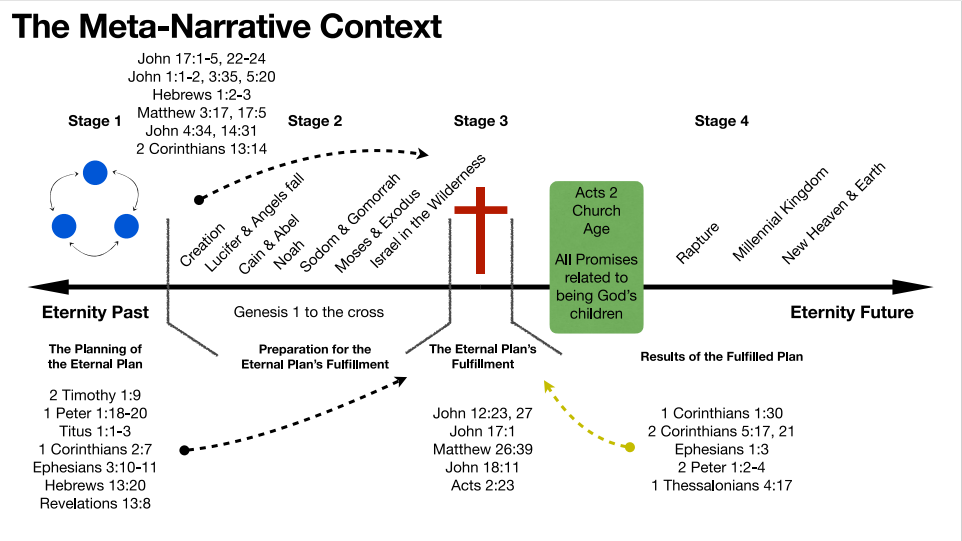
Remember how we said in stages one and two that none of it was dependent on the faithfulness of mankind but solely on the faithfulness of God? The same is true with this fourth and final stage. ALL the results of Jesus fulfilling the plan are based on the faithfulness of God and not on the faithfulness of mankind or believers. This is exactly why we said that it's so important that we begin our context at the right place and obtain a correct perspective of God and His expectations of mankind through the OT. For that will enable us to now have a correct perspective of God, His expectations of us, and all that we have received as the result of receiving eternal salvation.

God's eternal heart of love and showing itself in RELATIONSHIP and leading to the REDEMPTION of mankind brings with it all kinds of eternal results and benefits. Let's mention just a few for starters.

1. *1 Corinthians 1:30 - We have been placed into Christ Jesus*
2. *2 Corinthians 5:17 & 21 - We are new creations and have been declared righteousness (***Note - Adam's righteousness was the absence of sin. Our righteousness is Jesus Himself).***
3. *Ephesians 1:3 - We have been made accepted in the beloved*
4. *2 Peter 1:2-4 - We have been given everything pertaining to life and godliness*
5. *Ephesians 1:11 & 1Peter 1:3-5 - God has predestined for us an eternal inheritance that is reserved in heaven by His divine power.*
6. *1Thessalonians 4:17 - We will spend eternity with Him in the new heavens and the new earth.*

Again, these are results of the fulfillment of God's eternal plan. He wants us to walk in dependency upon Him, confident of His love, enjoying intimacy, fellowship and relationship with Him, which has been His plan from before the foundations of the earth.

He PLANNED it, He PREPARED all things for it's fulfillment, He FULFILLED it, and He produced all the RESULTS from it's fulfillment….It's ALL of Him.



Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! "For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?" "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. -

Rom.11:33-36

I. Lesson 1: Introduction

Goals of This Teaching

- To grow in the knowledge of God—who He is and He is like through gaining a "larger context perspective" of the whole Word of God.

- To grow in the knowledge of God by seeing what He reveals about Himself by His interaction with mankind through the Old Testament.

- To grow in our understanding of how God intends our relationship with Him to be.

- For each of us to become better equipped to provide a progressive unfolding of God's word for others and thereby lead them into a deeper knowledge of and communion with God as well.

How Will This Be Accomplished?

- By following God's pattern of progressively revealing Himself and His plan of redemption with the context of history.

- Beginning in Genesis, we will progress through the Old Testament and the life of Christ, highlighting the key themes of the Bible and get to know the character of God as we see Him unfold His plan of redemption. Being taught God's word as "one continuous story" is extremely significant, for it greatly affects our world view, our beliefs, our values, and ultimately our behavior. The fact that the majority of believers today have the perspective that the Christian life is all about them and their actions is proof of the confusion that is created by the traditional way of teaching God's word.

So, just what is the "traditional way" of teaching the Bible?

At the time of their conversion, most people will have some kind of understanding of a few Old Testament stories. Maybe they will have heard about creation, Adam and Eve, or maybe about Noah, etc.

So, they get saved and at that point start to attend a local church. That local church has a main worship service. What will that person be taught through the teaching in that main worship service? It could be anything—a topic, text from the New Testament or from the Old Testament. It could be in the middle of teaching expositionally through a book, etc.

This church also has a Sunday school class that this person attends. What teaching will they be taught in this class? Again, it could be on any number of topics or out of any book of

the Bible, but it will probably not have anything to do with the teaching that he receives in the worship service.

This church also has a weekly Bible study. What will this person be taught as he attends this weekly study? It could be any topic or from any book, and again, it probably won't have anything to do with the teaching he receives in the worship service or in the Sunday school.

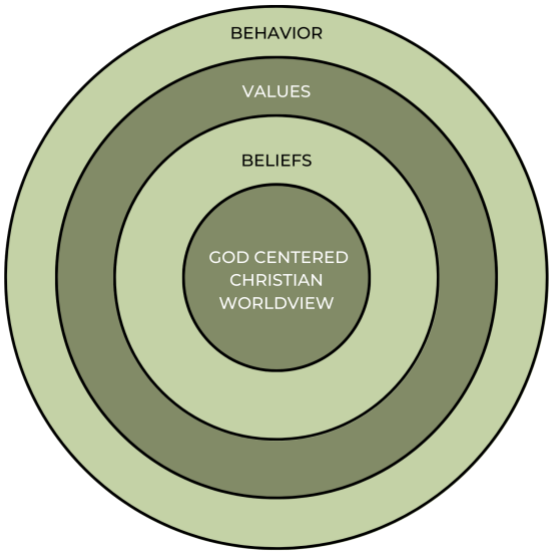
So, this guy is taught God's Word this way for a few years and let's say he decides to go to Bible College. What will he be taught in Bible College? Basically, he will receive a four year-long "shotgun blast" of truth. Each day, his classes will consist of alternating topics from the Old Testament and the New Testament.

If we compare "the truth" to a chain, the way we teach people would be like handing them a pile of chain links that are not connected to each other. Sure they will come away with some understanding of some truths, but there will be much confusion regarding how these individual truths fit into the context of the big picture of "THE TRUTH."

Chronological Teaching vs. Traditional Teaching

There is a difference between chronological teaching and traditional teaching. It is important, and both DO NOT arrive at the same goal. Let us explain.

Think of this as a target.



The outer ring of the target is our **behavior**. As humans, our behavior includes the outward actions that our bodies carry out. (Paul in Romans 6 explains using our bodies as "instruments of righteousness" or "unrighteousness.")

Our behavior, though, is determined by the next ring in the target, which includes our **values**—"commonly held standards of what is acceptable or unacceptable, important or

unimportant, right or wrong, workable or unworkable…in a community of society" (Business Dictionary.com).

Our values are determined by the next ring in, which are our **beliefs**. Here's an example: As Americans, we believe that it's important for our children to become financially independent. Therefore, we value higher education as the means to fulfill that belief, and we structure our lives in order to provide the best education we can for our kids.

However, it's the next ring in that determines our beliefs and that is our **world view**. World view is the fundamental orientation of an individual or society. For example, the fundamental orientation of the Karen people (Thailand) is animism; therefore, every aspect of life and their experiences are viewed through that "orientation" or grid. It's what determines what they believe.

Actually, I believe that if we were to boil down every culture to its fundamental orientation, it would have to be **SELF**. Everything we humans do and believe is always for the benefit of self in some form or another. At the center of our world view is where we are in our "knowledge of God" (or lack thereof). It's the degree of our knowledge of God that will ultimately determine our "fundamental orientation in life"—even as Christians! The less we know God, the more self will be our fundamental orientation.

This is where I believe the fundamental difference between traditional teaching and chronological teaching comes to light. When we pick and choose or pull out certain portions of scripture and teach from all over the Bible without first taking the time to lay a proper contextual foundation, it most definitely affects people's perspective of God and the Christian life. When our focus in the Old Testament is mainly on God's promise to bless obedience (which were promises to Israel and the Church), and when our focus in the New Testament is mainly on God's imperatives to live and act a certain way, we lead people to a warped view of God, of themselves, and what the Christian life is all about. Their focus is on themselves and their devotion to God and commitments to live a holy life instead of the provisions that God has already given. By default, we will lead them to think that they need to DO something to gain God's blessing and acceptance instead of rest in what He's already done and given through Christ!

When you begin at the beginning, (i.e., BEFORE Genesis with 2 Timothy 1:9-10; 1 Peter 1:19-20; Ephesians 1:4) and provide a foundational and progressive unfolding of the whole context of God's Word, then you can see more clearly God's attributes and character lived out through His interaction with mankind. You come away with a clearer perspective as to. . .

- ✓ . . .what He is REALLY like
- ✓ . . .what the human race is REALLY like (and capable of)
- ✓ . . .what God's interaction with man is based on
- ✓ . . .that clear picture that provides the main "backdrop" of context for the whole Word of God—GOD, the Almighty, Sovereign, supreme, holy, loving and gracious God, Creator, and Savior—reaching down to unfold His plan of redemption for a blind, ignorant, helpless, wicked, and sinful human race.

Seeing clearly WHO God is and who WE are is key to gaining a proper perspective on the context.

God's carrying out of His plan of redemption is not reactionary; i.e., it's not "Plan B." Nor is He gracious toward us "in spite" of our sin. He is gracious toward us BECAUSE of our sin and because He is love and it's absolutely impossible for man to do anything to help himself. This is a pattern you see all the way through the whole Word of God.

- What would have happened to Adam and Eve and the whole human race had God just created them perfect and upright and then left them on their own to deal with the consequences of their own decisions? Eternal death—never to be restored again.
- What would have happened with Noah? The whole human race would have been wiped out.
- How did the Nation of Israel (line of the Deliverer) come into being? By God choosing an idol worshipper with a barren wife to bring about a new race!
- What would have happened to Lot in Sodom? The angels had to take him by the hand and make him leave!
- What would have happened to Israel in Egypt? What would have happened to Israel in the wilderness? What about Israel's condition during the times of their judges and kings? They were forever turning away from God to worship idols, and God was forever intervening.
- What would have happened to the Deliverer? What would have happened to the disciples? What would have happened to the early church and its growth?
- Where would we be today? Name one thing that was significant in bringing us to where we are today as God's children, that could have happened without God's divine intervention.....You can't!

SIN is the only needed ingredient in this that God left up to man. And when you consider the giving of the law to Israel in the Old Testament and the biblical instruction to the Church in the New Testament in light of this contextual backdrop, then I believe you come away with a right perspective of God, the Christian life, and how we are to live it.

Christianity is Meant to be a Relationship.

Another simple but profound point we have to understand in order to gain a proper perspective on the context of God's Word is that the Christian life is meant to be a relationship—a real and tangible relationship with our Heavenly Father, as real a relationship as we have with our own families.

Why did God create Adam and Eve? Because God is love, He created man with which to have a relationship (John 17:9-10, 20-26). But the only way that it's possible for us to live it as a relationship is by coming to know God. The true knowledge of God will give us a proper world view, which will enable our beliefs, values, and behavior to become an outflow or manifestation

of our relationship with God. We will be able to trust God and His word, and this will affect our behavior.

I believe it's impossible to truly appropriate and consistently walk in truth without knowing God, for we can't trust Him. Walking in truth is an issue of trusting HIM, not the scriptures. There is much truth that we believe to be true, but don't walk in because we don't fear God, pure and simple!

Lacking a proper knowledge of God will throw all of this askew. The less we know God, the smaller our view of Him will be. The smaller our view of Him, the bigger our view of ourselves will be. We think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. We, and how things affect us, become our frame of reference or our "fundamental orientation."

Then, our self-centered orientation determines our beliefs. I believe that God wants me to be happy, comfortable, stress free, etc. We begin to believe that our desires are God's desires. I value anything that I think can bring this about; i.e., praying to God, obeying, serving, and my own plans and schemes. So, then, my prayers and the carrying out of any other Christian disciplines (even though they look spiritual and look like trust in God), they are really being motivated by a self-centered world view, beliefs, and values.

This then will result in us living out Christianity as a religion and not as a relationship. You could plug all other religions into this model and they would line up perfectly. This will also lead to many other misunderstandings and confusion in the Christian life:

- Grace will be misunderstood.
- People will be more focused on physical earthly blessings.
- We will believe that obedience/good works are the key to spirituality.
- The Bible, the Truth, will be used more as a law than it will be as a letter from our loving Heavenly Father Whose only desire is to reveal Himself to us and thereby take us into deeper communion with Himself.

Examples of those who didn't know God:

- **Exodus 5**
- **Judges 2:6-11**
- **Jeremiah 2:1-13**

Through the Old Testament, God makes many references to the importance of "knowing the WAYS of the Lord." Delighting in His ways, singing of His ways, knowing His ways—I believe this is a part of knowing Him. **2 Chronicles 17:6 (NKJV):** ***And his heart took delight in the ways of the LORD; moreover he removed the high places and wooden images from Judah.*** **Psalm 138:5 (NKJV):** ***Yes, they shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD.*** "Ways" here can also be described as a course of life or a mode of action. It's the heart of God. **Acts 13:22 (NKJV):** ***And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will."***

The Old Testament also makes much mention of obeying God's commands and keeping His statutes. It's entirely possible to be taken up with and focused on keeping and obeying God's commands without really knowing and delighting in His ways.

So back to the "bulls eye." If the "focus" of God in our lives is mainly on our obedience, keeping His commands, living the kind of Christian life that we believe He expects us to live, our world view, beliefs, values, and behavior are going to be very different from what they will be if we are truly knowing and delighting in His ways.

Let's look at this point in King David's life as an example—**2 Samuel 12:13-22.** As you know, under the law adulterers were to be stoned to death. But Nathan said that God had put away David's sin and that he would not die. BUT, he said, the child who is born WILL die. And indeed, the Lord strikes the child and it becomes ill.

David then, who should have been killed, begins to plead with God for the child. He fasts and prays all day and all night for seven days, seeking to persuade God to change His mind. After what David did and the trouble that he had caused through his sin, you would think that he would feel unworthy of approaching God to make any further requests. Nevertheless, the child dies.

David then gets up, washes, anoints himself, and goes into the house of the Lord and worships Him. Notice that it doesn't say that he went in to sacrifice. He went in to worship! He may have taken a sacrifice, I don't know, but worship is what is focused on here.

You know, after all that David had done and caused, seeing this baby put to death because of his sin, I would think that David would feel very unworthy of worshipping God. "Why would God want to hear my voice? Why would God even want to look at me"?

Then David explains his actions to his servants in vs. 22: **"Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me..."** David was a man after God's own heart. He knew and delighted in the WAYS of the Lord. David knew God according to His ways and not according to the law.

- According to the law, David wouldn't have had any room to ask God for anything; but according to God's ways, "His tender mercies endureth forever."

- According to the law, David shouldn't have felt worthy of entering into God's presence to worship Him, but David was worshipping God because of WHO HE is, not in order to gain anything.

What makes God worthy of our worship is WHO He is, not what we've done or how we are living. Only knowing Him can cause us to focus on Him and not ourselves.

The Epistles are filled with truth regarding our current position in Christ as the children of God. It talks of the "riches that are ours in Christ," "our hope that is in heaven," "being seated with Christ in the heavenlies." Knowing God according to His ways will allow us to believe and by faith appropriate those wonderful truths and promises and will thereby empower us to follow biblical instruction.

However, only knowing God according to "biblical instruction" will lead us to a world view that just will not allow us to believe and appropriate the truth that we know in our minds to be true. If I were to boil down the goals and purposes of this Creation to Christ curriculum to one main goal, this would be it: *to lead us into a deeper knowledge and grasp of the ways of God.*

In the Old Testament, in all the things that God put in place in order for Christ to come and fulfill His plan, name one thing that He left up to man to carry out on his own or one thing that God didn't carry out Himself! NONE!

At the end of the gospels and Acts—the establishment of the apostles, their message, and growth of the Church—what of that was left up to man? NOTHING!

II. Lesson 2:
God Is Eternal and the Bible Is His Message to All People

Review Questions

1. **What is our #1 goal in this study?**
2. **How will we seek to grow in the knowledge of God?**
3. **Why is growing in the knowledge of God so important?**
4. **How does a lack of knowing God affect our lives?**
5. **What is the difference between knowing God according to His ways and knowing Him according to biblical instruction?**

<u>God is a communicator and it's very, very obvious that He wants us to know Him, to know the truth.</u>

In the book of Genesis alone, the phrase "God said" is used 25 times. "The Lord said" is used 18 times. "He said" (referring to God) is used 26 times. So in doing just a quick search, I counted 69 references to God communicating in Genesis alone. Just by the very fact that God has seen fit to give us this Bible, this complete revelation, testifies to the fact that He wants us to know Him.

For it was all initiated by Him. It was God who authored the Bible, not man. Over a period of 1,600 years, God chose 40 men from all walks of life to write the 66 books of the Bible. God chose who He wanted the writers to be, and His Spirit inspired them to write what He wanted them to write. These men came from all walks of life—from Amos the fig picker, to Luke the doctor. There were uneducated fishermen and there was Paul the well-educated Pharisee and Moses who was educated in Pharaoh's palace. But even though there were such a variety of writers who were writing to different people, of different cultures, at different times, still the message of God's Word is completely unified from one end to the other. That's only because the omniscient, all-wise, and Almighty God is its author. God in His sovereignty and omniscience authored His word, and God in His sovereignty and omnipotence has preserved it.

Usually, when we hear people talk about "authorial intent," they are usually referring to what "Paul" or "Moses" or "Peter" meant by what they were writing. There definitely is validity to this, as each of the writers were writing to specific people, under certain circumstances, during a certain time

period, and within a certain culture. BUT, ultimately, it is God who inspired each of them to write what He wanted them to write, for the purpose of one day having it all put together to form this complete revelation.

And so, God in His sovereignty authored His Word through inspiration of His Spirit, and then put it together to form this complete revelation for the Church.

So, back to our target diagram. God has sovereignly put His Word together as a complete revelation of Who He is and what He is like, as He reveals Himself through the course of unfolding His eternal plan of redemption in the context of interacting with mankind throughout history. When we teach through God's Word as such, then we're laying the important foundations that need to be in place in order for people to have a proper world view, and thereby right beliefs, values, and appropriate behavior.

However, most Bible teaching today focuses on the belief, values, and behavior level. This then causes people to (1) view the Bible more as an instruction book, (2) live Christianity as a religion, and (3) have many misunderstandings about God and what He is really like. But, again, our aim through this study is going to be to focus on God. We want to grow in our understanding of Him and His ways. We want to know His heart.

<u>As you all know, there are many misconceptions about God.</u>

He's referred to as the "man upstairs." Some people view Him as this distant deity that has great power, but he's not overly interested in this world. Some view Him as a spoiler of their fun. Most people's view of God is going to be determined by their circumstances.

People generally have questions about God.

- Does He really exist?
- Where did He come from?
- What can He do? Is there anything that He can't do?
- Does He really have absolute authority over all the earth?
- Does He really care about the human race?
- How can a good God allow such suffering and pain?
- How could a good God allow children to be abused?

Even among Christians, and I mean people that have truly trusted Christ as Savior, there are still many misconceptions of God.

This isn't God's fault, as He has not hidden Himself from man; for He has gone to great lengths to clearly reveal Himself to the world, not only through His Word, but also through creation. I believe that as we continue on through this study, the question of God, Who He is, what He is really like, and what does that mean in my daily life will become clearer and clearer.

There are things that you will find that God reveals about Himself early on in Genesis, and other things will become clearer as we proceed on through the Old Testament. As we study through the Old Testament, God's nature and character will be revealed by the way He interacts through the events that He recorded for us in His Word.

As we seek to turn our attention to only Him, I think you'll be surprised to realize how much He has truly revealed about Himself. He truly wants us to know Him. He truly wants a close intimate relationship with us. This is His heart. See **Jeremiah 9:23-24.**

❖ **Read Genesis 1:1.**

Before the beginning, before there was anything....there was God! God already existed. I love how the Bible begins with God already existing. There is no argument or proof given for His existence.

Later in **Psalm 14:1**, God reveals, that from His perspective (in light of ALL that He has revealed about Himself through creation and in our hearts about His existence), you'd have to be a fool to deny His existence. How long did He exist before He decided to create everything? From eternity!

There was never a time when God didn't yet exist (try wrapping your mind around that). See **Psalm 90:2**. There was never a time when God did not exist, and there will never be a time when He ceases to exist.

God is ETERNAL! God is eternal and He existed before there was any creation. Therefore, we know that He is also completely independent of everyone and everything. He doesn't

need air to breathe, food to eat, water to drink, night time to sleep, light, time or space.

God is self-existent. He exists by His own power. He is the source of all power and all life. We humans are the exact opposite. We are extremely dependent upon other people and other things. Without parents, we wouldn't have entered the world, and without their care, we never would have lived past our first 48 hours. Without air, food, and water, we would die off really quickly. How long could we function without sleep? (Exhaustion on trips). Without the sun's ultraviolet rays? The ways in which we are dependent are too numerous to count, but God does not need a single thing!

Can you feel your perspective on life and your daily circumstances beginning to change yet? So far, I haven't said anything that we don't already know to be true, but bringing our attention back to the sovereignty and supremacy of God all of a sudden overshadows all my worries and concerns.

God does not have a body of flesh and bones like we do (John 4:24).

He doesn't have a physical body. 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 say that He HAS love or He MANIFESTS love; it says that HE IS LOVE! This means that there is nothing that He can do or allow to come into our lives that is devoid of His love. See **Romans 8:31-39.**

❖ **Read Psalm 139:7-12 and Proverbs 15:3.**

God is omnipresent. He is everywhere at the same time.

We can only know this about God through His own revelation. Without Him telling us, we would never know where He is because we can't see Him. He is out in the farthest parts of the universe, and He is right here with us in this room. He is with the believers over in China and with them down in Ecuador.

All of creation is limited by time and space. God alone is uncreated, and therefore He is not limited by time, space, or anything else within creation.

Think of this in terms of Satan. At any given moment, how many Christians from many different countries, are all at the same time blaming Satan for something in their lives? He is a created being who is NOT omnipresent or omnipotent, or anything else that God is. God is the only one that is always present.

God is a trinity—one God, but three persons who are the one God.

This doctrine springs from the facts that the New Testament historians report, and the revelatory teaching that we hold to today (that has been taught in the church down through the generations) grew out of these facts. Jesus not only prayed to God the Father and taught His disciples to do so, but scripture also reveals that He too is God. **John 20:28-31; Acts 7:59; Romans 9:5; 10:9-13; 2 Corinthians 12:7-9; Philippians 2:5-6; Colossians 1:15-17; 2:9; Hebrews 1:1-12.**

In **John 14:16**, Jesus said that a "paraclete" would be sent. This term was used of a legal advisor, pleader, proxy, or advocate, one who comes forward on behalf of and as the representative of another.

According to the *Complete Word Dictionary for the New Testament*, "In **1 John 2:1**, Jesus Himself is termed our substitutionary, intercessory Advocate (Paraclete). But, again Jesus designates the Holy Spirit as Paraclete (**John 14:16**), and calls Him *állos*, which means another of equal quality and not *héteros*, which means another of a different quality. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is designated by Jesus Christ as equal with Himself" (p. 1107). There are many different examples that we try to use to explain the trinity.

Bottom line, scripture is clear as it refers to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—that all three are equally God and yet have carried out distinct roles. See **2 Corinthians 13:14**.

Because God alone existed before everything and everyone else, He is greater than all.

God is greater than any force in the whole universe. He is greater than everyone and everything, even the spirit world. There can never be any person or any power that is superior to God. He is the supreme authority. The entire universe and

everything in it, including all spiritual powers, are subject to God's authority and are completely DEPENDENT on Him.

You know, in all of our minds, we know this to be true. But every day as we walk through life, are we living and viewing life in light of that reality?

I think if we were to dissect our lives, we would all find many areas of "independence" in our lives, places or areas where we depend on our own efforts, wisdom, and understanding rather than on God. These are signs of NOT knowing God.

What about in our view of Satan? Is there really a battle going on between God and Satan? Scripture speaks of a battle going on within us between the flesh and spirit. Satan walks around as a roaring lion seeking someone to devour, seeking someone to deceive. But from God's perspective, is there really a battle going on between God and Satan? NO, Satan is already a defeated foe.

❖ **Read Psalm 147:1-9; 148:1-13**.

There is no one and nothing that can be compared with God. He is far greater than everything and everyone. He is beyond our understanding.

- We can't comprehend One who had no beginning and will have no end.
- It's hard to fathom One who is never in need of anything.
- One who sees everything, but, because He is spirit, can't be seen by anyone.
- How He can reside in heaven and yet be everywhere all at the same time.
- The three persons are the one God. Very hard to understand. God surpasses all knowledge.

God's infinite superiority we refer to as His sovereignty. Webster's definition: "ruler, supreme in power, chief, efficacious or effective in the highest degree." In reflecting God's sovereignty, the Bible often calls God "the Most High. . .

- . . ."the Most High over all the earth" **(Psalm 83:18)**

- . . ."I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me." **(Isaiah 45:5)**

If we really believed these things to be true of God, if we were really living life through the reality of these truths, then **Psalm 46:10** would be our natural response: "Be still and know that I am God." Any time that we are not still, it should be evident to us that in our hearts, God is not God.

Because God is the only One that was there before all things, only He has the authority to tell us how everything began.

As humans, because we are so finite and unknowing, without an eye witness, we can't even figure out the truth for ourselves between two arguing toddlers, let alone how the world began.

Through the ages, man in his arrogance and pride has tried to come up with many theories concerning the beginning of the universe. But, all of them are contradicted by God, Who was there in the beginning. Only He can give us the true account of how it all really took place. God is the supreme and highest authority and we are dependent upon Him for all things, even as our source of truth. Next week we will begin to look at how He says everything came into being.

III. Lesson 3:
God Created the Angels

Review Questions

1. **How has God proven that He wants us to know Him?**
2. **What does ultimate authorial intent of God's Word mean?**
3. **Is the fact of God's eternality significant for us? Why or why not?**
4. **How will true confidence in God's attributes affect us on a daily basis?**

Keeping a Right Perspective

Before actually getting into the creation account, I think it's important to remind ourselves of the eternal plan of God that we mentioned in the introductory lesson.

- **2 Timothy 1:9 (NASB):** ***…who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.***

- **1 Peter 1:18-20 (NASB):** ***…knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you.***

Having established the fact of God's plan and purpose that existed in His heart from before time began, as we approach Genesis chapter 1, then we have to see it as the beginning of God carrying out His plan—a plan and purpose that included grace being bestowed upon us through Christ our Savior and Deliverer. Keeping these facts in mind will help set the context for all of the Old Testament.

Next, as we look at the creation account, our purpose isn't just to look at and highlight the things that God created and when; our purpose is more to consider what God has revealed about Himself through the creation account. Lastly,

as we move into looking at creation, we will look at creation in the order that God created it.

God created all the spirits.

Job makes it pretty clear that spirit beings were present when God created the earth, so therefore, we will begin with God's creation of the spirit beings.

❖ **Read Job 38:4-7.**

It's safe to say that much confusion exists in the world today regarding the spirit world. Every culture has its beliefs. However, only God is the true source of TRUTH. And if we are truly interested in knowing the TRUTH, then we have to find out what HE says about a matter.

First of all, I think it is quite significant that God created the spirit beings before He created anything else. This means that they witnessed God's omnipotence, sovereignty, and omniscience first-hand. Think of it, all the spirit beings got to see God speak everything into existence. What a display of power and wisdom!

God had clearly revealed His worthiness of their praise and worship. For Lucifer then to even remotely have the audacity to think that he could take God's place, really adds perspective to the depth of pride, arrogance, and evil that exists within him.

Unlike God, the spirit beings are not eternal. They were created by God, and therefore had a beginning.

❖ **Read Colossians 1:16.**

The "thrones," "dominions," "principalities," and "powers" in this verse refer to the multitude of spirits that were created by God and given different positions of authority. Another term scripture uses for them is angels.

God did not create the spirits with physical bodies. Therefore, they are not limited by time or space as we are. However, spirits cannot be everywhere at the same time as God is; they are limited to being in one place at a time. Although the spirits do not have physical bodies, they have sometimes appeared as human beings or in some other physical form.

Look at **Genesis 18:1-2, 22; 19:1, 12, 15; Isaiah 6:1-2; Luke 24:1-4, 22-23**. These are just a few of the many, many examples.

God created the spirits for a special purpose.

Angels were created to be God's servants and messengers. The word "angel" actually means "messenger."

❖ **Read Psalm 103:20-21; Zechariah 1:9-10.**

Specifically, at times, angels are sent out to render "service" to Christians according to God's will and for His glory.

❖ **Read Hebrews 1:14.**

Because God is their Creator and it was He Who created them how HE wanted them to be and for what purpose He wanted them to be created for, ALL angels/spirit beings "RIGHTFULLY" belong to God. He is their owner!

This is a very significant point in terms of the authority and sovereignty of God, especially in a day and age where people, even Christians seems to attribute more authority, power, and ability to the "forces of darkness" than what is appropriate.

Just as you are the owner of whatever you make, so God is the Owner of everything and everyone He created. He is their God, their Creator, and their Owner!

God created ALL angels/spirit beings perfect.

Since God is completely holy, He would never create anything evil. Everything He thinks, says and does is perfect. Though God absolutely knew what every single angel would turn out to be like, He didn't create any of them as evil. He created them all perfect and without sin.

This truth brings up a huge point regarding the sovereignty of God. Review two of our main "perspective" verses: **2 Timothy 1:9 and Colossians 1:16**.

- First, we have this purpose and grace (plan) that was bestowed on us THROUGH CHRIST, before time began.

- Then, Colossians says that ALL things (including ALL spirit beings) were created BY Him and FOR Him (Christ).

So, this means that Lucifer and all the angels who became Satan and the demons, their whole rebellion and all that has resulted from it down through the generations was already factored into God's plan and purpose from eternity past!

And because we know that God is absolutely perfect and holy, we must be absolutely convinced that His plan and purposes are absolutely perfect and holy, too. Therefore, rather than questioning why does God allow this and that, let us instead rejoice in the fact that the One who is absolutely holy, perfect, and good, is also the One Who is absolutely sovereign and supreme!

Regardless of our circumstances, we can fully abandon ourselves and cast ourselves upon Him and His sovereign grace and mercy to work all things according to the counsels of His own will, for our good and for His glory!

<u>God created a vast number of angels.</u>

❖ **Read Matthew 26:53 and Revelation 5:11.**

The next time you are tempted to be concerned about the "attacks of the enemy," remind yourself of these two verses and the massive number of angels that God simply spoke into existence! With such power, wisdom, sovereignty, and greatness, why would WE, as finished-work Christians ever find ourselves even remotely concerned about what the "enemy" is trying to accomplish?

Next, it appears from scripture that God did not create this huge massive number of angels exactly the same.

❖ **Read Ezekiel 28:11-14.**

This passage is a reference to Lucifer. Notice in vs. 14, he was called the "anointed cherub." Like all the other angels, Lucifer too was created perfect and blameless and without sin. Vs. 15 says "you were perfect in your ways from the day you were created." It appears that Lucifer had beauty, wisdom, and a position above all the other angels.

This point speaks of the sovereignty of God as the Creator and Owner of His creation. He had the authority and the right to create His creation in any way that He desired them to be.

God created angels with mighty intellect and power to do His will.

Return to **Psalm 103:20.** The angels have great knowledge and understanding, and God gave them power to do great things. However, unlike God, they do not know and cannot do everything.

❖ **Read Ephesians 3:10 and 1 Peter 1:12.**

These two passages show us that angels are not all-knowing. It's very apparent that God desires for His creation to know Him. He has gone to great lengths and detail in revealing Himself.

He created the angels first, partly so He could reveal Himself to them as He went on to create the rest of creation. Now we see Him using His interaction with the church to further reveal His wisdom and grace to the spirit world.

This is a major truth about God that sets Him apart from the gods of all other religions. God is a God Who desires His creation to know Him and Who desires to have a relationship with His creation. This same desire that we see in God for the angels to know Him and His heart, we will clearly see is His same desire for all of mankind!

He wants us to know Him and be confident in Who He really is and what He is really like. Why? Because He loves us and wants us to be able to trust Him. And without knowing Him, we won't be confident in His goodness and love, nor will we be able to love and trust Him in return.

Look at these verses: **2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (NASB):** ***For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.***

We could literally spend a week unpacking this passage, but the point I want to make is that the context here is the battle that takes place in our lives on a daily basis. More specifically, the thing that verse 5 names as being the real cause of the battle and conflict that we find ourselves in; namely, it's those things/circumstances/events etc., that challenge our knowledge of God. Those things that "raise up against the knowledge of God."

For the ten spies who were sent to spy out the land, the facts of the giant people and huge walled cities challenged their knowledge of God and ability to trust Him. What is it for you today? What are the areas of your life that right now are being "raised up against the REALITY of Who God is"?

This is the purpose of the class—to help all of us continue to grow in the knowledge of God so that, regardless of what the circumstances are, we can be like Caleb and Joshua: "Yep, the people are giants and the city's walls have been built to the heavens, but our God is greater and He is the One Who promised to give us this land. We can trust Him!"

I want to end with this quote from A. W. Tozer:

"The big question before the church is always God Himself. And the most awesome fact about any man is not what he may say or do, but, what he, in the depths of his heart, understands God to be like. Always the most revealing thing about the church is her idea of God, just as her most significant message is what she says about Him or leaves unsaid, for often her silence is more eloquent than her speech. Possibly every error in doctrine or failure to apply Christian ethics could be finally traced to imperfect thoughts about God. The man who comes to a right belief about God is relieved from thousands and thousands of temporal problems, for he sees that these problems have to do with circumstances, which at best cannot concern him for very long."

IV. Lesson 4:
God Revealed Himself and His Heart Through His Creative Acts

Review Questions

1. **God's eternal plan of redemption–when was it planned or pre-determined?**
2. **Is point #1 significant? If so, why?**
3. **What is the significance of God creating all the spirit beings before He created everything else?**
4. **Did Lucifer and the angels' rebellion surprise God?**
5. **What is a major truth about God that differentiates Him from the gods of all other religions?**

Introduction: With lesson 4, we are going to begin looking at Genesis 1:1 and work our way through the creation story. Before we do so, we want to first highlight some background information that adds to the context and hopefully our understanding of God's intended purpose for including this book in His word, the complete revelation.

Most scholars agree that it was Moses who not only wrote the book of Genesis, but also wrote the whole Pentateuch or the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. It is believed that Moses wrote it in the wilderness of Sinai, while on their way to the Promised Land. God's purpose for having Moses write what he wrote in the Pentateuch (for the Israelites), I believe is the same reason why He has also included it in the complete revelation for the church today, and that is for the purpose of revealing Himself to mankind.

Israel was headed into Canaan where the inhabitants followed and worshipped all kinds of gross false gods. It was going to be extremely important for all the future generations to have a clear record of Who the God of Israel is and what He is really like. Look at Judges 2:6-13 as proof of the need to remember.

The need for us as believers today to be absolutely convinced of Who God is and what He is like is no less important than it was for the Israelites going into Canaan. The Christian life is meant to be a relationship. Without a deep intimate knowledge of Him, we will inherently live the Christian life as a religion and not as a relationship.

Another aspect is in the appropriation of truth. If we don't know God, we won't trust Him. If we can't trust Him, then we won't walk in and appropriate truth in our lives. Growing in the knowledge of God is THE foundation for the whole Christian life.

❖ **Read Genesis 1:1.**

The very first phrase of the very first verse of the whole Bible, gives us two very important truths about the attributes of God. First, is His Name.

- The Hebrew name for God in Genesis 1:1 is "*Elohim.*" The "*im*" ending is the plural form which means three or more, and thereby making reference of the trinity.

- The name "*Elohim*" expresses that God is the mighty and glorious Creator who governs the universe in omnipotence, sovereignty, and faithfulness. Therefore, He is to be reverenced and feared **(Daniel 6:26-27)**. This is how God has revealed Himself in the very first sentence of the Bible! Do you think He wants us to know Him?

- The importance of the doctrine of God's "*aseity.*" This means independence and self-existence. It is His existence that originates from and has no source other than itself.

One commentary wrote, "*In our life of faith, we easily impoverish ourselves by embracing an idea of God that is too limited and small, and again the doctrine of God's aseity stands as a bulwark to stop this happening. It is vital for spiritual health to believe that God is great, and grasping the truth of his aseity is the first step on the road to doing this*."

❖ **Read Psalm 95:1-7.**

<u>The Eternality of God</u>

It's amazing to consider the way in which the Spirit of God begins the book of Genesis. He introduces us at once to God in the essential fullness of His being and acting. There is no prefatory argument for His existence. We are just brought to God. We hear Him break in upon the quietness and darkness of the earth for the purpose of developing a place where He would fulfill His eternal plan of redemption **(Colossians 1:16-18)** in which He might display His eternal power and Godhead.

The very first sentence of the Word of God sets us immediately in the presence of Him Who is the infinite source of all true life and blessedness. There is no argument here for the proof of God's existence, for God reveals Himself. He makes Himself known by His own works.

He exists in a different way from us. We, His creatures, exist in a dependent, derived, finite, fragile way; but our Maker exists in an eternal, self-sustaining, necessary way—necessary, that is, in the sense that God does not have it in Him to go out of existence, just as we do not have it in us to live forever. We age and die, because it is our present nature to do that; God continues on forever unchanged because it is His eternal nature to do that. This is one of many contrasts between creature and Creator.

"*None but an infidel or an atheist would seek an argument in proof of the being of One who, by the word of His mouth, called worlds into existence, and declared Himself the All-wise, Almighty, and everlasting God. Who but God could create anything*?" C. H. Mackintosh

The eternality of God is extremely significant for us as believers today, for not only is God Himself eternal, but also this means that all of His attributes are eternal as well:

- He will always be holy.
- He will always love us.
- He will always be merciful.
- He will always bestow His grace upon us.
- He will always be omnipotent.
- He will always be omnipresent.
- He will always be omniscient.
- He will always be immutable or unchangeable.

Not only is God the Father eternal, but so is God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The fact of Jesus' eternality is very important for us, too! For it is upon His finished work that God's acceptance of us is founded.

Because Christ and His finished work satisfies God's justice for all eternity means that our relationship with God and His acceptance of us will be eternal as well. The fact that the Holy Spirit is eternal means that He will be faithful to carry out His role and ministry in our lives throughout eternity. Currently, while we are still on this earth, His role is to lead us into truth and make Christ the occupation of our hearts. We can absolutely expect Him to always be faithful, because He is eternal.

❖ **Read Genesis 1:1-5.**

God is the Creator. The first day God created the heavens, the earth and light.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth without any preexisting material, but it was His WILL that these things should exist ("Let there be…"). God formed all things in order with an existence that depended on His will.

Some notes to consider here:

- There really is a whole lot more to the creation account than we can understand. We cannot create a single thing without using some already existing material, and we can't fully understand how God can.
- To state that God creates out of nothing only confesses the mystery, it doesn't explain it.
- Space and time are dimensions of the created order and God is not "in" either, nor is He bound by either.
- The world order was not self-created, nor is it self-sustaining. Only God is.
- The stability of the universe depends on constant divine upholding. Without it, every creature of every kind would cease to exist.

❖ **Read Acts 17:25, 28.**

We need to pray that God will open our eyes to begin to grasp the wonder and greatness that He has revealed about Himself through His creative acts. For only then can we sincerely and whole-heartedly praise Him as the Almighty Creator.

God is to be trusted as the sovereign Lord, with an eternal plan that covers all events and destinies without exception. He has power to redeem, re-create and renew. The more we grasp and view Him as the Almighty Sovereign Creator, the more we will trust Him.

For us today as Christians, this is where godliness begins, with God the sovereign Creator as the first focus of our thoughts.

"The earth was formless, void, and darkness covered it." This phrase gives us the world's condition when God created it. It was covered with water, covered in darkness, and

had no life on it. It was without form because the water was not separated from the land, which would give it form, and this did not happen until day three.

It's interesting to note, too, that this previous condition of the earth is an accurate physical depiction of our spiritual lives before coming to Christ. We were "spiritually darkened" and void of any relationship with God and hope. Our lives were spiritually without the life God. **1 John 1:5** says that "*God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.*"

God created light.

When you really stop and think about it, in order to create light or anything else for that matter, God really didn't even need to speak a word. One of the ways that God reveals Himself and Who He is to us is by the way in which He refers to Himself. When you find a "name" for God that He uses over and over, you know it's important to Him that people know Him as such.

In doing a real quick search, I found at least 50 times throughout the whole Bible that God refers to Himself as "The LIVING God" (**Joshua 3:10**). We've seen other places in scripture where God describes false gods as not being alive. They have eyes but can't see. Ears, but they can't hear. Mouths, but they can't speak.

Therefore, it is no coincidence that before God creates anything, He includes the phrase "then God said…" He wants to make it crystal clear that He and ONLY HE is the all-wise, almighty, and LIVING God!

Again, Moses was writing Genesis to the Israelites just before they entered the Promised Land where they would be faced with many, many dead false gods. In this one act of creating light (not the sun, but light), God revealed His power, wisdom, knowledge, life, and love.

This physical act also acts as a picture of spiritual truth that God is also the source of all truth! For "light" is often used to symbolize truth in the scriptures.

Notice in verse 4 God states that the light was "good." God is of such supreme moral excellence and holiness that what He created was correct in every detail. What He did was based on who He is! Look at **Psalm 18:30**.

In verse 5, then, we see the fact that God made the day and the night. God divided the light and darkness on the earth so that, while half of the partially formed earth was in darkness, the other half was bathed in light. This began the cycle of day and night which we experience every 24 hours. This cycle of "day and night" will continue on to the end of time, for God is faithful and He is the sustainer of all things.

❖ **Read Genesis 1:6-8.**

<u>The second day, God created the atmosphere.</u>

God created the firmament. The firmament in these verses refers to the atmospheric space surrounding the earth. What we can see is only a fraction of the vast atmosphere that surrounds it. By merely speaking, God created earth's atmosphere and it was perfect.

❖ **Read Jeremiah 10:12; Psalm 19:1.**

Another thing that really stands out in the creation account is the wisdom of the order in which God created all things. It was appropriate and logical for God to first create light followed by the atmosphere—two of the main things that all living things would need in order to survive.

❖ **Read Genesis 1:9-13.**

<u>The third day, God formed the dry land and created all plant life.</u>

On the third day, God caused some of the water that still covered the earth to recede and dry land was exposed for the first time. This was when the original oceans were formed. God commands and the waters and the oceans obey Him (**Job 28:23-28; 38:4-6, 8-11; Psalm 33:6-9; 74:12-17**).

Not only did God prove His power and sovereign control over water in the beginning, but He continued to do so throughout scripture.

- He used the flood to judge the earth during Noah's time.
- He turned water into blood to prove His power to Israel and Egypt when they were slaves in Egypt.

- He parted the Red Sea and provided water from a rock in the wilderness.
- In Elijah's day, He withheld rain for two years and then allowed rain again at the appointed time for His glory.
- Jesus turned water into wine and calmed the raging waves in a storm.

God has used water over and over to reveal His power and might to mankind. Also on the third day, God created ALL plant life. God created a great variety of plants, trees, and fruit with an incredible diversity of color shape and size. It is estimated that there are over 500 categories of fruit alone.

I did an online search to get a number for how many different kinds of vegetables exist in the world and I got this quote: "*Currently, due to their sheer number there is no official list as to how many vegetables there are in the world. For instance, there are 4,000 varieties of tomatoes alone*."

Then you have a whole host of non-edible vegetation and vegetation that you can see and vegetation that you can't see. And each variety was created with the ability to reproduce after its own kind. Apple seeds will only produce apple trees. They will never produce corn stalks. God has never once had to go back and upgrade or repair any part of the plant life that He created.

The trees and plants that we have today come from those God created on the third day of creation. God is the master designer of all things. Science is a wonderful tool or discipline that God has given us which enables us to find out even more about His incredible wisdom and power and glory.

Take flowers, for instance. Every kind has an identifying pattern all of its own. Contained in the seeds of each flower are characteristics peculiar to its type. When these seeds are propagated, they will invariably produce flowers with the same petal, stem arrangement, and fragrance as the original ones. If you were to examine a flower under a magnifying glass, you would see patterns characteristic of its kind.

Then if you took a tiny slice of the petal or stem and put it under a microscope, you would discover still more orderly arrangement of cells peculiar to that kind of flower. This is just one tiny example of the fact that God is truly THE Master Designer. Things did NOT happen by chance. God created this

huge variety of plants and trees for a purpose. God existed before any plant life existed, so we know He didn't create these for Himself. God was preparing the earth for the human race.

He created a huge variety of plants that He knew we'd need to use for food. He also created a huge variety of plants and trees that He knew we'd need to depend upon for other things—heat, building homes, etc. Then there is another huge variety that He created for the simple reason that He knew that we'd enjoy the beauty and fragrance.

All that God created was good and perfect because He is good and perfect, and everything He does is a reflection of Who He is and what He is like.

❖ **Read Genesis 1:14-19.**

<u>The fourth day, God created the sun, moon, and stars.</u>

Let's add some perspective to this. If we were traveling at the speed of light (186,000 miles per second), we could make seven trips around the world in one second. At that speed, it would take four years to get to the closest star and 59,000 years to get to the end of our galaxy, and then another 750,000 years to get to the next galaxy.

The galaxy that we are in has more than 200 billion stars in it. One million of them are the size of the sun, which is just a medium sized star.

Astronomers estimate that there are as many galaxies outside the Milky Way as there are stars in it. The Hubble Ultra Deep Field, taken in 2004, imaged 10,000 galaxies in a cone of space so slim you could cover it with a grain of sand held at arm's length. Integrated over the entire sky, that would mean there are more than 100 billion galaxies in the visible universe, many with more than 100 billion stars each.

According to **Psalm 147:4**, God calls them all by name. Keep in mind that not only has God created this immense universe, but He also created all of the laws and physics that govern the universe.

The sun, moon, and stars also continue to follow their orderly patterns that God created them to follow from this fourth day of creation. See **Psalm 104:19**.

Look at **Isaiah 40:12**. The whole universe was created so that it was fully functioning in the way God intended it should throughout all time. It did not take many light years for the light from the heavenly bodies to reach earth. Their light was visible from planet Earth the moment God created them. Look at **Jeremiah 23:23-24**.

❖ **Read Genesis 1:20-23.**

<u>The fifth day, God created all marine life and birds.</u>

God created numerous kinds of aquatic creatures and birds of countless designs and shapes. The more man searches the ocean depths and the remote places of the earth, the more kinds of marine life and birds are discovered. Regarding the seas, a quote I found stated, "*Over one million known species of plants and animals live there and scientists say there may be as many as nine million species we haven't discovered yet*."

God created each living thing so it could only reproduce "*according to its kind.*" The phrase "*according to its kind*" is repeated ten times in the first chapter of Genesis. The DNA of each organism was created and programmed by God so it can only guide in the reproduction of the same kind. Although great variations within each "kind" are possible, the evolution of new "kinds" is impossible.

Even the tiniest, most ordinary creatures are God's creation and are incredibly complex. Listen to this quote: "*Molecular biology has shown that even the simplest of all living systems on earth today, bacterial cells, are exceedingly complex. Although the tiniest bacterial cells are incredibly small, weighing less than 10-12 grams, each is in effect a veritable micro-miniaturized factory containing thousands of exquisitely designed pieces of intricate molecular machinery, made up altogether of one hundred thousand million atoms. They are far more complicated than any machine built by man and absolutely without parallel in the living world*."

Our God is ALL POWERFUL and He made everything by His own great understanding.

❖ **Read Genesis 1:24-25.**

<u>The sixth day, God created the animals.</u>

God created an inconceivable number and variety of animals and He created each kind with unique characteristics and with the capability of reproducing only other animals of its own species. For a little more perspective, note this: The animal kingdom is divided into about 30 phyla. The nine largest phyla contain the majority of species. One phyla, the arthropods, which includes insects and spiders, constitutes about 75 percent of all known animal species. More than 900,000 arthropods have been described, and according to some estimates there may be more than five million more.

The number of known species for all animals other than arthropods is about 250,000. The largest group within the phyla of arthropods and the most diverse class in all kingdoms is insects. Over 750,000 have been described. Some suppose that there are perhaps as many as three million different species of insects in the world. The most diverse family of insect is beetles, with over 375,000 types identified.

Other large families of insects include butterflies and moths (more than 100,000 species), bees and wasps (more than 20,000 species), and ants (about 10,000 species).

With over 30,000 known species, spiders, which are not insects, constitute one of the large families of other kinds of arthropods.

Only two other phyla within the animal kingdom, the roundworms and the mollusks, are known to contain more than 100,000 species. All other phyla generally have far less.

The dominant phyla on the planet, the vertebrates, consist of less than 50,000 known species. The number of fish species is estimated to be more than 20,000, bird species number approximately 8,700, reptiles about 6,000, mammals about 4,500, and amphibians about 2,500. Within mammals, the rodents are the most varied order, with 34 families and more than 1,700 species.

Every act of creation revealed some aspect of God's glorious character. From this first chapter of the first book of the Bible, which covers the first recorded acts that God had accomplished, what are some of the attributes and characteristics of God that we have seen so far?

❖ **Read Romans 1:20.**

The more facts and details that we learn about God's creation, the more we will begin to grasp His greatness and wonder.

So, what does that mean for us today, a few thousand years after the event?

V. Lesson 5:
God Created Adam and Eve

Review Questions

1. **Who did God use to write the Pentateuch and for what purpose?**
2. **Why is it so important for us as Christians to know God and be convinced of what His heart is really like?**
3. **How does God reveal Himself in the very first sentence of the Bible?**
4. **What is the doctrine of God's aseity and why is it important?**
5. **The fruit of God's eternality–how does that attribute affect all the others?**
6. **What spiritual truth about us will confidence in the truth of God physically creating all things prepare us for?**
7. **In all that God created, He created it all with huge number, vast varieties, and unfathomable distances. Name some reasons for this.**

Introduction: The creation account tells us much about God. He allowed many facets of His character to be revealed through all He made because He intended for someone to appreciate Him and to have the capability to respond to Him. Today, we are going to look at the Genesis account and discover why God made man and how he was a special reflection of God's glory.

<u>God finished preparing the earth for man.</u>

Which of God's characteristics do you see in the fact that God created what people would need before He created them? His love and kindness.

❖ **Read Isaiah 45:18.**

Everything that man would need in order to live on the earth was completely prepared for Him by God. What does a young couple do when they are expecting their first baby? They spend a lot of time gathering things that the baby will need in preparation for its arrival. How involved is the baby in all of those preparations? In making decisions about what to buy and provide for the baby, how much do the parents consult the baby? NONE. The parents know what is best and they make all of the decisions. EVERY decision they make is motivated by love.

It's the same with God! God made all the preparations and a place for man. The place that He prepared was perfect

because God is perfect! Every decision was also made in love for those that He was going to create and for all of their offspring that would follow. This was all in preparation for the ultimate goal of the carrying out of His eternal plan of redemption.

Now as believers, we have the promise of another place that is currently being prepared for us.

❖ **Read John 14:1-3.**

<u>God planned to create man in His own image.</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 1:26.**

Who are the "us" and "our" in this passage? The Trinity. It appears that they were discussing their plan to create man. God planned to create man superior to the animals. Of all that God created on the earth, man would be the most important and He created him in His image and this in and of itself makes man superior to all the animals.

In our world today, we see many evidences of man's rejection of God and truth. Man was created superior to animals and yet look at our society today—many animals have more rights than unborn babies. This also gives evidence of how true God's statement in Genesis 8:21 really is, for mankind's perspective on what is "good and bad" is the exact opposite from God's.

So what does it mean to be created in God's image? Obviously, this is not referring to man's body being like God's, because God is Spirit. Rather, God was referring to that part of man that cannot be seen: man's **soul and spirit**. The soul and spirit of man were created in God's image, setting man apart from the animal world. Our soul is our mind, will, and emotions.

Being made in God's image means that humans share, though imperfectly and finitely, in God's **nature**. That is, in His communicable attributes (life, personality, truth, wisdom, love, holiness, justice) and so have the capacity for spiritual fellowship with Him. God planned to give man a mind with which he could think and reason.

Bottom line, God created man to be able to have a **relationship** with him. Therefore, God created man with a mind

that would enable him to understand what God wanted to communicate to him. This is one of the key points that sets God and Christianity apart from all other religions—the fact that God wants to communicate with us and have a relationship with us.

God planned to give man **emotions**. God has emotions. He loves, hates, feels sadness and joy, and in order to have a relationship with man, man would have to have emotions, too. Can you have a relationship without emotions? It's impossible! This is why God created man with a mind and with emotions—so we can know and understand Him, understand His love for us, and love Him in return. What is the number one thing that we as parents want from our kids in return for our love for them? Love. It's the same with God.

God also planned to give man a **will**. God has a will. He makes decisions and choices. Where have we already seen God make choices? Creation. When He created, He decided what every single thing would be like. God also planned for man to be able to make choices. Why is this significant? If we couldn't make choices, we would be like an object controlled by someone else. We'd be like a robot. When you get dressed each morning, do your clothes have any say in what you will wear? Do the contents of your fridge decide for you how you will use them in your next meal? Does your car determine the route you will take to work? Inanimate objects have no say in our decisions. They are controlled by us!

God could have made man without a mind, will, and emotions, but there never could have been a relationship had He done that. God did not make us like objects. He places a very high value on man.

Man was to be given a mind that could understand what God wanted to communicate to him, the intelligence to think through what God said; the ability to learn about His character and be able to communicate with Him. Man was also to be given emotions so he would be able to respond to God out of love for Him. See **1 John**—we love because He first loved us.

Lastly, man was to be given a will so he could choose to carry out God's will on earth, not as a robot, but as one who would listen to God, appreciate and love Him, and choose to obey Him. Man was created a rational, moral, and spiritual being, for he was created in the image of God. NOTE: God

didn't create man in His image for the purpose of man becoming "great and independent." He created man in His image so that man could intimately commune with Him!

God planned for the first man and woman to be the managers of His creation on earth.

❖ **Read Genesis 1:26 again.**

Of all of God's creation, man would have a unique position: He was to be God's representative on earth. He was to be the caretaker of the earth, even with authority over the animals. Man would be able to carry out this role, for he was created with a mind, will, and emotions.

This again testifies to the wisdom and orderliness of God. Just as He created everything that man would be dependent upon before creating man, so He also created man with faculties he would need in order to carry out what God wanted him to do.

God created the first man and woman.

❖ **Read Genesis 1:27.**

God created the first man and then, on the same day, He created the first woman. Later in **Genesis 2** we will focus on the details of His creation of Eve, but for now, we will focus on His creation of Adam.

God made Adam's body from the ground. When God created everything else, He simply spoke and they appeared. He formed all of the animals by a command to the earth to produce them. But when He made the first man, He personally formed man's body from the earth. Man's body was formed by the immediate intervention of God. It did not grow; nor was it produced by any process of development. Compare **Genesis 1:24** with **2:7.**

❖ **Read Genesis 2:7.**

After God had created Adam's body, he was still without life. Every part of him was perfectly formed, yet he was lifeless. His soul and spirit, which gave life to the body, were not yet created. What did God do to give Adam life? He breathed life into Adam's body. Man's soul was derived from God. He breathed into man "the breath of life," that is, that life

which constituted him a man, a living creature bearing the image of God. Upon God breathing life into Adam, he then became a living person. Only God can give life. He is the source of all life and He gave life to Adam.

Give the example of many electrical machines. Without power, they are useless and worthless. Electricity brings them to life so to speak. Our bodies are the same. Without life from God, they would be dead and worthless. This is an important foundational truth about God that provides a physical picture of spiritual truth. For just as it was HE Who gave physical life to Adam and Eve, So, He is the true and only source of spiritual life. Jesus said, "*I AM the way the truth, and the LIFE.*"

❖ **Read Genesis 1:27-28.**

God made only one man and one woman. God then commanded them to have children so that, in time, the world would be populated. God made the first man and woman managers over all life on earth.

❖ **Read Genesis 1:28-30.**

God gave man great responsibilities. In keeping with His plan, which we read about in vs. 26, God put Adam and Eve in charge of the earth and everything in it. He explained to them that they were to be His representatives on earth. Take, for example, a manager or a father turning a business over to a son. In the same way, God appointed the first man to be supervisor and caretaker of all that God had created on earth.

Why did God have the authority to give them this position and responsibility? Because He had created everything, and He had the right to do what He wanted with His creation.

❖ **Read Psalm 24:1-2.**

Because God created and rightfully owns the earth, He could entrust it to whomever He pleased. God, the Creator of all things, gave the earth to Adam and Eve. He had the authority to do this because He is supreme and sovereign. Everything God made was good.

❖ **Read Genesis 1:31.**

Why was everything that God made "very good"? Because God is perfect and good, everything He made was perfect. In the beginning, the climate was perfect. No animal would harm man. There weren't any thorns, thistles, or weeds to spoil the land. Everything was entirely without fault or flaw. Everything was created as a true reflection of God's holy character!

God's angels, including Lucifer, all witnessed God's creation of man. God's angels, including their leader Lucifer were watching when God prepared the earth and then made man. The angels sang together with joy, praising and worshiping God for His great power and wisdom which were demonstrated as He created all things (**Job 38:4-11**).

Conclusion

What we've studied today is a powerful reminder of how awesome God is. He's not some impersonal force, and we're not the result of blind chance or evolution. God lovingly created man and made ready a marvelous environment in which to welcome him. He lovingly created man for a relationship with Himself! So, this week, think about what these truths about God mean for us every day in our daily lives!

VI. Lesson 6:
God Placed Adam in Eden

Review Questions

1. **What was God's ultimate goal and purpose for creating the universe?**
2. **For us as believers today, what is the significance of God putting all the special care with preparing this world for man before He created man?**
3. **For whom did God prepare the world? Who was it that was talking together when God said, "Let US make man in OUR image"?**
4. **What does it mean that God created man in His image?**
5. **Why did God create man in His image with a mind, will, and emotions?**
6. **What responsibility did God give to Adam and Eve?**
7. **Who watched as God created man?**

Introduction: During the past number of weeks, we have been looking at the greatness and wonder of God and how if we really stop and look at His creation in more detail, we can really see His handiwork and begin to get a glimpse of the magnitude of His power and wisdom. God's creation is so vast and great that our minds can't even begin to comprehend all that the heavens hold. The earth, too, points to His greatness. We have these pretty colored finches that come and nest in a tree next to our kitchen window. Something as simple as a beautifully colored bird sitting on a dark green branch can just make you stare in wonder. How wonderful everything must have been in its perfection. Our all-powerful God left nothing uncreated, and He knew when He had finished.

<u>God finished His work of creation.</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 2:1.**

God finished creating everything that He had planned. This is a tremendous manifestation of the wisdom, greatness, and power of God. In six literal days, God had spoken into existence every single bit of creation that has ever existed.

The amount of variety that He created is so vast, that today, thousands of years later, man still hasn't discovered it all. Things that are so minute, we can't even see them without the use of powerful microscopes. Then at the other end of the spectrum, He created things that are so large, even larger than the earth, but they are placed so far away, that it's impossible for us to see them without the biggest of telescopes.

Yet scripture tells us that He can again measure it all with the span of His hand! ALL of this was spoken into

existence from nothing in six literal days. How long does it take man just to build one house?

Theodore Roosevelt and his friend William Beebe performed a ritual each night before going to bed. They would scan the night sky until they found the constellation, Pegasus. Once they located it, they looked for a small speck of light nearby and began to chant: *"That is the Spiral Galaxy of Andromeda. It is as large as our Milky Way. It is one of a hundred million galaxies. It consists of one hundred billion suns, each one larger than our sun." Then, Roosevelt would turn to Beebe and say, "Now I think we are small enough. Let's go to bed."*

God knew exactly ALL that He was going to create, and what everything would consist of—so much so, that He even knew when He had completed it. And He DID complete it. How many times do we as humans start something that we don't finish? But, God never does. He always completes what He starts. This is a very significant point about God that has tremendous application for us today as Christians.

❖ **Read Philippians 1:6.**

<u>God rested from His work of creation.</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 2:2-3.**

On the seventh day, God rested from His work of creating. As humans, we all need to rest after putting in a hard day's work, but, God is not like us. God never becomes tired.

❖ **Read Isaiah 40:28.**

The reason that God rested was because He had completely created all that He had planned to create. He finished creation. It's like us when we are working on a project. There comes a point when we are finished with the project. We have the energy to keep working, but we stop working on it because we are done with it.

Keep in mind God's plan from before the foundations of the earth (**2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:18-20**). This plan originated in the heart of God before the foundations of the earth, and then the time came for God to begin to carry out His plan, and He began with creation.

Once He finished this step of the plan, it was complete. This place where His plan would be carried out was complete.

❖ **Read Genesis 2:4-6.**

In all of the prior references to God up to this point, God uses the name Elohim, which means "The Creator" and it speaks of God's power and might. However, beginning in vs. 4, God uses the name Jehovah, Yahweh, "HE Who is," the self-Existent One, "I AM."

All through the Old Testament, there are many names that are used for God, all with specific meanings. This speaks of God's desire for mankind to know Him, to know what He's like and what His heart is like. Again, the whole reason for this is that He desires to have a relationship with us.

Notice in v. 6 that at that time, the earth was watered with a mist that rose up from the earth. At that time, there was no rain.

❖ **Read Genesis 2:7-8.**

Because of God's great love for Adam and Eve, He prepared a beautiful garden for them. Often, we all do really special things for one another as a way to show our love for one another. It was the same with God. Because of His love for man, He prepared a wonderful place for man to live.

The most exquisite botanical gardens in the world couldn't have held a candle to this garden that was planted by God Himself. He included in the garden all the vegetables and fruit trees that man would ever need. I believe He provided what they would need to survive but also included much else that He knew they would enjoy, for God is the giver of good things.

❖ **Read Nehemiah 9:25; Psalm 31:19; 103:1-5; James 1:17-18.**

<u>God put Adam in the garden.</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 2:8 again.**

When God had the garden ready for Adam, God didn't ask Adam if he wanted to live in it. He didn't say, "*Hey, this garden is wonderful would like to live in it*?*"* God placed him in

it. God had the absolute authority to place Adam anywhere He so desired. God is the almighty Creator and Owner of all of His creation.

But here's the thing—God's authority is never carried out apart from love! **1 John 4** says that God IS love! Therefore, absolutely everything He ever does is always done in love, is always perfect, and is always the absolute best!

<u>God planted two special trees in the middle of the garden.</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 2:9.**

God caused many kinds of trees to grow in the garden. Some would have been planted by God for the sheer pleasure and enjoyment of man, like flowering trees while others served more practical purposes such as providing shade or fruit and food to eat. I believe that God did the same thing that we do as parents. We provide not only what our children need but also things that we know that they will enjoy.

Among all those trees, though, we know that there were also two special trees: the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. I believe there are three main reasons why God placed those two trees there and gave the command to not eat from the one.

- First, God created man to be dependent upon Him. He didn't create man to be independent. They would have had to keep eating from the tree of life to live forever, and God wanted them to remain dependent upon Him to show them what was right and wrong.

- Second, remember that God created man in His image with a mind, will, and emotions in order to be able to have a relationship with man. Along with that comes the ability to choose to obey or choose to sin. In the true sense of being created in God's image, man had to be given the ability to choose.

- Lastly, remember God's plan from before the foundations of the earth that would be carried out through Christ. Without sin and a fall, there would be no need for a Savior.

"*Everything centers in Christ and radiates from Him to the bounds of God's created universe. Union with Christ is the*

heart of all the revealed thoughts of God concerning man and man's relationship with God." T. Austin Sparks

One of the main reasons why I believe the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was there was for the purpose that it played in God's plan is because of **Revelation 22:1-5**. In the new heaven and new earth, there will again be the Tree of Life, but the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil will not be there because sin, the fall, and the fulfilled plan through Christ has already been fulfilled.

Our entrance into the new heaven and new earth to be in God's presence for all eternity is another part of the result of the finished work of Christ. Our residence in the new heaven and new earth will be proof that God's plan was fulfilled.

❖ **Read Genesis 2:16-17.**

<u>God warned Adam that disobeying Him would result in death.</u>

Until this time, everything that Adam had experienced was only good for God had provided everything he needed. He had never seen death before. However, at this time, God made it clear that if Adam wanted to be independent of God and disobey Him by eating the forbidden fruit, then he would die.

When God told Adam that he would die, this meant three things:

- First, Adam would be separated from having a spiritual relationship with God. This means that Adam would become "corrupted" and would move from being God's friend to becoming God's enemy. His fellowship with God would be broken. The very reason God had created Adam in His own image was so that man could enjoy a relationship and fellowship with God.

- But if Adam disobeyed Him, that part of Adam that was made in God's image, his mind, will, and emotions would become marred and corrupted and thereby separated from God. Adam would die spiritually, and the wonderful relationship he had with God would come to an end.

- Secondly, Adam would die physically. This did not mean that Adam would die immediately that very

same day. It meant that Adam would be cut off from God, his source of life, and he would eventually experience physical death. When Adam's body would come to the point of physically dying, his spirit and soul would become separated from his body. It's a going back to what he was before God breathed life into his body.

- Adam's soul and spirit would eventually be separated from his body, but this would not be the end of his existence.

- The final aspect of death that Adam would experience would be eternal death. Having first died spiritually and then physically, Adam would then be separated from God forever and would never again have an opportunity to enjoy God's love and friendship. In and of himself, there would be no way for Adam to escape this judgment.

Adam's state would be like a branch that I broke off a tree this morning. Is the branch dead? It doesn't look like it. When did the branch begin to die? In order for this branch to live again, what would need to happen?

The same will be true of Adam and Eve if they choose to disobey God. They will become cut off from God, their source of life, and they, too, will begin to die that very moment.

VII. Lesson 7:
God Created a Wife for Adam

Review Questions

1. **What do we learn about God's character in that He finished all He planned to create? How is this significant for today as Christians? (Philippians 1:1)**
2. **What does the Bible mean when it says that God rested on the seventh day?**
3. **Beginning in Genesis 2:4, God refers to Himself by a new name. What is that name, what does it mean, and why is it significant?**
4. **Why didn't God consult Adam before putting Him in the Garden?**
5. **Why didn't God want Adam to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil?**
6. **What did God mean when He said that Adam would die?**

Introduction: God knows His creation intimately. When He made Adam, He knew what his needs would be and lovingly planned to meet them. In this lesson, we will see His incredible kindness in providing Adam with a gift like no other. Today, God has not changed. The same heart that we see in the way that He loved and took care of Adam, that's His heart today with us, too. Our problem is that we determine for ourselves what we want, rather than trusting Him to lead and provide.

<u>God decided Adam needed a wife as a helper.</u>

We have already learned that God created Eve on the same day He created Adam and the animals.

❖ **Read Genesis 1:26-27.**

Could you describe how God made Adam—formed his body from the dust of the ground and then breathed life into him?

❖ **Read Genesis 2:7.**

To this point, we haven't seen how God made Eve's body. The section of scripture we are going to study now explains why and how Eve was made. Let's first look at why God decided to create Eve.

❖ **Read Genesis 2:18.**

First, notice who it was that said that it was not good for man to be alone. It was God. Only God is all-knowing. He knows what is best and only desires to provide what is best. God didn't create man to be independent of Him. He didn't

want Adam to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and begin to independently decide for himself what is good and what isn't good. God is all-knowing and Adam wasn't. God knew what was best and He had planned to provide him with a female companion.

Next, the basis for God's decision was His love and wisdom. God loved and cared for Adam; we've already seen much proof of that. Adam was created in God's image with a mind, will, and emotions. He created us to be relational. For Adam to reach his full potential, in terms of experiencing the full realm of emotions and relationship that God created him to have, Adam would have to have a suitable companion.

Lastly, God wanted man to fulfill God's purpose for placing him on the earth. What purpose had God given to Adam? Adam was to be the manager over all living things on the earth. They were to fill and subdue the earth. In order for that to take place, Adam had to have a wife and children in order to bring about the human race. God wanted the human race to grow, multiply, spread out, and cover the earth, for He was going to be in the process of carrying out His plan that's been on His heart from before the foundations of the earth.

<u>God brought the animals to Adam to be named by him.</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 2:19-20.**

God gave Adam the responsibility of naming the animals. Since God had already given man the care of managing the earth, He gave Adam the responsibility of naming the birds and animals. Because Adam had a perfect mind, he had the ability to quickly and suitably name each of the animals. Why do you think God didn't just tell Adam what the animals were called? I think it was for a number of reasons.

- Man was created above the rest of creation and God gave him responsibility—almost making a type of "co-laborer" together with him. God made it very clear that His relationship with man was special.

- Through bringing all of the animals to Adam to name, God also gave Adam a clear display of His power, wisdom, and sovereignty. Through naming all of the animals, it became apparent to Adam that none of them were suitable to be a companion for him; none were created as he was, in the image of God.

❖ **Read Genesis 2:20.**

<u>Adam was created in the image of God. He was created to rule over all the animals.</u>

In order for Adam to experience the fullest potential of relationship with someone else, that companion must also be created in God's image. He needed to have someone who could interact with him and communicate with him on the same intellectual and emotional level. He needed someone who would share the same interests and enjoy the same activities that he enjoyed. Adam could do nothing to provide himself with a suitable companion. Only God could do that.

❖ **Read Genesis 2:21-22.**

First of all, only God could pull off such a feat! Nothing, nothing, nothing is impossible for God. He is absolutely ALMIGHTY! Like Adam, God created Eve in His image. She had a perfect mind, emotions, and a will so that she could communicate with Him and with Adam. Give thoughts on why God created Eve from Adam's rib. She was taken from a part of man to signify their oneness. Then the part that she was made from, signifies equality but under his protection and authority.

<u>Marriage was ordained by God.</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 2:23-24.**

God made Eve for Adam so they could live together as husband and wife and have children. Remember God's command to them back in **Genesis 1:28**? They were to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. It's very clear here that it is God who instituted marriage and the family. Just as He created all the animals as male and female, so He did with mankind as well. It's also very evident that He created the earth and all that it contains for mankind to live and have his being and for God to carry out His eternal plan on man's behalf.

<u>Adam and his wife were not embarrassed by their nakedness.</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 2:25.**

Adam and Eve lived together in total love and purity. Their minds had not yet become corrupted; therefore, they weren't embarrassed by their nakedness.

Conclusion

In all that we've looked at from the beginning until now, have you ever seen God do or say one thing that wasn't for man's best? You can go through the rest of every page of scripture and you'll never find one instance of Him NOT doing what is best for mankind.

God's heart is still the same today. He wants what is best for each one of us, but He won't force it on us. Why? Because His goal from the very beginning was a relationship. Rather than forcing what is best upon us, He will patiently wait for us to learn (the hard way) that we can't trust in ourselves and that we need to depend fully upon Him.

VIII. Lesson 8: Lucifer Rebelled Against God

Review Questions

1. **In every decision that God makes regarding the provision He provides for man, what is the basis for all of those decisions?**
2. **What was God's main purpose for commanding man to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth?**
3. **What may have been some of the reasons why God had Adam name all the animals?**
4. **In the way that God created Eve, a wife for Adam, name some of the things that event teaches us about God.**
5. **How can we be sure that God will only do what is best for us?**

Introduction: We all know that when God first created the world, the universe, and all that it contains, that nothing bad existed. Everything was in peace and harmony. There was no sin, sickness, sorrow, or death. We also know that, shortly thereafter, this beautiful tranquility all changed as the result of sin.

<u>The angels are created beings.</u>

We learned earlier that before God created anything else, He created the angels. We also know that He created them as spirit beings with wisdom and power to serve Him. We also know that because the angels are created beings that were created by God, they could never become God or usurp His authority.

We also know about Lucifer who originally God had created perfect like all the other angels. His name Lucifer meant "Morning Star." Referring to Lucifer, **Ezekiel 28:15** says, "*You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created....*"

We also learned that God had given an important position to Lucifer. It seems that his position was one of great authority and power over the other angels. For in **Ezekiel 28:14** he is called, "*the anointed cherub who covers.*" It seems that God had given Lucifer the closest position near His throne that could be given a created being.

<u>Lucifer rebelled against God, and other angels followed him.</u>

There are different beliefs regarding Lucifer and the angels and what their sin was. From putting **Jude 6** together with **Ezekiel 28**, it would appear that their sin was pride and disobedience.

❖ **Read Jude 6, Ezekiel 28:13-15.**

Their "first estate" or "principality" then refers to their original position of being under the authority of the Godhead. They became unsatisfied with God's will and placement for them and they aspired to be higher.

When you stop and think about it, there was no reason for Lucifer to rebel. He had been honored by God by being given the highest position over all other angels. He should have obeyed and served God. But from **Ezekiel 28:17**, it appears that Lucifer became proud of his beauty, intelligence, and position.

❖ **Read Ezekiel 28:17.**

From all of this, we also understand that though Lucifer and the angels were created perfect, they were also given a free will. Lucifer's rebellion was an act of his will—a conscious choice to oppose God. Lucifer wanted to be like God. He aspired to take over God's place as supreme ruler over all things. Look at what **Isaiah 14:12-15** says in reference to Lucifer's rebellion.

Lucifer was the first one to do evil, the first one to sin.

He decided to go his own way and not God's way. He wanted to be independent of God. He wanted to take over God's position. God planned for the angels to obey Him, to live to worship and serve Him. But because of pride, Lucifer rejected God's purpose, opposed Him, and became the first to sin.

We know that other angels also followed Lucifer in his rebellion. These other angels also made the decision to rebel against God rather than to continue to obey and serve their rightful ruler and Creator.

❖ **Read Matthew 25:41; Luke 8:30; Ephesians 6:12.**

God knew what Lucifer was thinking and planning. God knew that Lucifer had become proud and wanted to take the

place of his Creator. God is ALL-KNOWING. He knew all of this would take place even before the foundations of the earth were laid.

Isaiah 14:13 shows that God knew what was taking place in Lucifer's heart when it said "but you said in your heart." Nothing can be kept secret from God. Nothing can surprise God. He knows everything even before it happens. God is everywhere, sees everything, and knows everything. God is so ALL-KNOWING, that all of this has been a part of His plan from before time began!

❖ **Read Colossians 1:16-17 and Hebrews 4:13.**

God removed Lucifer and the angels from their position as God's servants.

Regarding Lucifer's rebellion, I want to make the point that it wasn't just a matter of God NOT allowing Lucifer to take His position. Rather, it would have been IMPOSSIBLE for him to take it. A created being could never become God! God is the "great I AM," the self-existent one Who existed from all eternity in majesty and completeness before anything was created. He lives by His own power, and He gives life to everything. He is absolutely sovereign and supreme! No one gave Him this position! It's who He is!

Lucifer could never be God because He is NOT God! He could not be God without God making him God, which in effect makes him NOT God! Being God is not like becoming King or President! People can be chosen or appointed to these positions and then begin to act as such. To be God you have to be self-existent and eternal. Therefore, it's impossible for a created being to achieve the state of "having no beginning," for he was created.

As a result of Lucifer and the other angels' rebellion, God stripped him of his leadership position and removed them all from heaven. God is perfect and just in everything that He says and does; therefore, He could no longer allow these rebellious angels to remain as His attendants in heaven.

We know they were kicked out of heaven and have become Satan and the demons. "Satan" means "enemy, adversary, and opponent." Satan's angels are called devils, demons, and unclean or evil spirits.

God prepared the lake of fire for Satan and his demons.

Even though Lucifer and the angels tried to rebel against God, it was impossible for them to escape His authority over them. In judgment, along with removing them from heaven and the positions that God had given them, God also prepared a place of punishment for them.

❖ **Read Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10.**

Even though **Jude 6** and **2 Peter 2:4** sound as if the fallen angels have already been cast in hell, we know from many other passages (mainly in the gospels) that demons are still very present. These passages show there is no hope of redemption for the fallen angels. I see these verses as speaking "positionally" regarding their judgment, much like we ourselves are positionally seated in the heavenlies at God's right hand.

Satan and his demons hate God and man.

Satan continues to war against God and man. Jesus referred to Satan as the "father of lies." He is a liar and a deceiver. Because God loves mankind, Satan hates us. The Bible is filled with numerous instances of Satan and his demons' activity here on earth as they try to hinder the work of God. **Job 1 and 2** speak of Satan "*going to and fro on the earth, and walking back and forth on it*." **1 Peter 5:8** says, "the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

Through the Old Testament after God has given promises regarding the coming Deliverer that He will come through Abraham's descendants, we see Satan over and over trying to destroy the nation of Israel. Through the gospels we see him trying to lead people to kill Jesus.

Satan is doomed to hell for eternity and he wants us (the objects of God's great love) to go there, too. BUT HERE IS THE THING: Christians talk about this battle between Satan and God; but from one end of the Bible to the other, name ONE instance where Satan was able to carry out his will over God's! Oh, from Satan's perspective, he's battling against God all right, but from God's perspective, there is NO battle whatsoever.

Satan tried and tried and tried to get rid of the Deliverer, but Jesus would just walk through the crowds

because it wasn't time yet. When it was God's time, God actually used Satan and a sinful human race to carry out His will and bring about the sacrificial death of the Son of God, and in so doing, paid for the sin of the world!

If one ant were to latch on to my big toe and try and drag me back to its ant hill, how much effort would he have to put into that feat? How much effort would it take for me to prevent it from happening? See **2 Thessalonians 2:1-9**.

Bottom line, we must keep "Satan's context" in clear view. We acknowledge Satan's reality, taking his opposition seriously, noting his strategy, and reckoning on always being at war with him. This is not a lapse into a dualistic concept of two gods, one good, one evil, fighting it out.

Satan is a creature, superhuman but not divine; he has much knowledge and power, but he is neither omniscient nor omnipotent. He can move around in ways that humans cannot, but he is not omnipresent; and he is an already defeated rebel, having no more power than God allows him and is destined for the lake of fire.

IX. Lesson 9:
Adam and Eve Disobeyed God

Review Questions

1. **In the eight lessons that you've studied thus far, name some things that have stood out to you.**
2. **What are some significant things that you've learned about God? What attributes of God have you seen so far? How are these attributes important in our lives today?**
3. **In lesson two, the statement was made, "*God is greater than any force in the universe. He is greater than everyone and everything, including the spirit world. There can never be any person or power superior to God. He is the supreme authority. The entire universe and everything in it, including all spiritual powers and all humanity are subject to God's authority and are completely dependent on Him.*"**
4. **In the last lesson that you studied about Lucifer and the angels, when Lucifer and some of the angels rebelled against God, was there any kind of a battle? How is this significant for us today?**
5. **Why couldn't Lucifer take God's place as God?**
6. **In the last lesson that you studied about Lucifer and the angels, when Lucifer and some of the angels rebelled against God, was there any kind of a battle? Absolutely not! God commanded and they had to obey! They could not reject or resist God's punishment. How is this significant for us today?**

Introduction: So God removed Lucifer from His presence, changed his name to Satan, and sentenced him to eternal punishment in the lake of fire. Did the fact that God sentenced and punished Satan change his heart at all? No, Satan still wanted to be God.

In order to understand this lesson, we need to remember the original instructions and warning that God had given to Adam when He put him in the Garden of Eden.

- **What two trees did God mention by name that He had placed in the center of the garden?**
- **What did God say would happen to Adam if he ate fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?**
- **What did God mean when He said that Adam would die?**

<u>Now God had placed everything in the garden that Adam and Eve would ever need.</u>

More important than all of the vast variety of fruit and vegetables that God had created for man was the fact that Adam and Eve enjoyed a perfect relationship with each other and with God.

This is usually the place where we state that Satan did NOT want them to stay this way—that he wanted to ruin all of

God's great plans for man. Though I believe that may be true, even more than wanting to ruin God's plans, Satan still wanted to be God. Man was currently in fellowship with God under His authority. To be God meant that man would have to be under his authority. Satan's attempts to mess up and ruin God's plans and will are really his attempts to still become God.

Satan had seen God create man. He had witnessed God appoint Adam and Eve as managers over the earth. Later he saw God's care for them as He provided all they needed in the Garden of Eden. Satan could see the love and care that God had for them. Satan was also aware of God's command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Because Satan knew that he had been judged and condemned to eternal punishment, he also wanted man to sin and be punished along with him.

❖ **Read Genesis 3:1.**

The temptation here is to focus on the serpent and whether or not animals could talk back then (for Eve wasn't surprised by a talking serpent). Think about it, Eve was just created not that long before. Every time she turned around she was seeing a different animal for the first time. She would have had no clue as to what to expect from any animal. The text seems to imply that Satan chose the serpent because of its appearance—that a talking serpent may have had a greater impression upon Eve.

And that is the real issue here, the fact that Satan disguised himself as something other than what he is in order to make his lies more believable. Eve was unaware that it was really Satan who was talking to her. Actually, at that point, Adam and Eve only knew what was good. They probably didn't even know that Satan existed!

Today, Satan is the same and his intentions are still the same also. Namely, he still seeks to deceive people by disguising his lies to make them believable.

Let me ask you, is Satan omnipresent like God? Can he lie and deceive the Pwo Karen in Thailand and seek to deceive you here in Winchester at the same time? No, but there are many demons that help him.

Again, all they can do is lie and deceive. The only way they are ever able to do anything more is by God allowing it. And if God allows it, then it's for a purpose!

Friends, remember when Jesus said to Peter, "Satan, get thee behind me." Today, Satan uses all kinds of ways to lie and deceive people.

- TV
- False religions
- Wrong teaching

❖ **Read 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.**

It's the degree of our knowledge of God that determines how deceivable we are. To the degree that we don't know God, to that degree will we have an inflated view of ourselves and our desires; i.e., we will want what WE want even more than what God may want for us.

This is the height of pride. We end up thinking that we know what is better for us than God knows. We become self-sufficient and trust in our own understanding. Was this how God first created Adam and Eve to be? To be self-sufficient, trusting in themselves? No, He created them to be dependent upon Him.

So let's read **Genesis 3:1-6**. There are a number of things going on here from Satan's perspective and that from Eve's.

- As far as Satan was concerned:
    - He still wanted to be God.
    - He wanted man (the object of God's love) to sin so that God would have to punish him.
    - He disguised himself, deceived Eve, and outright lied to her. He lied to her about God and also called God a liar!
- As far as Eve was concerned:
    - She didn't really know or believe what God had truly said.
    - She doubted God's goodness and love

- Because she doubted God's goodness, this caused her to doubt his word, which led to believing Satan's lies and committing sin!

Notice that Satan didn't grab a hold of her and force her to eat the fruit. It was her lack of confidence in God and His goodness that made her deceivable, which led to her sin. Had she not doubted God's goodness, she wouldn't have eaten the fruit and there wouldn't have been anything else that Satan could have done about it.

So, do you see the significance of this for us today? When we are tempted by sin, the solution isn't to focus on Satan and "pray him away" or whatever, but the real issue is our lack of knowing God! It's true that Eve didn't know that this was coming from Satan, but she didn't NEED to know. Had she been confident in the goodness of God, she would have recognized the lies. Notice that Eve was deceived by Satan, but Adam outright chose to disobey God's direct command.

It's also interesting to note that the nature of Adam and Eve's sin was the same as Lucifer's: wanting to be their own God, their own authority, and not live in dependence upon God. It's also in us today!

When you were kids, did you ever find it difficult to obey your parents or teachers? This comes from wanting to be your own god, just like Lucifer wanted back then.

So, did God have the right to rule over Lucifer? What about Adam and Eve? What about us?

Why is it that we often disobey the word of God? It comes back to not really being confident in who He is and what He is like. To the degree that we don't know God, to that degree will it be impossible for us to walk in truth. For we can't TRUST God if we don't know Him!

❖ **Read Genesis 3:7-8.**

Now God had said that if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that they would die. They didn't drop over dead, so did God lie? Was he just trying to frighten them into obedience?

Was Satan right after all? So, did Adam and Eve die? YES! Was it immediate? YES! Physical death wasn't evident in

Adam and Eve immediately upon committing their sin. They were still breathing and walking around. But that very moment they had died spiritually. Their souls and spirits, which were made in God's image, had become corrupted and separated from Him. They were no longer able to know, love, and obey God.

Also at that very moment they did die physically in the sense that the process of aging and death began to take place in their bodies. Then, upon their physical deaths, they would also become separated from God eternally with Satan in the lake of fire.

God isn't like we are. He doesn't make threats that He doesn't keep! Sometimes we make threats and forget or we threaten things that we can't possibly carry out, or we get lazy. But God is never like this! He always carries out and fulfills His promises. Adam and Eve had become enemies of God. God cannot have fellowship with those who disobey Him because He is holy and righteous. For that reason, Adam and Eve would no longer be able to enjoy the friendship they once had with God. They were originally innocent, pure, following the Lord. Now they had become corrupted and were under Satan's control.

Verse 7 proves this. Originally they were naked and unashamed. They were pure and innocent. They did not have any evil or sinful thoughts. However, once they had sinned, their minds became corrupted and for the first time they began to "know evil" and were therefore embarrassed.

The second proof is that they had tried to provide for their own needs. They were created to depend upon God for everything. Now they were depending upon their own ideas and abilities to cover their own nakedness—just as Adam and Eve depended upon themselves to clothe themselves and "fix" their problem.

Today many continue to try to make themselves acceptable to God through their own efforts, to fix their outward appearance. Can you think of ways that people try to do this today?

- Going to church
- Being baptized
- Giving money to church
- Doing something good for someone else

- Praying
- Reading the Bible

As hard as some people try to make themselves acceptable to God, all our attempts are useless!

The third proof of their becoming corrupt and separated from God was the fact that they tried to hide from God. This also is another proof of their not being confident in who God is and what He's like.

First they doubted His authority and goodness, now they doubted His omniscience and omnipresence. They really thought they could hide from God! Do you ever do that? Do you really believe that God knows and sees every thought of your heart?

Yes, we believe it, but do we live like we believe it? Before Adam and Eve had sinned, they were of one mind with God. Now they were of one mind with Satan. They could no longer know and understand God. There was no unity between them as they had once enjoyed. They were no longer His friends; they were now under Satan's control.

When God had first created Adam and Eve, were they afraid of anything? No.

They definitely weren't afraid of God—He was their friend. Everything in the world was good and beautiful. Sickness and death did not exist and they had no fear of any animals, for they were all tame and none would harm them.

But after Adam and Eve had sinned, they became afraid. Was it right or wrong for them to be afraid at this point? I think it was both. It was right in the sense that they had committed the one thing that God had warned them not to do. The thing which He said they would die for. Satan said that they wouldn't die and they believed him. Immediately upon eating the fruit though, I think they realized...uh oh, why do I feel like this?

God always does what He says. He punished Lucifer and the angels for their rebellion against Him, and He also punished Adam and Eve for their disobedience. God is faithful.

Look at all the fear that exists in the world today. It's all the result of sin and disobedience against God. Have you ever

done anything that you've tried to hide and keep others from knowing about? That's fear from disobedience.

I also believe it was wrong for them to fear, though, in the sense that I believe their fear of the punishment was a continuation of the doubting of God's goodness.

Even though they had sinned and forced God to have to punish them, it didn't change the fact of Who God is and what He is like. He was still good, merciful, gracious, and loving even in punishment!

I'd like to end with reading two passages:

- **Jeremiah 23:23-24**

- **Psalm 139:1-12**

When we sin, our natural tendency is to fear and try to hide it just like Adam and Eve did. But once again, we do this because we don't know God and we doubt Him, Who He is, and what He's like!

X. Lesson 10:
God Judged Adam and Eve, Cursed the Earth, and Promised to Send a Deliverer

Review Questions

1. **Why did Satan want to cause man to sin?**
2. **Why did Satan disguise himself when he approached and talked to Eve?**
3. **What determines how deceivable we are by Satan?**
4. **Was Eve deceived because she didn't realize it was Satan deceiving her or because she doubted the goodness of God?**
5. **What are things that Satan seeks to use today to deceive people? From Eve's standpoint, what was at the heart of her being able to be deceived? How was Adam and Eve's sin like that of Lucifer's? Were both Adam and Eve deceived into eating the fruit?**
6. **How did the state of Adam and Eve's relationship with God change after they disobeyed? What are some of the things that people do today to try to make themselves right with God?**
7. **After Adam and Eve had sinned, they became afraid of God and hid. Was this right or wrong for them to fear?**

Introduction: It is difficult to imagine, that in light of God's wonderful character, Adam acted independently of God. We often talk about the embarrassment of being naked and fearful when they hid from God as being the first signs of corruption from their sin. But I think the first new emotion that they felt after sinning had to be the horror of knowing that they had sinned, that they had eaten from the one tree that God had commanded them to not eat from. Up to this point, they had never felt the results of sin before.

<u>God called out to Adam.</u>

God loved Adam and Eve and came into the garden to be with them. Before they were separated from God, they enjoyed being with Him; but after they disobeyed Him, Adam and Eve tried to hide from God.

❖ **Read Genesis 3:8-9.**

When Adam and Eve were attempting to hide among the trees, we know that God knew where they were, for He is everywhere and sees everything and knows everything.

So, in view of the fact that nothing can be concealed from God, why did He call out, "Where are you?" God called Adam and Eve because He still loved them. Even though God was going to have to follow through with the punishment that

He had promised for their disobedience, He was giving them the opportunity to come to Him voluntarily and admit their sin.

God didn't call out in order from Himself to figure out where they were, but it was for Adam and Eve to realize where they were and to realize how their minds, wills, and emotions had also changed. He wanted them to recognize and admit their sin.

I believe that we have to keep coming back to the verses that we looked at in our first week, that from even before the foundations of the earth, this plan of redemption already existed in God's heart that would be carried out through Christ. Sin was already figured in long ago. So, Adam and Eve's sin didn't change God's plan, I think we have to say that it was actually fulfilling it.

In the same way that God was calling out to Adam and Eve to help them realize their sin, God does the same thing today. He still calls out to people today to help them see their sin and their need for a Savior. What are some of the ways that He does this? We know that He speaks through the things that He has created. As we have said many, many times already, creation reveals a number of God's attributes:

- His wisdom
- His power
- His love
- His authority and sovereignty
- His goodness and holiness
- His kindness

The more we learn about the vastness of God's creation, the more we can see and grasp His greatness.

❖ **Read Psalm 19:1-3**.

The beauty and expanse of God's creation should make us stop and realize that God, the Creator of all things, wants us to know Him.

God also speaks to us through His Word. God's word is His message to the entire world. Sadly, though, most only view it as a list of do's and don'ts. But really it's an autobiography that God has written in order to reveal Himself to mankind.

God questioned Adam.

❖ **Read Genesis 3:9-11.**

Here we again see God questioning Adam, and again, God was giving Adam the opportunity to admit his sin. Also from this we see God establishing the fact that He has absolute authority over all of His creation.

When Lucifer and the angels sinned, did God just let it go? No, they had to answer to God and submit to His authority. The same here was true of Adam and Eve, and it's true of all of us as well. One day, all mankind will answer to God. Because God is our Creator, He is our rightful owner.

❖ **Read Acts 17:25.**

Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the snake.

Adam and Eve didn't want to acknowledge their sin.

❖ **Read Genesis 3:12-13**.

Instead of admitting his guilt, Adam blamed God for giving him the woman. Adam was insinuating that if God hadn't given him the woman, he wouldn't have disobeyed.

Think back to the time when God first created Eve. God carried out that event in such a way so as to clearly manifest His love for Adam. Now, here's Adam blaming God and His great love for Adam as the cause of his sin! Wow, that is the height of arrogance and conceit. This is what our sin nature is capable of folks: "Well, you shouldn't have given me the woman"! Then Eve blamed the snake. Adam and Eve tried to avoid taking personal responsibility for what they had done.

This is a major problem in our society today as well. People inherently seek to avoid being held responsible for their sin and failures, sometimes even to the point of allowing someone else to be blamed instead. But in the end, no one can deceive God. Sin will not go unpunished. God sees and knows the truth about every person. No one can escape God's punishment by blaming someone else. God holds each person fully responsible for his own sin. Adam blamed God and Eve blamed the serpent, but God already knew the truth about all that had happened. Nothing is hidden from Him!

God cursed the snake.

❖ **Read Genesis 3:14**.

We are not told in God's word how the snake moved when it was first created before it was cursed, but it seems that it didn't slither along the ground as it does now. It was only after Satan used the snake to deceive Eve that God cursed it and caused it to move as it does now.

God promised to send the Deliverer.

Adam and Eve were now under Satan's control. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God and submitted to Satan's control, their relationship with God was broken. Their oneness with God was broken and they were now of the same mindset as Satan, and, because of that, under his authority and influence. Undoubtedly, Satan had to think that he had defeated God and gained complete control of the world. Yet we know that God is absolutely sovereign and almighty!

We have to keep running all of these stories and events through the fact of God's plan from before the foundations of the earth. Without that perspective, we will tend to view God as "reactionary" instead of "sovereign"; but because of that plan of God's to be carried out through God the Son, that was determined before time began. As soon as God cited Adam and Eve's judgment, He immediately gave the promise of a Deliverer.

❖ **Read Genesis 3:15**.

Along with giving the hope and promise of a coming Deliverer here, God also begins to point out some of the characteristics of His coming. God only gives a reference to Him being of the seed of a woman. He does not say the seed of the man and woman but only the woman. This is a reference to the virgin birth. The Deliverer would have to be born free of the seed of the man; otherwise, He too would be born with a sin nature.

God also gives the promise that the Deliverer will overcome Satan. God said that Satan would bruise the heel of the Deliverer, but ultimately, He would crush the serpent's head. The "head" symbolizes authority. When Adam and Eve

sinned, Satan gained power, authority, and influence over them. But here God is giving the promise that the coming Deliverer will overcome Satan, deliver people from his control, and restore them to oneness and harmony with God.

God also said that the Deliverer's heel would be bruised in the process. During the process of the Deliverer overcoming Satan, pain and suffering would be inflicted upon the Deliverer. Yet a bruise on the heel is not fatal; and, therefore, Satan won't win in his battle against the Deliverer.

Name some of the things we have learned about God, His character, or His attributes thus far.

- He's eternal
- All-powerful
- All-knowing
- Omnipresent
- Loving and kind
- Holy and righteous
- Hates sin and punishes those who rebel against Him

What characteristic do we see in the fact that God promised to send the Deliverer? God is loving, merciful, and gracious. Adam and Eve had disobeyed God and deserved hell. He didn't have to promise a Deliverer. But, again, GOD IS LOVE, and even His judgment and punishment is carried out in love! There could be no greater manifestation of the love, grace, and mercy of God all wrapped up in one event!

Also we can never forget that He had planned to carry out His plan of redemption through Christ before time began. God showed His love and kindness for Adam and Eve by giving all that they would need and more through creation. When they sinned, they deserved to go to hell; but instead of just sending them to hell, God gave the promise of a Deliverer. God showed His mercy by not sending them immediately into the lake of fire. He didn't give them what they deserved. Then God showed His grace by giving them what they didn't deserve, a Savior.

God said Eve would suffer because of her sin.

God told Eve that she would bear consequences because of what she had done.

❖ **Read Genesis 3:16**.

Her consequences would be pain in child birth and a desire to rule over her husband but that he would actually be over her in authority. This is where role reversals come from in marriages.

God said Adam would suffer because of his sin.

Adam would also have consequences for his sin.

❖ **Read Genesis 3:17-19**.

Satan deceived Eve and used her to lead Adam into sin. Even though Adam knew what God had said, he willingly listened to Eve and allowed himself to be persuaded to do what he knew was contrary to God's command.

Satan is a liar and a deceiver and this is how he works to tempt people to sin. Before Adam sinned, God had given him the role of taking care of the garden. Everything grew well without him having to work real hard at it. But when Adam sinned, God cursed the earth and it no longer was the perfect environment man had once enjoyed. His work would become toilsome because of his sin.

When God first commanded Adam to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, He told him that he would die. Now that Adam had sinned, God again reminds him of that consequence and says that his body will return to the dust of the earth.

We live in a world that suffers from the curse God put on it because of Adam's sin. We could sit here and lament the fact that Adam and Eve sinned and sent us all into sin, but instead our focus needs to be God and His plan of redemption. For none of this has caught God by surprise. His plan of redemption was on His heart before time even began. So that's where our focus needs to be.

Adam and Eve are the ancestors of all people.

As you know, all human beings descended from Adam and Eve.

❖ **Read Genesis 3:20 and Acts 17:26**.

When Adam sinned, he was separated from God. Because Adam died to God, or his relationship with God was broken, all of us, as his descendants, were born into that same state of separation from God with the sentence of death upon us. Just as apple trees produce apples and dogs produce dogs, so sinful mankind produces sinful mankind.

- **Read Romans 5:12**.

Conclusion

Sin brought many terrible consequences into this world. We live with those consequences every day and die because of them. Nevertheless, God is carrying out His plan. Nothing ever catches Him by surprise. The fall of man was another step in the process of God setting the stage for His plan to be carried out.

XI. Lesson 11:
God Provided Clothing for Adam and Eve and He Put Them in the Garden; Cain and Abel Were Born

Review Questions

1. **After Adam and Eve sinned, how did their minds, wills, and emotions change?**
2. **How does God call out today to help people see their sin and need for a Savior?**
3. **Who did Adam first blame for his sin?**
4. **After Adam and Eve sinned, how did their relationship with God change?**
5. **Name some of the attributes of God that we see God manifest about Himself through His interaction with Adam and Eve regarding this judgment.**

Introduction: We know that God is a righteous judge Who cannot tolerate or overlook sin. We have clearly seen this with Lucifer and the rebellious angels. They rebelled against God but could not escape the judgment, for God is a righteous Judge. After Adam and Eve had sinned, they had no hope of being able to "fix" themselves. Even though they had tried, it was unacceptable to God; but God, by His own initiative, demonstrated what would be required to restore relationship with Him.

<u>God provided clothing for Adam and Eve.</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 3:7**.

After Adam and Eve had sinned, they became aware that they were naked. Notice the progression that had taken place in Adam's and Eve's hearts. Because they had sinned, they became sinners. As sinners, their minds, wills, and emotions became corrupted. They were now self-centered, became embarrassed of their nakedness, and made the coverings to cover themselves. But we know that God did not accept their attempt to fix their problem.

❖ **Read Genesis 3:21**.

Why do you think that God didn't accept the fig leaves for covering? There were at least three things that God was teaching and/or preparing for. Right then and there in the lives of Adam and Eve, He was teaching them that their problem was much deeper than simply covering their nakedness. They had now become sinners who were separated from God. Realizing their nakedness was just a symptom of the real problem, so treating the symptom would not cure the problem. That was God's "IMMEDIATE" purpose.

God was also setting the stage for the future Nation of Israel to grasp the understanding that sin could only be paid for by blood.

Lastly, God was creating a physical picture of the future spiritual truths that would be recorded in the Epistles for the future church. Our sin has separated us from God. There is nothing we can do about it in and of ourselves. Only by God carrying out the plan of redemption that has been in His heart from eternity past can our sin be paid for and we be restored to oneness with Him. Through Christ's death and bloodshed on our behalves, God has now clothed us with His righteousness, thereby taking care of our sin problem and making us acceptable to Him. See **Isaiah 61:10**.

Man's only hope for being made acceptable to God is in God Himself faithfully carrying out His eternal plan of redemption. Throughout the history of the world, people have tried many different ways to make themselves acceptable to God. Some think that religious activities, attending church, being baptized, and giving to the poor will make them right with God. Others have totally done away with God and created their own false gods to appease on their own terms.

Yet there are still others who consider themselves to be a really good person and they believe that their own "goodness" makes them acceptable to God. But no matter how kind, religious, or self-sacrificing our efforts may be, they can never make us acceptable to God. Only the carrying out of His eternal plan of redemption through Christ can do that.

Have you ever thought about the fact that the first death of any animal was caused by God in order to shed its blood to cover the first sin and its results? Just two chapters ago, God had spoken all of the animals into existence and proclaimed them "good," perfect. In power and love and sovereignty did He create them.

Now, He had to kill what He had just created in order to deal with the sin of the one's that He had created in His image! WOW! This action was a much clearer manifestation of the love and grace of God than was His initial act of creating these things for man's enjoyment.

Death entered the world because of Adam's sin. God had placed Adam as the authority over the earth and all living things. Because he sinned, now every living thing would

eventually die. Through this physical picture, God was establishing or manifesting another spiritual truth: "The wages of sin is death." See **Romans 6:23**.

God had given Adam and Eve a command. They disobeyed it and became sinners separated from God. God then turned around and made them acceptable to Himself!

- It was God who killed the animals.
- It was God who shed the animals' blood.
- It was God who skinned the animals.
- It was God who clothed Adam and Eve.
- God was emphasizing that HE and ONLY HE can make sinners acceptable to Himself!
- God was also manifesting the fact that He is merciful and gracious. Up until this point, what of God's grace and mercy had Adam and Eve really seen?

<u>God put Adam and Eve out of the garden, away from the tree of life.</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 3:22-24**.

Before Adam and Eve had sinned, they were perfect and enjoyed a close intimate relationship with God. They were perfect in the sense that they were sinless—they only knew what was good, and their minds, wills, and emotions had not been corrupted.

The moment they sinned, all that changed. They became sinners, their minds, wills and emotions became corrupted, and their relationship with God was broken. Therefore, rather than their banishment being an act of "punishment," it was really an act of grace and mercy. For looking at the big picture from God's perspective, we know this all ends with us living in the presence of God, in the new heaven and new earth with no sin, sorrow, sickness, or death.

Therefore, it was much more gracious for God to banish them than it would have been for Him to allow them to eat from the tree and live forever in that fallen condition.

For us as believers today, in the church, God has given us the promise of **Romans 8:28**—He promises to work all things together for good for them who are called according to His purpose. God's interaction with Adam and Eve and His

promises and actions toward them through all of this are proof of His heart that is truly behind the promise of **Romans 8:28**.

❖ **Read Genesis 4:1**.

It seems very apparent that Eve believed God's promise in **Genesis 3:15** by the way that she responds to delivering a son. When she says, "*I have gotten a man from the Lord*," she actually believed that Cain was the promised seed of the woman that God promised in 3:15.

❖ **Read Genesis 4:2**.

When were these two sons of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, born? Before the fall or after the fall? Where were they born? In the garden or outside of the garden?

Because Adam and Eve had already sinned and been judged, Cain and Abel were born into that same state. They were born to sinful parents; therefore, they too were born sinners, outside of the garden, and separated from God. And not only Cain and Abel, but every single descendant all the way down to us here today. All of mankind is born into this same sinful, separated-from-God condition.

❖ **Read Romans 5:12**.

Not only were we all born sinners, separated from God, but we were also born into Satan's family. Even though it is God Who is the source of all life, this doesn't mean that we are born as children of God. If Adam hadn't sinned, we would have been born in God's perfect image, able to love, understand, and obey Him perfectly. But we know that Adam did sin and, as a result, Satan has taken God's place as our spiritual father.

❖ **Read John 8:44; Ephesians 2:1-2; I John 3:8, 10.**

If our frame of reference began only at Genesis 1, it could appear that Satan is having his way a bit here. He wanted to be God. His desire to get mankind to sin was ultimately another attempt at becoming God. He wanted mankind to be under his authority. And he got it. BUT, our frame of reference, **2 Timothy 1:9** and **1 Peter 1:18-20,** both tell us, began before the foundations of the earth with an eternal plan of redemption that already existed in the heart of the Godhead, and that would be carried out through Christ! Therefore, we

must conclude that the events and all of the ensuing results have all been a part of that God's great eternal plan.

XII. Lesson 12:
Cain's and Abel's Offerings

Review Questions

1. **God rejected Adam and Eve's attempt to remedy their nakedness. Name three things that He was teaching through this.**
2. **What is man's only hope for being made acceptable to God?**
3. **What action of God on Adam and Eve's behalf communicated more love and grace than did His creating all things for them to enjoy?**
4. **When God banished Adam and Eve from eating of the Tree of Life, how was that an act of grace and mercy?**
5. **In the record of Adam and Eve's fall, whose plans and purposes were being fulfilled?**

Introduction: One of the key attributes or characteristics of God that we are going to see over and over through the entire bible, is first, God ALWAYS communicates. And secondly, His instructions are ALWAYS trustworthy and clear. This is one of the characteristics about God that separates Him from the gods of all other religions. Our God loves us with a love that surpasses all knowledge, and proof of that is the extreme effort that He puts into making Himself and His word known to mankind.

Mankind, however, is extremely sinful and bent on disobedience, and even though God is explicit in what He says, man often defiantly rejects His wisdom and chooses death, which in turn reveals the grace and mercy of God all the more as He patiently reasons with and waits on those who flagrantly disregard Him. God is always waiting for people to listen and turn to Him from their wickedness.

<u>Cain and Abel both came to present offerings to God.</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 4:3-4**.

Cain believed in the existence of God just as much as Abel did. For if he didn't, he would have brought a sacrifice in the first place. But just believing in the existence of God didn't make Cain acceptable to God.

❖ **Read James 2:19**.

Cain was born a separated (from God) sinner just his father Adam had become. Therefore, his only hope was to come to God in the way that God had revealed.

Some people today think that just going through the religious motions of prayer and worship will make them acceptable to God, but we can't come to Him with our own ideas or theories for what is acceptable to Him. It has to be God's way.

Remember when Adam and Eve had sinned and tried to fix the results themselves? Remember how their own idea was unacceptable to God? In and of ourselves, mankind has no way of restoring our broken relationship with God. If God didn't intervene and make a way for Adam, Eve, Cain, Abel, and even us today to be restored in oneness to Him and thereby be made acceptable, we would all HAVE to die and go to hell! There would be no other option for deliverance.

BUT in His mercy, God did offer a way for them to come to Him. Now, Genesis 4 doesn't actually tell us that God had made it clear to them how they were to approach Him. But based on other passages and truths that we know to be true, I believe it's safe to say that God did indeed make this instruction clear to them. They would have had the testimony of God killing two animals to clothe their mother and father after they had sinned.

The point with this was that God clearly wanted Adam and Eve to be restored and made acceptable to Himself, for He was the One who did it! So it's very apparent that God WANTS man to know the truth regarding how to be restored to Him.

Secondly**, Hebrews 11:6** makes it clear that "it's impossible to please God without faith." Therefore, in order for Abel's sacrifice to be acceptable to God, it had to be made in faith—faith in the facts and not just a "wishful hope." Therefore, in order for Abel's offering to have been made with "faith in the facts," he had to have known what the "facts" were. God had to have made it clear to them how they were to approach Him.

Another indication that Abel was following God's instruction is that Abel brought "of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat" to God. Later on in **Leviticus 3:16**, we see that this was exactly what God had told the Israelites that they had to bring as an acceptable sacrifice.

So, to think that Abel thought up the idea himself of bringing a sheep and its fat is contrary to the whole emphasis

of scripture. God doesn't accept anything that originates with man.

And lastly, we know that in Noah's day, animals were already recognized or classified as those that were clean and those that were unclean. Therefore, it's very likely that in Cain and Abel's time, the animals had already been classified by God in this way.

If you look at Leviticus 11 and the emphasis that is put on the lamb sacrifice, surely it could not have been a coincidence that Abel chose a sheep to sacrifice—a clean animal which was the perfect picture of the sinless Son of God. See **Isaiah 53:7; John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:19-20**.

Therefore, based on these truths, we believe that God had clearly communicated to them the way in which they could be made acceptable to Him

- First, they would have needed to recognize their sinfulness, or they wouldn't have even considered the need to bring a sacrifice.

- Secondly, there had to be faith in the coming Deliverer whom God had promised would come back in **Genesis 3:15**. We know that that promise had registered with them by Eve's response to giving birth to a son in **Genesis 4:1**–"The man."

- Lastly, while they were waiting for the promised One to come, God instructed them to sacrifice a sheep that had been killed in such a way that its blood would be shed.

❖ **Read Leviticus 17:11** and **Hebrews 9:22.**

We know today that the blood of animals doesn't cleanse sin. But sacrificing a lamb was important for two reasons. It kept before them the fact that the "wages of sin is death," the very thing that God promised would happen if they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Disobey and you will die. And most importantly, it was a continual foreshadowing and pointing to the promised One, whose blood truly would cleanse us of our sin.

<u>God accepted Abel's offering.</u>

The real issue with Abel and his sacrifice was the fact that he BELIEVED God. Abel demonstrated his faith in God by coming to Him in the way that God had said (**Hebrews 11:4**). Abel obviously believed that he was a sinner or he wouldn't have brought a sacrifice. Abel also believed God's promise to his parents in the garden that the seed of the woman would destroy Satan and save man from Satan's power.

Faith that is acceptable to God is based on what God says. God was pleased with Abel's offering, for by FAITH, Abel believed God's promises and thereby did what God had told him to do. It is presumption and sin for us to think that we can approach God in any way other than by faith in what He has told us to do in His word.

❖ **Read Romans 14:23.**

Genesis 4:3-4 refers to Cain's sacrifice as "produce from the ground," and Abel's as being from among the "firstborn" of his flock. They say it was the issue of it not being from among the first fruits rather than the fact that it was produce and not a lamb. Either way, we can't lose sight of the real issue here. That is the fact that God truly provided a way for the sinful to be restored to oneness with God and be delivered from the penalty of sin. He not only provided the way, but He also graciously communicated it to man, so that mankind could receive eternal salvation. We can see God's love, grace, mercy, power, and sovereignty revealed all in one fell swoop.

<u>God rejected Cain's offering.</u>

God rejected Cain's offering because Cain thought he could come to God in his own way according to his own understanding. He did not approach God with blood of sheep as God had instructed them. What does it tell us about Cain? He didn't believe God! God will always reject those who try to come their own way. Because we are sinners, anything that originates with us is unacceptable to God. We must keep in mind the fact of God's eternal plan that was in His heart from before the world began.

Based on that fact, we know that God was very purposeful to make sure that all things were heading toward the fulfillment of that plan. He would NOT have left any of it up to man to figure out or do according to his own understanding. Only God can provide the way for people to be accepted by Him. We saw this clearly with Adam and Eve after they had

sinned, and now here we are seeing it again with Cain and Abel.

Doing a real quick search of the phrase "my salvation" through the Old Testament, God is referred to 32 times as "my salvation." God is our salvation! His plan of redemption has been on His heart from eternity past, and only through coming to Him His way will we receive it.

Cain refused to listen to God.

❖ **Read Genesis 4:6-16.**

This whole exchange between God and Cain reveals a few things to us about God and mankind both. Again, we see the faithful communication of God over and over. First He had made it clear what they were to bring in sacrifice. Then God somehow communicated to Cain that his sacrifice was unacceptable, for Cain was angry about it.

Then God communicates more with Cain, reasoning with him and imploring him to believe God the way that Abel had done. God also provides a warning to Cain of the "sin that is crouching at his door." Again, Cain disregards God and kills Abel.

God again approaches Cain and pursues him, asking Cain the same kinds of questions that He had asked Adam after he had sinned. The last we see of Cain, he is wandering off from the presence of the Lord rejecting His grace and offer of acceptance.

We should notice that it wasn't bringing the wrong sacrifice that led to Cain's judgment. It wasn't even the killing of his brother that ultimately led to his judgment. It was the fact that Cain had turned His back and rejected God's grace that ultimately led to him being judged. For Cain was already a sinner before he brought the wrong sacrifice or killed his brother. Remember? He was born outside of the Garden of Eden separated from God.

Cain's descendants followed Cain's example.

❖ **Read Genesis 4:16-24.**

Cain's descendants were brilliant people. They built towns, raised cattle, and made tools and musical instruments,

but they were not interested in knowing God. They followed Cain's example of rejecting God. Think about the terrible effect that unbelief had already had on the world at that time. Because Adam and Eve sinned, ALL of mankind was sent into sin and separation from God. Adam and Eve's first son Cain murdered his brother.

Cain turned away from God and would not listen to what He said. Cain rejected God and all of his descendants lived in rejection of God, too. In Genesis chapter 4, the human race has only been in existence for a few generations and you can clearly see the rapid decline away from God!

❖ **Read Romans 3:9-18**.

Without the divine intervention of God, man would be without ALL HOPE!

The birth of Seth.

❖ **Read Genesis 4:25.**

In the Garden of Eden, God had promised that He would send a Deliverer who would overcome Satan. From Eve's comment in verse 25, we can see a tremendous hope that she must have had in that promise that God had given them.

It seemed pretty apparent how excited she was back in 4:1 that maybe Cain was the one. Then, at some point, it became pretty apparent to her that Cain was not the one. She then must have thought that Abel was supposed to be the one, but obviously Cain had killed him. So, when Seth was born, again you can see the excitement for her hope in the promise was again renewed. Today, however, we know that Seth was the one through whom God planned that the Deliverer would come into the world.

With Seth's descendants, people once again began to believe God and worship Him.

❖ **Read Genesis 4:26.**

It can be tempting to focus on people at this point, and speculate about how, after what had happened with Cain and Abel, Adam and Eve may have raised Seth differently—or maybe at least did a better job of raising him to trust in God. But, the real issue here is the divine intervention of God! You

saw how bad things were rapidly progressing within just a few short generations.

But God had a plan of redemption and in spite of the sinfulness of mankind, He divinely intervenes, "stops the bleeding" so to speak, chooses to use Seth to bring about the line of Christ. At the end of chapter 4, the statement is men, "*then men began to call upon the name of the Lord*."

Without God's divine intervention and calling people unto Himself and creating that hunger to know Him within them, NO ONE would have ever turned back to Him! The eternal plan of redemption originated in God's heart before time began. The carrying out of that plan throughout history was ALL done by His divine intervention.

God left only ONE needed component for His plan to be carried out up to mankind……SIN!

XIII. Lesson 13:
God's Justice Demands Judgment on Sin, But His Grace Always Provides a Way of Deliverance

Review Questions

1. **Name some evidences as proof that God will have made it clear to Cain and Abel as to how to become acceptable to God.**
2. **Why was Abel's sacrifice acceptable to God and Cain's was not?**
3. **What is faith that is acceptable to God?**
4. **Through the Old Testament, how many times is God referred to as "my salvation"?**
5. **Which sin of Cain was it that ultimately led to his judgment?**

Introduction: Through all that we have studied thus far, we continue to see God faithfully showing that He only desires what is best for man. We saw this in creation and His wonderful provisions for man. We saw this in his warning to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We saw it in His immediate promise of a deliverer. He clothed Adam and Eve. It was communicated to Adam's offspring as to what kind of a sacrifice to bring. Even though Cain brought the wrong sacrifice and killed his brother, God still pursued him, reasoning with him, desiring him to repent.

<u>God's love and perfect desires for mankind are obvious, as we see Him pursuing man even in the face of persistent disobedience.</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 5:3-5**.

This is a very different picture from Genesis 1 and 2. There was no sin, death, sickness, or sorrow. They were living in the presence and fellowship of God, in the Garden of Eden with every need met, eating from the tree of life. Now they are separated from God, toiling by the sweat of the brow, experiencing sin, sickness, sorrow, and death. Here we see the third aspect of death brought about: physical death.

Through Genesis 5, we see the genealogy of Adam. Sometimes we know the names of different Bible characters without knowing who they were related to and how they fit into the big picture. But notice the emphasis that God puts on the fact that each of these people died! God specifically states over and over: "and he died"!

Over and over and over God is proving that He is faithful and that His promises will always be carried out.

*"But whence came this strange and dreaded thing—death? St. Paul gives us the answer: 'by one man sin entered the world, and death by sin' (**Romans 5:12**). Here we have the origin of death. It came by sin. Sin snapped asunder the link which bound the creature to the living God, and that being done, he was handed over to the dominion of death, which dominion he had no power to shake off. And this, be it observed, is one of the many proofs of the fact of man's total inability to meet God. There can be no fellowship between God and man, save in the power of life, but man is under the power of death; hence on natural grounds, there can be no fellowship."* C. H. Mackintosh

The result of sin led to three aspects of death: spiritual, physical, and eternal. Even with today's advancements in medicine and machines in an effort to support life, we all know without a shadow of a doubt that physical death is absolutely unavoidable! Somehow we seem to think that we can turn around and on OUR OWN avoid the other two aspects of death. The assuredness of our own inability to avoid physical death is a picture of the assuredness of our own inability to avoid spiritual and eternal death.

The people listed in Genesis 5 are the family line of Seth. From Adam to Noah, there were 10 generations. It was the people from Seth's line who seemed to be the main ones who continued to believe and look for the coming Deliverer that God had promised back in the Garden of Eden.

One of Seth's descendants was a man named Enoch. We know that Enoch also was born a sinner. But Enoch believed God and came to Him in the way that He had instructed. Because of Enoch's belief, he was led to live his life in fellowship and communion with God.

❖ **Read Genesis 5:22-23 and Jude 14-15.**

From this we understand that Enoch was a messenger or prophet of God in his day. Enoch not only warned the people of a coming judgment, but it is specifically stated that he prophesied about Jesus' return after the millennium when He returns with the "saints." Again, the grace and faithfulness of God is manifested and His continual pursuit of man and desire

for him to repent! But the majority rejected God's warnings through Enoch.

❖ **Read Genesis 5:24.**

It's interesting that in this chapter where God emphasizes the physical death of man, there is one man in the midst of it He chooses to intervene and take to heaven without experiencing physical death.

❖ **Read Hebrews 11:5.**

It appears that God was giving a physical picture here. In chapter 5, for man after man it's recorded that "he died," but one man, Enoch, God intervened and took Him.

God also made it clear that it was because of Enoch's relationship and faith in God and His promises that Enoch pleased God, and that is why God chose to intervene and take him. Just as it was only through faith that Enoch pleased God and he was allowed to escape physical death, so it is only through faith that man escape spiritual and eternal death as well. God was providing another faithful picture and witness to the truth, for He only EVER wants what is best for man.

❖ **Read Genesis 5:25-32.**

We know that Methuselah lived longer than anyone else, and here we see that his grandson was Noah. Ten generations passed from Adam to Noah. With each generation representing such a life span, assuming current population growth figures, is highly conceivable that there may have been as many as seven billion people living on the earth at that time. **Matthew 24:37-39** clues us in on what the people and their attitudes toward God were like in that day. Again, more manifestation of the Lucifer mindset.

❖ **Read Genesis 6:3, 5-11.**

In spite of the attitude of the people towards God in Noah's day, God loved them and desired that they repent and believe on Him. He did not want them to die.

❖ **Read Ezekiel 33:11**.

Put the fact that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked together with fact of **2 Peter 2:5**, which says that Noah was a "preacher of righteousness." We can be confident that once again, God was taking the initiative and offering grace to mankind.

But according to **Genesis 6:3**, how long would God's Spirit continue to speak through Noah to the people? 120 years. What characteristics of God would cause Him to patiently endure and continue speaking to the people for 120 years? Grace and mercy.

What would God's attitude be if the people refused to repent during this time period? He would no longer show mercy but would punish them.

The same way God's Spirit guided Noah to tell God's message to the people in his time, so also He speaks today through those who faithfully teach the Word of God. And as God lovingly and faithfully tried to warn the people of Noah's day, so He does the same today. Through the church (pillar and ground of the truth).

The same gracious, merciful, and loving God that was pursuing Cain after bringing the wrong sacrifice and killing his brother, continues to pursue sinful man in this day and age.

Even though God in His grace was exceedingly merciful, truly desiring man to repent to turn back to Him. We know that they did not. Instead of listening to the Spirit of God and admitting their sin, it actually says that they became even more sinful and violent. The last part of Romans chapter 1, describes the moral condition of people who refuse to believe God. Again, this emphasizes the fact of how impossible it is for man to escape any of the three aspects of death on his own. For what was true of the heart of man in Noah's time, was true in the time of Paul, and is also true of the people today.

While it may have been possible for the people in Noah's day to deceive and hide their sin from one another, it is evident that they could not hide their sin from God. God saw them, just as He had seen Adam and Eve eat the fruit, and just as He had seen Cain kill Abel. God was omnipresent then, and He is omnipresent now! He knows and sees every single minute detail of our lives, even before we carry it out.

The people were so wicked, and God's hatred of sin is so great, that He said that He was going to destroy them. Can you see in this how much God absolutely hates sin? In light of the way that we have seen God pursue sinful man, patiently extend grace, promise to send a Deliverer—for Him to come to this point is extremely serious.

I don't see Him doing it in the same attitude that I would have had..."okay, you don't want to listen, here's the punishment you deserve." Again, we also see the faithfulness of God to do all that He promises He will do. He promised Adam and Eve that they would die if they ate the fruit.

Cain and Abel knew how to approach God. Cain came according to his own understanding, and God rejected it.

Now for 120 years, God was continually warning the people to repent. He warned that He would punish them if they did not listen and believe. They refused to repent.

As humans, we are very used to people not following through with what they say. Many of us have done it as parents. But God doesn't make mere threats. He always does what He says He will do.

❖ **Read Genesis 6:8-10.**

We know that Noah too was born a sinner and was under Satan's control just like all the rest of Adam's descendants. He too deserved to be punished. But Noah must have responded to God the Spirit and agreed with God that he was a sinner deserving death. He trusted in God's promise to send a Deliverer, and because of His faith, brought the right kind of sacrifice.

Noah did not deserve to be saved. He didn't do anything to merit God's favor. Noah was saved by God's grace. We have another picture of God's grace, mercy, and intervention being man's only hope for escaping imminent death.

Again, this was the same as with Enoch.

❖ **Read Genesis 6:13-17.**

Every living thing on the earth would be destroyed except those who entered the ark. Noah had to follow God's instructions and build the ark exactly as He said.

We don't know exactly what the ark looked like, but we do know its specific dimensions that God had recorded for us. From the measurements given in the Bible, it has been estimated that the ark would have been 438 feet long, 72.9 feet wide and 43.8 feet high. The dimensions given to Noah by God for the ark he was to build were proportional to the huge ocean-going carrier ships that are being built in this century.

Until the mid-1800's, there was no ship built close to the ark's size. The *Great Britain*, the world's first iron-hulled, steam-powered ocean liner, was the largest vessel afloat when it was launched in 1843. It was 322 feet long, 51 feet at the beam, and 32 feet high from the upper deck to the keel. The ark was actually bigger than this vessel. It was God who had created the laws that control flotation. He had no problem knowing the perfect design for such a huge ship. The purpose of the ark was to float and to preserve life, and the shape and size were ideal for that purpose.

Many animals needed to fit into the ark, and God took that into account when He instructed Noah how to build the ark. In his book *Noah's Ark–A Feasibility Study*, John Woodmorappe tallied up about 8,000 genera of animals that would have been aboard the ark, meaning about 16,000 individual animals. Standard recommended floor space requirements for animals indicate that all the animals together would have needed half the available floor space of the ark's three decks.

The total capacity of the ark was approximately 1,400,000 cubic feet, which is equal to the volumetric capacity of 522 standard livestock cars such as used on modern American railroads. Woodmorappe said since it is known that about 240 sheep can be transported in one stock car, a total of over 125,000 sheep could have been carried in the ark.

The average size of land animals is less than the size of a sheep. Of all the animals aboard the ark, only about 11 percent of the animals would have been larger than a sheep, and it is probable that the largest animals were represented by younger specimens.

Bottom line, it wasn't left to Noah to come up with a blueprint for the ark. Everything had to be done according to the plan God had given him.

Man, has accomplished one thing for himself – DEATH. And the only way that any man can escape any of the three aspects of death is through the grace and mercy of God. When Adam and Eve sinned, God promised the only solution: a future Deliverer.

It was not left up to them to figure out. They tried to cover their own nakedness, and God did not accept it. He provided the clothing and He actually clothed them!! Again it was not left up to them. He rejected Cain's attempt to earn acceptance through his own reasoning. He pursued Cain and implored him to come His way, but Cain refused God's grace and therefore never experienced deliverance.

Enoch walked with God, and God intervened and delivered him from all three aspects of death. And now it would be the same for Noah. If he and his family and the animals were going to escape death in the coming judgment, the ark would have to be built exactly how God required.

It is extremely significant that there would only be ONE ark. This signifies that there was only ONE way for the people to escape the judgment. Then that ONE ark had only ONE door to enter through. Every person and every animal that was to escape God's wrath had to enter the ark through that ONE door!

Had Noah or anyone else in his day tried to come up with their own solution (like Adam and Eve did) it would have also been rejected. Only God is the supreme, sovereign, almighty Creator and owner of all of creation! Not only does He have the right to determine how man can escape death judgment, but He also WANTS us to believe Him and be delivered!

❖ **Read Genesis 6:22.**

Up until this time, it had never rained on the earth before! But even though Noah didn't understand WHAT rain was going to look like, he believed God!

❖ **Read Hebrews 11:7.**

Many people today refuse to believe because they haven't seen God or a place of eternal punishment. In contrast, Noah believed even though he had never seen rain. He believed it because it was God who said so!

Not only is this done today by unbelievers, but many believers are doing the exact same thing. Many struggle with really believing that they are who God says they are. This has real ramifications in terms of living the Christian life.

❖ **Read Genesis 7:1-5.**

Noah believed that God was going to destroy the world just as He said He would. Noah also believed that only GOD could save him and his family.

❖ **Read Genesis 7:6-15.**

Noah and his family and all the animals entered into the ark through its only door. There was no other way for anyone to go into it and be saved.

❖ **Read Genesis 7:16.**

Notice this verse says that GOD shut them in. God shut the door. God Himself shut Noah and his family and all the animals inside this place of safety and deliverance. They were safe because it was God Who had shut them in. This is a picture of John 10 where Jesus said "no one can pluck them out of His hand."

Not only was Noah, his family and the animals shut IN for deliverance, but all that had refused to believe were also now shut OUT for judgment. In this one act of shutting the door, God manifested grace and mercy, and at the same time judgment and hatred for sin. Only He had the right to shut the door! Only He can extend grace and mercy, and only He can judge sin!

For 120 years, these people had rejected God's grace. Now that it was judgment time, they were left with no other way of deliverance. God had shut them out, so it would have been impossible for Noah to have opened the door and let them in. This is similar to when God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden with no other opportunity to eat from the tree of life.

For 120 years, God had pursued these people through Noah; now He was destroying them. I can't imagine how it must have pained Him. When God decides it is time to judge and punish those who refuse to believe, there will be no escape from His wrath.

❖ **Read Genesis 7:17, 21-23.**

For 40 days and nights the waters rose until the tops of the trees and the highest mountains were all covered. Remember that in the beginning, the earth was covered with water. God separated the waters and placed it above the earth's atmosphere. It was this water that God caused to fall as torrential rain on the earth. Notice the last sentence in verse 23: "*Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive.*" Again, in the beginning, God promised death as the wages of sin! And again, we see the utter impossibility for man to escape any of the three aspects of death apart from the grace, mercy, and divine intervention of God!

Noah's only hope was to believe God and trust in His grace and mercy! It is exactly the same for us today; our only hope is to believe God and trust in His grace and mercy, period!

XIV. Lesson 14:
God Faithfully Delivered Those in the Ark, Just as He Had Promised; God Sovereignly Intervenes and Forces Mankind to Follow His Will at Babel

Review Questions

1. **What is the statement that God gives over and over in Genesis 5 while giving Adam's genealogy, about every man that proves God's faithfulness to His promises?**
2. **How did Enoch escape physical death?**
3. **What does this teach us about spiritual and eternal death?**
4. **How did Noah know how to build the ark?**
5. **What does God's closing the door on the ark teach us about Him?**
6. **How do we know that it was painful for God to destroy mankind?**
7. **What do we always see God offer before He brings about judgment?**

Introduction: As we have seen over and over and over, God is all-knowing! He is fully aware of our attitude toward Himself. All that reject His authority foolishly make themselves their own masters. It's that "Lucifer mindset" that we first saw with Lucifer. Then we saw Satan tempt Eve with it. We saw it in Cain and his descendants (especially Lamech), and we just saw it again in the lives of the people in Noah's day. In each case, God offered His grace and mercy, but eventually a day came when His tolerance and patience ended and He brought about judgment.

❖ **Read Genesis 8:1-4.**

God sent a strong wind, which caused the water covering the earth to slowly recede until the dry land appeared. Again we see the sovereign omnipotence of God revealed. He is the Almighty Creator, and He is fully able to control His creation. We see this all through scripture. "*He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow*." (**Psalm 147:18**)

❖ **Read Genesis 8:14-19**.

God promised to deliver Noah and those he took into the ark, and He did it! He said He would destroy everyone outside of the ark, and He did that, too! God is always faithful to do what He says He is going to do! He never changes, He is always faithful!

It is interesting to note that no matter where you go in the world, every people, nation, or tribe seems to have a 'flood

story." In most cases they are unwritten and passed down from generation to generation. Because they are unwritten, the details get twisted.

When I was teaching the Karen and they realized that many of their "legends" had partial truth in them, it was a clear testimony to them that Satan had deceived their ancestors and led them away from the truth.

We know that God was the only one that was a true eye witness. The account came about by His will, and His Spirit inspired men to write it down; He wants us to know the truth. God's Word is an accurate historical record.

❖ **Read Genesis 8:20-22.**

If you remember back in **Genesis 7:2-3**, God had told Noah to take seven of certain kinds of "clean animals," but he was to take only two of each of the others. God accepted the blood sacrifice brought by Noah, just as He had Abel's. Noah and his family came God's way, trusting Him. Because of His grace, God accepted them. So, why did God require them to bring the blood of animals? To remind them that the wages of sin is death.

Did the animal blood pay for their sin? What was it that actually paid for their sin? The same thing that paid for ours! By faith, they looked ahead to the coming Deliverer, and by faith, we look back to the Deliverer that already came.

❖ **Read Genesis 9:1-7.**

In the beginning, God gave Adam and Eve dominion over all animals. God gave this same authority to Noah and his sons. God is the sovereign Creator and Owner of all things; therefore, He has every right to do with His creation that He deems best.

❖ **Read Genesis 9:8-17.**

We know that God gave the rainbow as a reminder of His promise that He would never again destroy the earth by a flood. It's awesome to consider that every rainbow that we ever see is a continuation of the promise God gave to Noah and his family after they got off of the ark. God is faithful and can always be trusted. It's amazing, too, to realize that there are many tribal cultures that have some very twisted beliefs about

the rainbow, most causing them to fear it. It's become an object of fear to them instead of an object of hope and grace.

❖ **Read Genesis 9:18-19 again.**

All the people of the world came from these three men. This chapter is often referred to as the "table of nations." The ancestry of every person can be traced back to the nations listed in chapter 10.

Man has his explanations for how all the nations came about, but it is God Who has recorded the truth about this for us in His word. Apart from believing what God has written down in the word, man cannot arrive at the truth regarding these things.

❖ **Read Genesis 11:1-4**.

More than three generations have passed since God saved Noah and his family from the flood. Many people were now living on the earth. These descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, although they knew about God, the majority of them refused to even consider what God wanted. It appears that they didn't trust and believe God as Abel, Seth, Enoch, and Noah had done. If they really didn't care about their sin, then we can also assume that they felt no need to look to the coming Deliverer and offer the right sacrifices. Again, we see the "Lucifer mindset."

Let's consider what these people should have known and believed:

- What would they have known about God through the creation around them? That there is a Creator and He is powerful.
- What would they have known about God from hearing about God judging the world by a terrible flood? That He is just and He hates sin. Also that He is merciful and offers a way of deliverance. He is also faithful to carry out what He promises.
- What did they know about God whenever they saw a rainbow? That God is faithful and gracious. That He will never destroy the earth by flood again.
- Would they have known about the promise of a coming Deliverer? I believe so.

The city of Babel is translated in other parts of the Bible as Babylon. It was located on the Euphrates River, fifty miles south of the modern Baghdad in Iraq. Written Babylonian accounts record that the city was made by the same process of brick making as described in this passage in Genesis. Remnants remain in the Tigris-Euphrates plain that also reveal the burnt clay and the tar mentioned in the Bible.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary states that "each brick was inscribed with the name of the Babylonian god, Marduk." Marduk is another name for Baal, one of the false gods the people set up to worship instead of the one true God. Here they were, just three generations from Noah and not only were they disregarding God, they were actively worshipping false gods already! When God doesn't divinely intervene, look where man goes! He always becomes increasingly sinful! It shows us that the flood got rid of sinners, but not sin, which in turn is proof of everyone being born with a sin nature. **Romans 1** tells us how this progression takes place.

These people had no excuse for not believing and trusting in God. They deliberately turned away from what they knew to be true about God. These people aren't the only foolish ones, though; every culture has some kind of a religious system in place that is used to blind the minds and hearts of people to keep them from knowing the truth.

It's that same "Lucifer mindset"—man determining for himself "right and wrong"—and not being willing to depend upon and trust in God.

❖ **Read Isaiah 42:8.** This gives us God's view on it.

❖ **Read Genesis 11:1-4 again.**

One of the mighty leaders of this time was named Nimrod. And it seems that Nimrod was known for his ability to organize the building of many great cities (10:8-10). Do you remember God's command to Adam in **Genesis 1:28** and to Noah in **9:1**? Let's look at those.

- They knew God's command. God told them to multiply, spread out and fill the earth. They thought it better to congregate.
- Once again, they were making themselves out to be wiser than God. Instead of obeying God, they

deliberately disobeyed Him and sought to exalt themselves instead.

❖ **Read Genesis 11:5.**

God was fully aware of their plans. Even though they had deliberately dismissed Him from their minds, they could not escape from Him. Nor could they escape being held accountable by Him for their actions. God is not passive and unaware of us.

❖ **Read Proverbs 15:3.**

What did God do when Lucifer tried to take God's place in heaven? What happened to Adam and Eve when they disobeyed God by eating the fruit? What happened to Cain when he refused to bring a blood sacrifice and then rejected God's imploring to repent? What happened to the people in Noah's day when they refused to repent?

In all of them, we see the "Lucifer mindset." They set themselves up against God but lost. They all received their judgment, and now, here are these people seeking to exalt themselves by building a great city and tower. They chose to worship the sun and other heavenly bodies rather than the one true God.

So, what did God do?

❖ **Read Genesis 11:6-9.**

More than an act of punishment, I believe this was an act of grace and mercy. Had God allowed all of these disobedient people to remain together in one place, they would have become more and more evil and increasingly rebellious.

As we know, God confused the languages. The people could no longer communicate with one another, and they began to move away to different parts of the country. Over many years, they moved to other continents around the world, even traveling across oceans. The longer they were away from each other, the more their languages would continue to morph, and other dialects arise. In the end, God's will was brought about even though man was deliberately trying to do

the opposite. That is the greatness and the sovereignty of God. It is He Who is carrying out His plan!

❖ **Read Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3; Romans 3:11.**

Just in the first 11 chapters of Genesis, this is the main characteristic that we have seen from man: the "Lucifer mindset"—rejecting God, turning away, wanting to be their own god.

❖ **Read John 6:44.**

This is exactly what we see of God over and over and over. All of mankind is bent on destruction—running from God as fast as he can—no care, concern, or thought for God. Every thought and intent of the heart—only evil from birth. But God in His grace and mercy, divinely intervenes and saves man from his own self-inflicted destruction!

This is not just those people that we read about; it's US, TOO! Not one of us is here today because we are of a different "cut" than those in Noah's day, or Cain, or those at Babel! We were just like them and God has done the same work with us as He did with Abel, Seth, Enoch, and Noah! Without God's divine intervention, we'd all be doomed!

XV. Lesson 15:
In Preparing to Bring About the Line of Christ, God Chooses Abraham and Guides Him to Canaan

Review Questions

1. **Name some of the recurring themes that we have seen over and over so far.**
2. **What would the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth have known about God?**
3. **What did they worship instead of God?**
4. **What same command did God tell Noah that He had also told Adam?**
5. **What did they end up doing?**

Introduction: Back when God first created Adam and Eve, it is very obvious to us that God didn't create them to then just leave on their own to figure everything out but that He created them to trust, depend upon, and fellowship with Him. We have seen this same desire manifested towards people of every generation that we have looked at so far, and we know that it is also true of us today. The fact that God has given us the complete Word of God is proof of this.

Not only have we seen this desire for man from God, but we have also seen two basic types of responses from man. There have been those who trust, believe, and obey God, like Seth, Enoch, and Noah; and there have been those who have rejected God, His grace, and His call to repentance, like Cain, Cain's descendants, and Shem, Ham, and Japheth's descendants.

Now we are going to focus on God's call and interaction with Abram. Abram was another man who listened to and believed God, even though his circumstances could have influenced him to do otherwise.

❖ **Read Genesis 11:27-30.**

Abram was a son of Terah who was a descendant of Noah's son Shem. We know that in those days being childless was a disgrace. Based on the promised "earthly" blessings that God promised Israel in Deuteronomy 28, we understand that children were a sign of God's blessing; and when a woman was barren, it always seems to imply that there was a reason for it. In **Genesis 30:1**, at one point Rachel says to Jacob, "G*ive me children or else I will die!*"

❖ **Read Genesis 11:31-32.**

Ur was near to the place where the rebellious descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth started to construct

the tower of Babel. The ruins of Ur are in present day Iraq. So, it said that Terah had taken his family, including his grandson Lot, and they were headed to Canaan but only got as far as Haran.

❖ **Read Genesis 12:1.**

Notice here that it says HAD said to Abram. When was this referring to?

Look at **Acts 7:2-4**. I had never caught this before. I had always just thought that Abram lived among his family until God called him out and then he left them all. In a sense, this sort of puts the emphasis on Abraham's belief and faith in God. In actuality, God had called him out, but then God used Abram's father to get him going, so to speak.

To me, this puts the emphasis on God, His grace, and the tender way in which He leads His children. As humans we have these "frailties," which includes our fears, wrong motives, even wrong beliefs. Not only is God able to come in and lead us and guide us in spite of those things, but He can even use them to move us to where He wants us. Another aspect of this was that Abram didn't wake up one day and decide, *you know, I am going to leave my homeland, step out in faith, and follow God!* That isn't how this happened.

Abram did not know God; he was living among idolaters. God chose Abram. It was God who came to Abram and told him what to do. Then God even made it easy for Abram to follow His will by causing Abram's father to up and leave with his family and actually head to the place that God had told Abram to move toward.

This was another example of the GREATNESS of God, and not the great faith of a man. There was a progression to Abram's faith and belief in God that corresponded with God's revelation of Himself to Abram.

So, why did God do all of this? This verse says it, and we truly see it lived out here in God's interaction with Abram. God called a man from among an idolatrous nation, whose wife was barren. He led them to a land that was not their own and used them to raise up a nation through which the line of Christ would come! This has been His plan from before the beginning of time–see **2 Timothy 1:9.**

Folks, this is our GOD! How much of Abram's wisdom or righteousness had anything to do with any of this? NOTHING! It was all initiated and carried out by God! How much of Abram's "frailties" hindered God from carrying out His will? NONE WHATSOEVER!

Do you remember **Genesis 8:21**? This is God's assessment of all of mankind. From here on I think we continue to see God dealing with man in light of this fact! When every thought and intent of our hearts is only evil from birth, what are we able to depend upon ourselves for? This is why we continue to see over and over the divine intervention of God in spite of man's rejection, rebellion, and sin. It has to be this way. If it wasn't, NO ONE would get saved! So choosing Abram was the next step in God carrying out the fulfillment of His promise in **Genesis 3:15** to send a Deliverer, which He had purposed from eternity past.

❖ **Read Genesis 12:2-3.**

To me this reveals further that this wasn't about the great faith of Abram, but it was about the will and the grace of God. For God graciously communicates to Abram the great plans that He has for him.

It's the same thing we do with our kids when we know that they don't understand what is going on. We want them to trust us, so we give them some explanation as to why we are doing what we are doing. We give them a view of the bigger picture.

This is what God is doing with Abram. He explains that He is going to make him the father of a great nation. God promises to protect and prosper him and that he would become a man of great importance. God would prosper those who help Abram, and He would punish those that seek to harm him. Through Abram, all families of the earth would receive great spiritual benefit.

God had every right to just demand instant obedience without any explanation, but that would have made Abram's interaction with Him a religion, and God is after a relationship.

God, graciously and tenderly communicates to Abram the wonderful plans that God has in store for him, and folks, the same way that we see God doing this with Abram, that's the picture we need to have of Him in giving us the New

Testament. It's a gracious and tender revelation or communication of all of the great things that He has done for us, has given us, and that He still has in store for us!

God's promise to Abram in verse 3 is obviously the most important part of all that He promised: "*That all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him.*" This is a restating of God's promise to send a Deliverer. Again, this is God faithfully keeping the truth of His provision before man.

It seems we are seeing a bit of a pattern here with God. He told Noah that He was going to cause something to happen that Noah had never seen before, and Noah believed Him. Now, here's Abram with no kids and a barren wife and God tells him that he is going to be the father of a great nation. Just like Noah, Abram believed God.

❖ **Read Genesis 12:4-5**.

God faithfully brought Abram and his family to Canaan just as He promised. We know that from Haran, Abram continued to take his nephew Lot along. We also know the story that by this time, both Abram and Lot had become quite wealthy and had acquired much livestock and many servants.

❖ **Read Genesis 13:5-11**.

Here we see a difference in how Abram and Lot dealt with this situation. The text doesn't say, but by the way that Abram gave Lot first choice, it would seem that there was possibly a greater dependence upon the Lord on his part. God had already come to Abram, given him some promises, and Abram had seen that God had faithfully led them to where He had promised. Abram was beginning to know God.

Lot, on the other hand, went totally by sight. He looked at his options and made his decision based on his own understanding. To me, that is a result from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We seek to discern what is good and what is not good on our own without giving God a thought. So, Abram ended up getting the land that was rocky and less fertile and Lot moved down to the fertile plains near Sodom. In the eyes of man that can only perceive things from their outward appearance, it would appear that Abram got the worse deal here.

❖ **Read Genesis 13:12-13.**

The people of these cities were extremely evil and wicked. Although they didn't care about what God thought of their wicked lives, it didn't change the fact that He is their Creator and that He saw and knew all that they were doing.

It's the same with us today, God knows absolutely everything there is to know about us. We can hide nothing from Him. Sometimes it's easy to live life as if we think God doesn't see! Read **Ecclesiastes 8:11.** We think we are getting away with it.

XVI. Lesson 16:
God Renewed His Promises to Abram;
God Destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah

Review Questions

1. **What instruction did God give to Abram?**
2. **What did God promise to Abram about his descendants?**
3. **Who did God say would be blessed through Abram's descendants?**
4. **What are some of the key truths about God that we can learn from His interaction with Abram in the last lesson?**

Introduction: We know that NO ONE or NOTHING can ever hinder God's plans and purposes. God even takes the things that Satan or man tries to do to rebel against God's plans and actually uses them to bring about His plan. That's how sovereign and supreme God is! And from what we've studied thus far, I think we can all see that it has to be this way. God has to be sovereign, He has to be supreme, and He has to bring about His will regardless of Satan or man. Otherwise, there would be no salvation! All of us would reject God and die and go to hell! He has to be sovereign, He has to be supreme, and He has to divinely intervene!

<u>God gives Abram this promise.</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 13:14-17**.

Again, this is God graciously communicating the wonderful things He has in store for Abram. God is revealing Himself to Abram that He only desires what is best for Abram and that Abram can trust Him. In chapter 14 then, it's where four kings came and attacked the Kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, and those who were their allies.

❖ **Read Genesis 14:1-24.**

Abram hears about it, and he rises up, takes his 318 trained servants, divides them up and goes and whoops up on them and brings back all the people and the goods.

There are three main details that I want to bring out here that I think are in keeping with the major themes that we have been seeing to be true about God.

- First, you'll notice in verse 14 Abram's reason for going. It was because Lot had been taken captive.

Abram sacrificed and risked lives for the sake of one person and his family (albeit a relative). Later we will see that this is the same thing that God does. For the sake of one person (the same person) God holds off His judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah.

- Second is the fact of the grace that was manifested. Lot ended up in this predicament because he was self-centered. It would have been easy for Abram to say, "*Hey, you wanted the fertile valley, you got it. That's what you get.*" In Abram's eyes, it was his relationship with Lot and not Lot's actions that dictated his involvement.

  It's the same with us and God. The love, the forgiveness, the understanding, the acceptance, the grace, the mercy, the kindness, and the goodness of God that He continues to bestow upon us is no way determined by OUR actions. It's all the result of Him, Who He is, what He's done, and who we've become in Christ. God is faithful because of Who He is, not because of what we do.

- Lastly, notice what Melchizedek says in verses 18 and 19. We don't know a lot of details about Melchizedek other than Hebrews refers to him as a type of Christ in that he was King and Priest. Some say that this was a Christophany, an actual Old Testament appearance of Christ.

  From what he says here, though, it is apparent that Melchizedek was someone who knew and worshipped God. It's interesting, then, in verses 21 and 22 to hear Abram's answer to the King of Sodom when he tries to give him the "spoils." In verses 18 through 20, after Melchizedek's reference to God, in verse 21, we hear Abram referring to God in the same way. It seems that God is continuing to reveal to Abram Who He is. This is the first recorded place that Abram refers to God in this way.

❖ **Read Genesis 15:5-6.**

God made this promise to Abram before he had any children. Not only did they not have any children, but they

were also old. Sarai was beyond the age for having children. Again, we see another promise by God that only He could bring about, that only He could make happen! This is another theme we see over and over and over: God bringing about the impossible!

"For ever since the ruin of Eden, all creation has awaited its Savior, the promised seed that would one day restore Paradise. Season after season it has waited. Century after century. Millennium after millennium. The hope of such a Savior is a universal longing. In pagan myths an echo of that hope, however distant or muffled, can be heard. In ancient legends a glimpse of that dream, however vague or distorted, can be seen. Within Israel, the hope was more distinct. The dream, more vivid. It was the hope of every expectant mother and the dream of every pacing father. The dream of a Savior. And the hope that he would come soon. The Savior would come from a royal line. That much everyone knew. The line would originate with Abraham and branch through David. Yet despite how sturdy its trunk and how spreading its limbs, the Savior's family tree had its share of blight and barrenness, of bent twigs and broken branches. Abraham, for example. A man of faith. But a man who also lied, sending his wife into the arms of Pharaoh and putting the promised seed in jeopardy. And he did this not in one moment of wavering faith but on two separate occasions. And there was David. He was, the Scriptures tell us, a man after God's own heart. But he was also a man after other things. Bathsheba, for one. With whom he committed adultery. And for whom he committed murder. Rahab was a harlot, an unsightly knot on the family tree. Ruth was a foreigner, an unexpected graft, since marriages to foreigners were forbidden by Jewish law. Uriah's wife goes unnamed in Matthew's list, but she is Bathsheba. Another adulterer. Then there's the forked branch of Judah. And the twisted branch of Manasseh. And when we've gone through the entire line, we're left scratching our head, wondering. What are we to make of this tree through whose branches came the Savior of the world? What are we to make of all the sin, all the imperfections, all the failure? Simply this. That God's purposes are not thwarted by our humanity, however weak and wayward it may be. That he works in us and through us and, more often than not, in spite of us. That he works with us, as a gardener works with his garden. Lifting. Pruning, Watering. Weeding. Whatever it takes to bring it to fruition. Or however long it takes. This is our hope. That season after season he walks the uncultivated fields of each generation. His providential hands at work in the dark, cloddy soil. His careful eyes at watch over the growth.

Watching over the budding faith of the young and over the branching influence of the old. So that something beautiful may blossom from our frail and nubby reach for the sky." (Source unknown)

❖ **Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; 2 Corinthians 4:6-7.**

As impossible as it was for Enoch to avoid death on his own or Noah the flood on his own or Abram to defeat four kings with only 318 servants and Abram and Sarai to now have children on their own, it was equally impossible for us to redeem, justify, and sanctify ourselves.....BUT GOD! Just as God miraculously provided for them, so He has for us in Christ!

Abram was born a sinner with a sin nature just like everyone else, but verse 6 says that he believed God, and God credited it to him as righteousness. I think it's important to keep in mind here that, yes, Abram is referred to as a man of faith, but Abram wasn't called to have faith in anything that God didn't communicate or reveal to him.

The whole descendant thing wasn't like "*You know, I don't have any kids and this really bothers me, I believe that God will one day give me kids*." No, God came to him and told him what He was going to cause to happen in Abram's life, and Abram believed what God communicated to him.

Today, we have tons of people trying to believe things and have faith in things that God hasn't promised them! Rather than knowing God and having faith in His character, we try to have faith that He is going to do what we want Him to do! This means that Abram knew that he was a sinner, and he believed God's promise to one day send a Deliverer that would pay for sin.

❖ **Read John 8:56; Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:8.**

❖ **Read Genesis 15:12-16.**

God knew all that would happen to Abram's descendants before they were even born. God was again assuring and comforting Abram. He was again showing Abram who He is. This was not only for Abram's sake, but also for the sake of future generations.

❖ **Read Genesis 17:1-5.**

Abram meant “high or exalted father” and Abraham means “father of a multitude.” God again is revealing Himself to Abraham. In His grace He is providing further assurance for Abraham that His promise will be carried out.

I think He is also revealing His sovereignty. All of this was of Him. He didn’t ask for Abraham’s advice on anything...where he would live, how He would use him, or even what name he liked. God is sovereign, and Abraham was simply along for the ride!

Then God changes Sarai’s name.

❖ **Read Genesis 17:15-17.**

Sarai’s name meant “my princess” or “my lady” and God changed it to “princess of a multitude.” Notice that God promised that Kings would descend from her. At this point, Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 90, way past their child bearing years.

God is the source of life. After creating Adam and Eve, it was He that gave them life. It’s He that promised to send a Deliverer to free man from the penalty of sin and thereby receive eternal life. And here it’s He that promised to give an old barren couple a son!

All life comes from God! Every single person of the billions that have ever walked the face of this earth has received their life from God! Through all of these circumstances, God is making it crystal clear that this is all about HIM and His sovereign plans.

God would not tolerate the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. We learned in our last lesson that Lot, Abraham’s nephew, had moved away from Abraham to live on the fertile plain where there were two cities, Sodom and Gomorrah. The inhabitants of these cities were extremely wicked.

❖ **Read Genesis 18:20-21.**

Even though many people lived in the world at that time, God saw the wickedness of each person in Sodom and Gomorrah. And not just the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, God sees through every single person that has ever lived. All of us today, He knows every act, thought, and attitude of the heart of all of us. He is truly ALL-KNOWING!

This is another area where God is not like us. We are not all-knowing and even with our own children, there is much about their thoughts, attitudes, and sometimes even actions that we are not aware of. And that is with our own children who are living in our own homes, let alone EVERY SINGLE PERSON THAT HAS EVER WALKED THE FACE OF THE EARTH! The fact that God doesn't punish sin IMMEDIATELY causes many to believe that He is overlooking it. See **Isaiah 57:11 and Ecclesiastes 8:11.**

What God did in Noah's time is a perfect illustration. Although He lovingly and patiently waited 120 years for the people to repent, He eventually destroyed them in the flood. Not one of those who refused to agree with God escaped His punishment.

God's angels came to Sodom.

❖ **Read Genesis 19:1-3.**

You may remember that when Lot first separated from Abraham and moved to the fertile plain, it said that "he lived NEAR the city." According to these verses, it said that Lot was now living IN the city and was even sitting with the leadership at the city gate. Lot was now very involved with the people of the city. God sent two of His angels into the city of Sodom to warn Lot and his family that God was going to punish the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Did Lot "deserve" to be forewarned? Absolutely not. He, like the rest of us, deserved death, hell, and the grave. But God has set a pattern of bestowing grace upon those who believe and trust in Him. The way that Lot is referred to as "righteous" in **2 Peter 2:7-8** leads us to believe that he, too, believed God and was looking for the coming promised Deliverer.

The people of Sodom were exceptionally wicked.

❖ **Read Genesis 19:4-9.**

It's tempting to look at the homosexual actions of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah as being that which defined their wickedness, but actually the homosexuality was a symptom of a much deeper problem and that is the fact of the wretchedness of the flesh. From the day that Adam and Eve sinned, all we see from mankind is a continual desire to do the exact opposite of what God wants us to do. Adam and Eve

became afraid of God and hid from Him. God wanted to commune with them. Cain brought his own sacrifice and killed his brother out of conviction and jealousy. God wanted him to repent; he walked off in rejection of God's grace. God wanted to the people of Noah's day to repent, they rejected and were destroyed in the flood. God wanted people to spread out, multiply, and fill the earth. They gathered themselves together and built a tower to make a name for themselves. God called Abram out from among idol worshippers. God had created mankind to know and worship Him.

God created Adam and Eve as male and female and thereby instituted marriage between man and woman and the family. Now we see the men of Sodom and Gomorrah rejecting God's design, having sex with one another, and even wanting to have sex with these angels.

When God stated that "every thought and intent of man's heart is only evil from childhood," He wasn't lying or over-exaggerating! In the 19 chapters we have looked at so far, when left to himself, man goes his own way and becomes more and more sinful. The only time we see man "choosing" to do something right or pleasing to God is when God divinely intervenes and draws him to Himself.

❖ **Read Ezekiel 16:49-50.**

This passage gives us a little more information on what the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were really like. Sometimes, reading about how terrible some people can be, we may be tempted to have higher thoughts about ourselves than we ought to think: "How could they be like that?" "I would never do those things." But, God doesn't categorize sin as we do. All disobedience to God is sin, and the punishment for any sin is death. It doesn't matter what kind of sin you've committed or HAVEN'T committed; the source of all of our sin is the same, the flesh. It's what causes us to be born sinful and separated from God…or as **Ephesians 2:3** puts it, "born by nature children of wrath."

❖ **Read Genesis 19:10-23.**

God saved Lot and his family because of His mercy. He didn't save them because they were good. Even though Lot did not live a wicked life like others in Sodom, he, too, was born a sinner. Even though Lot apparently believed that he was a sinner and was looking to the coming Deliverer, it's interesting

to note that he didn't just up and believe the angels. In order for Lot to escape the judgment, the angels had to actually grab him by the hand and force him and his family to leave. WOW! Talk about a picture of the grace of God! This is the pattern that we've seen from God and His interaction with man even from the very beginning. WHY? Because man is so far "gone"—"*every thought and intent of the heart is only evil from childhood,*" that he is absolutely incapable of even remotely being able to escape God's judgment for sin.

In the same way the angels grabbed Lot by the hand and delivered him from the judgment, so that is exactly what God has done with us through Christ and His finished work. Salvation from the penalty of sin, from the power of sin, and from the presence of sin is all by the finished work of Christ.

A statement that I believe really discloses the heart of God and clearly pictures His grace and mercy as He divinely intervenes in our lives is the statement that the angel made to Lot in verse 22: *"Hurry, escape there, for I cannot do anything until you arrive there!*" I am not allowed to judge and destroy these tremendously wicked people until you are safely removed. I believe this is a pattern we see all the way through the Word of God and is exactly what we will see in regard to the great tribulation that comes in the book of Revelation. Before the judgment is released, like Lot, God will safely remove all believers through the rapture.

❖ **Read Genesis 19:24-25.**

After Lot was safely outside of the city, God rained down fire and brimstone on Sodom and Gomorrah. This would have been a tremendous fearful demonstration of God's terrible hatred for sin. This shouldn't shock us, for we have already seen God's hatred for sin demonstrated a number of times:

- When Lucifer and some of the angels rebelled.
- When Adam and Eve sinned.
- God rejected Cain's offering.
- God destroyed the world with the flood in Noah's day.
- God scattered the people at Babel.

God has not changed. The Bible makes it clear that God still hates sin and demands death as the penalty for sin. Sin must be judged! At the same time, He knows that every

thought and intent of man's heart is only evil from childhood. Therefore, He has provided EVERYTHING and has left NOTHING up to us!

❖ **Read Genesis 19:26.**

This may seem extremely harsh to some people, but this is our God! While on the one hand you have an absolute abundance of grace, as we see displayed in the life of Lot, at the same time we see a strict faithfulness to judge sin and disobedience. It's the same picture that we see in God sending Jesus down to pay for our sin. This was a radical abundance of grace to the point of giving His own Son to die for His enemies, but, at the same time, a strict, demanding, faithful judgment of sin to the point of punishing His own Son on our behalf.

XVII. Lesson 17:
God Gave Isaac and Delivered Him from Death

Review Questions

1. **If someone asked you "How sovereign is God?" how would you answer?**
2. **Why did God go out of His way and communicate His plan to man?**
3. **What causes God to bestow love, grace, and goodness upon us?**
4. **Over and over through the Old Testament, God does the impossible. How are these examples significant for us today?**
5. **Name some reasons why God may have chosen a barren couple and then waited until they were old to give them a child.**
6. **Name the main thing about mankind that has been proven over and over through the first 19 chapter of Genesis.**

Introduction: God wants us to know and trust Him, but we don't naturally put our trust in stranger, do we? Until we come to know a person's character, there is always that element of doubt. God knows that, so He has given us the Bible to show us Who He is and what He is like. The more we understand and accept what He has revealed about Himself through these Old Testament stories, the more we will be able to believe the promises that He has promised us throughout the New Testament. This is exactly the work that we continue to see God doing in the life of Abram. All the while God was using him to bring about the Nation of Israel and ultimately the line of Christ, God was at the same time revealing Himself more and more Abram and showing him Who He truly is. God fulfilled His promise to give Abraham and Sarah a son.

Sometimes we tend to view Abraham as this great man of faith. God commanded him to leave his homeland and go to where God would show him, and he immediately left and believed God. Well, as we saw a few lessons ago, it wasn't quite like that, was it? The same is true regarding God's promise to give Abraham and Sarah a son. Again, we can tend to focus on Abraham and think of him as this great man of faith who always trusted in and believed God. The truth is, though, growing in the knowledge of God and our ability to trust Him is a true growth process. Though we do have times of genuinely believing and trusting God, we also have many times of doubt and unbelief. Abraham was no different.

❖ **Read Genesis 20.**

Now, keep in mind that Abraham had just seen God enable his 318 servants go and defeat four kings and their armies, after which he himself proclaimed God as "The Most High God." Then, he saw God miraculously and graciously deliver Lot and his family from Sodom and Gomorrah before raining down fire and brimstone and bringing about its destruction. After seeing God do these great and mighty acts with his own eyes, you'd think that he certainly wouldn't have been afraid to claim Sarah as his wife, but he doubted and

couldn't trust God in this circumstance. In this one account, we clearly see who man is and Who God is.

Regarding Abraham, it's pretty clear that he doubted and couldn't trust God. Though, it was a semi truth in the sense that Sarah was distantly related to Abraham, still his intent was deceit. Not only was he deceitful, but he was perfectly willing to allow Sarah to be taken by Abimelech to be his wife. It would appear that Abraham was so concerned about himself, that he totally lost sight of God's promise to give him and SARAH a son. Abraham in his unbelief was jeopardizing God's promise.

Regarding God, God reveals a lot about Himself through this interaction. First of all, we see His sovereign, divine intervention to protect His "eternal plan of redemption," and in that sense, His promise to Abraham never really was in "jeopardy."

There are three human characters in this account: Abraham, Sarah, and Abimelech. In all three of them, we see them living and functioning in light of the truth of **Genesis 8:21**—"every thought and intent of man's heart is only evil from childhood." Abraham doubted God, took matters into his own hands, and was willing to send Sarah into Abimelech's arms.

Sarah on her part was willing to go into the arms of another man. Abimelech proclaimed his righteousness to God in verses 4 and 5, but God set him straight in verse 6 when He said, yes, I know that you didn't touch her, but "I also withheld you from sinning against Me."

Had God left the carrying out of His plan up to the faithfulness of mankind, His plan would have been ruined over and over and over. God Himself stated that "every thought and intent of man's heart is only evil from childhood" and we see Him working and intervening in light of that fact.

Not only do we see God's sovereignty and omnipotence as He divinely intervened, but we also see His grace and mercy. Abraham's unbelief didn't affect God's ability to still carry out His plan, nor did it change God's desire and willingness to use Abraham and Sarah IN His plan. Not only would God continue to use them in His plan, but right then and there God listened to and answered Abraham's prayer on Abimelech's behalf.

Here was a man whose every thought and intent of his heart is only evil from childhood; he doubted God and couldn't trust Him, yet God uses his prayer to heal Abimelech, his wife, and his servants! Folks, this is a picture of us Christians and God's interaction with us and the way He uses us in the lives of other people. Not one of us deserves to be used by God for anything, but in His grace He does.

❖ **Read Genesis 21:1-3.**

Though many years had passed since God first promised to give Abraham a son, God had not forgotten. God always does what He says He will do. Sarah had a son just as God had said she would. Abraham and Sarah named him Isaac. Again, keep in mind that Sarah was 90 and Abraham was 100. From the very beginning, God has been working in ways to reveal His glory and attributes to mankind, as well as the fact that all of this is about HIM CARRYING OUT HIS PLAN! Over and over and over, He orchestrates circumstances that only HE can cause to happen.

But before God brought about the birth of Isaac, we can't forget about what took place with Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar back in chapter 16. Abraham and Sarah, due to the circumstances of their ages, took matters into their own hands and tried to fulfill God's promise of a son according to their own understanding. Once again, just as it was the last time that Abraham wavered in unbelief, it didn't derail God's plan or His faithfulness. It also didn't change the fact that God was going to use Abraham and Sarah and still give them their own son. This again emphasizes the sovereign grace of God, as well as the fact that man is so desperately sinful, that the only way that God can use him in His plan is by God continually divinely intervening.

One last point before moving on to chapter 22. You will notice in verse 33 that Abraham here refers to God as, "The Everlasting God." This is another new reference to God on the part of Abraham. It continues to show his progression in growing in the knowledge of God.

<u>God commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 22:1-2**.

At this point, many years had passed since Isaac was born and he was now a young man. A couple of things point to

this fact. The Hebrew word used in these verses for “son” or “lad” is the same word that is used in other places to mean “young men.” One of those places is the very next verse; verse 3: “Abraham took along two of his young men.”

Also is the fact that Isaac was strong enough to carry enough firewood for the sacrifice up the mountain. He couldn’t have been a little boy. Lastly, according to Josephus the Jewish historian, Isaac was about 27 years old when this event took place. Considering that Isaac was the “son of promise” and was greatly loved by his parents, and given the fact that he didn’t come along until they were 90 and 100 years old, can you imagine how Abraham’s heart must have sunk when he first heard God’s command?

Hebrews 11:17-19 clues us in a bit on what was going on in Abraham’s mind and heart at the time. First, notice how verse 19 begins with the word “concluding.” This implies that there was struggle going on in Abraham’s heart about this command from God. He probably had all kinds of questions going through his mind, but it says that he concluded with—being that God had already “raised him from the dead” in the sense that He gave him to us when it would have been physically impossible to have him, therefore, God is able to raise him from the dead again.

The temptation is to look at this interaction between God and Abraham as God testing Abraham to see if his love and respect for God was greater than it was for his son Isaac. Though there may have been something individual and personal that God was working to bring about in the life of Abraham regarding his relationship with God—not only for Abraham and his relationship with God, but also as an example for all who were to come. I believe, though, the real purpose for this was much bigger and far reaching.

We need to keep coming back to God’s eternal plan of redemption that was on His heart from before time began. Therefore, the intentionality of God in all that He has been doing up to this point has all been for the purpose of carrying out and fulfilling that plan. Of all the people on earth, Abraham was the one He chose to bring about the line of Christ, the Nation of Israel, the people through whom the Deliverer would be brought into the world. Abraham was an idol worshipper who didn’t know God. He was married to a barren wife. God waited till they were 90 and 100 years old to give them Isaac. And now here, God told him to go and sacrifice him.

First of all, God was making it absolutely crystal clear to all to come that this was all about Him carrying out His plan. We have seen so many absolutely impossible things happen; there is no way anyone could even remotely think any of this was done by man.

Lastly, because of God's purpose in choosing Abraham and giving him Isaac, God was giving a "type" or a physical picture of the promised One to come and what some of the specifics would be regarding how He would fulfill the eternal plan of redemption.

Abraham believed God.

This "struggle" that God caused to take place in the heart of Abraham was an important struggle for Abraham. It's also a struggle that God allows us to experience today as well. The struggle was regarding the fact that God had asked Abraham to do something that he didn't understand. It appeared to Abraham that God was going back on His promise. I am sure there was much of this that didn't make sense to Abraham. In the end, without understanding "WHY," Abraham had to just settle on the facts of WHO God is and what God is like. Abraham had seen God's faithfulness, His power, His sovereignty, and had never seen God do anything that wasn't for his good. Therefore, like we already read in **Hebrews 11:19**, Abraham "concluded" that even though he didn't understand what God was asking him to do, he knew he could still trust Him because of Who He is and what He's done in the past.

God is doing this same thing in our lives today as well. God isn't asking us to sacrifice our children, but He still allows circumstances to come into our lives that we don't understand. Sometimes we know He is asking us to do something we don't want to do or we don't understand why. In those cases, like Abraham, we MUST "conclude" that God is always good, faithful, omnipotent, and promises to work ALL things together for our good. We've got to get to where we can trust Him simply because we are confident in Who He is and not because we understand the "why's and what's" of the circumstances.

I think it's also interesting to note the growth you can see in the life of Abraham. Early on he didn't know God and couldn't trust Him. He lied about his wife and he and Sarah tried to bring about God's promise of a son according to their own understanding; but here we see a willingness to sacrifice

that son, believing that God will still fulfill His promise. This is an obvious progression in Abraham's knowledge of and trust in God.

Abraham and Isaac went to make the sacrifice.

❖ **Read Genesis 22:3-8.**

Isaac, no doubt, had witnessed many animal sacrifices. Knowing that they were preparing to make a sacrifice to God, he questioned his father because he could not understand why they hadn't taken a lamb with them. Obviously, Abraham hadn't told Isaac yet what God had instructed him to do. I love Abraham's answer: "*My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering*." WOW! Talk about a physical picture of future spiritual truth! Abraham had totally abandoned himself to the sovereign will of God.

❖ **Read Genesis 22:9-10.**

Isaac's situation here—tied up, laying on an altar with a knife about to come down on him and sacrifice him—is a physical picture of the spiritual condition that every single one of us was born into. He couldn't untie himself or deliver himself from being sacrificed.

Unless God provided a lamb substitute to die for Isaac, Isaac was going to die. We have already seen this pattern a number of other times. The people in Noah's day who did not believe God, once God had shut the door, there was nothing they could do to deliver themselves from the imminent judgment. Noah, his family, and the animals were all delivered from the flood because God had provided a way for them. When it came time to judge Sodom and Gomorrah, there was nothing that the inhabitants could do to deliver themselves. Lot's wife was also judged with no way of delivering herself because she had rejected God's warning. Lot and his daughters on the other hand were escorted out to safety, even though Lot kept arguing and dragging his feet.

Because "every thought and intent of the heart" of EVERY human being is "only evil from childhood," unless God divinely intervenes, it is impossible for us to deliver ourselves.

God provided a ram to take Isaac's place.

❖ **Read Genesis 22:10-13.**

Here we have God continuing to add to the "type" or the physical picture of future spiritual truth. Abraham looked to and relied solely upon God for a substitute sacrifice for his son. God, on His own initiative, provided a substitute to die in Isaac's place.

The substitute met the criteria for what would constitute an acceptable sacrifice. See **Exodus 12:5**; **Leviticus 5:18**. Isaac was removed from the altar and the ram was placed and sacrificed there in his stead. This was a clear physical picture of the future coming Deliverer Who would become the "Lamb of God."

God reaffirms His promise to send the Deliverer through Abraham's descendants.

❖ **Read Genesis 22:14-19.**

Notice how Abraham's reference to this location was in light of Who God is and what He had done in Abraham's and Isaac's lives through this incident. Again, life is about God, Who He is and all that He is doing as He continues to unfold His eternal plan of redemption if all of our lives today. How do we view the circumstances in our own lives today? As "The God who provides"?

This act of God providing a substitute for Isaac is as significantly referred to in history (as a type of Christ) as the Passover is! In order to bring this about in Abraham's life, God first spent a great deal of time revealing Himself to Abraham, causing him to grow in his knowledge of and ability to trust in God.

XVIII. Lesson 18: Finding a Bride for Isaac

Review Questions

1. **Why is it so important for us to know and believe what God has revealed about Himself through the Old Testament?**
2. **What does it record of Abraham doubting God in chapter 20?**
3. **How did Abraham's unbelief affect God's using him in His plan?**
4. **Why does God continue to orchestrate events that only He can carry out?**
5. **Name a clue that reveals the fact that Abraham was growing in the knowledge of God.**
6. **How do we know that Abraham didn't understand God's command to sacrifice his son?**
7. **Why did Abraham go through with obeying God's command?**
8. **What is the significance of Abraham's statement to Isaac that God would provide himself with a lamb for the offering.**

Introduction: We know from God's word that in this current "age," God is calling out from among the nations a people for His name (Acts 15:6-17). References to this body of believers from scripture include the Church, the Body of Christ, God's holy temple, a royal nation, and a holy priesthood to name a few. The one reference we want to focus on today is God's reference to the Church as the Bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:1-2). Throughout the Old Testament there are many physical pictures of future spiritual truth that was eventually contained in the New Testament. Some of these examples we have already seen in the lessons we've covered so far and others we haven't come to yet:

- **God clothing Adam and Eve**
- **Noah's Ark**
- **The ram that God provided to die in Isaac's place**
- **Israel's position at the Red Sea.**
- **Leading Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land.**
- **The rock in the wilderness**
- **The brazen serpent on the pole**
- **Genesis 24, where Abraham sends out his servant to find a wife for Isaac, provides a very clear physical picture of God's calling out a bride for Christ.**

<u>Part 1 – The Father and His Purpose</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 24:1-4.**

First, notice that the plan to find a wife for Isaac began in Abraham's heart. A wife may have been on Isaac's mind, but all God chooses to reveal to us here is that it was Abraham who

initiated the finding of Isaac's bride. Just as the plan to find a wife for Isaac began in Abraham's heart, so the plan to establish the church and call out a bride for Christ began in the heart of God before the foundations of the earth. See **Romans 16:25-27; 1 Corinthians 2:6-9; Ephesians 1:4; Colossians 1:26-29; 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:18-21.**

Second, it was also Abraham who determined when the time was right to send out his servant to find a wife for Isaac. So, also it was God the Father who determined when the time was right to begin the process of carrying out His eternal plan of redemption (which He began with creation). From creation in Genesis to the creation of the new heaven and the new earth in Revelation, it is God Who has determined the perfect time for all things.

We have clearly seen this in the life of Christ through the gospels. Abraham wouldn't have sent the servant out to find Isaac's wife had Isaac not yet become an adult. He didn't find him a wife while he was still a child; i.e., there was an appropriate time. Just like that, once Jesus had completed all the work that God had sent Him to do, God then sent the Holy Spirit down into the world to call out a people for His name to become the bride of Christ. See **John 14:26.**

Next, notice that Isaac's wife couldn't just be any woman from anywhere. She had to be a woman who, by Abraham's standards, was suitable for his son. Just like that, those who make up the bride are those who have been made suitable for Christ through faith in His finished work. His finished work that He did FOR us makes us suitable in terms of our position or origin. But it's His divine work that He does IN us that makes us suitable in terms of our relationship with Him.

❖ **Read Genesis 24:5-9.**

Two times Abraham warns the servant to never take Isaac back to Mesopotamia where he came from. Abraham was making it very, very clear that this is very important. At what point did God send the Holy Spirit down to begin calling out the bride? After Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. After Jesus was already in heaven. Jesus will not be brought back to join us here on earth, but one day we will be raptured and taken out of this world to go and be with Him.

"The Holy Spirit is not here to prosper the Christian in business, or to make us wealthy men in the world, or to make

the world a comfortable place for us. He is not here to remove the curse, or hush creation's groan. He is not here to make the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose. He is not here to remove pain, and death, and sorrow, and tears. All this Christ will do in a day yet to come. Nor is He here to convert the world as some think. He is here to bring to light a people who are suited to Christ for the joy and satisfaction of His heart." Hamilton Smith

"Again the people of God may entertain great hopes from the mission field. With thousands of missionaries working in all parts of the world, they had hoped that the strongholds of heathendom, Buddhism and Mohammedism would be broken down before the light of Christianity, and yet they find these false systems are hardly touched, and they are disappointed.

Others again have entertained the thought that after nineteen centuries of the light of Christianity, the world would be morally better, and instead they have to admit that never was society more corrupt, lawlessness so prevalent, and unrest so general, hence they are disappointed. If however, we abandon our own thoughts and rise up to God's thoughts we shall not be disappointed. Our expectations are often times too limited, our outlook too circumscribed. We think of the present moment and look only at things seen. Let us however, 'look beyond the long dark night and hail the coming day'. Let us see to what great end God is working, so that, out of the wreck and ruin of this world, He shall secure a Bride that will be suited for the love of Christ. What a thought, that the Spirit of God is here to form bridal affections in the hearts of believers in view of the day - the great day - the day of the marriage of the Lamb!" Hamilton Smith

<u>Part 2 – The Holy Spirit and His Work</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 24:10-26.**

In speaking about the servant, notice what it says of him in verse 10: "*All the goods of his master were in his hands*." What a picture of the Holy Spirit and His role and ministry among us today

❖ **Read John 16:12-15**.

"*He will take of mine and reveal it to you*."
"*He will lead you into all truth.*"
"*The Spirit will tell you whatever He receives from Me*."

Another verse that clearly speaks to this role of the Holy Spirit is **1 Corinthians 2:12:** "*To reveal to us the things that God has freely given to us.*

Another important thing to notice about the servant was the fact that he went out in total dependence upon God. His role was not to choose just any girl and then work to make her suitable for Isaac. His role was to find "the one" that God had appointed for Isaac. If you read Jesus' prayer in John 17, you will notice that eight times, Jesus refers to His disciples and future followers as "those that You have given Me." Folks, God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, views each one of us (that have accepted Him as our Savior) as being given to Him by God the Father!

Next, notice that the moment God brings Rebekah to the servant and reveals to him that she is the appointed one, immediately the servant adorns her with a nose ring and bracelets, thereby distinguishing her from all others. Compare with **Ephesians 1:13**. The moment any of us accepts Jesus as our Savior, that very moment we become "sealed" by or with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwells us, thereby marking us as now belonging to God.

After marking Rebekah as the appointed one, the servant asks if there is room for him to lodge at her father's house. Notice that he didn't force his company on her. The servant had a lot that he wanted to tell Rebekah about Isaac in order to awaken the affections in her heart for Isaac, but he wasn't forcing it on her.

At this point, Rebekah knew nothing about Abraham and Isaac. Just like that, for many of us, at the time of our salvation, there is really very little that we know about God the Father and God the Son. Just as the servant wanted to tell Rebekah more about Abraham and Isaac, so the Spirit is desiring to reveal more and more about God the Father and God the Son to us; but like the servant, He won't force it on us.

❖ **Read Genesis 24:28-49.**

Upon entering the house, the first thing the servants want to do is to speak about Isaac and his father Abraham. In a sense, the servant was "glorifying" Abraham and Isaac by showing and declaring their wealth. In **John 16**, Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes, "*He will glorify Me.*"

First, the servant speaks of all of the wealth of Abraham. Then he speaks of Abraham's son and says in verse 36, "Everything that my master owns will all become his." This is exactly how it is with God the Father and God the Son.

- **John 16:15 –** "*All that belongs to the Father is Mine*."
- **John 17:7 –** "*Everything that I have is a gift from the Father.*"
- **Romans 8:16-17 –** Made "*joint heirs*" with Christ.

This is exactly what the servant was saying. All that is Abraham's will become Isaac's. If you marry Isaac and become one with him, you will become a "joint heir" with him.

❖ **Read Genesis 24:50-60.**

Upon receiving Rebekah and her family's approval, the servant then pulls out jewels of silver and gold and expensive raiment to give to Rebekah. The servant awakened affection in Rebekah's heart by first telling her about Isaac and his family. Then when she agreed to go and become his wife, the servant then adorned her with riches and beautiful things that came from Isaac.

The moment we accepted Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit did the exact same thing with every one of us. He opens His bag and pulls out:

- Justification and adorns us with it.
- Sonship
- Access to God
- Reconciliation with God
- Forgiveness
- Oneness or Union with Christ
- Acceptance with God
- Heavenly Citizenship
- Eternal security
- Made a new Creation
- Made one with the saints
- A relationship with God
- All condemnation is removed
- Adoption
- Taken out of the kingdom of darkness and placed in the kingdom of light
- Made joint heirs with Christ

- Made a vessel of honor used to proclaim the excellencies of Christ
- Indwelt with the Holy Spirit
- Been given every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies
- Seated with Him at God's right hand
- Complete in Him

We were adorned with all of these things and more the very moment that we accepted Jesus as our Savior.

Now, after giving all of these beautiful gifts to Rebekah, the servant wanted to leave right away, but Rebekah's family wanted her to stay another ten days. Isn't it interesting that when asked, Rebekah said she was ready to go to Isaac and that she didn't want to stay. She had never met Isaac or his family. She had never seen his home and the area in which he lived. All she knew of Isaac at this point was what the servant had told her about him and what the servant had given her FROM him.

The servant had so proclaimed the glories of Abraham and Isaac that Rebekah was willing to immediately leave her own home and family to go to be with him. Rather than proclaiming unto Rebekah the "glories" of Abraham and Isaac, what if the servant had spent all of his time telling all the things that she would have to do in order to please Isaac and make him happy? How would this have affected her? Think she would have had the same eager desire to go and become his wife? But this is exactly what many churches do to their people. Instead of grounding them upon the foundation of the finished work of Christ and that He's done, given them, and made them to be, we spend more time telling them all that we believe God now expects them to do for Him.

No wonder why people lose their joy. No wonder why people get burned out, lose heart, and fall away. Their "betrothal" to Christ, which God has given as a life and place of great blessing and privilege and honor, has become to them a life of bondage and slavery!

So, there was no longer a desire for Rebekah to remain in her old home. This is exactly what the Holy Spirit does in our lives. We have never met Jesus; we have never seen Him in person. We have never seen heaven or the place that He is preparing for us. Through the Word of God, He reveals to us the mind of the Father concerning Christ. He takes of the things

of Christ and shows them unto us. He awakens our love for Christ, our desire to know Him, commune with Him, and one day enter His presence. The Spirit thereby adorns us with the beautiful things of Christ. The moment we get saved, He adorns us with the "riches of Christ." And then He continues on to work to deep our affection for Christ by continuing to reveal to us the glories and excellencies of Christ! See **1 Corinthians 2:12; Ephesians 1:3-11, 16-20; and Ephesians 3:14-21.**

As He continues to reveal Christ to us, the desire to be with Him continues to grow within our hearts. The more we walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh, the more the Spirit will cause Christ to become the occupation of our hearts—and the more disengaged our hearts will become from the things where Christ is not, or is not a part of.

So, the servant has found the appointed bride. He has distinguished her from all others with the earrings and bracelets. He has awakened affection for Isaac within her. He has adorned her with the beautiful things from Isaac, and now he will lead her TO Isaac. What a beautiful picture that depicts exactly what the Holy Spirit has done in our lives. For such is the mighty attractive power of the excellencies of Christ when the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the heart to behold Him. See **Philippians 3:7-8.**

❖ **Read Genesis 24:61-66.**

Notice that Rebekah arose and followed the servant. The servant took Rebekah and went "HIS" way. In order to get to Isaac, Rebekah had to place herself totally under the guidance of the servant and she had to go HIS way, not her own way. See **Joshua 3:1-4; Galatians 5:16** – The flesh is "our way" – In the Spirit is "His way"; **Ephesians 5:18.**

The immediate result of following the servant was that Rebekah found herself in the wilderness! She was no longer in the comfort of her own home, nor was she with Isaac at his home yet. For 400 miles or about one month, all she had was the desert, heat, stinky camels, maybe low on food or water at times, and much discomfort.

However, along the way, I believe the servant continued to tell Rebekah about the one that she was going to marry, the one that was waiting for her to arrive. I believe the servant continued to tell Rebekah about Isaac as he continued to lead her to Isaac! The joy of meeting her groom gave her

encouragement to endure the hardships she faced in getting to him. See **Hebrews 12:1-3.**

This is a picture of exactly what the Holy Spirit is doing in our lives today, too! We are currently in the wilderness, as this world is no longer our home. We no longer feel comfortable here in our old lifestyles, but we haven't yet arrived to our eternal home heaven yet either. See **John 15:18-19; 17:14, 16; 18:36.** See also **Galatians 6:14** "*world crucified to me and me to the world*"; **Ephesians 2:19** "*members of the household of God*"; **Philippians 3:20**; **Colossians 3:1-3.**

Now we must consider as we are traveling through the wilderness, are we focusing on the One to whom the Spirit is leading us? Is our focus on the prize of being with Christ? Is our hope in heaven? Or are we doing what the Israelites did when they were in the wilderness? They, too, were delivered from being slaves and were being led by God through the wilderness to their promised land; but, often they lost sight of the prize and instead longed to return to their old life of slavery. See **Exodus 13:17-18; 14:10-12; 16:1-3; 17:1-3; 31:18-32:4 and Numbers 14:1-4, 11; 20:1-5; 21:4-5.**

We must remember that the Spirit has much to reveal to us about the excellencies of Christ, but He will not force it on us. He will allow us to hang on to the old life and all the misery that comes along with it. The Holy Spirit continues to lead through this "wilderness," seeking to reveal Christ to us more and more as He continues to lead us to Him. See **1 Corinthians 2:12.**

<u>Part 3 – Christ and His Affection</u>

Genesis 24:65 says that Rebekah looked up and asked who was walking out to meet them. This picture portrays Isaac as one who was waiting for and wanting to receive his bride. We often talk about the rapture in terms of our anticipation of going to be with Him, but have you ever stopped to think about His desires for us? How much He wants us to be with Him? How He longs to receive His bride? Not just us as a group, but US as individuals.

Think about it–this all began in the heart of God before the foundations of the earth. And when that day finally comes in **Revelation 19**, God will have spent thousands of years working, orchestrating, intervening, and carrying out His plan. Jesus came and fulfilled that plan through much pain and

suffering and “ALL FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM”! The joy of one day receiving His glorious bride without spot or wrinkle.

Revelation 19:7 says, “*The marriage of the Lamb HAS COME.*” See **Hebrews 12:2 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18** – “*And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, comfort one another with these words.”*

In this lesson, I believe we have been given a clear glimpse of the heart of God for His people, the affection that He has for His children, and Jesus’ love and anticipation to receive His bride!

XIX. Lesson 19:
The Promise Passes On To Isaac and Jacob; God Takes Jacob's Family to Egypt

Review Questions

1. **Name some things that teach us what is true of us spiritually about the story of Abraham sending his servant out to find a bride for Isaac.**
2. **How was Rebecca's wilderness journey different from Israel's?**
3. **What does Isaac's reception of Rebecca tell us about Christ's heart for us?**

Introduction: With each lesson, each story, we must always keep before us the fact of God's eternal plan of redemption that has been on His heart from eternity past. Every account, every interaction of God with mankind that we have recorded in His word is all the intentional preparation for and the carrying out of that plan. Because God is the sovereign, omnipotent, and almighty God, His purposes remain firm and unshakable. Through every lesson that we've studied thus far, we've clearly seen that nothing and no one can deter what God says He will do. As we have seen and will continue to see, in each generation, there are those who believe and look forward to God's promises and those who don't. The ones who cherish His word enjoy the benefits and blessing of trusting Him. Those who treat God's word as unimportant or not true lead empty, fruitless lives that end in eternal death.

God's promises to Abraham were passed on to Isaac.

❖ **Read Genesis 17:1-6, 15-22; 25:5-11, 19-27.**

At this point of God passing on the promise He gave to Abraham now to Isaac, Isaac is the twenty-first generation since God first created Adam perfect and sinless. Within ten generations (Noah), the human race had already become so perverted and evil, that God decided that it was time to wipe the human race in judgment and "reboot" with Noah and his family. As a side note, beginning in **Genesis 4:25** and going to the end of chapter 5, we have Adam's genealogy from Seth to Noah, nine generations. It is very interesting to note the meanings of their names.

- Seth – "Appointed"
- Enos – "Mortal Man"
- Cainan – "Sorrow"
- Mahalalel – "A blessed God"
- Jared – "Come down"
- Enoch – "Teaching"

- Methusaleh – “Death shall bring”
- Lamech – “The despairing”
- Noah – “Comfort”

Putting the meaning of all of their names together in sequential order, the nine generations that began with sinless perfection in Adam and ended in judgment for sin with Noah, mean “It is appointed to mortal man, sorrow, but the blessed God shall come down, teaching that His death shall bring the despairing comfort.” Coincidence? I doubt it!

The “reboot,” though, didn’t change anything in terms of the heart of man, for every thought and intent of the heart was still only evil from childhood. The next eleven generations to the time of Isaac are proof of that. Unless God divinely intervened, man always rejected Him and became exceedingly sinful. However, God in His grace did continue to intervene and draw some unto Himself. We’ve seen this over and over in the life of Abraham.

It was because of the “God’s eternal plan of redemption” that He gave the promise of a coming Deliverer to Adam and Eve in **Genesis 3:15**. That eternal plan was also the reason why God chose Abraham to use to bring about the Nation of Israel as the line through which the Deliverer would be brought into this world.

The plan was also the reason why God divinely intervened in Abraham’s life, preventing him from jeopardizing the fulfillment of the plan when he was fearful and unbelieving. In the passages we have just read, it’s again because of God’s eternal plan that He now faithfully passes “the promise” on to Isaac, the next generation. God faithfully carried out and fulfilled all that He promised Abraham that He would do. That faithfulness of God to lovingly and graciously carry out His eternal plan of redemption for all mankind, regardless of how desperately wicked mankind becomes, is seen over and over and over throughout both the old and new testaments. After Isaac, God again faithfully chose the person in the next generation through whom the promise would be passed on to and we know that person was Jacob.

❖ **Read Genesis 25:19-34.**

We know that in Old Testament Jewish culture, Esau being the first born should have been the one that one day received the “birth right” from Isaac. We also know that it was

Jacob who received it instead. The temptation after reading the above passage is to think that the birthright was passed on to Jacob because, as stated in verse 34, "Esau despised" it, or he took it lightly, it was unimportant to him.

Look at **Romans 9:10-13.** Paul makes it pretty clear that Jacob was chosen by God over Esau before they were even born or had any opportunity to do good or bad. Jacob wasn't chosen because Esau despised his birthright but because God in His infinite wisdom and sovereignty chose to use him instead of Esau.

This again highlights the fact that what we have been saying all along is exactly what the Apostle Paul stated in **2 Corinthians 5:18-19** (NKJV): "*Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation*.

These Old Testament stories are not about MAN and his obedience. Mankind is clearly "broken" and totally inept to ever do one single thing on his own accord to gain acceptance with God. Instead, these accounts are ALL about the love, grace, and mercy of God as He powerfully and sovereignly carries out and fulfills His eternal plan of redemption for mankind.

- This is why He created a whole host of angels which He knew some of which would become Satan and the demons.
- This is why He created a human race that He knew would become sinful.
- This is why He clothed Adam and Eve.
- This is why He didn't accept Cain's sacrifice.
- This is why He delivered Noah and the animals with one ark that only had one way of entering it.
- This is why HE shut the door.
- This is why He chose Abraham, an idol worshipper who was married to a barren wife and waited until she was 90 and he was 100 to give them their first child.
- This is why God divinely intervened when Abraham on two occasions gave his wife to other men.
- This is why God tenderly and patiently continued to communicate His plan for Abraham and his offspring to Abraham.

- This is why He chose to miraculously deliver Lot and his family from Sodom and Gomorrah's judgment.
- This is why He asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac.
- This is why He provided a ram to die in Isaac's place.
- This is why He passed the promise on to Isaac.
- This is why He chose Jacob over Esau and passed the promise on to the younger instead of the older.

WHY? Because God is making it absolutely clear that only He is the sovereign and almighty God and Creator, and this is all about Him carrying out His loving, gracious, merciful, and eternal plan for mankind! He and His plan has ever been mankind's only hope!

❖ **Read Genesis 26:1-15.**

Sound familiar? Notice here that Isaac's unbelief comes after the fact that God had appeared to him and promised to bless and prosper him and his offspring. Then, just like He did with Abraham, God divinely intervenes and not only protects Isaac, Rebekah, and His promise, but He also blesses Isaac with prosperity! This once again should clearly impress upon our hearts, that the carrying out of God's will and plans has nothing to do with the faithfulness of man but everything to do with His sovereignty and power and grace.

❖ **Read Genesis 27:1-44.**

Notice the scheming, lying, deceit, and total disregard for or trust in God, but at the same time, the fact that God, even in the midst of their sinful scheming and self-dependence, used it all to sovereignly bring about His will in the lives of Jacob and Esau! God's purposes remain firm and unshakable.

Even throughout life's events, nothing and no one can deter what God says He will do. Esau, Rebekah, and Jacob were just responding to one another according to their own human wisdom and understanding. As far as they were concerned, they were finding their own solutions to the circumstances that they were causing in each other's live. But in the midst of it all, God was continuing to fulfill His plan!

❖ **Read Genesis 28:1-17.**

Through God's interaction in the life of Jacob, we see Him doing the exact same thing that He did in the life of Abraham. God patiently works, intervenes, and reveals Himself

to them, taking them into a deeper knowledge of Himself; all the while He continues to use them in the carrying out of His plan.

At various times, God worked through trials and circumstances in ways to reveal His love, power, and grace, and at other times He would patiently and tenderly encourage them by communicating the great plans that He had in store for them. Namely, that the long awaited Deliverer would come through his line. God did this on a number of occasions with Abraham, and here we see Him doing it with Jacob.

In chapter 29, Jacob finally gets to Haran where Abraham's relatives are living and you all know the story of how he saw Rachel and proposed that he work for her for seven years. Laban agreed, but at the end of the seven years, gave him Leah instead. Jacob then works another seven years for Rachel. Again, amid much lying, scheming, and deceit, God's will is being carried out. Chapter 29 also tells us that Jacob loved Rachel more than he loved Leah. God had pity on Leah, so He allowed her to have children, but Rachel remained barren. By the time chapter 29 ends, Leah had borne three or four children and Rachel still had borne none.

❖ **Read Genesis 30:1-24.**

Chapter 30 begins with Rachel getting the idea of her providing children for Jacob through her maid. She gives her maid to Jacob as another wife and she indeed has two children and Rachel feels vindicated.

Leah then sees that she hasn't gotten pregnant in quite some time and that Rachel has been having children through her maid; she then gives her hand maid to Jacob and she too has a couple of kids. Then, Leah schemes a way to have Jacob sleep with her again and she gets pregnant. Now she again feels superior to Rachel.

Then the Lord takes pity on Rachel and opens her womb and allows her to have Joseph, which in turn makes her feel better about herself. Later, while they were on their way back to Canaan, God allows Rachel to give birth to her second and last child Benjamin. Here this family is, all caught up in the culture of the day, engaging in this fleshly competition for becoming the most loved and significant wife of Jacob, giving no thought whatsoever to God and His will for them; but right

there in the midst of it all, God uses it all to raise up the twelve tribes of Israel!

❖ **Read Genesis 32.**

It's interesting to note that God appeared to Jacob while traveling to Haran to confirm His promise to him that the Deliverer would come through his line. Then, on Jacob's way back to Canaan from Haran, God again shows up in the form of an angel and wrestles with Jacob, puts his hip out of socket, and changes his name to Israel. Verse 32 tells us that this account had even resulted in a Jewish tradition in which the Jews would not eat the muscle from the hip socket of their animals because this was the muscle that God had touched and caused to shrink.

God was not only working in the lives of these Old Testament characters to reveal Himself to them as He was continuing to use them in His plan, but He was also using these accounts as testimonies that reveal Himself to all future generations. It's interesting to note that Jacob's name was changed from "he deceives" to "he who struggles with God." From the time that Jacob and his seventy descendants went to live in Egypt on, they were known as "Israel" or the Israelites. "Those who struggle with God" is a true and accurate depiction of their relationship with God.

Like He did when He chose Abraham the idol worshipper with a barren wife, it's just like God to choose a people who would struggle with believing and trusting Him as "His People," instead of those that would easily obey and follow Him. He's clearly making the point that it's all about Him and His grace! It's never been about mankind and anything that we have to offer.

<u>Joseph believed God.</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 37:1-4.**

As we begin to look at the life of Joseph in order to see God's revelation of Himself through His interaction with Joseph and his family, God begins with setting the stage here for what Joseph's position was within his own family. The main point is

that his father loved him more than the rest, his brothers could see this, and they resented him for it.

❖ **Read Genesis 37:5-11.**

You know, God could have had the exact same plan for using Joseph without all the drama, but like throwing fuel on a fire, God allows Joseph to have these dreams that were really God's revelation about future events. Joseph then innocently tells his family what he dreamt about.

The dreams enrage his brothers against him all the more. Look at the plight here that God is allowing to come up in Joseph's life…FOR A PURPOSE. Joseph did nothing wrong. It wasn't his fault that his father loved him more than the others. It wasn't his fault that he had these dreams. Joseph was being wrongfully treated by his own brothers, but it gets worse.

❖ **Read Genesis 37:12-36.**

We need to keep in mind here that all of this is still all about God carrying out His eternal plan of redemption, and this is one of the key families He sovereignly chose to use in a key role within that plan. The amount of unfaithfulness, unbelief, and sin we see in these people cannot go unnoticed. It reveals all the more the fact that this is all about our great and awesome God and not about the faithfulness, goodness, or obedience of mankind. Joseph's plight gets even worse.

❖ **Read Genesis 39:1-23.**

First, Joseph's own brothers wrongfully hate him because of jealousy, even going to the extent of actually selling him to foreigners as a slave. Then, he gets to Egypt and is falsely accused and, even though he was righteous and pure, he gets thrown into prison.

Talk about an impossible situation. The Bible is silent regarding any of the inner struggle that may have been going on in Joseph's heart at the time. Joseph's situation was wrong and horrible, but notice the sovereign intervention of God.

All of these circumstances that Joseph found himself in were the result of the fallenness and sinfulness of man. Yet the great and sovereign God is so strong and mighty and sovereign, that He can even use the sinfulness of man to bring about His sovereign will. Joseph may have been praying for deliverance

from the circumstances, but God was "delivering" him THROUGH the circumstances all the while using them to reveal His greatness to mankind and to bring about His will.

Even though Joseph was in prison, God was in control and had not forgotten him. When it was time for God to carry out His plan, He had Joseph released from prison and exalted to high position of leadership.

❖ **Read Genesis 41.**

You just have to shake your head at the divine orchestration of God. Listen to what Daniel said about God in **Daniel 4:35**: "*All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, 'what have You done?'"*

God uses people even though they may not know to worship Him. As the Creator, God has the right to use anyone, anywhere, at any time, and to do whatever it is that He desires they do in fulfilling His own purposes. God is absolutely sovereign. God not only orchestrated the dreams that the pharaoh experienced and confounded his wise men so none of them could give a very good interpretation, but He also gave the interpretation to Joseph in order to orchestrate his exaltation and promotion. Along with that, it's interesting to note that, yes, Joseph endured much wrongful and ill treatment that he didn't deserve, but now God is bestowing upon him exaltation he didn't deserve either because it wasn't his own wisdom that allowed him to interpret the dreams.

❖ **Read Genesis 42:1-20.**

So, Joseph's brothers return with the grain and over time they run out again and need to go back to Egypt to purchase more.

❖ **Read Genesis 43:1-17.**

So far, in everything that we have read in Genesis about the life of Jacob, there really isn't anything at all about him that stands out and impresses me about him. All that we have seen from him has been scheming, deceit, lying, playing favorites with his wives and with his children and a real lack in trusting God.

Another example of that lack of trust is in verse 14. Finally Jacob agrees to allow Benjamin to go along with his brothers to Egypt to get grain, but he makes this statement: “And may God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may release your other brother and Benjamin. If I am bereaved, I am bereaved!"

May God Almighty be merciful, but if I lose another son then I lose another son. I see no ability of Jacob to trust in God. He even doubts the goodness and mercy of God. His conclusion was not determined by God and Who He is and what He is like. It was determined by human logic. If I lose him, then I lose him. There is nothing I could do about it. In chapters 43, 45, and 46, Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers; they return home and bring Jacob and the rest of their families and possessions down to live with Joseph in Egypt. All of this took place exactly as God had promised Abraham it would back in **Genesis 15:13.**

Conclusion

The story of Joseph is very significant, as it reveals much to us about the sovereignty of God and His ability to use circumstances and people to bring about His plans. Many years earlier, God had told Abraham that his descendants would go to live in a foreign country. Although Jacob never planned to leave Canaan and live in another land, it was God’s time for this to happen. So God used many different events, circumstances, and people to take them into Egypt. Name what some of those were.

- Joseph’s dreams, his father’s love for him, the special coat he gave him, and Joseph’s reports about his brothers all set the stage for what his brothers did to him.
- Joseph’s brother’s hatred and jealousy towards him.
- Jacob sent Joseph to check on his brothers taking care of the sheep in a distant place.
- The Ishmaelites (who came into being by Abraham’s sin of not trusting and waiting upon God) were willing to buy Joseph as a slave.
- They took Joseph to Egypt.
- Joseph was falsely accused and ended up in prison.
- Pharaoh had dreams that no one could interpret, but God enabled Joseph to interpret them.
- Pharaoh exalted Joseph to second in command.

- The famine spread as far as Canaan where Joseph's father and brothers lived.
- Jacob sent his sons to Egypt.
- Pharaoh agreed to have Joseph's family move down and live with them in Egypt.

God has not changed. Although we cannot see Him at work much of the time, rest assured that He is. He is the sovereign God Who will do all He has said He will do in His word. He is the sovereign, almighty Creator Who has the final say in all things. Nothing and no one escapes His attention.

Joseph's life not only serves as a tremendous testimony of the sovereignty of God, but it's also a very true and clear picture of Christ.

- Like Jesus, Joseph was hated and rejected by his brethren.
- Like Jesus, Joseph was SOLD. Jesus into the hands of his enemies and Joseph into slavery.
- Like Jesus, Joseph was falsely accused.
- Like Jesus, Joseph was punished for crimes that he didn't commit.
- Like Jesus, Joseph forgave those who wronged him. Jesus said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Joseph said, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive." (**Genesis 50:20**)
- Like Jesus, Joseph was exalted by God—Jesus to the right hand of God and Joseph to the right hand of the Pharaoh.

1 Peter 2:19-23 (NKJV): *"For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously."*

XX. Lesson 20:
God Preserves the Israelites and Protects Moses

Review Questions

1. **Why did God choose Jacob over Esau?**
2. **Through the Old Testament so far, we have seen God work in many ways that don't make sense to us. Why?**
3. **How important is man's faithfulness for the carrying out of God's plans?**
4. **What does the name Israel mean?**
5. **What does it teach us about God, the fact that God would choose people with that characteristic?**
6. **Name a few reasons the story of Joseph is so significant for us today.**

Introduction: It's becoming more and more evident to us that Who God is and what He is like never changes. The lives of some of the people we've highlighted thus far have been full of unexpected twists and turns, but God remains the same. His actions in the midst of human upheaval reveal His dependable character. We have seen Him steadfastly continue to work out His plan in an all-powerful, holy, and sovereign manner even though things often seem very bleak.

Here we are today a few thousand years later, and God is still the same and we can fully trust and expect Him to remain faithful and true as He continues to do the same work of revealing Himself in our lives, too. There have been hardship in people's lives that we've seen that it's pretty obvious God orchestrated in order to show Himself strong. There have been other circumstances that He didn't necessarily orchestrate but that He allowed for the same purpose: to reveal Himself to people and thereby deepen their knowledge of Him and ability to trust and depend upon Him.

This is the exact same work that He is doing in every one of our lives here today! There are some trials and hardships that He obviously orchestrates in our lives and others that He just allows. ALL of them, though, He is using to reveal Himself and His heart to us. From the very beginning, God created man for the purpose of having a relationship with Himself. This is the heart of God! His love for us is so great that it surpasses all knowledge, and because of that love, He is driven to reveal Himself to us more and more, so that we can know Him and experience love and closeness in our relationship with Him.

<u>Pharaoh wanted to destroy the Israelites.</u>

❖ **Read Exodus 1:1-11.**

Following Jacob's death and burial in Canaan, Joseph and all his generation lived the remainder of their lives in Egypt. Even when the drought had ended, they didn't return to Canaan, the land that God had given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

This passage also tells us that God had blessed the Israelites; they were fruitful and multiplied greatly in number. They were growing into a powerful and rich society. Because of their number, the new Pharaoh viewed them as a threat to Egypt's security, and so, he enslaved them. Later he condemned them to hard labor. Additionally, he commanded that all the baby boys be killed in an attempt to wipeout the Israelites.

❖ **Read Exodus 1:12-22.**

This account provides a pretty clear picture of the "dynamics" that are going on in the lives of humans on any given day. You have our sovereign and almighty Creator God Who is carrying out His will. You have Satan who is trying to fight against God and hinder His will. Then you have varying groups of humans, controlled by their sin natures, who are interacting with one another according to what is right in their own eyes.

Satan knows that he is condemned. He heard God give the promise of a coming Deliverer and I think he knew what God was planning to do through the nation of Israel. Therefore, he was influencing Pharaoh to try and destroy Israel. Pharaoh didn't know he was being influenced by Satan. As far as he knew, he was trying to provide security for his own people and ultimately himself. The Israelites were being wrongfully mistreated and greatly abused and there was nothing that they could do to deliver themselves.

BUT GOD! Not only did God NOT allow Satan to destroy the Israelites, the pain, suffering, and hardship that He did allow He allowed for a purpose—a purpose that will become clearer and clearer as we go through this.

This same type of scenario is going on today in our lives every day. We have Satan, the demons, our flesh, and the world who are seeking to influence and destroy us both physically and spiritually. We have us, the human race who's "every thought and intent of the heart is only evil from childhood" either mistreating or responding to mistreatment.

And there is GOD!! The same sovereign almighty Creator Who has promised and purposed to use ALL things together for good in our lives.

One other thing I want to point out here is in regards to the midwives. First, the midwives feared God. From all that we've seen thus far of the human race, we know that the only way these women came to fear and respect God was by God divinely intervening and giving them that view of Him. Notice, too, that their fear of God and respect for Him led them to lie to Pharaoh and God BLESSED them for lying! That will make legalistic Christians "dance around" like a cat on a hot tin roof, won't it? God blessed these women for lying! This is significant.

Before going on to the next passage, I want to remind us of God's promise to Abraham many years prior in **Genesis 15:13-14**—his people would be enslaved in a foreign country; but at His appointed time, He would deliver them and bring them back to Canaan, the land that He had promised to Abraham and his descendants forever.

<u>God protected Moses.</u>

❖ **Read Exodus 2:1-10.**

Here we are again at another account of God divinely intervening and choosing to use whomsoever He will to fulfill His eternal plan of redemption. And God doesn't just fulfill His plan, but He often does it in a way that no one can deny His power and sovereignty. God actually uses Pharaoh, the Egyptian king who wanted to destroy the Israelites, to be the one to raise, protect, and prepare the one person that God had chosen to one day deliver Israel from their Egyptian bondage! Pharaoh, who wanted decimate the Israelites, actually raises and protects the one who will be used to set them free!

God wasn't just working in this way for the sake Israel at that time, but He was building a testimony of Himself and Who He is and what He's really like for all future generations, especially for the future church. No matter how bad any of our circumstances ever become, Jehovah God is able to do absolutely anything! Choosing to protect and prepare Moses in this way wasn't just to show His strength and might, but it also had practical purposes. Egyptian writings from that time period indicate that the children of Egyptian leaders were given instruction in writing and literary skills as well as training in domestic and military leadership.

The Lord had a big job in store for Moses and he needed to be prepared for it.

❖ **Read Acts 7:22.**

❖ **Read Exodus 2:11-22.**

This passage gives us more evidence of an interesting pattern we've seen over and over in God's interaction with mankind. First, God raises up an impossible situation. Man determines his best course of action and seeks to supply his own deliverance (the result of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). Man fails at seeking to deliver himself or come up with his own solution. God divinely intervenes, revealing Himself to man and thereby seeking to lead him into a deeper grasp of knowing and trusting in Him.

God had chosen Moses, protected him, placed him, and provided for him all on His own initiative without Moses asking or praying for a single thing; but upon seeing this situation, Moses takes matters into his own hands. We saw Adam and Eve do this, Cain did this, the people at Babel did this, Abraham did this, Isaac did this, Jacob did this, and now we see Moses doing it, too.

It's ever present in our own lives as well. Just like the Israelites, we, too, were all born captives of Satan. And just like the Israelites couldn't rescue themselves from their captivity, we couldn't deliver ourselves from the penalty of sin as unbelievers, nor are we able to deliver ourselves from the power of sin in our daily lives. God alone, by grace and through the finished work of Christ is our only hope for deliverance.

❖ **Read Exodus 2:23-25.**

God had not forgotten the promises He had made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob hundreds of years before. Whatever He says, He does! God knows when the time is right to carry out His will. Sometimes He is waiting for the people involved, for their desperation to grow to the point where they know that God is their only hope.

God is always about the relationship! He loves us so much that He wants us to be able to enjoy closeness and communion with Him. Sadly, though, humans will only turn to God in trust and dependence when we are desperate.

God allowed Israel's desperation to grow to a "crescendo," so to speak, until they, as a people, "cried out to the Lord." I believe God works in this way for a few reasons:

- First, Israel was God's chosen people through whom He was going to bring the Deliverer into this world. We often see Him putting Israel in absolutely impossible situations in order to reveal His greatness and glory through His divine intervention on their behalf. The nation that God would use to bring about the Deliverer, He was using as a whole to form a physical picture of the spiritual deliverance that would one day be provided by the Deliverer.
- By allowing Israel to become desperate, it became very clear to them that they couldn't help themselves and that He was their only hope.
- Finally, God waited for the desperation to spread throughout the whole nation, so they as a nation turned to God in dependence rather than just a few.

<u>God spoke to Moses from the burning bush.</u>

❖ **Read Exodus 3:1-6.**

Remember back in Genesis 15, God had told Abraham that his descendants would be slaves in Egypt for 400 years. It was now coming to the end of that 400 years and God had determined that it was now time to deliver His people, just like God did when He created Adam and Eve and chose Seth (for the line to go through), and chose Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And just like He did when He chose to use Joseph to preserve Jacob's family, God had chosen Moses to use to deliver His people from slavery in Egypt. God chose Moses for the same reasons that He chose all those others: because He in His sovereignty and wisdom and grace and mercy chose who He wanted to according to His own will and for His glory. Notice, too, that in each of those cases, the people God chose to create and use in carrying out His eternal plan of redemption, not one of them knew Him or was seeking after Him before God chose them. Proof again, that this is all of God.

In the same way we saw God patiently reveal Himself to Abraham, so we see Him doing the exact same thing here with Moses. Notice in verse 5 God had to tell Moses to remove his sandals. In those days, to be barefoot was a sign of humility and submission. Slaves, for example, went barefoot. So when Moses took off his shoes, he was culturally showing respect to God.

However, though Moses may have heard true things about God through the years, he didn't really know God. God had chosen Moses to use in His plan, and along the way of using him, God was also revealing Himself to Moses more and more for the relationship and also so that Moses could truly trust and depend upon God.

Two things we can't lose sight of: This is all about God carrying out HIS eternal plan of redemption—and the total depravity and ineptitude of mankind to do one single thing for himself in order to restore his relationship with God. Keeping those two main points in focus allows us to maintain the proper perspective on God's interaction with mankind through all of these stories.

❖ **Read Exodus 3:7-12.**

After giving Moses a glimpse of His power and holiness, God now communicates His heart for His people Israel as well as His desire to use Moses in His plan of delivering them. Another thing that we have seen revealed about God over and over and over, is that He is always faithfully communicating with Man. Communicating and revealing Himself, His heart and desires and love, as well was His plans for mankind. It is very, very evident that God wants us to know Him and the truth because He goes to great lengths to faithfully communicate it. The word tells us that He reveals and communicates through creation, through the word of God, through other people, through His Spirit, through His angels, and even by placing truth within the hearts of people.

This is why unbelievers often view mankind in general as "being good" but doing bad things. The truth is any good or knowledge of right and wrong within us all comes from God. Apart from Him, there is nothing good about us.

Keep in mind that Moses had run away from Egypt for fear that Pharaoh wanted to kill him. Now God was telling him that He wanted to send him back. At this point, with Moses' lack of knowing God, his fear of Pharaoh was greater than his trust in God. For in verse 12, even after God promises "I will certainly be with you," that promise directly from the mouth of God Himself still doesn't give Moses a lot of confidence.

<u>God is the "I AM."</u>

❖ **Read Exodus 3:13-14.**

Moses was grasping at reasons to decline this command/request of God's to return to Egypt. Again, his last attempt to help his people was rejected by the Israelites and resulted in Pharaoh seeking to kill him. Moses knew that the Israelites would look at him and say, "Who are you and why should we believe you?" We need to remember, too, that Israel had been slaves now for 400 years! That is a long, long time

America hasn't been a nation yet for 300 years and yet, from our perspective, it feels like our country has always been "this way." This is our identity.

Israel had been slaves at this point for 400 years. It was their identity. Though they were beginning to cry out to God, it's all they had ever known. Moses knew they would be asking questions. In Old Testament times, we know that a person's name emphasized some personal characteristics or quality about them. For example, Moses' name meant "to draw out of" because he was taken out of the water by Pharaoh's daughter. Let's think about what name God could call Himself that would express all of His wonderful characteristics.

- He is supreme, greater than everyone and everything.
- He is perfectly holy.
- He is everywhere.
- He knows everything.
- He is almighty.
- He is faithful and unchanging.
- He is the judge and avenges all evil.
- He is loving, kind and gracious.
- He communicates and initiates.

God is so awesome and magnificent that it's hard to come up with one name that clearly communicates all of Who He is. However, the name that God told Moses covered KEY elements of His nature and character. God told Moses to tell the Israelites that "I AM" had sent him.

This name I AM, is so deep we cannot comprehend its full meaning. We do know it means that God never had a beginning and will never cease to exist. It means He is the Self-Existent One! He has lived and will always live completely by His own power and wisdom. He never has been, nor ever will

be, dependent on anyone or anything. While God is completely independent of all things, ALL things are completely dependent upon Him! He has complete control over the entire universe and everything in it. Pharaoh, the Egyptian army, and even Satan could not hold God's people when the Lord, the "I AM," decided that it was time to deliver them.

❖ **Read Exodus 3:15-21.**

In the same way that God patiently tenderly took the time to communicate details of His plan and what the future holds to Abraham, so God lovingly does the same thing here with Moses. God was building His relationship with Moses. He knew that Moses really didn't know Him all that well and was having trouble trusting and feeling confident in Him.

So, God revealed some of His power with the burning bush, then some of His holiness in having him remove his shoes, and now He's giving a glimpse of His sovereignty, knowledge, and wisdom by disclosing details to Moses of what he can expect. Moses was reluctant to return to Egypt.

❖ **Read Exodus 4:1-9.**

Moses wasn't able at this point to just blindly believe and trust God, and God was all right with that. God knew that both Moses and the Israelites would need "signs" in order to be assured that this was all truly from the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And so God gives Moses these signs to perform.

❖ **Read Exodus 4:10-20.**

We can see a bit of a progression here with Moses and with God. Keep in mind that God was asking Moses to do something that would require a lot of faith and trust in God, but Moses didn't know God that well at this point. So God progressively begins to reveal Himself to Moses.

First, He reveals His existence to Moses through the burning bush. Then, He reveals Who He is to Moses. He confirms that He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God that Moses had undoubtedly heard about before.

Moses fears that the Israelites will question if it was really God Who sent him, and so God reveals to Moses His name, the "I AM." Then Moses fears that Israel just flat won't

believe him. So God gives him some miraculous signs to perform as proof that this is from God.

Next, Moses focuses on himself and the fact that he is not very articulate, implying that there is nothing about him that anyone would want to follow. God brings along Moses' brother Aaron who is articulate to accompany him.

Finally, through his father-in-law Jethro, God gives Moses the assurance that the people who were seeking to kill him have all died. Moses is now willing to go, but notice his confidence (at this point) was more in the fact that God had provided the "right circumstances" for Moses that he could feel confident in than it was him being confident in God Himself. Again, God was all right with that. God also knew that it wasn't going to remain this way, for over time, Moses was going to see God reveal Himself over and over and over on behalf of Israel. Moses' knowledge of God and therefore trust in Him would grow exponentially.

❖ **Read Exodus 4:21-26.**

This little exchange between God, Moses, Zipporah, and their son is especially interesting in that it took place while Moses was on his way to Egypt to bring about Israel's deliverance. Remember the covenant that God had with Abraham back in Genesis? The sign of that covenant was circumcision. God was keeping His end of the agreement.

He had chosen Moses and was sending him to bring about Israel's deliverance and lead them back to the land that He had promised to their forefathers. But Moses, "the deliverer" that God had raised up, hadn't even circumcised his own son. God was showing Moses the value that needed to be placed on His covenant with Israel…another step in growing in the knowledge of God.

❖ **Read Exodus 4:27-31.**

Moses and Aaron meet up and go to Egypt together. They tell the elders of Israel all that God had said and performed the miraculous signs that God had given them to prove that He had really sent them, and it says that the people of Israel believed them. Then it says that they bowed their heads and worshipped God! An interesting note to consider is, from Genesis chapter 24 (when Abraham sent his servant out to find a wife for Isaac) to this point in **Exodus 4:31**, this is the

first record we have of Israel as a people worshipping the Lord. Notice it was in response to learning that God had seen their plight, had compassion for them, and had promised He was about to deliver them.

In churches today, so much emphasis is placed on our love for and worship of God, but He is the initiator. **1 John** says that we love because He first loved us. This is always the order, and we even see it in our families. Children grow to love their parents because their parents first love them and take care of them. Our God is the same!

XXI. Lesson 21:
God Sent Plagues on the Egyptians

Review Questions

1. **What are some of the ways God reveals Himself to mankind?**
2. **Why is this so important to God?**
3. **How was Israel's predicament as slaves in Egypt a picture of our lives every day?**
4. **How did it come about that anyone in the Old Testament came to fear and obey God?**
5. **Give some examples; i.e., those from the Old Testament, where God allowed individuals to be put into impossible situations and why does God allow this?**
6. **God told Moses that His name is "I AM." What does that name mean?**
7. **Describe God's progression of revealing Himself to Moses.**
8. **When Moses agreed to go back to Egypt, ultimately, what was his confidence in?**

Introduction: God is supreme! Nothing under heaven or earth can diminish His authority. His word is dependable and His plans are unstoppable. We've learned that Satan arrogantly challenged his Maker but to no avail. Throughout history he's tenaciously tried to oppose God. Satan's connived and convinced man to do the same, but God will never be defeated. These acts of defiance and rebellion only serve to provide God a backdrop for displaying His mighty power. Satan himself has become nothing more than a tool in God's hand that He uses where He will to bring about HIS will for His glory! Pharaoh refused to obey God's command.

❖ **Read Exodus 5:1-2.**

Pharaoh's answer to Moses and Aaron was absolutely true. He didn't know God and therefore he didn't see the need to obey what they were telling him that God had said. We've seen this same principle in the lives of Abraham and Moses. Before Abraham really knew God well, there were many times that we saw him doubt and walk in unbelief. Moses, too. Initially, Moses feared the issues that faced him more than he had confidence in God.

It's no wonder that Pharaoh didn't see the need to obey God. We know from secular history that there were many intelligent, highly skilled people among the Egyptians. Among them were capable writers, mathematicians, chemists, military and civilian leaders, architects, artists, and craftsmen.

They were knowledgeable in many fields, but concerning spiritual truth, they were totally blind and foolish. It

should be noted that the Egyptians refused to release the Israelites from slavery, but they themselves were also hopelessly enslaved. The Egyptians were held captive and completely subservient to Satan, his lies, and his ways. God planned to use Pharaoh's rebellion to display His mighty power.

❖ **Read Exodus 5:3-23.**

Notice the struggle in Moses' heart. God had convinced him that He was going to free Israel, He had given Moses these miracles to perform, he and Aaron had come to the Elders of Israel and they believed them, and all praised God and worshipped Him. I think Moses thought, "Hey, we've got this in the bag." Moses forgot about what God had told him back in **Exodus 3:19** – "*But I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not even by a mighty hand."*

In Moses we see the same struggle that often takes place in our own hearts. When things are going well, we see and love and are greatly encouraged by the great things that God has promised us; but when facing trials, hardship, and difficulty, we tend to forget Who God is and what He has promised and become focused on the circumstances and begin to lose heart. God then faithfully and graciously intervenes and delivers us through it. Each time we go through this cycle, God is revealing Himself to us more and more, and the more we get to know Him, the more we will begin to trust and depend upon Him even when the circumstances are bad.

❖ **Read Exodus 6:1-9.**

This generation of Israelites living in Egypt when Moses returned there had heard about the Lord and what He had done for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, but they had never personally experienced the Lord's greatness and power. Obviously, Moses was discouraged because his demand for freedom ironically had increased his people's burden, not eased it. So the Lord comforted and reassured him, making two main points. First, God again told Moses what He would do to Pharaoh. God actually shared with Moses His purpose for in allowing Pharaoh to resist His command. Secondly, God assured Moses that He would indeed deliver His people. He was arranging circumstances so that Pharaoh would let them go and would even compel them to do so.

All this would be because of God's mighty hand and outstretched arm. Then in verses 2-5, God reminded Moses of His character as revealed in His name Yahweh. The words "I am the Lord" occur four times in verses 2-8. This is very significant, for God is saying that it's because of Who He is that He should be trusted. As the Lord, Yahweh, He is with His own and is always faithful and true to them.

Why did God say that by His name the Lord, He had not made Himself known to the patriarchs? Was not God known by the name Yahweh to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Yes, He had been (e.g., **Genesis 13:4**). But He mainly appeared to them as God Almighty (El Shaddai), the One who provides or sustains. He had not displayed Himself to the patriarchs primarily by the name Yahweh.

So putting this together with how God revealed Himself to Moses back in **Exodus 3:14**, God is providing a "fuller" revelation of Himself to Moses, that He is not only the sustaining and providing God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but He is the self-existing Promise-Keeper, the Almighty One who is personally related to His people and WILL redeem them. God then told Moses in verses 6-8, to put aside his broken spirit and feelings of inadequacy and return to the people.

Seven times in these three verses God said "I will," thus emphasizing that He is the promise-keeping God. The "I wills" cluster around three promises: deliverance from Egypt (verse 6), possession of the people as His own (verse 7), and the gift of the land (verse 8). Deliverer, Owner/Lord, Provider. Further, the passage begins and ends with the same declaration: "I am the Lord." The people's deliverance would become the basis of a covenantal relationship, which would result in their being in the land. God's statement that He would redeem them with an outstretched arm meant that His power would be evident. After this, it appears then that Moses' was once again encouraged by a revelation of God's character and purposes.

With renewed vigor Moses returned to his people with God's words, but the burden of their oppression caused them not to listen. And again we see the process taking place, this time in the lives of the Israelites as a group. That process of God placing people in positions where He is their only hope and then Him working in ways to reveal Himself to them.

This generation of Israelites had heard of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but now, through the rebellion of

Pharaoh, they were going to get to see Him and grow in knowing Him for themselves, and thereby become gripped with the reality that He is also their God. Through Pharaoh's defiance, the God of Israel would be revealed as the Almighty Ruler over the earth.

❖ **Read Exodus 7:1-5; 9:16.**

<u>The Lord sent nine plagues on the Egyptians.</u>

Because Pharaoh refused to release the Israelites, the Lord began to show His great power by sending a series of plagues on the Egyptians. Because of the amount of time it would take, we won't take the time to read through all of the details of what happened, but if you want to read the story, it is found in **Exodus chapters 7-10**. Here is a summary of the plagues:

- First, the Lord turned the water of the Nile River into blood.
- Then, He sent plagues of frogs.
- Gnats
- Flies
- Then, He caused the Egyptians' horses, cattle, sheep, camels, and donkeys to become sick.
- Next, God caused all of the Egyptians to have terrible boils.
- This was followed by a horrific hailstorm.
- A plague of locusts
- Then three days of total darkness

These plagues were selected by God as miraculous signs because He intended to prove thereby to the king and his servants, that He, Jehovah, was the Lord in the land, and ruled over the powers of nature with unrestricted freedom and omnipotence.

For this reason God not only caused them to burst suddenly upon the land according to His word and then as suddenly to disappear according to His omnipotent will, but caused them to be produced by Moses and Aaron and disappear again at their word and prayer. Pharaoh might learn that these men were appointed by Him as His messengers and were endowed by Him with divine power for the accomplishment of His will.

It is also very interesting to note that God intentionally chose the plagues that He sent, some of which were an attack on the Egyptian gods.

- First there was the turning of the Nile water into blood. Look at where and when God told Moses to go and perform this in **Exodus 7:15** – "in the morning at the bank of the Nile." Pharaoh went out in the morning to the Nile, not merely to take a little morning walk or to bathe in the river but without doubt to present his daily worship to the Nile, which was honored by the Egyptians as their supreme deity. At this very moment the will of God with regard to Israel was declared to him. He rejected the message and immediately the Nile River water was turned into blood, revealing to him that the God of the Hebrews was the true God and He possessed the power to turn this highest object of their worship into blood.

- Next was the plague of the frogs. The significance of this plague is in the fact these too originated in and came up from the Nile River, which again was the Egyptian's highest deity. This god which they worshiped and prayed to for blessing had now become the source of two plagues. Look at **Exodus 8:9-10**.

- The third plague was the gnats. At Aaron's command, all of the dust in Egypt turned into these little tiny biting gnats. Just as the fertilizing water of Egypt had twice become a plague, so through the power of Jehovah, the soil so richly blessed became a plague to the king and his people. In 8:18, it says the magicians tried to bring forth the gnats, too, but they could not, and then stated that it "was the finger of God." Up until this point, it simply looked to the Pharaoh and the magicians that the miracles were brought forth by the powerful incantations of Moses and Aaron. But when they couldn't duplicate the gnats, they said this is the finger of God. Not in the sense of giving glory to God, but in the sense that, "look, we couldn't do it, but really neither could Moses and Aaron, as this is from God."

- Then you'll notice with the fourth and fifth plagues, God leaves Moses' and Aaron's involvement out of it and just simply has them state that they will take place. The fourth plague was the flies. One commentary states the following: "These were probably 'dog-flies.' Literally a mixture of all kinds of flies. These flies were much more numerous and annoying than the gnats, and when enraged, they fasten themselves upon the human body, especially upon the edges of the eyelids, and become a dreadful plague."

- God's statement in verse 23 is extremely significant as well. Putting a "difference" between Israel and Egypt literally meant a "deliverance" or a "redemption." I think it's obvious that this was for the benefit of both Israel and Egypt. For Egypt, He was proving that Israel's God was the absolute God, Who ruled both in and over Egypt with free and boundless omnipotence. For Israel, He was proving His love for them, as well as giving them a physical picture of the redemption and deliverance that was to come.

- The fifth plague was the killing of much of Egypt's livestock. This one was given as a clear escalation of the plagues getting worse because Pharaoh continued to defy God's will (**Exodus 9:1-3**). In verse 7, Pharaoh even specifically sent someone to see if any of the Israelites' livestock had died and none had, but he still remained hardened.

- The sixth plague was that of boils. It is believed that the ash that Moses and Aaron had thrown up in the air was ash from the smelting furnace or lime kiln that was used in making the bricks for all their buildings. No doubt this had to do with the fact that it was the making of these bricks that the Israelites were tortured with, and now God was using them to become a curse on the Egyptians. Notice in 9:11, that the magicians were so far from being able to shelter the king from this plague by their secret arts, that they were attacked by them themselves, were unable to stand before Moses, and were oblige to give up all further resistance.

- The seventh plague was hail.

❖ **Read Exodus 9:13-18.**

God announces that “these next plagues will be plagues that will not only strike the head and arms, but penetrate the very heart, and inflict a mortal wound" (Calvin). It is implied that this threat referred not only to the seventh plague, the hail, but to all the other plagues, through which Jehovah was about to make known to the king that "there was none like Him in all the earth"; i.e., that not one of the gods whom the heathen worshipped was like Him, the only true God. For, in order to show this, God says that He had not smitten Pharaoh and his people at once with pestilence and cut them off from the earth (killed them), but He had set him up to make him see, i.e., discern or feel His power, and to glorify His name in all the earth.

Personally, I take this as God giving the Egyptians an opportunity to respond to what God was revealing about Himself and worship Him as the only true God. Notice, that those who believed God’s words given through Moses and who feared God, could escape this judgment by putting all of their livestock under shelter—a sign of God’s grace and mercy.

- The eighth plague was locusts.

❖ **Read Exodus 10:1-2.**

God again encourages Moses by clearly telling him that He has purposefully hardened Pharaoh’s heart. One of the purposes being that this display of the sovereign power of God would make an everlasting impression upon the people of Israel, to the point that they would continue to pass these narratives down through the generations.

Sometime read Psalms 78 and 105. These events were recorded and passed down through the generations. Notice, too, that the announcement of such a plague of locusts, as their forefathers had never seen before since their existence upon earth, i.e., since the creation of man (verse 6), put the servants of Pharaoh in such fear, that they tried to persuade the king to let the Israelites go.

- The ninth plague is darkness over the land. After it happens, Pharaoh finally calls for Moses and Aaron to come and tells them they can go, but their cattle must stay. Moses tells him no,

everything must go. Pharaoh gets so angry that he threatens to kill Moses if he ever sees him again. Notice Moses' reply in verse 29. For one, God had already told Moses that the last blow would be followed by the immediate release of the people, and there would be no further need to appear before Pharaoh. But notice the change in Moses' faith in God. The last time that someone was trying to kill him, he was running for his life deep, deep into the wilderness. Now we see a boldness that was brought on by faith in God! God had clearly revealed Himself, His heart, and His attributes to Moses. His confidence in God was now far greater than his fear of any man or circumstance. This is the progression that God is seeking to do in all of our lives, and it takes place progressively as He works to reveal Himself to us more and more.

God told Moses how the Israelites should prepare for the final plague.

❖ **Read Exodus 11:1-7.**

God was building a testimony. He was revealing Himself to the Israelites in a strong and mighty way. First, He hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he wouldn't let the Israelites go in order to give God more opportunity to reveal Himself and His might to the Egyptians and to the Israelites. Now, in verse 3 it said that God had given the Israelites favor in the sight of the Egyptians so that they would give them all that they asked for in order to get rid of them.

God truly is the Lord God Almighty, the Great I AM. He predetermined His eternal plan of redemption before time began, and He's been fulfilling it and carrying it out ever since. He has the power, the authority, and the "right" to use people in His plan how He wants, when He wants, and for His glory. He is sovereign.

❖ **Read Exodus 12:1-28.**

The Old Testament is full of physical pictures or foreshadowing of Christ and His finished work. You'll be hard pressed to find one clearer and more referenced than the Passover. Everything about this whole event points to Christ.

The Israelites were slaves in Egypt. All of mankind is born enslaved to sin. The Israelites could not deliver themselves from slavery. All of mankind is without hope of ever delivering themselves from their sinfulness.

Had God not initiated and divinely intervened for the Israelites, they would have been made extinct. Had God not divinely intervened in all of our lives, we would all be destined for an eternity in hell.

God provided a deliverer and a way of deliverance for the Israelites from slavery. God provided a Deliverer and a way of deliverance for us from our sinfulness.

The Israelite's deliverance was accessed by faith. Our deliverance from sin is accessed simply by faith.

One lamb was sacrificed per household. One Lamb (the Lamb of God) was sacrificed for the whole world. The Israelites' lamb had to be a firstborn male and had to be perfect in terms of its health. Our Lamb was the One and only beloved Son of God and was "spiritually perfect," i.e., Jesus didn't have a flesh.

None of the bones of their lambs were to be broken. When Jesus died for our sin, the tradition was to break the leg bones to speed up the dying process, but Jesus' bones were not broken.

The Israelites' lambs had to be killed in such a way as to have their blood run out and painted above their doorways. When Jesus was crucified, He was beaten and bled, a crown of thorns was pounded onto His head and He bled, nails were driven through His hands and feet and He bled, and a spear pierced His side and He bled.

The Israelites in every household had to have faith in the lamb's blood in order for their firstborn to be spared. So we, too, must place our faith in the blood of Christ as that which cleanses us from sin and allows us to receive eternal life.

When the "angel of death" saw the blood on the doorway, all the firstborn of that household were spared or saved. So, too, it's the blood of Christ that has cleansed us of all of our sin thereby allowing us to receive eternal salvation and full acceptance from God.

All the Egyptians' firstborn died.

❖ **Read Exodus 12:29-51.**

God did exactly what He promised He would do. That night, every firstborn in Egypt died among their children and their livestock and all were spared among the Israelites.

The Israelites believed God, chose acceptable sacrifices, killed them, and placed the blood around their doors as God had commanded. The angel passed over their households just like He promised.

This was the "final blow" in terms of the Pharaoh continuing to defy God. He and the rest of his people were brought to the point of begging the Israelites to leave, even loaded them up with gold and silver and whatever they wanted, just so they would leave. God doesn't merely threaten and then not carry through.

When God decides to punish sinners, there is no way of escape. God is patient, gracious, and long suffering. But, there always comes a time when it's too late. We saw this with Adam and Eve, Cain, the flood, Babel, Sodom and Gomorrah, and now the Egyptians.

Along with God's faithfulness to judge and punish sin, we also see His faithfulness to graciously offer a way of deliverance and then faithfully deliver those who believe Him and accept His way of deliverance through faith. We saw this with Adam and Eve (even though they had sinned, they were still given the promise of a Deliverer), Abel, Noah and his family, Abraham, Lot and his family, Isaac (and the ram that died in his place), and the Passover.

XXII. Lesson 22:
God Delivered the Israelites at the Red Sea;
God Provided Food and Water in the Wilderness

Review Questions

1. **Why didn't Pharaoh think that he needed to obey God?**
2. **Have we ever seen anyone rebel against God and succeed?**
3. **Describe the cycle that God uses in our lives to reveal Himself to us.**
4. **When Moses struggled with the circumstances, how did God encourage him?**
5. **Why did God intentionally choose some of the plagues that He chose?**
6. **Compare Moses' trust in God at the burning bush with what it was like after the nine plagues.**
7. **Name some of the ways that the Passover points to Christ.**

Introduction: God is merciful. He had miraculously delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, even though they didn't deserve it and could not have delivered themselves.

We can only imagine the great relief these people felt as they traveled away from what had been such a miserable existence. However, it was not long before they would face other terrifying difficulties. In this study, we will continue to highlight the amazing grace and mercy of God as He compassionately rescues them again and again, even though they often responded to Him in unbelief. God had specific reasons for delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. God delivered the Israelites from slavery to demonstrate much about Himself:

- **His power**
- **His sovereignty**
- **His faithfulness**
- **His love**
- **His grace**
- **His mercy**
- **That only He can deliver**
- **He was also providing a clear physical picture of the coming Deliverer's future work.**
- **In delivering the Israelites from Egypt, God was keeping His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that their descendants would inherit the land. God was now leading the Israelites back to the land He had promised to them—the land where their ancestors had lived before they had gone down to Egypt. God was protecting and preserving the Israelites because they were His chosen people.**
- **They were chosen by God for two main purposes. First, God chose them to be the human bloodline through which the Deliverer would be brought into the world. Second, God chose the nation of Israel to be vehicle through which He revealed Himself and His word to the rest of the world—through His interaction with Israel and**

His divine intervention in their lives, as well as through using them to record His inspired word and preserve it for the future church.

❖ **Read Isaiah 43:9-12 and Romans 3:1-2.**

<u>God led the Israelites by a cloud.</u>

❖ **Read Exodus 13:17-22.**

Immediately upon delivering Israel from slavery, we see Him sovereignly leading them and taking care of them according to what was best for them. Humanly speaking, it would have made more sense for God to lead them the most direct and shortest route or routes that were the most commonly traveled at that time period.

Instead He leads them straight into the wilderness and all the cares, concerns, and fears that would come along with it. For what was BEST for Israel was to know Him! To come to the point where they were confident in Who God was and what He was like, so they could trust and be confident in His goodness and grace. This could only be done by placing them in impossible situations like this. Now, when the Israelites first went into Egypt, 430 years prior, there were about 70 of them. **Exodus 12:37** tells us that there were about 600,000 men who left Egypt. If we estimate that each man had a wife and two children, the Israelites would have numbered approximately 2.5 million. In spite of all of the mistreatment, torture, and suffering, God had truly blessed and prospered the Israelites.

The fact that God used the "cloud and pillar of fire" to lead the Israelites night and day was another manifestation of His love, grace, tenderness, and power. God was making it easy for the Israelites to have faith that He was truly leading them by giving them such undeniable proof that He was leading them. This has been a pattern we have seen with God over and over through His gracious and loving interactions with mankind. He knows how weak, feeble, blind, and lost we are, and even though He has every right to demand unquestioning obedience, He is gracious, loving, gentle, and patient instead.

<u>God brought the Israelites to the Red Sea.</u>

❖ **Read Exodus 14:1-4.**

Though we don't know just where God brought them, we are sure the biblical details of the event are true and that the water was so deep that God had to perform a miracle in order to deliver His people. He brought the Israelites to this place because He planned to demonstrate again to them and to the Egyptians that He is the almighty, sovereign God. For Israel to experience close intimate communion with God, they had to know Him. In order to know Him, He had to reveal Himself to them. It was dilemmas such as this that really revealed the greatness of God in their lives.

❖ **Read Exodus 14:5-9.**

Verse 8 says that the Israelites had left Egypt with boldness, or literally, "they went out with a high hand." To now turn around and see "all of the chariots of Egypt" bearing down on them, how do you think they felt now? God makes it absolutely clear that the reason why the Pharaoh kept pursuing them to the point of destruction was because He kept "hardening Pharaoh's heart" in order to reveal His glory and greatness all the more.

❖ **Read Exodus 14:10-12.**

The Israelites had just witnessed some great and mighty miracles back in Egypt. Very clear and obvious manifestations of God's greatness, power, and especially His love and care for Israel as He miraculously protected them from the plagues that He brought on the Egyptians. Now here they are, in the midst of their very next dilemma and they've lost sight of the greatness of God, OR it hasn't really sunk in yet. As we have seen in the lives of Abraham and Moses, growing in the knowledge of God is truly a growth process.

❖ **Read Exodus 14:13-14.**

I love Moses' answer to their doubt and unbelief. No berating, no condemning, no belittling, just a reassurance of the love, grace, power, and sovereignty of God! There was absolutely no way that they could deliver themselves. They had the Red Sea before them and their enemies behind them. Only God could save them.

What are some of the instances where we have seen this pattern before?

- Only God could provide the way for Adam and Eve to be accepted by Him after they had sinned.
- Only God could provide the way for Abel to be accepted by God.
- Only God could save Noah and his family from the flood.
- Only God could save Isaac when he was tied to the altar and his father had the knife raised above him.
- Only God could provide the way to save the firstborn children of the Israelites from death.
- Only God could provide a way for the Israelites to be delivered from slavery in Egypt.
- And in this instance, only God could provide the way for the Israelites to escape form the Egyptians at the Red Sea.

All these accounts are physical pictures of the spiritual truth that no human being could ever provide a way to escape the wrath of God that we all deserve because of our sinfulness. We cannot make things right between us and God by the things we do. Only God can provide a way for us to be saved from eternal punishment. Just like Moses told the Israelites, "God will fight for you and you will hold your peace," that is exactly the same way we received eternal life. He did all the work; we stood still and reaped the benefits. However, mankind is naturally proud and independent. We naturally seek to depend upon ourselves and our own ideas and abilities to make ourselves right with God. We are just like Cain.

<u>God delivered the Israelites at the Red Sea.</u>

❖ **Read Exodus 14:15-18.**

Another way that God has revealed Himself, His power, and sovereignty, is through revealing the complete control that He has over His creation. In the beginning when the earth was covered with water, God spoke and the water receded and dry ground appeared. God placed some of the water in the expanse above just by a simple command. When it was time to turn all that water loose and flood the earth, it happened when He wanted it to happen.

Now, just as God had done in the past, He parted the Red Sea where and when and how He wanted it parted and kept it back for the Israelites to pass through.

After seeing all these clear and mighty manifestations of the mighty hand of God, it's hard to imagine that Israel could ever doubt Him again. It appears that in verses 13-14, Moses was proclaiming to Israel what God was about to do, but in verse 15, God says, "Why are you crying to me?" It almost sounds like Moses had begun to doubt as well or at the very least was again crying out to God for help. God's answer was, "Why do you keep asking for help? I already gave you My promise of what I was going to do. Stop asking for help and tell the Israelites to get moving."

This is a physical picture of what we do regarding our Christian lives today. Like the Israelites, we see our great need. We see the sin that we continue to walk in. The things we want to do we don't do and the things we don't want to do we keep doing. Like Moses, we keep crying out to God for "help." We keep asking Him to change us, to empower us, to transform us, put a hedge around us, give us strength, etc. I think like He did with Moses, He says, "why do you keep crying out to me for help? I have already 'given you all things pertaining to life and godliness.' I have already provided your deliverance from the penalty of sin, as well as from the power of sin. Just believe it and walk in it!"

❖ **Read Exodus 14:19-22.**

Every detail of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, God was doing in ways to reveal Himself and what He is like to Israel and all future generations. Notice what it said about the cloud; He placed it in between the Israelites and the Egyptians. On the Egyptian's side, it created fog, a cloud and darkness, but on the Israelite's side, it provided light and the ability to see at night! This is another pattern that we see all through scripture, an act of God being used as grace, mercy, and deliverance for one, at the same time it being judgment for another.

Removing Adam and Eve from the garden was both an act of judgment and mercy at the same time. At the same time that God pronounced Adam and Eve's judgment, along with it came the promise of the Deliverer.

When God shut the door on the ark, it meant grace and deliverance for Noah and his family and the animals but at the same time pronounced judgment for all those who were outside.

The angels coming to Sodom and Gomorrah meant deliverance for Lot and his family but judgment for the rest of the inhabitants.

All the plagues in Egypt, God in His grace, used them to bring about deliverance for Israel and judgment for Egypt.

This cloud did the same thing. These are amazing pictures of the sovereignty of God!

❖ **Read Exodus 14:23-29.**

Some people may have a really hard time with the fact that it was God who "hardened" Pharaoh's heart to defy Him, which has now led to his and his whole army's destruction. "I thought God was gracious." God's choosing to "harden" Pharaoh's heart was in regard to letting Israel go. This didn't have anything to do with God choosing Pharaoh to receive eternal life or not.

Secondly, before God hardened Pharaoh's heart, Pharaoh had already rejected God. Scripture is clear that God has revealed Himself through His creation. Pharaoh and many of the Egyptians had rejected that testimony and had been worshipping creation instead of the Creator. So, in terms of turning to God, looking to Him for salvation, and worshipping Him, they had already rejected Him.

God was now simply hardening his heart in his already existing defiance of God. No one can oppose Almighty God and win. It is absolutely impossible! God is supreme and there is NONE LIKE HIM. Anyone who tries to resist Him, actually ends up becoming a tool in His hand that He uses to bring about the very will that they were seeking to oppose. Both Satan and Pharaoh are prime examples of that.

❖ **Read Hebrews 10:31.**

You often hear people speculating about the Israelites crossing the Red Sea. Some say that they didn't really cross the sea but crossed a marsh land. Then you also hear many other ideas that people have for how it could have happened and thereby explain away the omnipotence of the Lord God Almighty. Look at this stat from an article: *"They had to get across the Red Sea in one night. Now, if they went on a narrow path, double file, the line would be 800 miles long and would require 35 days and nights to get through. (Besides all of the*

people, there were large droves of livestock.) So, there had to be a space in the Red Sea three miles wide so that they could walk 5000 abreast to get over in one night."

I think it's pretty obvious that the parting of the Red Sea was another God-sized miracle that He did to plainly reveal His supremacy and sovereignty.

❖ **Read Exodus 14:30-31.**

For the moment, Who God is and what He is like was very apparent to the Israelites because they marveled at His power and worshipped Him. God's deliverance of Israel out of slavery in Egypt is a clear physical picture of our spiritual deliverance.

God initiated their deliverance by sending Moses to deliver them. God initiated our deliverance by sending Jesus, the Son of God to deliver us.

Through God's power and might, the Israelites were delivered. Through God's power and might and the finished work of Christ, we have been delivered.

The Israelites deliverance meant judgment for Egyptians. Jesus' death on the cross has brought about our deliverance and at the same time judgment for all who don't believe.

Israel's enemy was completely defeated in the course of their deliverance. Our enemy was completely defeated upon our deliverance.

Israel was free from Egypt's authority forever. We, too, are set free from Satan's authority, as well as sin, death, hell, and the grave for all eternity.

They had to be set from slavery in order to go on to enjoy the Promised Land. We, too, must be saved and set free from the bondage of sin in order to go on to enjoy the Promised Land.

Their deliverance resulted in faith, praise, and worship of God. Our deliverance results in faith, praise, and worship of God.

❖ **Read Exodus 16:1-3.**

This brings to light another aspect of Israel's deliverance that is also true of ours. Immediately upon being delivered from the Egyptians, they had to first pass through the wilderness in order to get to the Promised Land. Here they were one month after leaving Egypt and the Israelites find themselves facing the next trial after the Red Sea—that of having no food. With all that they had just seen God do on their behalves and witnessing His many great displays of power and might, you would think they would have never doubted God again, but we know that that wasn't the case.

As we know, it was how Israel responded to God in the midst of these wilderness trials that ultimately determined how long they spent in the wilderness. It is estimated that Israel could have entered the Promised Land within three months of leaving Egypt. Instead it took 40 years. No matter how much God revealed Himself to them, or even how greatly He manifested Himself to them, they just couldn't trust Him in the face of trials and difficulties.

God had clearly stated His promise that He would lead them back to the Promised Land, but in verse 3 they say, "You have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." This is a clear refusal to believe God's promise. Had God wanted Israel dead, all He had to do was nothing. He didn't divinely intervene in their lives just take them out and starve them to death.

The same will be true of us today as Christians. Upon accepting Jesus as our Savior, we immediately enter the wilderness. We are no longer "at home" living the way that we used to live, indulging the flesh. Nor have we fully learned to trust Him and walk in the Spirit. The Spirit of God will be using each and every trial and hardship that comes up in our lives to teach us to rest and rely fully upon Him. As we embrace this process and learn to walk by faith, we will enter the "rest" that God has for us here and now while we still remain on this earth. However, if our response is more like the Israelites, unbelief, we will spend the rest of our lives circling around in a barren wilderness.

❖ **Read Exodus 16:4-21.**

In the wilderness, Israel was faced with many, many hardships and difficulties. Each of them could have been viewed as opportunities to see the strong and mighty hand of God at work in their lives again. From God's standpoint, He lovingly and graciously sought to watch over and care for Israel like the parents of a newborn baby. All He wanted from them was trust and dependence. He wanted them to recognize His great love and care for them through all the gracious and mighty things that He did on their behalves.

He wanted them to respond to that love in close, intimate, communion and dependence. Instead, as we will continue to see, each new trial in the lives of Israel were met with an attitude that was as if God had not yet done a single thing for them.

They perpetually lost sight of God and His greatness and great love for them and would often accuse Him of not doing what is best for them. The same is true in our lives today as Christians. While still living here on this earth, we will face many more hardships and trials. God will be seeking to use every single one of them in our lives to reveal Himself and His heart for us more and more, and thereby take us into a deeper and more intimate communion with Himself.

It is possible, though, for us to respond to these hardships like Israel did. We, too, can become controlled by our circumstances rather than remaining confident in God's love and acceptance of us, and thereby understand that hardships and trials are opportunities to taste and feel God's love and care for us.

❖ **Read Exodus 16:35.**

This verse jumps ahead of the chronology and makes the statement that God faithfully provided manna for ALL of Israel for 40 years in the wilderness. Even though Israel often doubted God, God never failed them. After each provision that God provided for Israel, we've seen an attitude of thanks, praise, and worship from Israel; but by the time the next trial came along, what God had done prior was always forgotten.

❖ **Read Exodus 17:1-7.**

Obviously, they had to have water in order to live. So again, Israel was placed in an impossible situation that they couldn't deliver themselves from. Their only hope was for God to divinely intervene, which they had seen many, many times. God was worthy of being trusted. One of the reasons why I believe God chose such an obstinate, stubborn, and stiff-necked people like Israel is that they really helped to magnify the grace, patience, and faithfulness of God. Even though they perpetually doubted and even turned away from Him, He never gave up on them but always faithfully provided for them.

Listen to some of the specifics that it would have taken to have supported Israel and all of their animals each day in the wilderness:

(Quoted from *www.clarion-call.org/extras/moses/moses.htm)*"*Moses and the people were in the desert, but what was he going to do with them? They had to be fed, and feeding 2 or 3 million people requires a lot of food. According to the Quartermaster General of the Army, it is calculated that Moses would have needed 1500 tons of food each day to feed the Israelites. To bring that much food each day, two freight trains, each a mile long, would be required. Besides that, you must remember, they were out in the desert, so they would have to have firewood to use in cooking the food. This would take 4000 tons of wood and a few more freight trains, each a mile long, just for one day. And just think, they were forty years in transit. And oh yes! They would have to have water. If they only had enough to drink, cook and wash a few dishes, it would take 11,000,000 gallons each day...and a freight train with tank cars, 3 miles long, just to bring water!*" Dave Smith, "Moses' Math Problem"

Now, keep in mind, God provided all of this every day for 40 years! You will notice in verse 6, that God had decided to have Moses strike the rock before He caused the water to come rushing out of it. God didn't have to do it this way. He could have just provided the water to flow on its own like He caused the manna to fall from the sky. But in providing the water as He did, God was creating a "type of Christ" that would become a physical picture of the eternal life that can only come through Christ, the promised Deliverer.

Israel needed water and only God could provide it. Just like that, we need eternal life and only God could provide it. Just like God initiated the provision, so He initiated our provision. After the rock was struck, the water flowed forth. After Jesus was "struck" (crucified), eternal life was made available to us.

- **Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.**

XXIII. Lesson 23:
Giving of the Law

Review Questions

1. **Through delivering Israel from slavery, what did God reveal about Himself?**
2. **Why did God lead Israel out of Egypt and straight into the wilderness?**
3. **What does the fact that God gave such undeniable proof that He was leading Israel show about the heart of God?**
4. **Why is being put in impossible situations so important in our lives today?**
5. **At the Red Sea only God could provide a way of escape. Name other examples of times when only God could deliver.**
6. **Moses' crying out to God for help at the Red Sea and God's response to him – how is that like us today as Christians?**
7. **Name examples of one act from God providing grace for some and at the same time judgment for others.**
8. **Name some similarities between Israel's deliverance from Egypt and our deliverance from sin.**

Introduction: God is holy. As we continue to study God's word and look at how God reveals Himself to mankind, our view of Him will become more and more balanced. Many people consider Him to be so loving and kind that He will not punish sin, while others tend to see Him more as an unreasonable task master Who is there to judge and punish their every mistake. Very few of us really have a properly balanced view of God and His holy justice along with His loving grace.

God directed the Israelites to Mount Sinai. After God delivered the Israelites from Egypt, He led them in the direction that He wanted them to go. He led them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. God continued to guide them in this manner throughout their journey. The Israelites did not decide when they would travel or where they would go. God made those decisions for them. He wanted them to accept Him as their ruler, protector, and provider. God had chosen Israel as His "covenant nation" above all other nations. He was preparing them for unprecedented trust and dependence upon Him.

❖ **Read Exodus 19:1-15.**

First of all, we notice in verses 1 and 2 that God brought the Israelites to Mount Sinai or some say Mount Horeb. Actually, Mount Sinai is a specific Mount in the Horeb Mountain Range. Do you remember what was going on the last time that Moses was on this mount? It was when God spoke to him from the burning bush. Do you remember what God promised Moses in **Exodus 3:12**?

❖ **Read Exodus 3:12.**

As proof that God would be with Moses, God promised him that he would lead Israel out of Egypt to this mount to "serve" Him here. Serve here means "worship." God was telling Moses that he and Israel would be brought back to this mount one day to worship Him. That would be proof of Him fulfilling His promise to be with them. From the time that Moses had left Mount Sinai to return to Egypt, what steps did God take to fulfill His promise to bring Moses and the Israelites back to this mountain?

- He protected Moses from Pharaoh who, in his anger, could have had Moses killed.
- He delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt even against the Pharaoh's wishes.
- He opened the Red Sea so that the Israelites could escape when Pharaoh and his army pursued them.
- He provided the Israelites with food and water so that they didn't die in the wilderness.
- He guided them by the cloud so that they weren't lost in the wilderness.

God went to great lengths to prove His trustworthiness. God reminds them of His gracious and divine intervention.

Notice how God Himself describes His delivering of Israel from slavery: "you saw what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to Myself." He doesn't say, "I bore you on eagle's wings and delivered you, or brought you out of slavery, or unto freedom" but "I brought you to Myself"!

There would have been no greater way for God to show Israel how important and significant they were to Him than to say, "I brought you to Myself." I wanted you for Myself! I want a relationship with you. Do you know that God says the exact same thing about us as believers?

❖ **Read 2 Corinthians 5: 18-19.**

Paul said that "God has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ." Like Israel, He brought us to Himself. We didn't choose Him, we didn't search after Him, but He brought us unto Himself! Nothing could make you more significant than

the fact that the glorious and almighty God of the universe brought you to Himself!

Then God says, if you will hear my voice and keep My covenant, then you will be a special people to Me. Up until this point, what had God's voice sounded like? What had His covenant been based upon? GRACE and Divine Intervention. There had been no rules and regulations. He had freely delivered them from slavery, freely protected them from their enemies' sword, freely led them through the Red Sea, freely rained down bread from heaven, and freely brought forth water from a rock.

This is what God's voice had sounded like up to this point. It was all grace and had nothing to do with Israel doing anything. Before carrying any of these things out, God had given them no conditions or demands. There was no burden or yoke put around their necks.

From the time that God promised Adam and Eve a Deliverer in **Genesis 3:15** and on to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, God's covenant and promises had no conditions. It was all about His grace.

It is very significant that God gave Israel this reminder of His love, power, and grace before offering to them this law based covenant. The significance really stands out when you consider it in light of God's previous statement in **Exodus 16:4** – *"Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not.'"*

Well, you know the outcome. Before offering Israel this law based covenantal relationship with Himself in chapter 19, God first "tested" them by telling them to NOT do one little thing. "When you collect manna each day, only collect that day's worth. Don't collect extra and try to save it for the next day." God was requiring this in order to teach them that they could trust God for each day's provision. The test wasn't for God to find out anything; He is all-knowing. It was for Israel's benefit, to show them that they were incapable of following even the simplest and easiest to carry out of commands. The Israelites promised to obey the Lord.

So, now here in chapter 19, when God offered this law based covenant with them, they should have fallen on their

faces before God and said, “NO, we want You to keep fighting for us! We want You to keep carrying us on eagle’s wings! We want our relationship with You to be based on your grace and mercy, not on our obedience! We have grumbled and doubted you at every trial and we couldn’t even follow the simplest of commands to not gather more than one day’s worth of manna. We are incapable of obeying You.”

C.H. Mackintosh, in his notes in the Pentateuch states: “*Instead they made one of the most presumptuous vows that any human could ever make: “All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do.” Not, we will TRY to do, or we will ENDEAVOR to do. This at least would have communicated a level of distrust in themselves. But, no, they took the most absolute ground, ‘“WE WILL DO.”’*

And it wasn’t just a few people. It says that ALL of the people made this same bold and presumptuous vow. They were like Cain who thought that he could please God by what he offered to him. Remember God’s statement about mankind back in **Genesis 8:21**? Every thought and intent of man’s heart is only evil from childhood. People who really believe that that is true about themselves would never have made such a vow.

As soon as Moses officially relayed the people’s response to God, look at the immediate result in verse 9 – “and the Lord said to Moses, ‘behold, I come to you in a thick cloud’ and you shall set boundaries for the people, round about saying, ‘take heed to yourselves that you do not go up onto the mountain, or even touch the border of it. For whosoever touches the mountain will be put to death.’” WOW! What a change! The One Who had just stated that He had borne them on eagle’s wings and had brought them unto Himself, now envelopes Himself in a thick cloud and threatens the people with death if they come near the mountain.

The “sweet accents” of grace and mercy are exchanged for the thundering and lightings of the fiery mount. Israel had said, “WE WILL DO.” and now, therefore, they must be put at a distance in order that it may be fully seen what they are able to do.

This same dynamic happens in our lives today as Christians when we strive to depend upon ourselves and our own efforts to earn God’s favor and blessing. Why is this so? Why wouldn’t God be honored and glorified by our efforts to “please Him”?

As we have seen in passages like **2 Timothy 1:9**, God's purpose and grace were bestowed upon us through Christ BEFORE TIME BEGAN! You put this together with the fact that "every thought and intent of our hearts are only evil from childhood," and it's very clear that SALVATION, which is justification, sanctification, and glorification is all the result of Christ and His finished work on our behalf.

To depend upon ourselves and our efforts for any part of this, may make us look "spiritual" in appearance, but in reality we are doing exactly what Cain did, walking in unbelief! To walk in unbelief is to reject God and His provision for us which results in distance and separation, not closeness and intimacy.

When we are striving to live a holy life in our own efforts, God cannot and will not ever bless those efforts. To do so, would be to make us even more proud, self-righteous, and independent of Him. Rather, He will do exactly what He did with Israel—He will step back and allow us to go on to prove that we can't depend upon ourselves.

"Thus, then, Israel made a fatal mistake in saying, "We will do." It was taking upon themselves a vow which they were not able, even were they willing to pay. And we know who has said, 'Better that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay.' It is of the very essence of a vow that it assumes the competency to fulfill; and where is man's competency? As well might a bankrupt person draw a check on the bank, as a helpless sinner make a vow. A man who makes a vow denies the truth as to his nature and condition. He is ruined, what can he do? He is utterly without strength and can neither will nor do anything good. Did Israel keep their vow? Did they do "all that the Lord commanded"? Witness the golden calf, the broken tablets, the desecrated Sabbath, the despised and neglected ordinances, the stoned messengers, the sacrificed children, the rejected and crucified Christ, the resisted Spirit. Such are the overwhelming evidences of man's dishonored vows. Thus must it ever be when fallen humanity undertakes to vow. Christian reader, do you not rejoice in the fact that your eternal salvation rests not on your poor shadowy vows and resolutions, but on 'the one offering of Jesus Christ once'? Oh, yes, 'this is our joy which never can fail'. Christ has taken all our vows upon Himself, and gloriously discharged them forever. His resurrection-life flows through His members and produces in us results which legal vows and legal claims

never could affect. He is our life and He is our righteousness. May His cause ever command our energies. May it be our meat and our drink to spend and be spent in His dear service." C. H. Mackintosh

God spoke to the Israelites from Mount Sinai.

- **Read Exodus 19:16-25.**

After Israel made their vow to do "all that the Lord commands them," we saw the change in God's response towards them. We can clearly see the change in Israel's response as they for the first time experience this different way of God relating to them. Up until this time, Israel's response toward God was never described in terms of fear or being afraid.

Up to this point, the basis for God's dealing with them was always on the basis of His gracious and divine intervention. He was always on their side, protecting them, leading them, providing for them, and loving them. His acceptance of them was based on the fact that He had chosen them. This is the true heart of God as He is dealing with His people according to grace. It's all of Him! But, once Israel said, "We will do," God could no longer deal with them according to grace.

Now, He would have to deal with them according to the law. Under the law, Israel's acceptance before God would be determined by their own ability to keep the law. God would still protect them and provide for them, as long as they were faithful to obey the law. This is how it looks when God is dealing with His people according to the law: "so that all the people who were in the camp trembled."

God had a specific purpose for giving His commandments to Israel.

- **Read Exodus 20:1-19.**

First of all, compare what God says here in 20:2 with how He said it back in 19:4. Do you notice a difference? Back in 19:4, God was still dealing with them according to grace and in describing His deliverance of Israel from Egypt, He describes it tenderly as a loving father would with his own children: "*I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you unto Myself*." God's

purpose in reminding them of this was to reveal His heart for them.

But, now in 20:2, as He is dealing with them according to the law, God states the fact more matter of fact. Rather than it being for the purpose of revealing His heart for them, it's more for the purpose of establishing His authority and right to give them these commandments and to expect their obedience. "*I am the LORD your God. I am the One Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, therefore you will serve and obey only Me*."

God then goes on to give them the Ten Commandments and then look at what it says in verses 18 and 19: "*Now all the people witnessed the thundering, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, 'you speak with us and we will hear; but, let not God speak with us lest we die.'*"

This is a great physical picture of spiritual truth. If our relationship with God is according to the law (or rules and regulations), then we, too, will fear, for there will be the ongoing condemnation for our failures. **I**n the law, God sets forth what man ought to be like and pronounces a curse on all who are not like that. Then, when ANY and ALL men or women look at themselves in light of the law, they actually find themselves to be the very thing that the law condemns. How then could anyone get life by keeping the law?

The law proposes life and righteousness to be obtained by anyone who can keep it, but it then turns around and proves that we are all in a state of death and unrighteousness. In order for us to do what the law requires, we must have life. And in order for us to be what the law requires, we must have righteousness. In and of ourselves, we have neither and so we are cursed.

So we come to the real purpose for God giving the law or the Ten Commandments.

❖ **Read Romans 5:20**.

Paul states that the law entered that the offense might abound. Or the law was given so that people's offenses/sinfulness might be made manifest. All humans are

already sinful by means of our sin nature, but that sinfulness can't be seen without a law. Also see **Romans 7:13.**

C. H. Mackintosh has this to say about the law: *"It was in a certain sense, like a perfect mirror let down from heaven to reveal to man his moral derangement. If I present myself with derangement habit before a mirror, it shows the derangement, but does not set it right. If I measure a crooked wall with a perfect plumb-line, it reveals the crookedness, but does not remove it. If I take out a lamp on a dark night, it reveals to me all the hindrances and disagreeables in the way, but it does not remove them. Moreover, the mirror, the plumb-line, and the lamp do not create the evils which they clearly point out. They neither create nor remove, but simply reveal. Thus it is with the law. It does not create the evil in man's heart, neither does it remove it, but with unerring accuracy, it reveals it."*

This then leads us to one of our main problems in modern day Christianity. The New Testament is full of all kinds of biblical instruction, which actually presents an even higher standard than the Ten Commandments. When obedience to follow that biblical instruction is the focus of the teaching, it becomes like the "law" to believers. Just as the law provided no help or power to enable the Israelites to keep it, so biblical instruction in and of itself, provides no help or power to enable the believer to walk in it.

This is exactly what F. J. Huegel is saying in the following quote: *"There is not a New Testament requirement that does not immediately bring the believer face to face with an overwhelming dilemma. Either he must cease to move in the realm of the purely natural, die to the "flesh-life," and find in the resurrected Christ a new life, or he must fail as a Christian."*

If biblical instruction is the focus of our modern day Bible teaching, that type of teaching will have this same effect on our lives as believers. The New Testament is full of much biblical instruction that contain many imperatives or commands. If we are viewing our relationship with God in light of our ability to obey that teaching, then we too will have the same fearful response towards God, for it will reveal in us our own inability to live the Christian life.

And just as it was important for Israel to recognize their sinfulness in order to see their need for the coming promised Deliverer, so, it's important for us today as Christians to see that we are incapable of living the Christian life on our own.

Just as Peter's self-proclaimed commitment and devotion to Christ ("even if I have to die for you") left him running and weeping through the streets, so we, too, need to see and recognize our own failure and inability to live the kind of committed and devoted lives to Christ that we all desire to live. For only then will our hearts be prepared to accept and appropriate ALL of the gospel, i.e., Christ's substitutionary death for the penalty of sin, our co-crucifixion and co-resurrection with Him for the power of sin, and that all this WILL result in our future glorification in heaven with Him for all eternity! "All of grace."

XXIV. Lesson 24:
God Told the Israelites to Build the Tabernacle

Review Questions

1. **In God's description of how He delivered Israel, what phrase does He use that really reveals His heart for them?**
2. **Name a New Testament passage where He reveals the same heart for us today.**
3. **Before giving Israel the Law, how had God previously proved to them that they were more incapable of following even the simplest of commands?**
4. **What presumptuous vow did Israel make with God and why was it so presumptuous?**
5. **As soon as they made the vow, how did God's "countenance" found them changed, so to speak?**
6. **Why isn't God honored and glorified by our vows and commitments to obedience?**
7. **Describe the difference between relationship with God that is based on law and that which is based on grace.**
8. **What is the "modern day law" for most believers today?**

Introduction: God is perfectly holy, righteous, and just. Yet, at the same time, He is also perfectly loving, gracious, and merciful. Nothing highlights all of these attributes all at the same time like this account of God giving Moses the Ten Commandments followed immediately by His instruction to build the tabernacle. Immediately upon giving Israel the law He knew they wouldn't be able to keep, God also provides a way for them to be able to "cover" their sins until the promised Deliverer came. Can you think of any other events that so clearly show all of these attributes of God at the same time?

- **The Fall–Immediately upon God cursing Adam and Eve, He gives the first promise of the coming Deliverer.**
- **God's pursuit of Cain**
- **Noah and the flood**
- **Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah**
- **The giving of the law and the tabernacle proved the sinfulness of mankind, the grace of God, and gives clear pictures of the coming Deliverer and His finished work all in one fell swoop!**

<u>Israel's first taste of approaching God.</u>

❖ **Read Exodus 24:1-11.**

These eleven verses give a little snapshot view of what Israel's relationship with God is going to look like under the law. Notice God's statements to Moses in the first two verses. "Come up to the Lord, you and Elders, and worship from afar." Nowhere in the law or while under the law, is anyone ever told to "draw nigh" unto God. We don't hear those kinds of statements until the New Testament after the completed finished work of Christ.

He also says that the people "shall not come near, nor shall they go up with him." Under the law, this is the only way that it can be. The law so magnifies the holiness of God and at the same time so magnifies the sinfulness of man, that it will always condemn mankind and keep us separated from God.

Notice Moses' statement in verse 8: "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words." Basically Moses was saying this is the basis upon which you will be able to be at peace with God; i.e., upon the basis of shed blood, for the wages of sin is death.

Then in verses 3-11 God gives Israel their first taste of how their relationship with God will be maintained under the law. Moses and the other elders, being sinful men, living in "defilement" among mankind, before ascending the mountain to meet with and worship God, stopped at the base of the mount to offer burnt offerings and peace offerings, shedding the blood of the animals and sprinkling it on the altar. The blood of the animals didn't PAY for their sin, but it "covered their sin while they continued to believe in and look forward to the promised coming Deliverer. It's also interesting to note that it was Moses and the Elders of Israel whom God called up to see this manifestation of Himself; i.e., it was the leadership.

Notice what God revealed about Himself. He manifested Himself in light, purity, majesty, and holiness. It wasn't that same kind of "fatherly affection for his little children" like we saw back in Egypt where it was more of God revealing His heart for Israel to Israel. No, the vision they saw of God in verse 10 included Him standing on "the paved work of a sapphire stone." This speaks of God's unapproachable light and purity. This kind of view of God begs separation and not closeness.

At the same time, verse 11 goes on to say that God didn't "lay a hand on them, but that they saw God and ate and drank in His presence." This speaks of God's forbearance and mercy because of the shed blood.

"Blessed forevermore be the grace which has not left us under a covenant of works. Blessed be He who has hushed the law's loud thunders and quenched Mount Sinai's flame by the blood of the everlasting covenant, and given us a peace which no power of earth or hell can shake. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His blood, and hath made us

kings and priests unto God and His Father. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" C. H. Mackintosh

God wrote the Ten Commandments on stone.

❖ **Read Exodus 24:12-18.**

Moses was then called up to the presence of God and he took Joshua along with him. While Moses was on the mountain, the Lord gave him the Ten Commandments written on two tablets of stone. The Lord also explained to Moses other rules and customs that He commanded the Israelites to follow. Along with these "rules and regulations," God also told Moses to have the Israelites build a special place where He Himself would come down and dwell in their midst.

God commanded Moses to build the tabernacle.

❖ **Read Exodus 25:1-8.**

Again, I want to highlight the fact that immediately upon giving the Ten Commandments, God also gives His instruction for constructing the tabernacle. This will be not only the place where they will be able to make blood sacrifices and cover their sin, but also the place where God Himself will dwell in their midst. God tells Moses in verse 2 to ask all the Israelites to bring offerings to Him, but God said, "From everyone who gives it WILLINGLY with his heart you shall take my offering."

This offering was all the needed materials that it would take to construct the tabernacle. God said that Moses was only to accept the offerings that were truly offered "willingly from the heart." God wasn't going to force His presence upon Israel. He had made a covenant with them and promised to protect, provide for, and bless them if they obeyed His commands and was now offering to live among them to fulfill His end of the covenant if they "wanted" Him. Bringing the articles that God requested, willingly from the heart, would reveal the faith of the people. Those who believed God and valued His presence among them would have willingly contributed what they had.

Had none of the Israelites brought anything for the tabernacle, God wouldn't have dwelt among them. He is exactly the same way with us today as believers. God doesn't force Himself upon us. We can grieve and quench the Holy Spirit in our lives by living a carnal sinful life. Should we choose to live that way, the result will be the same—we will miss out

on God's dwelling "among us." We won't experience an abiding relationship with Him.

The tabernacle had to be built exactly as God had instructed.

❖ **Read Exodus 25:9.**

The Israelites had to build the tabernacle exactly according to the instructions God had given to Moses. First of all, had God not given them these instructions, they would never have known by themselves what would be acceptable to God and what wouldn't be. We have seen over and over the fact that God does not leave learning how to please Him up to mankind to figure out on their own. He is always the initiator, it's always His plan, and He always makes it clearly known!

Secondly, it is He Who is the sovereign and supreme One. He is the Creator and Owner of all. He has the right to say how man can come to Him. Where else have we seen this patterned?

- Adam and Eve and the fig leaves
- Cain and his sacrifice
- Noah had to build the ark according to God's instruction in order to be delivered from the flood.

The tabernacle also had to be transportable, for the Israelites would be traveling great distances. Therefore, the outer covering was to be constructed of animal skins and materials woven from goat's hair. These were similar materials that were used for the Israelite's portable tents. Whenever God told Israel to stop and pitch their tents, the tabernacle was to be set up in the center of their camp. This symbolized that God Himself was to be kept at the center of the nation!

The tabernacle "proper" consisted of two rooms: the holy place and the holy of holies, or the most holy place. The holy place was the first room entered into from the courtyard through the curtains which hung at the front of the tabernacle. The second room then was the most holy place. This special room would be the most important place in the tabernacle, for it was here that God would dwell with His people. It was a sacred place set apart only for God. The only entrance to this room was through the holy place.

❖ **Read Acts 7:44.**

In the course of Stephen unfolding his famous chronology of God's interaction with Israel, notice here in verse 44 how he refers to the tabernacle as "the tabernacle of witness." Other versions call it the "tabernacle of testimony."

Then in **Hebrews 9:1-9**, speaking of the "first covenant, its ordinances of divine service, and the earthly sanctuary," the writer in verse 9 says these things were "symbolic."

In **Hebrews 9:11**, the writer goes on to say, "*But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation."*

Symbolism of the tabernacle

It's very apparent that the whole tabernacle and all of its furnishings, as well as the Priests, their work, and the sacrifices, all of it together foreshadows Christ and/or various aspects of His finished work. Beginning with the structure of the tabernacle, you know that it outwardly was made with animal skins; but inwardly, in the holy of holies, it would contain the very presence of God. This provides us with a very clear picture of Christ Himself. He was one hundred percent God and at the same time was also one hundred percent man. Outwardly, all people could see was His human body. Inwardly He was God Himself.

The book of Hebrews says that Jesus was the expressed image of God. To have been with Jesus would to have been with God Himself.

❖ **Read Exodus 25:10-22.**

The ark was known by different names. It was called "the ark of the covenant," the "ark of the Lord," the "ark of God," and the "ark of the testimony." It was to be made of acacia wood and completely covered with gold. The ark of God was the most important piece of furniture in the whole tabernacle. The mercy seat was the specific place where God's presence would be manifested and where He would show mercy to the nation of Israel.

The ark of God also provides us with some very beautiful symbolism of Christ and His work. The King James Version refers to the wood it was made of as "shittim" wood and other translations call it acacia wood. The Greek version of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) translates it as "incorruptible wood." This seems to be a fitting symbol of the distinguishing characteristic of His humanity, the fact that He too was the perfect, spotless, incorruptible Son of God.

One of the "roles" of the ark and the mercy seat was one of "mediation" between man and God. It was the sprinkling of the blood on the mercy seat every year by the high priest that allowed Israel to receive God's forgiveness for another year.

We know that Jesus is our Mediator between us and God. On the one hand, He had to be fit for the most holy and glorious presence of God. We know that He was because He was not only sinless and perfect, but He was also God the Son.

On the other hand, He had to be able to truly represent those for whom He stood to represent. He had to thoroughly understand their need, as well as feel for them and with them in their various temptations. We know that as a man, He, too, was tempted as we are and has proven to not only be an acceptable sacrifice but also an understanding mediator.

Verses 21-22 tell us Moses would be instructed to place the "testimony" inside of the ark. This is the two tablets containing God's commands that He gave to Moses. Placing them in the ark actually took place in **Exodus 40:17-20**. What a picture. The record of the law that Israel would never be able to keep was actually placed under the "mercy seat," under the place where blood would be sprinkled every year in order to obtain forgiveness for breaking that very law!

James 2:13 says that *"Mercy triumphs over judgment."* So, the holy of holies contained the presence of God Himself. Within the ark was the written standard of His holiness. God being just would have to hold men to that standard and faithfully punish those who disobey; but there was also the mercy seat, the place where the blood of a substitute sacrifice was sprinkled. This sacrifice satisfied God's justice and therefore the sinner could obtain grace and mercy instead of punishment. There could be no clearer physical picture of Christ and His finished work on our behalf!

We should also notice that this is exactly what God did back in Genesis 3 after Adam and Eve had sinned. God doles out their judgment and it's followed by His promise of the coming Deliverer. Just like that, on Mount Sinai, God gives Moses the law and it's followed with all of the instruction for how to construct the tabernacle and all of its furnishings.

Immediately upon giving them the law, God provides the way for Him to dwell among them, as well as for the way for Israel to receive deliverance from the condemnation that they will incur from not being able to keep that law. Such is the WAY of God, for man's redemption has always been about Christ and His finished work, even from before the foundations of the earth.

Another interesting thought about the mercy seat is in regard to the cherubim. In Henry W. Soltau's commentary, "*The Tabernacle, The Priesthood and the Offerings,"* he states that it's very significant that scripture notes the cherubim and the mercy seat were forged together out of one piece of gold; i.e., they weren't formed separately and then attached to each other. Soltau says that this represents Christ as the One Who holds all the glorious power of God that is associated with mercy. It's through Him that God is able to display His power and righteousness ever inseparably linked to His mercy and grace. The first place we see cherubim in the scripture is when they were placed in the Garden of Eden to keep mankind from returning to eat from the tree of life. They stood associated with the "flaming sword," a sword of vengeance and judgment.

These things also stood as a witness that all of the majesty of God's power and holiness was now against man for his act of deliberate defiance against God. The word and majesty of God had been taken lightly by mankind and they had actually given more credit to Satan's lie.

Soltau states, "*This significant place of the cherubim it's self-manifested the hopelessness of any attempt on the part of man to regain life by his own efforts. And that unless the glory of God could be met and the flaming sword of vengeance and of holiness satisfied, it were vain for man to hope for any way to return to life. And therefore, death and the curse would be his inalienable portion."*

The fact that those cherubim, which once prevented mankind to return to life, are now located on the mercy seat, symbolizes the fact that God Himself has made a way for His

own justice and holiness to be satisfied on the behalf of mankind.

Again Soltau writes, *"And now no act more displays the righteousness of God than His act of mercy to a sinner. God never proves Himself more holy than when He pardons sin. For that mercy and pardon are ever grounded upon His righteous judgments having been poured out on the head of Christ, on behalf of, and as the substitute for the sinner. God is faithful and just in the forgiveness of sins, and the very attributes of His holiness, which were against us as sinners, become our surest defense and protection through Christ. The Cherubim of glory have laid down the flaming sword and have now taken their place upon the mercy seat."*

XXV. Lesson 25:
The Tabernacle: A Picture of Christ and His Finished Work

Review Questions

1. **Can you name some events that show God's grace, love, and mercy, and at the same time His justice, righteousness and holiness?**
2. **Under the law, was mankind ever told to draw near to God?**
3. **Is it possible for man to initiate his own way of deliverance?**
4. **Name some examples as proof of this.**
5. **The tabernacle, its furnishings, the priests, this work, and the sacrifices are all symbolic of who and what?**
6. **How does the tabernacle as a structure symbolize Christ?**
7. **What piece of furniture in the tabernacle provides the closest picture of Christ and His finished work for us?**

Introduction: The tabernacle was a transportable "tent of meeting" that God had instructed Moses to build. Even from the very beginning in Genesis 1, we have seen that God is all about relationship. He created mankind in His image so that mankind could know Him and thereby grow to love and commune with Him. As you all know, man's first obstacle to knowing, loving, and communing with God was our sin problem. God knew that would be the case and took care of it even from before the foundations of the earth (2 Timothy 1:9) and all things He has orchestrated either point to or foreshadow that eternal plan of redemption.

From Genesis 1 to this point in Exodus, God's promise of the coming Deliverer has become more and more narrowed down in the sense that He would be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah. Originally in Genesis 3:15, He would be the "seed of the woman."

Here in Exodus with the giving of the law and the instruction for the tabernacle, its furnishings, and all the sacrifices, God is making more specific the spiritual work that the Deliverer will accomplish "for all the nations."

The Big Picture

So, here's the picture: we have a sinful human race that is symbolized by the Nation of Israel and the completely holy, righteous, and almighty Creator God of the Universe, and they are separated by the sinfulness of the people. This is symbolized by the fact that God had Moses build the tabernacle, the place where God would dwell in the midst of His chosen people. The glory of God dwelled inside of the holy of holies, inside of the tabernacle which was located in the middle of Israel's camp. Though He dwelt in their midst, still His

presence was separated by a thick curtain due to the sinfulness of the people.

❖ **Read Exodus 26 & 27.**

So, having already looked at the tabernacle as a whole and the mercy seat, in looking at the rest of its furnishings, rather than thinking of them as individual furnishings, let's look at them as a "process," the "process" that must take place in the lives of every sinful human being in order to be restored to oneness with a holy God.

The Entrance or Gate–Exodus 27:16

Looking at our diagram, you will notice that there was only one "gate" or entrance into the courtyard. The first step a person must make was to approach and enter through that one gate. This step begins with conviction. The person being convicted of their sin and therefore the need to bring a sacrifice was the only reason for a non-Levite to enter into the tabernacle courtyard. **John 14:6** – I am the way the truth and the life, NO ONE COMETH UNTO THE FATHER BUT BY ME.

Just like the Israelite worshiper, all believers begin with the conviction of their sin and need for a Savior. Without that conviction no one will even approach the "gate."

The Bronze Altar–Exodus 27:1-8

Upon entering through the one gate, the worshiper would bring his sacrifice to the bronze altar to make atonement for his sin. Arriving at the altar, the person would put his hand on the head of the animal while it was killed. This symbolically, yet temporarily, put their sins onto the animal, and the animal died as their substitute. God allowed the blood of an animal to atone or cover for their sin, thereby making it possible for the worshipers to enter into God's presence and experience and enjoy all the "benefit" of a restored relationship with their holy God. See **John 1:29; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:7; 2:13; Galatians 4:3-7.**

The same is true of us. Jesus' shed blood on the cross makes atonement for our sin and thereby restores us to oneness with God, making it possible for us to enter into His presence and experience and enjoy all of the benefit of being His children.

The Bronze Laver–Exodus 30:17-21

The bronze altar was as far as the regular people were allowed to go. After making their sacrifice, their sin was atoned for, but the benefits and privileges that resulted from having your sin atoned for were then carried out symbolically by the Levite Priests. The priests functioned as a mediator or representative of the people. All of this was just a physical foreshadowing of the real atonement and resulting relationship that was yet to come through Christ. After making the sacrifice for the individual, the priest then had to go to the laver and wash himself. This washing purified him and enabled him to enter the tabernacle and carry out the rest of his duties on behalf of the people. See **Ephesians 5:25-27.**

Without first having the sacrifice at the bronze altar, the washing at the bronze laver would have been irrelevant. The same is true of us. One must first accept Jesus' death on the cross as the payment for his sin in order to be in a position where it's even possible for him to be "washed by the water of the word." If you are not a believer, only a very small part of God's word is relevant for your life and, therefore, it's impossible for your life at that point to be changed and transformed by studying God's word. This in turn means that the next steps which are to be taken (symbolically) inside the holy place are even more impossible and irrelevant for the person (unbeliever).

Inside the Holy Place

Every day the priests would enter into the holy place to serve or commune with the Lord. Their entrance into this room took place only after there was a sacrifice at the altar followed by a ceremonial washing at the laver. Then and only then could they enter into the holy place and carry out their duties that symbolized the future believer's spiritual privileges and communion with God.

There were three items that were placed within the holy place to symbolize the believer's privilege and communion with God. First was the table of showbread (**Exodus 25:23-30**). Once a week on the Sabbath, the priests placed twelve loaves of bread made from fine flour upon this table. The twelve loaves symbolized the twelve tribes of Israel and served as a

symbol of God's relationship with Israel as the result of the everlasting covenant that He had made with them. This provides a physical picture of our spiritual relationship with God. See **John 6:35, 47-51; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.**

As our "bread of life," Jesus is our source of life and source of relationship and communion with the Father. All through the Bible, eating food, dining at the table are symbols of relationship and fellowship. Because of Jesus and His finished work, we have been restored to oneness with God and are therefore able to experience and enjoy intimate communion and fellowship with Him. Keep in mind that this intimate communion only comes after the sacrifice at the altar (accepting Jesus' death on our behalves) and the washing at the laver ("growing in the grace and knowledge of Him" through His word – **2 Peter 3:18**).

The Altar of Incense–Exodus 30:1-10

The priests burned incense on this altar every morning and evening. The incense was made from a special recipe that God had given to Moses and this was the only place that anyone was ever allowed to burn this specific incense. Also, they were not allowed to burn a different recipe upon this altar. It had to be the one that God had prescribed. It appears that this burning incense was a symbol of God's people praying to and praising Him. There are many places in the Old Testament where God points out that Israel was burning incense to idols and other false gods (**Isaiah 65:3; Jeremiah 44:8, 18; Hosea 11:2**). Also in **Psalm 55:17**, David mentions that he prays at evening, morning, and at noon which were the times that the priests were burning the incense.

According to **Exodus 30:10**, the incense altar owed its standing to the blood of atonement that came from the sacrifice made upon the bronze altar. Also, the holy fire which caused the sweet aroma to ascend was that which had first descended and consumed the sacrifice on the bronze altar (**2 Corinthians 2:14**).

This provides a tremendous physical picture of spiritual truth for us today as believers. The ability for us to offer up "acceptable" prayer, praise, and worship to God is provided through Christ's death on the cross (the bronze altar) and our growth in the grace and knowledge of God (washing of the laver).

Our "right" to pray, praise, and worship God comes through the standing that we received the moment we accepted Christ as our Savior, but the desire, heart, and ability to pray and sincerely praise, honor, and declare God's worth will be in direct proportion to our growth in the knowledge of Him and His grace.

As you know, it was the fire or the coals that caused the incense to burn and the fragrant aroma to be emitted. Through the scriptures, fire is often associated with the Holy Spirit and judgment (**Philippians 3:3**).

As the Holy Spirit continues to do His work within us bringing us to the "end of ourselves" and cause us to judge ourselves in the sense of recognizing and admitting our fleshliness, the more we will be enabled to walk in the Spirit and become more and more conformed to the image of Christ. The more conformed to the image of Christ then that we become, the more our lives and actions will be a fragrant aroma to God.

"It will save years of frustration and effort for one to understand that prayer can never be learned or developed. Prayer is the outflow of the new life; as one grows, as the cross frees the new from the old, there is growth of effective prayer. Without the cross, prayer becomes a mere religious formality...As the cross works in us, keeping in the place of death every assertion of the old man, and everything in our old natures that is against God, our spirit finds a clear way up to fellowship at the throne.

Away from the cross, prayer becomes nothing more than an ecclesiastical ordinance or a religious exercise expressed in devotional phrases; and I beg of you, when you read a book on prayer, find out the place in it which the author gives to the cross, and you will be able to estimate its value." G. Watson

<u>The Lampstand–Exodus 25:31-40</u>

The table of showbread and altar of incense speak more of the believer's relationship and interaction with God. Whereas the lampstand speaks more of the believer's functionality and purpose while remaining here on earth. Light through the scriptures is always a picture or symbol of truth. Jesus is the "light" of the world and He is also called the

"truth." He is the truth and therefore the source of all truth (**John 1:1-9**). See also **Matthew 5:14-16; Ephesians 5:8-18; Colossians 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; 1 Peter 2:9.**

With this lampstand in the tabernacle, we have the symbolism of the light, but there is also the symbolism associated with the oil that it contained as its fuel for the light. Most often through the scriptures, oil is associated with the Holy Spirit. This physical picture provides a clear image of the Holy Spirit's role and ministry in our lives today. See also **John 16:14; 1 Corinthians 2:12; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Corinthians 3:18.**

The more the Holy Spirit continues to process us, teaching us to walk less in the flesh and more in the Spirit, the more conformed to the image of Christ we will become in the daily living out of our lives. The more conformed to the image of Christ we become, the "brighter" our lives will shine forth the life of Christ to all those around us. Without the sacrifice (bronze altar, cross) and without the washing (laver, God's Word and Holy Spirit's ministry), all of these things will be totally impossible and irrelevant.

<u>Symbolism of the Priesthood</u>

In taking a brief look at the Levitical Priests, rather than looking at the symbolism in what they wore, etc., I just want to take a quick look at their position and services.

First and foremost is the fact that the Levites were chosen solely by the sovereignty of God. They didn't do anything to earn this position. God simply told Moses to take his brother Aaron and Aaron's sons and separate them from the rest to be Priests unto the Lord (**Exodus 28**).

After choosing the first generation of priests, all other future priests became priests by birth; i.e., just by the fact that they were born into the tribe of Levi.

They were "separated" or set apart from all the rest of Israel for special service unto the Lord. This being set apart for God's purpose and use carried with it, both privilege and responsibility.

Their main role was to function as "mediators" between God and man. In order for them to function properly in that

role, their "holiness" that was symbolized by strict standards for remaining ceremonially clean had to be strictly adhered to.

❖ **Read 1 Peter 2:4-10.**

Once again, the tabernacle, the priests, their roles, the sacrifices, and the furnishings all provide us with a pretty clear physical picture of Christ, His finished work, and some of the privilege and responsibility that comes along with the position that we have received in Christ.

As believers, none of us became God's children or were placed into Christ because of anything we did to deserve it, but it was all of God and through grace. We, too, become "believer-priests" through birth, our second spiritual birth. As children of God/believer-priests, we, too, have received great privilege and great responsibility.

1 Peter 2:9 – the only way we can effectively "proclaim the praises of Him called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light" is for us to maintain our "holiness" or "spiritual cleanness" by continuing to learn and grow to walk less in the flesh and more in the Spirit.

1 Peter 2:11-12 – The role of priests was to mediate the relationship between God and the everyday Israelite. This passage tells us that, as we walk in the Spirit manifesting the life of Christ, there are those who will be affected by the transformation of our lives and will result in their glorifying God.

Jesus, our High Priest. He is our merciful and faithful high priest (**Hebrews 2:17**); He passed through the heavens and sympathizes with our weaknesses (**Hebrews 4:14-15**); He was chosen by God (**Hebrews 5:5, 10**); He is our high priest FOREVER (**Hebrews 6:20**); He holds His unchangeable priesthood forever (**Hebrews 7:23-28**); He is our high priest Who is seated in heaven (**Hebrews 8:1**); He is the high priest of a tabernacle made without hands who offered His own blood and not just that of bulls and goats (**Hebrews 9:11-12**).

❖ **Read Hebrews 10:19-23.**

Jesus is the tabernacle, the sacrifice at the bronze altar (as well as all other offerings and sacrifices that were to be made), the High Priest, the bread, and the once a year sacrifice

whose blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat. All these things point to Him and His finished work.

XXVI. Lesson 26:
The Israelites Didn't Believe That God Would Give Them the Land of Canaan

Review Questions

1. **What process does all the furnishing of the tabernacle provide?**
2. **Describe that process.**
3. **How does the sacrifice at the bronze altar affect all the other furnishings?**

Introduction: If all we had of the bible was the New Testament and we had no written record of these Old Testament stories, how much of God's attributes and characteristics could we really come to know? How much of what God's heart is really like could we really understand? I think very little. As we have seen already, God has given us wonderful accounts that reveal all of His attributes and what happens when He unleashes His power. It must have been absolutely amazing to watch the Red Sea part, to witness water gushing from the rock that Moses struck, and to see Mount Sinai violently tremble in God's presence. God had these accounts recorded and preserved, so that today we, the Church, could grow in the knowledge of Him and thereby be able to trust and depend upon Him.

The Lord brought the Israelites to the border of Canaan.

❖ **Read Exodus 40:35-38.**

After the Lord had given His laws at Mount Sinai and after the tabernacle was built and God had come to live among the Israelites, it was time for them to be taken to the land which God had promised to their ancestors. This generation of Israelites had never seen the land of Canaan before, nor did they know the way.

Therefore, God guided them by the cloud throughout their journey. I love the way God ends verse 38 with the phrase, "throughout ALL their journeys." It's knowing the rest of the story that gives that phrase its significance. As we'll see, Israel continuously doubts and disbelieves God, but He remains faithful and never abandons them or ever once ceases from leading them throughout their journeys. This really reveals the love, grace, and long-suffering patience of God.

God led them in such a way as that they could have complete confidence that He truly was leading them. They had a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. When it stood still, they were to camp. When it moved, they were to follow. It couldn't have been any more clear and obvious than that. From the time that God led Israel out of Egypt to this point in Exodus 40, we have seen the Israelites doubt God more than they trusted Him, and yet we continue to see God graciously and lovingly lead them. Why?

First of all, God is ALL-KNOWING! None of man's actions or responses catch Him by surprise. This is why He established His "purpose and grace through Christ before time began." He is ALL-KNOWING!

Secondly, "Every thought and intent of man's heart is only evil from childhood." (**Genesis 8:21**)

Lastly, God is faithful because of who He is and not because of what we do! This is a very important concept for us to understand.

Next, we want to point out that it had been 400 to 500 years from the time God had first promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants until this time when the Israelites were approaching its border. Once again, this one event reveals to us the grace, love, and mercy of God, AND His holy and righteous justice that demands He punish all sin.

Before God chose Abraham and miraculously gave him descendants, the nation of Israel didn't even exist. God intentionally brought them into existence for His own purpose and use. God's choosing of them was based upon His own sovereign will and not upon Israel doing anything to earn or deserve it. God's choosing of Israel and the way that He has graciously and faithfully loved, protected, provided, and blessed them, very clearly makes manifest His mercy and grace.

From the standpoint of the Canaanites, then, we see the other side. We see God's holy and righteous justice that demands punishment for sin. Along with the justice, though, God's grace is always offered and revealed, too. We see this in God's statement back when God first made the promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham in **Genesis 15:16** where He stated that "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full."

God is absolutely holy and He will never ever act unrighteous, even toward those who reject Him! Even though the Amorites were already extremely wicked and sinful at the time of God's making this promise to Abraham, because of God's long-suffering patience and desire for all to repent, the sinfulness of the Amorites had not reached that point yet where God was ready to bring about their punishment through Israel.

❖ **Read 2 Peter 3:9.**

<u>The Lord told Moses to send spies into the land.</u>

❖ **Numbers 13:1-3; 17-33.**

This account provides a great physical picture of how faith in God or the lack thereof can affect us in our daily lives. The information the ten spies reported to the people was absolutely true! There were giants there and their cities were well fortified. BUT GOD! They had left God and His promise out of the equation. These men were looking at their problems from a worldly or human point of view and from that standpoint, they were absolutely correct. Israel in and of themselves could have never defeated these Canaanite cities, but they had just seen some pretty amazing and unprecedented manifestations of God's power, sovereignty, and His grace and love:

- They saw all the plagues in Egypt.
- They experienced deliverance from slavery in Egypt.
- They saw God part the Red Sea.
- They saw God provide manna in the wilderness.
- They saw God provide water from a rock.
- They had just seen His mighty display of power on Mount Sinai.

So, these ten spies and their unbelief, was it that they didn't believe that God COULD overcome the Canaanite, or that they didn't believe that He WOULD overcome them? There's a difference. As believers today, we often walk in the same unbelief. Sometimes it has to do with physical needs and wants that we have in our lives. More importantly it often has to do with spiritual truth.

All through the New Testament there are some really radical and amazing statements and promises that God makes

about us that He says are already true and have already taken place.

- Redeemed
- Forgiven
- Made His Children
- Accepted in the beloved
- COMPLETE in Him
- Seated with Him at God's right hand
- Clothed with His righteousness
- Made a NEW CREATION
- Co-crucified and co-resurrected

Then there are also other statements and promises that also have a future aspect to them:

- He is conforming us to the image of His Son.
- He will complete in each of us that which He has begun.
- He has gone to prepare a place for us.
- He will use all things together for good in our lives.
- He will never leave us nor forsake us.

And so, depending upon our view of God, or lack thereof, we often either don't believe that God can do these things or we don't believe that He WILL do these things. Like the ten spies, sometimes we think that the carrying out of these things is up to us and not up to God, or we can think that His faithfulness to carry these things out is dependent upon our faithfulness to obey Him, serve Him, or please Him in some way.

The Israelites agreed with the ten spies who doubted God.

❖ **Read Numbers 14:1-10.**

Listen to that response! A response that didn't need to be made! Stress, sorrow, and anger that they didn't need to experience, for it was totally founded upon the doubting of God and His goodness. First, they didn't believe God could or would give them the land, even though He had promised it. They accused God of lying (**1 John 5:9-10**). Then here in verse 3 they said, "Why has the Lord brought us to this land to die by the sword and our wives and children become victims." Their unbelief had gone beyond calling God a liar to actually accusing Him of malice!

Folks, we do the exact same thing. All we have to do is look back a few paragraphs to a few of the promises He has made about us as believers. Is God working "All things together for good in your life"?

Can you truthfully say that you wholeheartedly believe 0that regardless of the circumstances that come your way? Saying that is one thing, but living it is another. If we can't, then we either think God is lying or we doubt His goodness.

What about His promise to never leave you or forsake you? Have you ever prayed that God would "be with you" for a certain trip or event?

What about when you are tempted by sin? It's easy to avoid certain sins when we know "someone" will catch us, but does it matter that God sees it? If not, it shows the extremely small view of God we have that comes from a lack of knowing Him.

What about when you feel rejected by someone else? Does the fact that Jesus promises to always be with you encourage you? I mean, really encourage you—to the point that being rejected by people doesn't matter?

What about God's promises regarding who we are and what we've been given in Christ? Do you believe that you really are who HE says you are? That you've really been given what He says you've been given? That you are really placed where HE says you've been placed? Or is your view of yourself determined more by how you are living and whether you feel you are faithful or not?

Verse 10 left off with the Israelites threatening to stone Caleb and Joshua for suggesting that they trust God, and then God divinely intervenes by His glory, lighting up the tabernacle.

❖ **Read Numbers 14:11-25.**

The temptation is to view this as God deciding to annihilate the Israelites; but through Moses' intervention, God to change His mind. It almost looks as if God blew His cool and Moses was able to point Him to the bigger picture and calm Him down, but who is God here, God or Moses? We have to keep in mind all that we already know to be true about God:

- He is all-knowing.

- He is sovereign and supreme.
- He is holy and just and He is also gracious and merciful.
- He is kind and loving and at the same time hates sin and wickedness.
- We also know that God desires a deep, intimate relationship with His people and this can only take place as His people grow in the knowledge of Him.

That is what this exchange with Moses was all about. It was about God revealing Himself more and more to His people. The only way that God could truly reveal His grace, mercy, and long-suffering faithfulness to His people (and to the world), was through this kind of interaction with an extremely "stubborn and stiff necked" people.

Think about it. Had God given His promises, Israel immediately believed and obeyed, and God blessed them like He promised. What would we learn from that? God's faithfulness to bless and fulfill His promises is based upon the faithfulness of His people. There would be no manifestation of His grace and mercy in that. But when He faithfully and continuously reveals Himself over and over in the lives of these people, and they continue to doubt His goodness and doubt Him (to the extreme that they have doubted and rejected Him), and then He turns around and withholds what they deserve, that is the clearest manifestation of His mercy! Actually, the more extreme people are in doubting and disbelieving God, His forgiveness then reveals His grace and mercy ALL the more!

<u>God punished the Israelites for their unbelief.</u>

❖ **Read Numbers 14:26-45.**

Here is another example of God using one incident to reveal His grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness, as well as His holiness and just judgment of sin. On the one hand, He pardoned their sin and didn't annihilate them, but on the other hand, they were no longer permitted to enter the Promised Land.

The main thing I want to draw our attention to in this is what it was that actually led God to say, "Okay, you are now going to receive punishment for this." It wasn't as much as they deserved, but nonetheless it was punishment. It was Israel rejecting God's goodness and grace through unbelief! You'll

notice there was a greater responsibility placed on those that God had given greater revelation to. See verses 36-38.

Belief was the real issue, for the people tried to "undo" their sin by going ahead and "believing God," but this was motivated by a desire to avoid punishment and not by believing God. Their action then (which could have looked like belief), because it was self-motivated, was displeasing to God and only made their situation worse.

Leading up to this account, on a daily basis, how much sin would you guess was being committed in the lives of the Israelites? I would guess lots, just like it is in our own lives every day—i.e., bad attitudes, anger, lust, gossip, pride, etc.

Remember **Genesis 8:21**? This was still true of them, therefore, it wasn't their everyday sins that led to being judged and punished, but it was what they did with God's specific revelation of Himself in their lives. It was the fact that they were viewing God as the exact opposite of how He had so clearly revealed Himself over and over and over for them.

"Every thought and intent of their hearts was only evil from childhood"; therefore, they didn't have the capacity to stop sinning on a daily basis. However, because God had created them (all humans) in His image with a mind, will, and emotions, all mankind has the ability see God's revelation of Himself, learn about Him and His greatness, and believe that He is all that He's revealed Himself to be. It's the rejection of that revelation for which God holds man accountable (**Romans 1**).

<u>Israel complains because they are without water again.</u>

❖ **Read Numbers 20:1-6.**

This is absolutely unbelievable! After experiencing what they had just gone through, they turn right around and continue to doubt the goodness and grace of God:

- "If only we had died when our brethren (the ten spies) had died."
- "Why have you brought us up into this wilderness for us and our animals to die here?"
- "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt (where they were slaves) to this EVIL place?"

- "This is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, nor is there any water here."

This passage really reveals the heart of mankind AND the unbelievable long-suffering and patient endurance of God's grace and mercy. It was Israel's unbelief of God that led them to this condition in the wilderness, not God! God had great and wonderful things in store for them. He wanted them to go into the land and be wonderfully blessed, but, in spite of His great and many manifestations of His love for them and almighty power, they rejected Him and He allowed them to bear those consequences.

The same is true of us today; as believers, God has given us His complete revelation of Himself through creation, the scriptures, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit (**1 Corinthians 2:12**). Not knowing Him will lead to doubting Him when in the midst of hardship and trials. God will allow us to doubt Him and experience the consequences that will result from it. Doubting Him in hardship and difficulties will lead to many of the same emotions that the Israelites voiced in this last passage—anxiousness, worry, anger, and even to the extent of blaming God.

❖ **Read Numbers 20:7-13.**

Remember the last time they didn't have water back in **Exodus 17:5-6** and God had commanded Moses to strike the rock? This time God specifically told Moses to just SPEAK to it! This was because God was using this rock in the wilderness to establish a picture of type of Christ. See **1 Corinthians 10:1-4**. We know that Jesus was struck down (on the cross) only once for the sin of the world and through that death He provides the "living water" (salvation) for all who will believe.

When Moses struck the rock out of anger the second time, he directly disobeyed God's specific instructions—he ruined the spiritual picture of Christ that God was bringing about through this physical event. God in His grace still graciously allowed water to flow forth for the people. Moses' anger and unfaithfulness didn't prevent God from pouring out His grace and providing for the people!

This smacks in the face of misconceptions and wrong beliefs that many Christians have about God today. One example is in praying for lost friends and family members. Yes, we need to be praying for people, but what if no Christian ever

prayed for the salvation of unbelievers ever again? Would God not allow another soul to ever be saved? God's grace is NOT determined by or dependent upon our faithfulness!

When the Israelites spoke against God and Moses again, God sent poisonous snakes.

❖ **Read Numbers 21:4-9.**

Israel's wilderness was the time between being delivered from slavery in Egypt to the actual time that they eventually entered the Promised Land. This provides an amazing physical picture of our spiritual wilderness.

Our spiritual wilderness is basically the time we spend on this earth. It begins the moment we accept Christ as our Savior and become delivered from our slavery to sin. Our wilderness ultimately ends the moment we die and leave these cursed bodies and sin-cursed earth, but we can begin to experience that spiritual rest right here and now the more we learn to walk less in the flesh and more in the Spirit.

The way that God brings this about in our lives is the same way He was doing in the lives of the Israelites, namely through hardships and difficulties. Along with each trial that Israel faced came the opportunity for them to clearly see their own helplessness to deliver themselves and to again see God reveal Himself through His constant and faithful interaction and intervention in their lives as He faithfully delivered them through every trial.

The exact same is true of us. God uses every trial, hardship, and difficulty in our lives to teach us that we can't trust and depend upon ourselves and to show us that HE and Christ's finished work on the cross is our only hope for SALVATION (which includes justification, sanctification, and future glorification). Notice verse 4 says, "The soul of the people had become very discouraged along the way." Instead of going to God and crying out to Him for His mercy, they grumbled and complained against Him, again doubting His goodness.

Notice God's solution wasn't to cater to their flesh and make them feel better. He actually worsened their circumstance! He made their circumstances bad enough to make them desperate, which in turn drove them in dependence to Himself, Who was their only hope all along.

They just didn't realize it! While walking in the flesh, we will respond to God's processing of our lives the same way Israel did with vexation, discouragement, and disappointment and complaining.

Whether we respond with belief and dependence or vexation and complaining, God will graciously meet our needs and deliver us through it. Our responses don't change Who He is and what He is like. There will be another trial that comes along, and each time God is seeking to take us to deeper and deeper levels of knowing Him and trusting Him. Close and intimate communion with Him is the only place we will find true satisfaction and fulfillment for our souls!

This account gives us another glimpse of the greatness of God. Along with what He was seeking to accomplish in the lives Israel, He was also providing another physical picture of the coming promised Deliverer and His future work. See **John 3:14-17**. God is doing the exact same thing with us.

In looking at this account of God leading Israel into a deeper knowledge of Himself WHILE carrying out His eternal plan of redemption for them and through them, I'd like us to now turn to **Hebrews 3:12-19; 4:1-2.** What was it that prevented Israel from entering the Promised Land? UNBELIEF. Unbelief about what? God's promises? Ultimately it was unbelief regarding God Himself! The promises that God makes have no power within themselves to carry anything out. It is God Who brings them to fruition; therefore, the unbelief was a direct doubting of God Himself.

This is exactly what happens in our lives today as Christians. What are God's promises to us today? I believe we can break God's promises to us down into three categories: "What He's given us," "Who He's made us to be," "Where He's placed us."

Let's look at **Ephesians 1**. Paul begins in verses 1 through 14 with stating the facts that are true of every believer in Christ, simply BECAUSE they are IN Christ.

- Verses 1-14 – Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, sonship, chosen in Christ, acceptance, redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of grace, an inheritance, predestined according to His

purpose, seal of the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our inheritance.

- Verses 15-23 – Paul shares with them what his prayer for them is. Basically, it was that God would open their eyes and hearts to know and believe that they really have received and been made all that he listed above. And also that they would be enabled to know and believe all the mighty work of Christ that He did on their behalves THAT makes them who they are in Christ.

This is a very important part, for as believers, if we aren't taken up and focused on Christ's finished work, then our focus will be on ourselves. Bottom line, if the Ephesians grow in the knowledge of God and these truths that He's listed out here, the result will be true transformation and spiritual growth, and experiencing of the "rest" that we are promised today. To not know or believe these truths will result in their own wandering around the wilderness.

XXVII. Lesson 27: God Is A "Zealous God"; He Took the Israelites to Canaan

Review Questions

1. **What is the main reason why God had many accounts of His interaction with mankind recorded in the Old Testament?**
2. **In Exodus 40:38 when it says that the cloud and pillar led them "throughout all their journeys," why is this significant? What does it reveal about God?**
3. **The unbelief of the ten spies – how are they an example of us today regarding spiritual truth?**
4. **In Numbers 14:26-45, what was it that finally caused God to punish the Israelites.**
5. **Name some similarities between Israel's wilderness experience and our spiritual wilderness.**

Introduction: God's word is absolutely dependable. He never has to retract a statement because His knowledge is perfect and He is completely omnipotent and absolutely sovereign. Therefore, His word is unchanging and He is totally trustworthy! When talking about God's attributes, there are attributes that get all of the focus: holiness, omnipotence, omniscience, sovereignty, love, gracious, merciful, never changing, eternal, etc.; but then there are attributes that you rarely hear anything about—attributes such as God's "zealousness." What is God's zealousness? Is it different from being jealous? And what is God zealous for? These are some of the questions we will be answering in this lesson.

<u>Israel engages in idolatry.</u>

❖ **Read Numbers 25.**

Just like in the last lesson regarding Israel's unwillingness to believe God and enter Canaan, up until this point of God choosing to punish Israel for this sin, how much other sin do you think existed within the lives of every individual? I would guess lots! Notice the extremely strong response from God regarding this sin in verses 4 through 9. Also notice that, just like at the border of Canaan, this sin also directly had to do with Israel's relationship with God and their rejection of His revelation of Himself to them. Next, notice what God says about Phinehas in verses 10 through 13: "He was zealous with my zeal among them, so that I did not

consume Israel with my zeal…He was zealous for his God and made atonement for the nation of Israel."

❖ **Read Exodus 33:18 – 34:17.**

The thing I want to point out here is that when Moses asks God to see His glory, in reference to God's glory, what is it that becomes the focus? **Exodus 34:5-7** emphasizes the fact that He is merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abounding in goodness and truth, and that He forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin.

Now look at **Isaiah 42:8 and 48:11.** God says, "I will not give My glory to any other!" I am the Lord God Who has bestowed grace and mercy upon YOU. I am the One that has been extremely long-suffering and have abounded in goodness and truth towards YOU! It is I that have forgiven YOUR iniquity, transgression, and sin and I will not allow you to give credit for these things to any other.

Being gracious, merciful, long-suffering and forgiving sin is the ultimate revelation of God's heart and deep desires for His people! Turning from God to false idols isn't just a matter of exchanging one statue for another.

Aside from the fact that God is truly God and is truly alive, one of the main aspects that separates Him from the gods of all other religions is the fact that He is gracious, merciful, long-suffering, good, and the forgiver of sin!

So, when Israel joined themselves with the Moabites to worship Baal in **Numbers 25**, this was to take all these truths that are true of God (and that He bestowed upon Israel over and over and over) and say they are true of Baal and not God. Regarding the difference between being zealous and being jealous, actually both terms are used to translate the same Hebrew term "Kanaw" or "Kinaw." Depending upon which version of the Bible you use, some versions use "jealous here in Numbers 25 instead of "zealous. In general, though, being zealous is usually referred to as a positive or godly form of jealousy. It always has to do with God, His truth, His ways, or His people. When used of humans, sometimes it's positive, but usually it's negative. When used of God, it's always in a holy, righteous sense. See also:

- **Exodus 20:5; 34:14**
- **Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:9**

- **Ezekiel 36:6; 39:25**
- **Nahum 1:2**
- **Zechariah 1:14; 8:2**
- **1 Kings 19:10,14**
- **2 Corinthians 11:2**
- **Genesis 37:11**
- **Acts 7:9; 17:5**
- **Romans 13:13**
- **2 Corinthians 12:20**
- **Galatians 5:20-21**
- **Proverbs 27:4**
- **James 3:14,16**

The things we see God protecting with zeal are His people, His chosen ones, His relationship with His chosen ones, and His glory. God's relationship with His chosen ones is all based upon His glory! This was true of Israel and it's also equally true of us today as Christians. All that we have and all that we are is totally based upon the finished work of our gracious, merciful, and long-suffering God and Savior Who has saved us from all of our sins!

The unbelieving Israelites died in the wilderness.

So moving on, we know that the adult generation who refused to believe God and enter Canaan, all died in the wilderness within 40 years.

❖ **Read Hebrews 3:16-4:2.**

As mentioned in the previous lesson, the real issue with the Israelites was that they had rejected Who God had very clearly revealed Himself to be. It's the tremendous amount of grace, mercy, love, and divine intervention that God patiently bestowed upon them with great long-suffering that made their rejection of Him all the more aberrant.

What about us today? God has given us even more revelation of Himself! He has sent His Son to die on the cross and has given us His complete written revelation of Himself and the details of His eternal plan of redemption that was carried out through Christ. Just as this generation of Israelites died in the wilderness and never experienced the Promised Land because of their rejection of God's revelation of Himself, so the same is possible for us today as Christians.

What we do with God's revelation of Himself, of Christ, His finished work, and who we've become will directly determine whether or not we reside in the "promised land" or we remain in the wilderness.

<u>God chose Joshua to take Moses' place.</u>

- **Read Numbers 27:18-23.**

One of the things that really stands out here is the fact of God the loving initiator. At this point, Israel was supposed to be in the Promised Land and Moses with them. Because of their sin of unbelief and Moses' striking the rock twice, here they are, still in the wilderness waiting to die in order for the next generation to be led into Canaan. Even though their sin and unbelief had gotten them into this mess, God in His grace and long-suffering raised up another godly and faithful man to take Moses' place and to be the one to lead them into Canaan.

Joshua had been Moses' constant companion and helper. He had accompanied Moses when God gave him the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. Joshua was also one of the spies who had believed that God would give the Israelites the land of Canaan. He was a man who trusted in God.

- **Read Deuteronomy 34:1-5.**

God did exactly what He promised He would do. He did not allow Moses to enter the land, but He did graciously take him up on the mountain and allowed him to view it from a distance. It can be tempting to listen to this story about Moses and view God as being kind of harsh. I mean, look at all the good things that Moses had done "for the Lord." Couldn't He have been a little more gracious with him? Come on, didn't God owe him at least a little bit? We must keep in mind, though, that there is nothing more important than God, His will, and His glory! God owed Moses nothing. It was the pure grace of God that Moses received anything from the Lord as he was a sinner just like all of us who only deserves to die and go to hell.

Sometimes as Christians, we can actually slip into that same mentality regarding our own lives, i.e., that at times when God blesses us with something, deep down we can tend to think that He "owed" us or that it was because of something that we've done right or well or have sacrificed.

Two things should absolutely amaze us; first, the only thing that we "deserve" from the Lord is punishment. The fact that He has sent His Son to be punished on our behalves will glorify Him for all of eternity. Secondly, not only do we not deserve to NOT be punished, but we also don't deserve to receive anything good from God! We could spend months talking about all of the good things that we receive from the Lord. There is a song by Ascend the Hill called "The Love of God" that has the following verse in it: "If we with ink the oceans filled, and were the skies a parchment made, were every stalk on earth a quill and every man a scribe by trade, to write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry, nor could the scroll contain them all though stretched from sky to sky."

Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan.

- **Read Deuteronomy 34:9; Joshua 1:1-2.**

No one could hinder God from fulfilling His plan to give the Israelites the land of Canaan. The Egyptians couldn't. Satan couldn't. The Canaanites couldn't. Not even Israel's own sinfulness and unbelief.

This provides a pretty amazing physical picture of God and the plan of redemption that He is carrying out today for the church. Satan can't hinder it. Governmental laws and regulation can't hinder it. The world can't hinder it. Not even the sinfulness of mankind for it's actually our sinfulness that creates the reason or need for God's plan of redemption in the first place.

Israel turned to idolatry after Joshua's death.

- **Read Joshua 23:14-16.**

Before Joshua died, he called the Israelites together and challenged them to remain faithful to God by reminding them of how gracious and faithful God had been in their lives. It was the "we love because He first loved us" principle. But as soon as Joshua and his generation died, the next generation quickly turned from the Lord.

- **Read Judges 2:7-13.**

After Joshua and his generation died, the Israelites followed the ways of the idolatrous nations nearby, making

idols and worshiping them instead of the one true God. Keep in mind that in doing so they were giving God's glory to dead statues! They were saying that the love, grace, mercy, and deliverance they had received from God had actually been received from these lifeless statues! So what did God do?

❖ **Read Judges 2:14-15.**

With this time of punishment, a "cycle" begins in Israel that goes on and on for many generations, all the way up to the time of Christ in the gospels. That is the cycle of Israel rejecting God, God bringing about punishment, Israel turning back to Him, and God delivering them.

❖ **Read Judges 2:16-23.**

At this point, the way in which God was working in the lives of Israel as a nation had changed drastically from His description in **Exodus 19:4** when He states, "I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you unto Myself."

Between **Exodus 19** and **Judges 2**, God had revealed Himself and manifested Himself over and over and over to Israel. With great patience and long-suffering, He bestowed much grace, mercy, love and forgiveness upon them. The previous generation had refused to believe God at the border of Canaan and they died in the wilderness. This next generation had been blessed and privileged with being led in to finally occupy the Promised Land. They, too, had seen God reveal Himself through the many miracles He performed in giving them this land (Jericho, etc.).

Now here is the next generation that were probably children when they occupied the land. Not only are they NOT believing God, they are totally rejecting and despising Him and turning in worship to false idols! Hence **Judges 2:19** says that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers.

It's been pretty clear through these last couple of lessons that God has punished Israel solely for how they responded to His revelation of Himself in their lives. This is a pattern that you see all the way through to the life of Christ and even up to us today in this day and age. It was Israel's rejection of God and His revelation of Himself that led them to not believe Him at the border of Canaan and the punishment of dying in the wilderness. It was Israel's rejection of God here in **Judges 2** that led to them being conquered by their enemies.

We see this happening over and over and over throughout the rest of the Old Testament.

Then we see it is Israel's rejection of Jesus as the Christ that led to them being set aside as a nation and God's turning to work in and through the Church. Today, as individuals, it's what we do with God's revelation of Who Jesus really is and our need for His sacrifice that determines whether we receive eternal life or eternal death. However, also as we have seen over and over and over throughout the Old Testament, along with God's justice and judgment, His grace and mercy is ever present.

No matter how many times Israel turned away from God, God never totally abandoned them. They were and still are His chosen people. When they confessed their sin, He was always ready and willing to forgive them and accept them back. God was always faithful to preserve a remnant.

Along with raising up "judges" to deliver them from the current predicament they were in, God was also again, building more testimony and foreshadowing that was pointing towards the coming ultimate Deliverer Who would once and for all deliver them from their sin.

Ultimately, God was faithfully protecting Israel because they were His chosen people. They were chosen to be the ones through whom the "whole world will be blessed," by using them to bring the Deliverer into the world. God used them to record Holy Scripture to one day be given the complete revelation of God to the future church. They were also chosen to be the ones through whom God would reveal Himself and His heart to the rest of the world by recording His interaction with them.

❖ **Read Isaiah 41:8-10; 44:1-8.**

At the end of the time of the judges then, God raised up Samuel and I'm sure most of us all know his story. Toward the end of Samuel's life, there was no one to take his place because his sons were not obedient to the Lord.

❖ **Read 1 Samuel 8:1-9.**

Talk about an amazing picture that clearly manifests just how sovereign and supreme God really is. In the midst of Israel's ongoing rejection of God and desire to be like the other

sinful nations around them, God used their sinfulness to establish a royal line within Israel through which the future Deliverer would enter the world. The future Deliverer would be prophet, priest, and king.

Even though Israel continued to sin and turn away from God and God would punish them, it still didn't change His plan or alter His faithfulness to carry it out. This is the height of sovereignty. As humans, when we talk about God's sovereignty, we tend to think of it in terms of man not having a free will; i.e., God is absolutely sovereign; therefore, everything is predetermined.

Well, what if God is SO sovereign and SO supreme and SO omnipotent that He doesn't have to predetermine man's every move or every decision in order to bring about His will?

What if God is sovereign beyond our understanding to the point that He can totally give every man the ability to choose to sin, reject Him, and depart from His will, and yet still use them in His plan to bring about His will?

This is exactly what we see God doing here!

Many kings ruled over Israel.

As you know, that last exchange between Israel and Samuel kicked off the time in Israel's history in which they were ruled by kings. Saul was chosen to be the first king, followed by David and then Solomon. After Solomon died, the nation of Israel was divided into two kingdoms. First were the ten northern tribes which continued to be called Israel, and then the two southern tribes which were called Judah. Both kingdoms ended with having twenty kings each through the years. All twenty kings of Israel in the north were evil or ungodly kings, while some of the kings of Judah were bad and some of the others were good.

Of all of those kings, King David was the only king who God refers to as "a man after God's own heart"! A man that had committed murder, adultery, and who had multiple wives, how could he be called "a man after God's own heart"? In highlighting this aspect about David's life, our goal isn't to focus on David here, but it's still to focus on God.

Do you remember what we shared about God's glory and the fact that it consists of His grace, mercy, goodness, and

kindness to sinful man? It wasn't David's actions that made him a man after God's own heart; it was that David knew and GLORIED in these truths about God! David's trust and dependence was not in himself but solely in the grace and mercy of God! Like we said in our introductory lesson, David knew God according to His WAYS and not according to the law. Examples of this are **2 Samuel 12:15-22**, David beseeching God to spare his child that he had with Bathsheba; **1 Samuel 21:1-6**, David's men eating the "holy bread" from the table of showbread.

In an effort to learn more about the heart of God, it's interesting to compare these recorded accounts of David's sin with those of the Israelites that we have already looked at, first at the border of Canaan and then with the new generation after Joshua's death.

Keeping in mind the fact of **Genesis 8:21** and **Ephesians 2** ("born by nature children of wrath"), apart from the finished work of Christ, man has NO capacity whatsoever to stop sinning and it's pretty clear to see that God treats him accordingly. For the only "unforgiveable sin" that you find ANY person(s) being judged and punished for is in regard to what they did with the "Glory of God"! What have they done with who God has revealed Himself to be and what He has revealed Himself to be like? From even before the foundations of the earth, it's ALWAYS been about Him and His "GLORY" (eternal plan of redemption) and not about mankind!

XXVIII. Lesson 28:
God Sent His Prophets to the Israelites But They Refused to Respond to His Warning

Review Questions

1. **In Exodus 33 and 34, what does God reveal His glory to Moses as?**
2. **What does it mean when God says that He won't give His glory to any other?**
3. **Why did that first generation of Israelites miss out on the Promised Land?**
4. **What is our Promised Land? Is it possible for us to miss out on it?**
5. **Nothing could prevent God from faithfully fulfilling His promise to give Israel the Promised Land. Why should this be an encouragement to us today?**

Introduction: With each lesson documenting different stories or aspects of God's interacting with Israel, we need to keep reminding ourselves of the fact of God's eternal plan of redemption that has been in His heart from eternity past (2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:18-21; Revelation 13:8). It's this plan that helps give us the proper perspective and understanding for all that God does. First of all, it helps us see and recognize the extreme "effort" that God puts into "seeking" to rescue mankind. One of the things that has really stood out regarding God's revelation of Himself through the Old Testament thus far has been how God time and time again offers grace and deliverance to people.

Rather than just immediately punishing man, God consistently warns mankind of the consequences of not believing Him. God loves all people and desires that no one perish. Ever since the fall in Genesis 3, God has faithfully and consistently communicated His promise of the coming Deliverer Who will fulfill His eternal plan of redemption. Along the way He has faithfully gone to great extremes to reveal Himself and Who He is in order to enable people to believe His promises.

<u>God desires to communicate with people.</u>

From the beginning of the world, God has faithfully communicated with people. This truth reveals a number of things that are true of God but that are also true of us. First is the fact of God's love. God IS love and He created mankind to be an object of His love. Second, this is the very reason why He chose to create mankind with a mind, will, and emotions. He could have just "hard-wired" us to obey as robots.

But He's all about relationship and He created us with the ability to see, hear, and receive His communications and revelations about Him and the truth so that we can respond to His love and grace. God's faithful and consistent

communication with mankind is one of the main things that really separates Him from the gods of all other religions. Only God is truly alive, and only HE is the source of all truth!

God's faithful and consistent communication with mankind is continued proof that His assessment of mankind is true—that every thought and intent of man's heart is only evil from childhood. If God didn't preserve the truth and faithfully communicate it to us, NO ONE would ever come to know it or Him on their own. It shows that every aspect of redemption and all that is included in it is ALL of God! Some examples that we've seen already of God's faithfulness to communicate the truth directly with mankind are Adam and Eve, Cain, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Moses, when He gave the law on Mount Sinai. There are other examples of Him speaking the truth with people through a messenger (Noah, Moses, Samuel).

Later on in Israel's history, God continued to faithfully speak to Israel, Judah, and some surrounding nations through His prophets. We don't have the time in this class to go through each prophet in any real detail, but our purpose here is to see them all as a testimony to the love of God for His people and His deep desire for them to JUST trust Him! God's message over and over and over was "will you just believe Me? Will you just trust Me to meet your every need? Will you just allow me to continue to carry you on eagle's wings?"

But as you all know, Israel was forever turning away from God and ascribing His glory to the false gods of the nations around them. Consequently, then, God's communications through His prophets in those days ended up consisting more of warnings of coming judgments.

It's like a parent of an extremely rebellious and self-willed child. Mixed in with the affirmations of love and acceptance is going to be a whole lot more communications of warnings of what is going to happen if they don't obey. There were also other examples of God's grace that was extended to the peoples of other nations, like Jonah.

You all know the story. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh to warn them of coming judgment. Israelites hated the Assyrians and Jonah wanted nothing to do with them, so he got on a ship headed in the opposite direction. God orchestrated the circumstances that had the men on the ship throw Jonah overboard and God had appointed a large fish to swallow Jonah whole.

Inside the belly of the fish, Jonah repented of his sin and God had the fish regurgitate Jonah on the beach and again commanded him to go to Nineveh. Jonah obeys this time, albeit very grudgingly, goes and gives the warning, and the whole city repents.

Jonah then is ticked off because He knew that God would be gracious to the Ninevites and not judge them if they repented, and sure enough that was what had happened.

❖ **Read Jonah 3:10-4:4.**

So then Jonah goes out of the city up on a hill to watch what will become of the city and makes himself a shelter. God had prepared a plant that provided some great shade for Jonah and Jonah enjoyed the plant very much. But as quickly as it grew, God had also prepared a worm to kill it and a hot east wind to blow until Jonah had become faint, disheartened, and angry.

❖ **Read Jonah 4:8-11**.

This little account provides an amazing picture of how things really are! The main reason why the Assyrians were so hated by Israel was because of how ruthlessly wicked they were. So wicked, that Jonah couldn't fathom the thought of God being gracious to them. Folks, apart from the finished work of Christ, every single one of us are "Ninevites"! No, we may not be committing the same sins they were committing, but every single one of us were born with the same sin nature as they and equally separated and as equally an enemy of God as they.

However, notice how God describes them. He doesn't describe them as being exceedingly sinful; He describes them as being so lost, confused, and in the dark that they can't even discern between their left hand and their right hand!

The second thing this account highlights is just how much evangelism is a work of God and NOT a work of man, and no one exemplifies this better than Jonah. First of all, as it always is, it was God who initiated the sending of someone to warn Nineveh of their coming judgment. This didn't originate in the heart of Jonah or any other man.

Then, it was God who chose Jonah to be the one to take the message to them. It wasn't Jonah who wanted to go to them, but it was God Who wanted Jonah to go. You'll notice here that Jonah didn't even want to go to these people. He hated them. He wanted them to be judged. He didn't want God to be gracious to them. God actually had to FORCE Jonah to go and eventually he went very reluctantly. Finally being forced to go, Jonah proclaimed the warning and the whole city repents!

As Christians, we are so inclined to focus on ourselves, our efforts, our prayers, and our burden for the lost. Jonah had none of that. He hated the people, He didn't want to go, He most definitely didn't pray for them. Not only did he NOT have a burden for them, but He wanted them to be judged and punished.

Modern day missions and outreach is no different. The burden for the lost doesn't originate within any of us. It's been on God's heart from before the foundations of the world. In and of ourselves, we only care about ourselves. But because He, through the finished work of Christ, has made us a new creation in Christ and we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit, His burden for the lost becomes our burden for the lost.

As a church, as a people, we look to Him to send us to reach those whom He so desires to use us to reach. As we walk in the Spirit, looking to Him and being led by Him to whomever it is that He desires to use us to minister to, we go and administer the truth and He brings about the results.

Just like this account with Jonah portrays, it is truly ALL SO of Him and Him alone!

Israel refused to believe God's message from the prophets.

Back to God's interaction with the nation of Israel, for the most part, Israel as a nation refused to heed the many consistent warnings that God graciously gave them through the prophets. In fact, not only did they reject the messages from the prophets, they also persecuted and killed a number of them because they didn't like their message.

Instead of believing the message, heeding the warnings, and returning to God, most of Israel continued to worship false idols. Most of them continued to go to the temple to offer sacrifices, a physical picture that God had given them to continually remind them of the coming Deliverer; but both

Israel's leaders and the people themselves began to pervert the services and the rituals taking place in the temple.

The more time that went by the worse they became, until even most of the priests and leaders of Israel themselves had become evil men who didn't really believe God's word.

❖ **Read Isaiah 29:13.**

Also at that time, there were many false prophets in Israel. However, the real issue wasn't with the false prophets and the lies they were proclaiming to be truth from God. The real problem was that because the majority of the people had already turned away from God, they had no way of preventing the deception that came through the false prophets. They didn't want the truth; they wanted to believe what they wanted to believe and were led astray.

<u>God judged Israel and Judah.</u>

As we have seen over and over and over through the Old Testament, God is extremely patient and long-suffering. He doesn't immediately punish sinners. Some examples where we have seen this about God:

- Cain
- He waited 120 years for the people of Noah's day to repent.
- He waited for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah to repent before judging them.
- The Egyptians and the ten plagues
- The Israelites from the time they left Egypt until they entered Canaan.
- In the same way, God was extremely patient and long-suffering with Israel and Judah. For many hundreds of years, He sent His prophets to tell them that He was angered by their rejection of Him and that they would be punished if they did not repent.

❖ **Read Jeremiah 5:1-4, 9-19.**

God in His sovereignty chose to bring Israel the Northern Kingdom's judgment to fruition first. He had sent Isaiah to prophecy and warn them that God was about to send the Assyrians to fight and capture them if they didn't repent.

❖ **Read Isaiah 10:5-6.**

As you can imagine, the Northern Kingdom chose to refuse to believe this warning and ignored it. They didn't believe that God would allow their enemies to take over their land. Yet, one day in about 722 BC, after a three-year siege of the capital Samaria, the Northern Kingdom of Israel came under the complete control of the Assyrians. Thousands of Israelites were taken captive into Assyria. God had warned this was going to take place, but they refused to believe His warnings.

- **Read 2 Kings 17:5-18.**

The Assyrians then brought people from other countries to settle in the northern area of Israel. Many of those people were those who did not know the true and living God and who were idolaters.

Many of the Israelites who remained in their land then began to intermarry with these foreigners and their descendants later became known as the Samaritans.

As a side note, these Samaritans claimed to worship the same God as the Jews, though they did not accept all of the Old Testament. They claimed to follow the Pentateuch but believed that Mount Gerizim in Samaria was the correct place to worship God and not the temple in Jerusalem. Therefore, they built their own temple.

God also sent prophets directly to the Southern Kingdom of Judah to warn them as well. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God warned Judah that He was going to send the Babylonians to conquer them if they didn't repent. Just like the Northern Kingdom, Judah refused to believe this message and repent; true to form, when it was the right time, God followed through with His promise and sent the Babylonians to conquer Judah. They smashed the walls of Jerusalem and totally tore down and burned the temple of God.

- **Read 2 Chronicles 36:15-21; Jeremiah 52:1-30 (also 2 Kings 25:1-12).**

<u>Some of the exiles returned to Judah.</u>

All these things took place exactly like God had promised they would. Then after seventy years of exile, God returned many of His people to their own land. God allowed

them to reconstruct Jerusalem, its temple and its walls, and the land of Israel was once again resettled by Israel. This was about the time the Israelites began to become known as Jews, which was probably derived from Judah.

God allowed other nations to conquer Israel.

Although these Jews had experienced God's faithfulness to lead them back into their homeland, still most of them continued to NOT walk faithfully with Him. For this reason, God continued to allow Israel's enemies at various times to conquer them.

Greece grew into power around 400 BC and Israel came under the rule of Alexander the Great about 330 BC. During this time, Greek became a second language of many Jews.

Then, along came the Romans. The Romans conquered the Greeks, and around 63 BC Israel came under Roman rule. The Jews had to pay taxes to the Roman rulers, and if any Jews disobeyed Roman rule, they were punished.

The Romans worshiped many false gods as well as worshiped Caesar. However, they did allow the Jews to continue worshiping God. During these times, the Jews built synagogues in every city and almost every town they lived in. Each Sabbath in these synagogues, the Jewish religious leaders read and taught God's law and the writings of the prophets. However, the rabbis' explanations were often incorrect because they interpreted things in light of Jewish traditions rather than in the context with the rest of the scriptures.

❖ **Read Matthew 15:3-9.**

The stage is set for the Deliverer to come.

As you know, Israel was chosen by God to be His special people through whom He would bring the promised Deliverer into the world, but look at what a mess the nation of Israel had become in terms of their spirituality and relationship with God.

The last Old Testament prophet that God raises up is Malachi in the 400s BC. By this time, many in Israel were probably very confused about what was true about God and their covenantal relationship with Him. Malachi begins in 1:2 with the message from God "I have always loved you!" In between there is some other instruction that he gives them,

and then he ends in chapter 4, verse 2, with one last reminder of God's promise to bring about the Deliverer.

❖ **Read Malachi 4:2.**

And then God goes silent for 400 years!

XXIX. Lesson 29:
God Foretold the Birth of John
And Fulfilled His Promises Concerning Him

Review Questions

1. **From the beginning of time, God has faithfully communicated with mankind. What are some things that this reveals to us about God and man?**
2. **Name some results that we will experience if we don't know God to the extent of being confident in what His heart is really like.**
3. **Name some examples of God faithfully communicating directly with man.**
4. **How is the story of Jonah and the condition of the <u>Ninevites</u> similar to our context today?**
5. **Name some examples that show the patience and long-suffering of God by Him not punishing sin immediately.**
6. **How did God use the Greeks and Romans conquering of Israel to further set the stage for the coming Deliverer?**

<u>God desires to communicate with people.</u>

As you all know, through Israel's history in the Old Testament, God raised up prophets at various times to communicate what He wanted Israel to know. As we had mentioned in the last lesson, Malachi was the last of God's Old Testament prophets and God used him to write the last book in the Old Testament. God used Malachi to remind the Jews that God's promised Deliverer was coming soon. He also told them that, prior to the Deliverer's arrival, God would send another prophet. This prophet would teach the Jews in preparation for the arrival of the Deliverer.

❖ **Read Malachi 3:1.**

Following Malachi's death, God did not send another prophet for 400 years. These are known as the "silent years" because God did not speak through a prophet during that time. However, although God sent no prophet for 400 years, still He was preparing the way for the coming Deliverer:

- Through the Greeks, God made one language common to many parts of the world.

- Through the Romans, He had linked distant cities and roads.
- Through the Jews who had built synagogues in foreign countries, the Old Testament with its many promises of the Deliverer was being taught.

❖ **Read Acts 15:21.**

In every area of life—politically, culturally, and economically—God was setting the stage for the greatest event that has ever taken place in history: the fulfillment of His Eternal Plan of Redemption!

<u>God promised that Zacharias and Elizabeth would have a son.</u>

The prophet referred to by Malachi was soon to be born. His preaching would be preparatory to the arrival of the Deliverer. He was to be like a herald going before a king. It's interesting to note that the parents of this coming prophet were Israelites who believed God and were waiting for the Deliverer.

❖ **Read Luke 1:5-17**.

What an amazing picture of the wonder of the grace of God. Here was Zacharias, a faithful priest in Israel, whom now with his wife Elizabeth had become advanced in age. She had been barren all her life and it's pretty obvious that they had spent a lot of time making faithful supplication to the Lord that He would allow them to become pregnant.

Even though Zacharias was a faithful priest, both he and Elizabeth were still human with a sin nature and I'm sure there were times when they really struggled with the fact that God had never allowed them to have children. God didn't choose to record any of that struggle that they may have experienced through the years; all He tells is that they were advanced in age, they were both "righteous" before God and "blameless," and that Zacharias was faithfully carrying out his duties in the temple as priest when the Angel appeared to him.

The temptation is to think that God chose Zacharias because he was faithful and righteous, as if he had earned this privilege or as if God was responding to Zacharias' faithfulness with blessing. Instead I think it's a great picture of God's grace being bestowed upon a humble man who knew and trusted God and who was looking forward to the fulfillment of the

promise of the coming Deliverer. I believe that this is why God referred to him as righteous and blameless.

Secondly, once again, I think God purposely chose a man with a barren wife and waited until they were advanced in age to answer their prayers because God had much more in store for them than just simply giving them a child. He was going to use them to bring into the world, the "greatest prophet of all" (Jesus' words). The one that God Himself was sending to "prepare the way of the Lord" in Israel!

Think about this from God's perspective though. From before the foundations of the earth, He had planned His "eternal plan of redemption." He had created the universe and then worked to set the stage for its fulfillment, and now it was finally about time for all to unfold! In the course of bringing about these last final details for Him to be brought into the world, God also "made it an opportunity" to wonderfully bless a humble man who was faithfully looking to Him, trusting in His grace and mercy, and who was waiting for the promised One to come, by choosing to use him and his wife to bring this last prophet onto the scene.

Such is the heart and wonder of God. He's both gracious and just. He's patient and long-suffering and yet faithful to bring about judgment. Here we see He is both far and near, big picture and minute detail. While He is carrying out His big picture plan of redemption for the world, He's intimately caring for and blessing a humble priest and his wife!

Can you imagine Zacharias' response? Not only did an angel appear to him, but the angel told him that he was going to have a child. And not just a child, but the promised prophet who would come to prepare the way for the Lord Himself! Finally, the long-awaited promised Deliverer was about to come and it would be Zacharias' son who would prepare Israel for His arrival. But notice Zacharias' response.

<u>John was born.</u>

❖ **Read Luke 1:18-25.**

By the response that Zacharias had given the angel in verse 18, I think it's pretty obvious that he had given up hope of him and Elizabeth ever being able to have children. The typical way to look at this exchange is to view Zacharias as being punished for his unbelief. He doubted, so the angel

struck him with an inability to speak. Rather than it being punishment for not believing, I think God was graciously proving to Zacharias that he COULD wholeheartedly believe. God worked in a way that I guarantee you immediately increased Zacharias' faith. After the angel struck him with no longer being able to speak, you can bet without a doubt that Zacharias no longer doubted.

This again is the heart of God. Because He is love and desires an intimate relationship with us above all things, everything He does and allows to come into our lives is for that purpose—even discipline.

❖ **Read Hebrews 12:3-6.**

Secondly, I love Elizabeth's response in verse 25. Her focus was totally on herself and the "reproach" that she had endured for years. All she knew was that God was blessing HER.

At that point she was more excited that she would no longer be viewed by people as someone who was cursed of God than she was about the fact that God was finally about to bring forth the long-awaited Deliverer.

I also love the way the Lord doesn't correct her. He just allows her to focus on herself and feel blessed, for truly He was blessing her in the process of Himself carrying out and fulfilling His eternal plan of redemption. Then, John is born.

❖ **Read Luke 1:57-66.**

Once again we see another promise of God faithfully fulfilled. And once again, He carries it all out in a way that helps people have faith. "For every thought and intent of man's heart is only evil from childhood." We are born separated from God! Therefore, without God working in such gracious and loving ways with such understanding, man could never grow in faith.

❖ **Read Mark 9:14-24.**

God had made the fact of His divine intervention so evident with Zacharias and Elizabeth that fear came upon all who lived around them and these things were discussed throughout all of the hill country of Judea.

Then verse 66 says that all who heard these things kept them in their hearts "and the hand of the Lord was with him."

God continued to make it evident throughout John's life that God had a special use for him. Personally, I think this was so that when it came time for God to use John, there would be no doubt in people's minds that his message and ministry were truly from God.

Zacharias prophesied concerning the Deliverer and John.

- **Read Luke 1:67-79.**

Do you see the progression here of God working in and through Zacharias? What really stands out to me the most is the difference between God's "part" in this and Zacharias' "part." What part did Zacharias play in the planning and the carrying out of his involvement in God's plan of redemption? Zacharias was so inept to contribute anything from himself in God's plan, that he couldn't, on his own, even believe the angel even though the angel spoke with him face to face!

First, God helps his unbelief by working in a way that took away all doubt as to the truth of the angel's message. Then, when the child finally does come, the Holy Spirit comes upon this doubting man, illuminates his mind to understand the big picture of what God was going to accomplish through his son and through the Deliverer, and then empowers him to clearly articulate God's eternal plan of redemption!

This is exactly the work that God has done and continues to do in each one of us today as believers. In and of ourselves we are totally inept to even have faith. Like He did with Zacharias, God works in such a way to empower us to believe the gospel. Then, as His children, He slowly works through His Spirit to reveal to us more of what is included in our salvation.

- **Read 1 Corinthians 2:12.**

The more then He imparts the truth to our hearts, the more then He uses us to proclaim and teach it to others, but notice that it's ALL of Him! Notice in verse 76 that Zacharias stated John would "go before the face of the Lord." One of God's purposes in John's future ministry would be to help Israel realize that it was the Lord Himself Who was coming to deliver them.

In every other religion, people are led and taught to depend upon their own actions (sacrifices, involvement in ceremonies, good works) in order to receive blessing or deliverance; but because every thought and intent of man's heart is only evil, there is nothing man could do to help himself. Therefore, God HAD to come and deliver man Himself.

The Lord, Who is God, is the great Deliverer of all who trust in Him. We have seen many other physical pictures of God delivering those who trust in Him:

- Noah and his family in the flood
- He provided a ram to be sacrificed in Isaac's place.
- Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah
- Delivered Joseph from prison in Egypt
- Israelites from slavery in Egypt
- Israelites from the Egyptian army at the Red Sea
- Delivered the Israelites from death throughout their travels in the wilderness

There is no Savior other than God.

❖ **Read Isaiah 43:11; 45:22 and re-read Luke 1:77-79.**

Here again the true heart of God comes through loud and clear in the way that the Holy Spirit leads Zacharias to describe what the Deliverer's ministry will look like. First, he says, "*To give knowledge of salvation to His people BY the remission* (deliverance or forgiveness) *of their sins*." This deliverance will be obtained "*through the tender mercy of our God, with which the Dayspring from on high has visited us,*" visited us in order to "*give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace*."

God's description of the Deliverer's ministry speaks of the absolute ineptitude of mankind to have hope in and help himself. If you were out hiking in the mountains somewhere, got lost, and had no flashlight or other supplies with you (because you were planning to return before dark), what would you have to do once it got dark? Groping in the dark on a night with no light from the moon, your only option would be to sit or lie down somewhere and wait for the sun to come up. There would be nothing you could do in that scenario to make light for yourself and find your own way out.

This is the description that God gives of the coming Deliverer's ministry. Mankind is sitting in complete spiritual darkness, headed for hell, without any hope of being able to deliver himself. But God in His mercy is sending the "Dayspring"! The One is the "Way, the truth, and the life" to deliver us from our sin and guide us "into the way of peace." Peace with God!

Conclusion

Everything was now ready for the Deliverer to come and finally carry out the plan of redemption that had been in the heart of God from eternity past. Down through the years from creation, millions had died waiting for the Deliverer. Many, such as Abraham and Sarah, lived and died, persuaded that He would come and His coming would be the basis for the salvation of all who would believe. (See **John 8:56; Hebrews 11:13**.) Yet there were many millions of others who also heard the promises but who refused to believe.

At any rate, the physical and spiritual state that Israel was in at the time of Jesus' birth gives clear evidence of the truth that "mankind was sitting in darkness under the shadow of death." In all through their history that we've seen thus far, the only time they did well was when God was divinely intervening. At this time when Jesus was about to be born, God had been silent for 400 years!

XXX. Lesson 30:
God Was About to Fulfill His Promises Concerning the Deliverer

Review Questions

1. **Name evidence that proves God's great effort to deliver mankind.**
2. **Speculate as to why you think it was that God chose to use Zechariah and Elizabeth to be John the Baptist's parents.**
3. **The way God worked in Zechariah's and Elizabeth's lives – what does this show us about the heart of God?**
4. **Compare the way that God worked with Zechariah to how He works with us spiritually preparing us to believe the gospel.**
5. **Give some examples of God delivering those who trust in Him.**

Introduction: Over the past 29 lessons, we have seen God work in some really amazing ways. It's also been very clear that the reason for this isn't that He is just "showing off," but it's because of Who He is and what His heart is like. As you know, 1 John 4 says that GOD IS LOVE. We also know that God created mankind with the ability and for the purpose of having a relationship with him.

Therefore, we know the number one reason why God works in such amazing ways is for the purpose of revealing Himself and His heart to mankind. Without these amazing manifestations of His character and His attributes, mankind would never be able to come to know God on our own. Once again, today's lesson on God's provision of the Deliverer is another clear manifestation of God working in such clear and obvious ways in order to make Himself and His heart known all the more.

<u>God promised Mary a son.</u>

❖ **Read Luke 1:26-35.**

God continues to reveal His sovereignty and supremacy. Remember **2 Timothy 1:9** and the fact that God's eternal plan of redemption was on His heart before time began? From that time until now, here in **Luke 1**, God has been sovereignly fulfilling that plan by grace, at the appropriate time, and for His glory. Each event that needs to take place in the fulfillment is always initiated by Him. From **Genesis 1** until this point, there has only been one event that we have seen mankind carry out for themselves: SIN, the fall! All other aspects, God Himself has

taken the initiative to bring them about at each appropriate time.

This event is evidence of that fact. This passage begins with the fact that God SENT the angel Gabriel to bring this message TO Mary. God determined it was time for the Deliverer to be sent; God chose Mary to be the one to birth the Deliverer into the world; God sent Gabriel to bring this message to her.

Where else have we seen God exercise His sovereignty like this?

- Predetermining His eternal plan of redemption
- Creation
- Placing mankind in the garden
- Deciding that it wasn't good for man to be alone and then creating his help mate
- Choosing Abraham
- Choosing Moses
- Choosing Israel as a nation
- Choosing various prophets
- And now choosing Mary to be the one to carry the Deliverer

Like all the rest of the people whom God chose to use in the carrying out of His plan, Mary also fit the description of **Genesis 8:21**, that "every thought and intent of the heart was only evil from childhood." Therefore, we know that like all the rest, she was simply chosen by God and His grace. One proof we have that Mary herself recognized her own sinfulness was the fact that she refers to God as "her Savior."

Obviously, Mary recognized her own need of a Savior and was looking forward to the promised coming Deliverer in faith. After believing Gabriel's message to her, Mary then went to see her cousin Elizabeth in order to rejoice together regarding this great news.

❖ **Read Luke 1:36-45.**

Now listen to Mary's response.

❖ **Read Luke 1:46-55.**

In listening to Mary's response here, her view of God and the things that she says about Him were all based upon her

hearing of these same stories that we have been looking at that have been recorded and preserved in the Old Testament.

Again, it's His grace, mercy, love, forgiveness, compassion, and the fact that He brings down the proud, but exalts the lowly. But even that is with the purpose of showing their need for HIM. This is the heart and glory of God.

Her response also is proof that God's revelation of HIMSELF has been His intended purpose in recording and preserving these accounts of His interaction with Israel through the years.

This verse pretty much sums up the purpose and message behind God's revelation of Himself.

❖ **Read Isaiah 45:22.**

We saw that Gabriel told Mary she was to name her son "Jesus," which means "Jehovah is the Savior." Again, God was making the fact of what He was doing extremely clear and obvious, for He WANTS mankind to know the truth and trust Him.

He was making it absolutely clear Who this child of Mary was going to be, that He was truly going to be the long awaited promised One! He was also faithfully fulfilling the plan that began in His heart before the foundations of the earth and that He promised in **Genesis 3:15**, and to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, and through various prophets.

<u>Jesus would be both God and man.</u>

Back in verse 32, Gabriel told Mary that "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest." God was making it clear that Mary's son would not only be her son, but that He would also be the true Son of God. Another truth that we need to keep in mind is that this event, the coming birth of Jesus the Deliverer, was the ultimate purpose for which all previous events had been fulfilled or carried out.

❖ **Read Colossians 1:16.**

"All things were created BY Him and FOR Him." From **Genesis 1** to this passage in **Luke 1**, the stage had been prepared or set for the Son of God to come and reveal the grace of the Godhead. In verses 34-35, Gabriel also told Mary

that it would be the Holy Spirit Who would perform this miracle of her, a virgin becoming pregnant. The purpose of God working this way was mainly two-fold; first, in order for Jesus to be able to come and die for the sin of others, He would have to be born without His own. Meaning, He would have to be born without a sin nature. Otherwise, He, too, would have needed a Savior and could not be our Savior.

Because God Himself was His Father and not "Adam," Jesus would not inherit Adam's sinfulness. He would be born with the same character as God – holy and without sin.

The second reason can also be seen in verses 36-37, in that Elizabeth, who was both old and barren, was the one who was chosen to give birth to the one who would prepare the way for the Deliverer.

Bottom line, God so wants people to know Him and believe the truth that He works in undeniable ways to prove that it's truly of Him. Name some other instances where we've seen Him work in such undeniable ways:

- He allowed the angels to watch Him create creation.
- The way He created Eve after first making it obvious to Adam that he didn't have a suitable partner. She was obviously from Him.
- Noah, ark, flood, shutting of the door
- Sodom and Gomorrah
- Abraham's son
- Joseph
- Raising up Moses
- The plagues and delivering Israel
- Providing for Israel all the way through the wilderness

<u>The Deliverer would be Jesus, the Christ.</u>

❖ **Read Matthew 1:1.**

Jesus was appointed by God the Father to be the Christ. "Christ" is a Greek word that means "anointed one." It is the Greek translation of the word "Messiah." We know Jesus Christ was anointed or set apart by God for three specific duties. He would be God's final Prophet, Priest, and King.

➢ <u>As Prophet</u>

❖ **Read Deuteronomy 18:15.**

This is an example of "general prophecy." It had application to the situation at hand in which it was given, but its ultimate fulfillment would be found in Christ.

The role of prophets in the Old Testament were to proclaim the truth that God revealed to them as messages or warnings for Israel and their surrounding nations.

We know that Jesus Himself is the way, the TRUTH, and the life. As The Truth, Jesus Himself is the ultimate fulfillment of all prophets and prophecy.

➢ <u>As Priest</u>

❖ **Read Psalm 110:4.**

The physical picture we have of the Old Testament priests was one of mediation. They performed sacrifices on behalf of the people and their duties included the carrying out of a representation of Israel's fellowship and communion with God within the holy place.

Jesus, as our High Priest, is not only the High Priest and mediator between us and God, but He's also the sacrifice that has restored us once and for all to oneness with God, thereby making it possible for us to personally enjoy our own fellowship and communion with God.

❖ **Read Hebrews 10:1-12.**

➢ <u>As King</u>

❖ **Read Isaiah 9:6-7.**

Jesus would also be God's final King to rule over Israel and whole world. God had promised King David that there would always be one of his descendants upon the throne in Israel. Jesus, as a descendant of David, is the ultimate fulfillment of that promise. He is called King of kings and Lord of lords! The Christ was to be born in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

We will now look at a chart of the Old Testament prophecies about the coming Deliverer. There are many other Old Testament prophecies about the Deliverer. The ones on

this chart have been chosen because they record some of the more significant details concerning the Christ, from His birth to His resurrection.

Basically there are three types of Messianic prophecy.

The first type we've already mentioned with **Deuteronomy 18:15** as an example. It is general in nature, had direct application to the situation at hand, but its ultimate fulfillment will be found in Christ.

The second type is direct prophecy that speaks specifically of the future Messiah and is more personal in nature. **Isaiah 7:14** is an example of this.

The third type is prophecy that is a New Testament application of the Old Testament. **Matthew 2:15** and **Hosea 11:1** exemplify this. Hosea gives no indication of specific prediction, but Matthew applies it to the Messiah.

Lastly, I think it's also important to keep in mind that Messianic prophecy is not a bunch of independent statements. It is a series of promises. There is really only one "Messianic promise," which is then unfolded and elaborated on throughout the Old Testament. It is one promise developed in a progressive series of revelations rather than several disjointed predictions.

The progression to the Messianic promise, then, has at the same time both a narrowing aspect and an enlarging aspect. It narrows in the sense that as it progresses, it becomes more and more specific as to whom the Messiah is; it begins broad as simply "The seed of the woman." It enlarges in the sense that, as it progresses, there is a broadening of the scope of His role and work.

"Everything centers in Christ and radiates from Him to the bounds of God's created universe. Union with Christ is the heart of all the revealed thoughts of God concerning man and man's relationship with God." T. Austin Sparks

XXXI. Lesson 31:
The Deliverer Was Born and Grew Into Manhood

Review Questions

1. **Why is it so important that God has gone to great lengths to reveal Himself?**
2. **From Genesis 1 to Jesus' fulfillment of God's eternal plan of redemption, how much of all that needed to take place in preparation did God leave up to mankind?**
3. **Name some examples in the Old Testament and New Testament where we've seen God exercise His sovereignty.**
4. **Give examples of times when God worked through impossible situations in order to make it clear that it was of Him.**
5. **How many types of Messianic prophecies are there and what are they?**

Introduction: The Wisdom of God—All through the weeks and months in this class, one of the main things we've sought to emphasize is God–Who He is, what He's like, and what He's done. All through the Old Testament we've seen clear manifestations of His power, sovereignty, love, grace, holiness, and hatred of sin. Now, as we get into the time that He begins to "physically" bring about His redemption plan, again, I think we'll see many of the same attributes that we've seen through the Old Testament; but, as we unfold the story, I'd like us to think about it in terms of God's wisdom.

Romans 11:33 (NKJV) "*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!*"

1 Corinthians 1:18-25 (NKJV) "*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*"

1 Corinthians 1:30 (NKJV) *"But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God–and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."*

1 Corinthians 2:6-7 (NKJV) *"However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory."*

The plan of redemption according the wisdom of the world would have looked very different. I'm sure that God would not have become a man; but if He did, there would have been a grand and glorious entrance, not a birth in a manger to a couple that appeared to have committed fornication.

<u>The Angel explained to Joseph that Mary was going to have a baby.</u>

- **Read Matthew 1:18-19**.

We know Mary had already been promised in marriage to Joseph. We also know, in their culture, engagement was as binding as the marriage itself and according to Jewish culture; Joseph could have shamed Mary by a public announcement that she was pregnant with a child that was not his. This would have resulted in a divorce and in Mary being stoned to death. But even though Joseph really believed that Mary had been unfaithful, he had decided to just privately break off the engagement. Without making Joseph our focus, I think we can at least see what kind of a man and husband he was going to be. It wasn't about him.

- **Read Matthew 1:20-25.**

Once Joseph understood that Mary's unborn baby was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, he immediately married her. In all actuality, Joseph was not needed in order for Jesus to be born into this world. God could have just had Jesus drop out of heaven in any form.

However, back in the Garden of Eden, according to **Genesis 1:31** (NKJV) "*Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day*." Part of that creation He created and called "good" was man and woman and the institution of marriage and the procreation of families. Back there in Genesis, God showed His value for family and marriage; and here in the bringing about of the Deliverer, He shows it again. Though the Deliverer was 100% God, He would also be 100% human. Part of being human means that you have a mother and father. God wanted Mary to have a husband and He wanted Jesus to have an earthly father and family. This is the heart and the wisdom of God!

We also see that God took the time to communicate with Joseph, to get him on the same page with what HE was

doing. He took the time to give Joseph confidence through knowing the truth of what really took place and how Mary had gotten pregnant.

Again, we see the heart of God being manifested in His care and concern for man to know Him and what He is doing. The angel told Joseph that he was to name the baby "Jesus." The name Jesus means "Jehovah is Salvation" or "Jehovah is the Savior."

❖ **Read Isaiah 45:21-22**.

Based on what the angel told Joseph, what was Jesus coming to do? To deliver His people from their sins.

The angel also told Joseph that Jesus' birth would be the fulfillment of **Isaiah 7:14**—born of a virgin. Again, God didn't have to bring about the Deliverer in such a way as this, but I believe He did it for our benefit. He had planned to send a Deliverer from before the foundations of the earth, had promised Him all through the Old Testament, and now brought Him forth with undeniable signs and evidence that this was truly Him. Next, the angel said that He would be called "Immanuel." In addition to being called Jesus - Jehovah is the Savior, the Christ - The anointed One, He would also be called Immanuel - God with us.

This would have been a lot more significant to the Jews than it is to us. We name our kids Steve, Bill, or John and don't give a thought to the meaning. Even the name Jesus in and of itself doesn't mean much to us. But for them, every time they called Him or referred to Him, they were saying "Jehovah is Savior," "The anointed One," "God with us." The sign can't get much clearer than that. He is from heaven—God Himself the sent One to be our Savior!

<u>Jesus was born in Bethlehem.</u>

❖ **Read Matthew 2:1-2 and Luke 2:1-21**.

I just want to point out a couple of things. Verse 11 says, *"For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."* As great and as sure as God's promises are, this was not another promise of the Deliverer's coming one day, but it was an ANNOUNCEMENT that He has come! He is HERE NOW!

Then verses 13-14 say, *"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!"* The NLT says the angel was joined by the "armies of heaven."

God gave the world another clear and unmistakable announcement. The fact that it was announced to shepherds and not to royalty again goes back to the wisdom of God. His ways are not our ways; His ways are past finding out.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 "*For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence."*

Eight hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Micah said that the Deliverer would be born in Bethlehem. (See **Micah 5:2**.) We need to keep in mind that this prophetic promise from Micah was given in the context of Micah calling Israel to prepare for the vicious onslaught of Assyria, which in turn means that Israel had turned from God to follow false gods.

In the midst of judging Israel for their sin, God again promises a future Deliverer. He did the same thing in the Garden of Eden. That's the heart of God. It's what Paul said in **Romans 6**: *"where sin abounds, grace does much more abound."* **Matthew 2** also stated that wise men came from afar in search of Jesus. If these wise men from a distant country in the east, who were NOT directly given all of the promises that God had given to Israel, could recognize the "signs" and come in belief, then the Jews were without excuse for their not accepting Him.

As a side note, it is believed that these wise men came from Media and Persia. We know Judah was taken captive by Babylon, which was when Daniel, Shadrach and Meshach were taken to Babylon. Then in 539 BC Babylon was captured by the Medes and Persians. In the book of Daniel, he makes mention of Darius, Cyrus, and other Persian kings. Given the testimony that we've read of Daniel and his three friends, I'd say it's very

likely that the knowledge these wise men had of the coming Deliverer came through Daniel and his friends.

❖ **Read Matthew 2:3-12**.

And right here you have it! Wise men from a distant land saw the signs, came in belief, and worshipped Jesus, the Son of God, while Israel's own scribes and Pharisees (who knew the prophecies) refused to believe and accept Him as the Deliverer. This was also a statement from God that Jesus is truly God!

❖ **Read Matthew 2:13-18**.

You know, we've seen this before. We saw Pharaoh try to destroy all of the Israelite boys back in Egypt. Just as I believe that Satan was ultimately behind it then (to get rid of the Deliverer), so it was this time too with Jesus. But notice, even though we'd say that Satan fights against God by trying to hinder His plans, do you see any struggle from God's point of view? Was there a battle as far as He was concerned? (Read Not Kwot testimony.)

❖ **Read Matthew 2:19-23**.

More than 700 years before Jesus' birth, God foretold through the prophet Hosea that the Deliverer would be called by God out of Egypt. See **Hosea 11:1**.

With all of the details of the prophecies, I think God is actually making it easy for people to believe. He sent His Son and submitted Him to all of the circumstances of life so that people could see Him, touch Him, hear Him, and know and believe. Verse 23 also said that Joseph and Mary's "happening" to settle in Nazareth was also a fulfillment of scripture. These little phrases we keep seeing "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets" are very, very significant. There are approximately 300 prophecies in the Bible that pertain to the Messiah. The odds of Jesus (by chance) fulfilling just eight of them is 1 in 10 to the 17th power. Or the same as filling the state of Texas up with silver dollars two feet deep. Mark one coin, stir them all up, and have someone blind folded find it in the first try. This was all done on purpose! God was making it absolutely clear that Jesus is the Messiah.

<u>Jesus as a youth</u>

❖ **Read Luke 2:40-51.**

God gives us little glimpses of Jesus' childhood and that even though Jesus is 100% God, He is also 100% man. Just because He is God, as a man, He wasn't spared from any of the difficulties and temptations that come along with being a human in this fallen world. He didn't skip over any part of being a human. He was even a little kid once and throughout His life He experienced every temptation we will ever be faced with and therefore He understands our plight. He can relate. He knows our weaknesses. **Hebrews 4:14-15** (NKJV) *"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."*

❖ **Read Luke 2:52**.

Think about what Jesus must have been like as He interacted with friends, family, and neighbors. **Hebrews 1:3** says that Jesus is the "expressed image of God's person." So what are God's characteristics and attributes? This is what Jesus was like:

- Sinless and holy
- Faithful - always kept His word
- Completely righteous
- Perfectly wise
- Kind and loving
- Merciful and gracious
- Always in fellowship and dependent upon the Godhead

Look at **Isaiah 11:1-2**. As we continue through these lessons and we see over and over how Jesus fulfilled every messianic prophecy there ever was, may it do two things for us:

- May it convince us of the absolute faithfulness of God. He will never change NOR His word ever fail.

- May we recognize the effort and the clarity that God has put into making it possible for the world to know Christ.

XXXII. Lesson 32:
God Sent John to Teach and to Baptize;
John Baptized Jesus

Review Questions

1. **From the introduction to this class through this Lesson 32, what has been the number one thing we have sought to emphasize?**
2. **As we have begun to see God unfolding His plan of redemption, name some of his attributes we see being manifested.**
3. **What approximately 4,000-year-old promise did God fulfill when Jesus was born?**
4. **What does the name "Jesus" mean?**
5. **So far, we have seen a few of the Messianic prophecies that were given hundreds of years prior to Jesus' arrival fulfilled; e.g., born in Bethlehem, descendant of David, born of a virgin, called out of Egypt, called a Nazarene. Why did God take the time and make the effort to give the prophecies and then for Christ to fulfill them?**
6. **What was the significance of three wise men coming to worship Jesus from a distant country?**

Introduction: In this lesson, God is setting the stage to reveal the Deliverer. We've already mentioned some of the fulfillment of prophecy that surrounded Jesus' birth and childhood as "signs" of who He is, but now we're within three years of Jesus doing what He came to do—die and pay the penalty for sin.

So, God begins the process of revealing to the public who Jesus is. God doesn't do it in a way that we humans probably would have done—with banners and trumpets. Instead He uses this wild looking man with poor, rough clothing, who lived in the wilderness and had strange eating habits to "announce" His arrival! God would use this unusual herald to preach a message to the people that would prepare their hearts to recognize their need for a Deliverer to come and save them from their sins.

❖ **Read Matthew 3:1-2.**

Notice where John's ministry took place–in the wilderness. Aside from the fact that it was practical, in that it was next to a river which made it easy for John to baptize people, I believe it was significant for other reasons. When you hear "wilderness" in the Bible, what main event in Israel's history comes to mind? Wandering in the wilderness for forty years.

How would you characterize Israel's time in the wilderness? Lost, uncertain, unbelief, maybe even silence. A lot

of the same characteristics that would have probably characterized Israel at the time of John the Baptist.

They were definitely lost, times were very uncertain, there was unbelief, and they had just come through 400 years of "silence" from God, but I think the most significant commonality is the fact that in **Exodus 19** it was in the wilderness where God gave the law to Israel.

What was the purpose of the law? To show Israel their sin and need for a Savior. What was the purpose of John the Baptist's ministry and message? To convict people of their sin and need for a Savior.

I love the faithfulness of God to use every detail as a way of communicating His plans and purposes. John's message was simple—it was a message of repentance. We must note here that repentance is NOT a promise! It's not a promise to change, or quit sinning, or try harder. It's a change of mind, a change of attitude toward God, oneself and one's own sin. In effect, it's an acknowledgment that "God You are right, and I am wrong." Basically, John would have been calling the Jews to recognize their sinfulness, see their need for a Savior, and trust in the coming promised Deliverer.

John was the one Isaiah said would precede the promised Deliverer. See **Isaiah 40:3**.

❖ **Read Matthew 3:3**.

Another sign from God making it easy for people to identify the promised One.

❖ **Read Matthew 3:4**.

God gives us a few details here about John. The thing that stands out to me in the life of John is again the sovereignty of God. God determined who John would be and how and where he would be used. God was his owner and God had the right to use him how He wanted and where He wanted.

I think this is a major issue with us Christians today. The "entitlement" mentality that we accuse liberals of having, I see it in us, too. We think we have a right to life as we want it, and we think God exists to ensure that we get it! John was different here. God was obviously his focus and being used according to God's purpose seems to have been what mattered most to him.

❖ **Read Matthew 3:5-6**.

Many of the Jews repented when they heard John's message. Their thinking was completely changed concerning God, themselves, and their sin. They agreed with God that they were sinners, and they believed He was going to send the Deliverer. John told those who repented that they were to be baptized. Through baptism they would be demonstrating that they had accepted John's message of repentance. They would be showing they agreed with God about deserving death for their sins, and they were trusting in God to send a Deliverer to save them.

We know that John's message was not the "gospel" and his baptism was different than the believer's baptism. We have the testimony of Apollos in **Acts 18:24-28**—he only knew of John's baptism. He only had a partial message. You are a sinner and you need a Savior. John didn't baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, like we are told to do in the believer's baptism.

❖ **Read Matthew 3:7-10**.

These religious leaders were proud people because of the positions they held. They refused to admit they were sinners. Therefore, John was absolutely forthright when he spoke to them.

The Pharisees were a non-political lay movement within Judaism. They were called the "pious ones." They opposed the syncretizing of Greek culture and religion with Judaism around 100 B.C. They taught strict adherence to the law, not only the written law of Moses (Torah), but also to the oral traditions which they claimed Moses had passed down to them. Their goal was to defend the written law against any possible infringement.

They were God-fearing and law-abiding people. They were famous for passing their interpretations from generation to generation by word of mouth, establishing an oral tradition concerning legal matters. They argued that if the law were obeyed by all, the nation would be purged of sin and God would establish His kingdom over all the nations.

The traditions of the Pharisees developed into the rabbinic writings known as the Mishnah and the Talmud. The primary influence of the Pharisees was in the local synagogue communities, while the Sadducees were more influential in the temple worship in Jerusalem and in the Sanhedrin.

The Sadducees were made up of the priestly class (in contrast to the lay movement of the Pharisees). They seem to have lived in the vicinity of Jerusalem and controlled the Temple system. According to Josephus, they were powerful aristocrats and mediators between Rome and Israel and they did not have great favor or influence among the people.

Their theological views are often contrasted with that of the Pharisees. They mainly only held to the Pentateuch and rejected the oral traditions that were so cherished by the Pharisees. Also in contrast, they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead (**Matthew 23:23-33**) or angelic beings (**Acts 23:8**).

Other commentaries also said that they rejected the sovereignty of God and the concept of final judgment. The term Sadducee actually comes from not believing in the resurrection. Not having that hope made them "Sad You See."

Some of the other Jewish leaders who showed up would have been called scribes. They were men who copied the original writings of the prophets onto new scrolls. They were also known as "lawyers" or "teachers of the law" because their job included interpreting the meaning of God's laws and the writings of the Jewish prophets.

Scribes were proud of their scriptural knowledge. They thought they were pleasing to God because they had memorized large sections of the Old Testament and they regarded themselves as better than others because they thought they knew the meaning of God's word.

The Pharisees were proud of their law keeping and thought that was what made them acceptable to God. The Sadducees were proud of their power and position. The scribes were proud of their knowledge of the scriptures.

So, get the picture here. From an outward appearance, there would not have been anyone who appeared to be more holy, righteous, or spiritual in all of Israel than these three groups of men (**Philippians 3:3-8**). There was no one who was

stricter about keeping the law than the Pharisees. Law doesn't lead you to sin—it demands perfect holiness! However, because of their arrogance and self-righteousness, John calls them a brood of vipers!

We also know that later on Jesus gets just as strong with them calling them white-washed sepulchers. Nowhere in scripture do you ever see or hear anyone referring to those who the world would see as being the "worst of the worse" with such strong language.

Here we see the real issue. **Ephesians 2** says that all men are born as "children of wrath"! Therefore, no amount of law keeping or scripture knowledge or prayer or fasting or any other spiritual thing can change that fact! Only the substitutionary death of a Savior can do that.

This is a recurring theme that we see all through scripture. God is against the proud, but He helps and saves the broken and humble, those who recognize their only hope is the mercy of God! In John's harsh words to these religious leaders, God was giving them the opportunity to recognize their own sin and repent, too. John also knew these men were proud of being descendants of Abraham and that this helped make them acceptable to God.

Who was Abraham anyway? A man that God by His grace called out from among idol worshippers and through whom He brought about the Nation of Israel. There was no Nation of Israel before God brought them about; so John was right, God could raise up more children of Abraham from stones if He wanted. John is making the point that all of this you are proud of and are trusting in is worthless. It's the same thing Paul did in **Philippians 3:3-8.**

Verse 10 then is awesome! You see, the leaders where trusting in their efforts to earn favor with God. By saying that the tree will be cut off at the roots was to say that if a tree is "fruitless," then the whole tree is no good and not just the fruit. It's not that we just do THINGS wrong—WE are wrong! We are sinners and God's judgment is on US, not merely on the things that we have done!

❖ **Read Matthew 3:11-12**.

John obviously knew his ministry was to prepare the way for the coming Deliverer, and he obviously understood

what the Deliverer's role would be. He states that the coming Deliverer would baptize with the Holy Spirit those who accept Him and those that reject will be judged. Notice the difference between John and these leaders and each of their views of themselves before God. The leaders were wealthy, high, and lofty; yet God calls them a brood of vipers. John was poor, living in the wilderness, had poor man's clothing and ate locust and wild honey. He said of himself that he was just a voice and that he was unworthy of even carrying Jesus' sandals. But in **Matthew 11:11**, Jesus said, of all who have ever lived in Israel, none is greater than John the Baptist.

❖ **Read Matthew 3:13-17**.

Jesus was about thirty years old when He came to John to be baptized (**Luke 3:23**). Jesus' reason for coming to be baptized was not the same reason why everyone else came. They all came to show their repentance and belief in their need for a Deliverer. Jesus came to show that He accepted John as God's prophet. God required baptism of those who accepted John's message of repentance. If Jesus had not been baptized, people would have thought that He was refusing to obey God's commands or that He did not believe John's message was from God. See **Luke 7:29-30**.

When Jesus came back up out of the water after being baptized, God, the Holy Spirit, came to be with Him to guide and empower Him for the work God planned for Him to do. Jesus was Almighty God, but when He became a man, He lived as a man and depended upon the Holy Spirit to do God's will here on earth, just like we have to do. See **Isaiah 11:2; John 8:28; 14:10**.

Then God states from heaven, "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." Could God's declaration of who the Deliverer was be any clearer? You had all the miraculous fulfillment of prophecy. Then the Holy Spirit comes and lights on Jesus, and then God the Father Himself states in an audible voice from heaven, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED."

❖ **Read John 1:29-34**.

John recognized the signs that clearly showed Jesus was the promised One. He calls Him the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world, which gives us an interesting progression. In Genesis, we have the record of one lamb for

one person. In Exodus, we have one lamb for one family. After the tabernacle was created, every year there was one lamb sacrificed for the whole nation.

Now, Jesus is God's lamb sent for the whole world—the One through Whom God's purpose and grace was bestowed upon us from eternity past.

XXXIII. Lesson 33:
Jesus Resisted Satan's Temptations

Review Questions

1. **What was John the Baptist's message to Israel?**
2. **What does it mean to repent?**
3. **Why did people come to John to be baptized?**
4. **What did the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees believe would save them?**
5. **Why did Jesus go to John to be baptized?**
6. **Why did John call Jesus the "Lamb of God"?**

Introduction: I believe that one of the biggest misconceptions existing in churches in today's world is in regard to who God and Satan are in relation to one another. It's apparent today that many view them on equal footing—one is powerful and good and the other is powerful and bad. The truth is that although Satan temporarily has some authority, he was created by God and can never win against his Almighty Maker.

Satan tempted Jesus. Satan is God's great enemy. He hates God, and he also hates man who was created by God. Satan has opposed his Creator from the beginning. This was how he became Satan in the first place.

What were some of the ways that we've seen Satan try to hinder God's plan to send the Deliverer?

- **The killing of Abel**
- **Pharaoh wiping out the Israelites**
- **Trying to have Jesus destroyed as a baby**

Every battle that Satan has ever tried to enter into with God, he has lost every time, but he still never ceases to rebel against God and hinder His plan to save man.

❖ **Read Matthew 4:1**.

Notice Who was in control and doing the "leading" in this situation: The Holy Spirit and NOT Satan! It was the Holy Spirit that led Jesus to this place to be tempted by the Devil! WHY? There may be more reasons, but I'd like to point out two of the main ones. First, the first man, Adam, when tempted, failed to obey God. Jesus came be the "Second Man" or the "last Adam" – **Romans 5:18-19; 1 Corinthians 15:45-47**. It was necessary, therefore, that Jesus as a man should also be tempted to show that He was perfectly fit to take His place as the Last Adam, the Head of a new people – **2 Corinthians 5:17.**

Secondly, to become the "Author of Eternal Salvation" – **Hebrews 5:5-9**. Again, Jesus was 100% man! Being born a man, he grew, matured, and learned.

I must admit that Jesus being 100% God adds an element of mystery to the whole thing. It's no different than what we read last week in **Luke 2:52**. Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.

So, how could Jesus Who was 100% God grow in favor with God? The only explanation I can give is as a man and more specifically as the Deliverer. As a man, it seems apparent that Jesus had to experience the true meaning of obedience in terms of the suffering it entailed in order to be "made perfect" for the role He would play as our Captain and High Priest.

One commentary said, "In a real sense not fully comprehensible, the Incarnation gave the already infinitely wise and perfect Son of God the experiential acquisition of knowledge about the human condition. Suffering thus became a reality that He tasted and from it He can sympathize deeply with His followers."

We always tend to look at this from Satan's point of view and what he was trying to accomplish. Yes, he wanted Jesus to sin. Yes, he was trying to prevent Jesus from becoming the Deliverer! But, once again, unbeknownst to Satan, he was a tool in God's hand that was being used to prepare our Deliverer, not hinder Him! This was about God making Jesus to be the Author of our Salvation!

❖ **Read Matthew 4:2-4**.

Again, more evidence that Jesus was truly man. He didn't use His divine attributes to deliver Himself from any of the hardships that being a human brought about. The thing that really stands out to me is that Jesus didn't come up with His own solutions for His problems. Adam and Eve tried to, Cain did, Abraham did, Jacob did, and the list goes on.

However, Jesus didn't rely upon His own understanding. To me, this is one of the areas that contrasts Him, the Second Adam, to the first Adam. God didn't originally intend for man to know what is good and what is evil and to depend upon himself for this determination. Adam and Eve were tempted by the desire to be like God and to know for themselves right and wrong. They were tempted and fell for it. Here now Jesus, too,

was tempted to take matters into His own hands and decide for Himself what was best, but He remained dependent upon God the Father.

I also see here a huge contrast in Jesus' view of life compared to most Christians. For many, what our existence on this earth is like is most important to us and we "depend" upon God only to get Him to bless us and make our lives how we want them to be. God and His will was Jesus' focus! You don't see Him here trying to get God to change His circumstances. I believe that is where we are growing toward—growing in the knowledge of God to the point that the things and circumstances of life are no longer what controls us.

I think some Christians are afraid of growing to that point. We think that somehow the more we are taken up with God, the less we will enjoy the things of this life. I wholeheartedly disagree and would say that I find the opposite to be true. The more I grow in the knowledge of God, the more I feel free to truly enjoy creation and the things that I enjoy in this life as gifts from His hands!

That is the heart of God. He is the giver of all good things! Again, go back to **Genesis 1** and remind yourself of the vast variety of all things that He created simply for man's enjoyment!

❖ **Read Matthew 4:5-7**.

Notice in the first temptation, Satan just told Jesus to turn the stones into bread, tempting Him because He was hungry. This time, Satan twists scripture and uses it to tempt Jesus to sin. Jesus was already confident in God the Father's love for Him, so He wasn't tempted to put God to the test. Jesus' confidence was based on the truth and not on experience.

Satan twisted God's Word when he tempted Eve, too: "Did God say that you couldn't eat from ANY tree in the garden?" These are still Satan's main tactics, to lie and deceive.

Notice he didn't try to tempt Jesus with evil sin but with that which sounded scriptural or reasonable. When we don't know God, we are easily deceived into doubting Him and His goodness. We often have the attitude that God has something to prove to us…as if WE are God and He has to answer to us. But the truth is God already has proven Himself. No matter

where you ever go in this world, what are we constantly surrounded by? His creation! His handiwork!

What else has He given us? A written testimony, the Bible! If we refuse to believe God's "voice" through creation and His written Word, then we have no right to demand anything else. He is God and we are NOT!

God isn't some inferior being we can control and manipulate to meet our needs and do what we want. He has given us His Word, and He expects us to believe it because it's from HIM! Regardless of our circumstances, God expects us to believe His Word!

❖ **Read Matthew 4:8-11**.

Look at **Genesis 1:28**. Originally God gave Adam and Eve dominion over the earth; but when Adam rebelled against God, Satan immediately stepped in to control man and to influence the attitude of humanity toward God and His Word. See **John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19.**

Our flesh is of the same mindset as Satan. That's why Jesus said, "You are of your father the devil." So anyone who has not accepted Christ as Savior, who is controlled by their flesh 100%, in that sense they are under Satan's control and the mindset will be exactly the same. See **1 John 3:8**. Even as believers when we are walking in the flesh, this is when it's possible for Satan to deceive us, for the mindset will be the same.

Satan's attempt to get Jesus to worship him, I take as being the same as when he was Lucifer and tried to take God's place. I can remember back as a young believer thinking, "Why doesn't Satan give up? He's got to know that he will never stand a chance." He is so intrinsically evil that it's impossible for him to change or do anything different. He's so evil that he's become a fool. Our flesh does the exact same thing to us. It makes an absolute fool of us.

In responding to Satan, Jesus once again depends on God by depending upon His Word. Even though He is God, as a man, Jesus didn't depend upon His answers but continued to depend upon God the Father and His provisions. See **1 Peter 5:6-10; Ephesians 6:16**. This is exactly what Jesus did.

Bottom line, Satan is a created being who is also accountable to his Creator. He was unsuccessful when he was Lucifer to take God's spot and his every attempt to hinder God's plans and purposes have all been unsuccessful.

Our world is permeated with the concept of a struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. It's often viewed as a "horizontal battle." But this isn't how it is between God and Satan. God is supreme and He is totally superior to Satan in every way times infinity!

Even though Satan left Jesus at this time, one of the other gospel accounts says that he left for a more opportune time. We know he returned again and again, trying in every possible way to get Jesus to disobey His Father. Hebrews says he tempted Jesus with every temptation known to man, but Jesus never sinned. He truly is the Captain of our salvation!

XXXIV. Lesson 34: Jesus Began His Ministry

Review Questions

1. **Was Jesus' temptation in the wilderness according to Satan's will and timing or God's?**
2. **What did God use Satan to accomplish in leading Jesus out to be tempted by him?**
3. **How did Satan try to confuse Jesus?**
4. **How did Jesus resist each temptation?**

Introduction: As you continue through the Bible as we have done, and IF you look at everything through the grid that 2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:19-20 provides; namely, that before there was time, God foreordained His plan of redemption that would be carried out through Christ—when you look at everything in that light, then from the beginning you can clearly see that the written Word of God was given to us as a progressive record of all that God has done to bring this about. Through the Old Testament we have the preparation for the plan to be fulfilled. Creation, fall, promise, choosing of Israel (the line), showing them over and over their need for a Savior. Now in the gospels the promised One has come.

We've seen all that God did to make it possible for the world to recognize Him. From the time of His birth and on up to going to John to be baptized and led out to be tempted by the devil, this was all to make it clear who He was, to prepare hearts to accept Him as the Promised One, and to prepare Him to be the Deliverer.

Now, as we continue into this lesson, I think we can see God taking things a step further as He continues to patiently take the time to first prove to the world Who Jesus really is. That is the fact that, before Jesus actually did what He came here to do, die for our sins, God first had Him spend three whole years in which He (very publicly) healed the sick, cast out demons, and fulfilled prophecy. Again, I believe God was making it very, very clear that Jesus was the promised One.

<u>John's work was finished.</u>

As we continue on with looking at various aspects of Jesus' life and ministry while on this earth, I think it's very important for us to keep in mind what it says in **Hebrews 1:1-3**—that in these last days, God has spoken through His Son Who is the brightness of His glory and the expressed image of His person!

Whatever we see of Jesus' life, this is exactly how God is! However we see Jesus interacting with people, we know

that God is immutable and He views us with the same heart and compassion today!

❖ **Read Mark 1:14-15.**

John was sent for the purpose of preparing the way for the Promised One. We saw in past lessons that he faithfully communicated the message he was given to proclaim.

Looking back at **Mark 1:4-5**, we see that a tremendous amount of people believed his message and were baptized. Along with those whose hearts were prepared and believed, there were also those who continued to remain self-righteous, not seeing their own sin and need of a Savior.

We also saw how forceful and blunt John became with such people. One of those occasions was with King Herod himself. We won't take the time to read it, but **Mark 6:14-29** gives us the account of John confronting Herod of his sin and how Herod had him imprisoned and later beheaded for it.

So, it's very clear that John faithfully proclaimed the message of repentance God had called him to proclaim. Mark said that after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee and basically began His ministry. He began to publicly teach and minister. Mark tells us that Jesus had two main declarations. The "Time has come!" God's appointed time of preparation and expectation, the Old Testament era, now stood fulfilled.

❖ **Read Luke 4:16-21.**

This was at a later time but the same type of message. It's what we've been saying all along. God's plan of redemption was from before time. Through the Old Testament He sets the stage, and now in the gospels He is bringing it about.

The second declaration was "The kingdom of God is near." A theological dictionary that I consulted says "kingdom" means "kingship or "royal rule." Involved in the term is the sovereign authority of a ruler, the activity of ruling, and the realm of rule including its benefits. Thus, the kingdom of God is a concept that refers to God's sovereign activity of ruling over His creation.

When Jesus said that "the kingdom of God is near," it meant that "God's rule is near," that Jesus the "agent" of God's

rule was present among them; therefore, repent of your sin and believe this good news!

Man would no longer have to live under the reign and authority of Satan, for the rightful King had come. He would overcome sin and Satan and set the captives free. See **Luke 4:18-19; John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2.**

Jesus told them to "believe." This is no different than what we've seen all the way through the Old Testament. Faith, belief in God's promise of the coming Deliverer, is always what justified someone. But now the actual object of that faith is becoming clearer. God had been showing that Jesus is the Deliverer, and now Jesus was beginning to state it, too.

It's interesting to note that NOW that the Deliverer had come, it was no longer good enough to just believe that One was coming. Those who ended up rejecting Jesus as the Messiah still believed God's promise to send a Deliverer. They just didn't believe that it was Jesus. To NOT believe that Jesus was He was the same as not believing it at all. There was a progression to what people were to believe.

❖ **Read Mark 1:16-20.**

Jesus' little statement here, "follow Me and I will make you fishers of men," could take up a whole lesson on its own. I won't take the time to do that, but I do want to give you a little overview of what I'm talking about. First of all, when Jesus made that CALL, the promise was based on what HE would make of them and not on what they were in and of themselves. (Example of Jesus' discipleship of Peter)

❖ **Read Mark 1:21-22.**

Comparing Jesus with the scribes and Pharisees is a case in point of what the Christian life looks like as a religion and as a relationship. Jesus knew God the Father intimately and therefore spoke of truth with authority that the scribes and Pharisees didn't have, for they didn't know God! Jesus knew God, He knew His ways, knew His heart! The Pharisees only knew commands and strict guidelines. They were following a "religion," while Jesus was living out a relationship. Our Christian lives will be the same way!

❖ **Read Mark 1:23-28.**

So often today, the focus of this kind of passage usually ends up being on the demons and what they can do and can't do and how to battle them. The real thing that is being revealed through this is God Himself and not the demons: Jesus is the Deliverer, His Authority and power, His love, grace, compassion, and mercy.

Again, Jesus is the expressed image of God. The demons said to Jesus to let them alone and asked, "*Did you come to ruin us?*" One commentary said that it would be accurate for this to be a declaration rather than a question: "*You have come to ruin us.*" The demons were able to perceive the significance of Jesus' presence and His threat to their power and authority. Then Jesus silenced them.

Do you remember what Jesus said back in verse 15? The kingdom of God is at hand - God's rule is here! Well, here right before their very eyes, Jesus proves it by physically showing His authority over the spirit world! Not only did Jesus silence the demons, but He also commanded them to leave making it absolutely clear that God's rule had come in the life of Jesus!

❖ **Read Mark 1:29-39.**

You know, words really can't do this picture justice. In Jesus, at one moment you have this clear manifestation of absolute power and authority over the forces of evil and at the next moment this clear manifestation of utmost love, compassion, and mercy for all mankind! Notice that it says He healed ALL the sick and there were no strings attached! Again, He is the expressed image of God! This is exactly what the Godhead is like!

❖ **Read Mark 1:40-42.**

It's interesting that up above, the individual things that Jesus healed people of weren't specifically named…just that He had healed all the sick. Here, though, this specific account is recorded along with this man's specific disease. Back then, leprosy was like AIDS and cancer today with no known cure. People were deathly afraid of it and lepers' lives were very difficult as they were required to isolate themselves from the rest of society. Many of them had to live in caves outside the walls of Jerusalem.

This account really shows the vast wisdom of God, as He can take just one situation like this and use it to reveal so

much about Himself! It was another proof of Who Jesus was and the truth that God's rule is truly here. He showed His authority over the spirit world, and now He shows His authority over sickness and disease. These were both "authorities" that humans are subject to and can have no sway over. He was also showing His love, compassion, and care for every person!

Back then, people didn't even want to be near this guy, but here's Jesus reaching out and compassionately touching him. I believe He was also giving a physical picture here of spiritual truth. Leprosy to them physically is like sin is to us spiritually. It controls us and there is nothing that we can do for ourselves about it. It destroys our lives and separates us from God.

Only Jesus could have healed this man from his leprosy, and only the Deliverer can save us from the penalty of our sin. It's a clear demonstration that He IS the Savior, as well as Who He is and what HE IS LIKE AS our Savior.

XXXV. Lesson 35:
Jesus Taught the Necessity of New Birth

Review Questions

1. **How do passages like 2 Timothy 1:9 and I Peter 1:19-20 add to the overall context of God's Word?**
2. **What was God's purpose in having Jesus spend three years ministering and teaching before having Him die for our sins?**
3. **When Jesus first began to teach, what were His two main declarations?**
4. **Once Jesus began to be revealed as the promised Deliverer, how did that change the "facts" of what people were to believe to be saved?**
5. **Jesus' relationship with God and the Pharisees' relationship with God – how are they both examples of what our Christian lives can look like?**

Introduction: When we were going through the Old Testament, what were the two main points of context that we kept before us? First was the truth that we saw in 2 Timothy 1:9-- "That God's purpose and grace was bestowed upon us through Christ before time began" (meaning that it's always been about Christ). Secondly was the fact of God's statement about mankind in Genesis 8:21, "that every thought and intent of man's heart is only evil from childhood" (therefore, it HAS to be all about God's grace and the finished work of Christ).

God was working all through the Old Testament preparing mankind and pointing him towards His eternal plan of redemption, all the while continuing to work to unfold and fulfill that plan. Keeping these things in mind will help give us the proper perspective of what God was doing and what He expected from mankind.

So, now we fast forward to this lesson in which Jesus, the long-awaited and promised Deliverer and Son of God, has come. Not only is He the promised One who had come to fulfill the eternal plan, but, as God the Son incarnate, He was the expressed image of God Himself. All that God was doing through the Old Testament to reveal His heart and His eternal plan of redemption, Jesus was now continuing to reveal and carry out, though in more specific detail.

❖ **Read John 3:1-2.**

As you know, the Word of God is God's inspired and complete revelation that He authored and preserved for the church. Therefore, we have to believe that each historical account He has included in His word was included for a reason and I believe that is the case with this account of Jesus' interaction with Nicodemus. I'm sure there were many other individuals who had come to seek out Jesus and ask Him these kinds of

questions, but why was this account with Nicodemus chosen by God to be recorded in the gospels and maybe not some others?

Personally, I believe it's because Nicodemus was a Pharisee. The Pharisees were religious leaders of the Jews and they thought they were superior to all other people. The Pharisees misunderstood the whole premise for God giving the law. They thought that God truly expected mankind to keep it and thereby obtain righteous standing before God by keeping the law.

The Pharisees were so serious about this they went on to establish many other "laws" and regulations that would help them not break the law that God had given in Leviticus. No one was more serious in their attempts to keep the law than the Pharisees and therefore they viewed themselves as being better than everyone else. If any human being had a reason or an ability to glory in their law keeping it was the Pharisees.

❖ **Read Philippians 3:4-6.**

The Pharisees were self-righteous and didn't view themselves as sinners. They did believe in a coming Deliverer, but it was more to deliver Israel from the Romans and to setup an earthly kingdom than it was to deliver them from their sins. Therefore, when Jesus was born in a manger, of lowly parents from Nazareth, His dad was a carpenter, and He appeared to be an illegitimate child…..there was just no way the Pharisees could even fathom that He could possibly be the promised One. Even though Jesus continued to do many miracles that clearly revealed Him to be the Son of God, the Pharisees kept stumbling over those issues.

❖ **Read 1 Corinthians 1:23-25.**

Therefore, the Pharisees hated Jesus and tried to discredit His miracles rather than allowing themselves to believe such a "lowly individual" could be the promised Deliverer. One of the main ways they tried to discredit Him was by saying His miracles were all being done in the power of Satan. The fact then that Nicodemus seemed to perceive Jesus was sent by God, for His miracles could only be performed through the power of God, makes a couple of points.

First, it's a testimony to the fact that Jesus' miracles were a clear enough revelation that "teachable" people or those who had "ears to hear" could indeed recognize Him for

Who He truly was. Secondly, it was an indictment against the "religious elite" in Israel, for here was a humble and teachable Pharisee who was responding to the Holy Spirit's conviction in His life. Therefore, they ALL would be without excuse so to speak. The fact that Nicodemus also came at night is proof of the extreme hatred the Pharisees as a group must have had towards Jesus. Nicodemus was afraid for anyone to see him associating with Him.

❖ **Read John 3:3.**

Jesus' answer to Nicodemus about needing to be "born again" or "born from above" has two main points to it that God had been proving over and over and over through the Old Testament. First was in regard to being the children of Abraham. The Jews, especially the Pharisees, were very proud that they were the descendants of Abraham. They thought that being relatives of Abraham automatically made them children of God or members of His family.

This is why they so despised Gentiles or non-Jews. They weren't "chosen" by God and they would not associate with them. To fellowship together in a Gentile's home would have meant defilement for the Jew. So, by this statement, Jesus was making it clear that just being born a Jew wasn't enough.

Jesus' second point had to do with the fact that ALL (both Jew and Gentile) human beings are born with a sin nature and therefore no amount of good deeds or law keeping could ever make anyone acceptable to God. This again comes back to the fact of the "fall" and mankind becoming sinners. When Adam and Eve sinned, they went from being perfectly sinless and righteous creatures to creatures whose "every thought and intent of the heart was only evil from childhood." They went from being people who had a perfect relationship with God, fully accepted by Him and objects of His blessing, to people who were separated from Him conditionally, spiritually, eternally and who were now the objects of His wrath. See **Ephesians 2**.

Therefore, Jesus was saying that because mankind is inherently sinful by nature, death and re-creation is the ONLY solution for the old man.

❖ **Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.**

As you will see, Nicodemus didn't get what Jesus meant, but the truth is Christians today still don't get it. We tend to think that all we needed was improvement, a little extra help. We don't get that our only hope and only solution was to be RECREATED!

❖ **Read John 3:4-5.**

Obviously, Nicodemus didn't understand what Jesus meant as he thought Jesus was saying a person had be born physically again. Notice that Jesus said man must be born both of water and Spirit. Some denominations interpret "born of water" as water baptism. This is absolutely false. Being baptized in water does NOT add one iota to our salvation or our sanctification. It was given to the church to perform as a public display of people's faith.

I believe the "water" Jesus was referring to was God's Word, the truth. No human comes into this world already knowing the truth about God, about Christ, and how to receive eternal life, but will naturally grow up believing many wrong beliefs and concepts about those things.

Well, just as water is used to wash away dirt, so the "written Word of God" is used by the Holy Spirit to wash away all those misunderstandings and wrong beliefs that people are led to believe about God, themselves, and sin. The Holy Spirit will use the Word of God in the lives of people to completely change the lives of all those who hear the truth and believe it.

Just picking up the Bible then and reading it isn't enough. The Holy Spirit has got to illumine our minds so that we can clearly understand the truth. The Word of God must be spiritually understood, and that is a work only the Holy Spirit can do.

This is what it means to be "born of water and spirit": the Holy Spirit using the written word of God to convince our hearts of the truth, so that upon believing it, our spirit is made alive and we thereby become a new creation in Christ.

Another main reason for Jesus making this point with Nicodemus was because of the importance they placed on themselves being "children of Abraham."

❖ **Read John 3:6-8.**

Jesus is continuing to point out to Nicodemus that being born descendants of Abraham will not guarantee entrance into heaven. He said, "what is born of flesh is flesh." Just being born a descendant of Abraham only guarantees that you are a fallen human being like Abraham was. It doesn't make you a child of God. Being "born of the Spirit" will quicken your spirit and thereby give you eternal life.

Jesus knew this would be a shock to most Jews, especially the Pharisees, for in essence, He was telling them that being born Jews/children of Abraham, wasn't enough. They must be born from above! In verse 8, Jesus goes on to say that the work of being "born from above" will be the work of the Holy Spirit. You won't be able to predict where He is moving and working, but you will be able to see the results. This again is in contrast to their beliefs that being born physical descendants of Abraham is what matters.

❖ **Read John 3:9-15.**

As we spent many weeks reading through the Old Testament, we pointed out many physical pictures of spiritual truth. Here, Jesus is doing the exact same thing. When Nicodemus still didn't understand what Jesus was talking about, Jesus said look, YOU of all people as a teacher of the scriptures in Israel should be well aware of and understand these many physical pictures of spiritual truth that were recorded in the Old Testament. He said, "*If you can't understand the gist of these earthly/physical examples, then how would you ever understand if I were to tell you about the spiritual truths that they point toward*?"

Then He goes on to give the bronze serpent on the pole as an example of a well-known physical picture of spiritual truth.

❖ **Read John 3:16-20.**

Again, the Jews' perspective was purely physical and earthly. They were born the physical descendants of Abraham. This made them God's chosen people, the recipients of God's earthly promises to send a Deliverer and establish their earthly kingdom. In these verses, Jesus is pointing Nicodemus toward a big picture spiritual perspective.

God loves the WHOLE world and not just the Jews. He sent His Son, not just so that Israel can have an earthly

kingdom, but so that ALL who believe in Him can receive eternal life. God didn't send His Son just to deliver Israel and to condemn all others, but He sent His Son so that ALL of the world could be saved.

For those who believe in Him will be saved (whether Jew or Gentile) and those who DON'T believe in Him are already condemned (even if he was born a child of Abraham).

What will determine whether one receives salvation or condemnation is what each person believes regarding the "Light that has come into the world." It is what you do with the TRUTH of the gospel and not what your ethnicity is.

Keep in mind that Nicodemus was a Pharisee just like all the other Pharisees that Jesus calls a "brood of vipers" or "white-washed tombs." The difference was that Nicodemus was responding to the testimony that the Holy Spirit was unfolding before his eyes through the life of Jesus. He was responding to what the Holy Spirit was making evident and what Jesus took the time to explain clearly to him. Nicodemus was also a sinner like all the rest of the Pharisees, but the difference was that he knew it and Jesus' response and interaction with him was much different than it was with the other self-righteous Pharisees.

XXXVI. Lesson 36:
Jesus Had Power to Heal Sickness and Forgive Sins

Review Questions

1. **Why was it so difficult for the Pharisees to believe that Jesus was the promised Deliverer?**
2. **Why is it significant that Nicodemus, a Pharisee, believed that Jesus was the Deliverer?**
3. **When Jesus said that "You must be born from above," what did this mean?**
4. **What aspect of that do most Christians not really understand today?**
5. **What does it mean to be born of water and the Spirit?**

Introduction: In the last 35 lessons we have studied through, we have been following a progression that began before the foundations of the earth (2 Timothy 1:9). Through the Old Testament, then, we've seen God doing a number of things to set the stage.

Creation

We've seen Him go to great lengths to reveal Himself. Not only has He clearly revealed His attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, sovereignty, love, grace, justice, holiness, etc., but also we have seen many of the characteristics of His heart, like His desire for a relationship and how that leads Him to communicate. We've seen the great "heart" that He has for mankind by the way that He is the Initiator. There are many promises and reminders all pointing to Christ—for example, calling into existence the Nation of Israel, the line of Christ.

He proved His faithfulness and trustworthiness over and over. Through the Old Testament, God very faithfully and meticulously built a testimony in which He proved through the things that can be seen, that we can today wholeheartedly trust His promises regarding our spiritual blessings that can't be seen. Once God had all of these things in place, it was then time for Him to bring the long-awaited Promised One on the scene.

Throughout the Old Testament, we saw God so faithfully and so abundantly reveal Himself over and over in order to make it easy for Israel to trust and depend upon Him.

So, now in the life of Jesus, we are seeing God go to great lengths to faithfully and abundantly manifest the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Promised One. We will see Him do it with the same undeniable proof and clarity with which He revealed Himself throughout the Old Testament.

There were six main ways that God was revealing Who Jesus really was:

- Through His power to heal sickness, disease, and rise from the dead
- By His authority to forgive sin
- By His power and authority over creation
- By His power and authority over the spirit world
- Through fulfilling prophecy
- By His teaching

During the three-year span that Jesus was carrying out His ministry, the gospels record that He publicly healed someone's sickness or disease 18 different times. There are four specific times where Jesus proved He was God by publicly forgiving sin. Each time the Pharisees would say something like, "Hey, who does He think He is? Only God can forgive sin." They were right! At least nine different times, He revealed He was God by revealing His authority over nature. He calmed storms, walked on water, fed four and five thousand with just one boy's lunch, miraculous catches of fish, raising the dead, getting a coin from a fish, and sending demons into pigs.

At least six times He proved He was God by revealing His authority over the spirit world by casting out demons. He revealed He was God by revealing His authority over death. Not only did He publicly raise three people from the dead, but when He gave up His spirit on the cross, many, many people were raised from the dead.

❖ **Read Matthew 27:50-53**.

On two specific occasions, God the Father, speaking in an audible voice from heaven, proclaimed Him to be His beloved Son. Jesus revealed that He was God by His teaching. On numerous occasions people were amazed by the authority with which He taught. Another way that God proved over and over who Jesus was, was through the fulfillment of all of His promises and prophecy regarding Him. Ultimately, God gave SO many promises and prophecies to be fulfilled by the Deliverer

that only HE could orchestrate the fulfillment of every one of them through one man.

"Indeed, it may be possible for someone to fake one or two of the Messianic prophecies, but it would be impossible for any one person to arrange and fulfill all of these prophecies."

John Ankerberg relates the true story of how governments use prearranged identification signs to identify correct agents: "*David Greenglass was a World War II traitor. He gave atomic secrets to the Russians and then fled to Mexico after the war. His conspirators arranged to help him by planning a meeting with the secretary of the Russian ambassador in Mexico City. Proper identification for both parties became vital. Greenglass was to identify himself with six prearranged signs. These instructions had been given to both the secretary and Greenglass so there would be no possibility of making a mistake. They were (1) once in Mexico City, Greenglass was to write a note to the secretary, signing his name as "I. JACKSON"; (2) after three days he was to go to the Plaza de Colon in Mexico City and (3) stand before the statue of Columbus, (4) with his middle finger placed in a guide book. In addition, (5) when he was approached, he was to say it was a magnificent statue and that he was from Oklahoma. (6) The secretary was to then give him a passport. These six prearranged signs worked. Why? With six identifying characteristics it was impossible for the secretary not to identify Greenglass as the proper contact."* (John Ankerberg, John Weldon and Walter Kaiser, "The Case for Jesus the Messiah," Melbourne: Pacific College Study Series, 1994, 17-18.)

How true, then, it must be that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah if he had 456 identifying characteristics well in advance and fulfilled them all! In fact, what does the science of probability make of this? The science of probability attempts to determine the chance that a given event will occur. The value and accuracy of the science of probability has been well established beyond doubt; for example, insurance rates are fixed according to statistical probabilities.

"Professor Emeritus of Science at Westmont College, Peter Stoner, has calculated the probability of one man fulfilling the major prophecies made concerning the Messiah. The estimates were worked out by twelve different classes representing some 600 university students. The students carefully weighed all the factors, discussed each prophecy at length, and examined the various circumstances which might

indicate that men had conspired together to fulfill a particular prophecy. They made their estimates conservative enough so that there was finally unanimous agreement even among the most skeptical students. However, Professor Stoner then took their estimates, and made them even more conservative. He also encouraged other skeptics or scientists to make their own estimates to see if his conclusions were more than fair. Finally, he submitted his figures for review to a committee of the American Scientific Affiliation. Upon examination, they verified that his calculations were dependable an accurate in regard to the scientific material presented. (Peter Stoner, Science Speaks, Chicago: Moody Press, 1969, 4.)

For example, concerning Micah 5:2, where it states the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah, Stoner and his students determined the average population of BETHLEHEM from the time of Micah to the present; then they divided it by the average population of the earth during the same period. They concluded that the chance of one man being born in Bethlehem was one in 300,000, (or one in 2.8 x 10^5 - rounded). After examining only eight different prophecies (Idem, 106)*, they conservatively estimated that the chance of one man fulfilling all eight prophecies was one in 10^17. To illustrate how large the number 10^17 IS (a figure with 17 zeros), Stoner gave this illustration: if you mark one of ten tickets, and place all the tickets in a hat, and thoroughly stir them, and then ask a blindfolded man to draw one, his chance of getting the right ticket is one in ten. Suppose that we take 10^17 silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They'll cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would've had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom.* (Idem, 106-107.)

But, of course, there are many more than eight prophecies. In another calculation, Stoner used 48 prophecies (Idem, 109) *(even though he could have used Edersheim's 456), and arrived at the extremely conservative estimate that the probability of 48 prophecies being fulfilled in one person is the incredible number 10^157. How large is the number one in 10^157? 10^157 contains 157 zeros! Stoner gives an illustration of this number using electrons. Electrons are very small objects.*

They're smaller than atoms. It would take 2.5 TIMES 10^15 of them, laid side by side, to make one inch. Even if we counted 250 of these electrons each minute, and counted day and night, it would still take 19 million years just to count a line of electrons one-inch long. (Stoner, op. cit, 109.)

With this introduction, let's go back to our chance of one in 10^157. Let's suppose that we're taking this number of electrons, marking one, and thoroughly stirring it into the whole mass, then blindfolding a man and letting him try to find the right one. What chance has he of finding the right one? What kind of a pile will this number of electrons make? They make an inconceivably large volume. This is the result from considering a mere 48 prophecies. Obviously, the probability that 456 prophecies would be fulfilled in one man by chance is vastly smaller. According to Emile Borel, once one goes past one chance in 10^50, the probabilities are so small that it is impossible to think that they will ever occur." (Ankerberg et. al., op. cit., 21.)

As Stoner concludes, *"Any man who rejects Christ as the Son of God is rejecting a fact, proved perhaps more absolutely than any other fact in the world* (Stoner, op. cit., 112)*. God so thoroughly vindicated Jesus Christ that even mathematicians and statisticians, who were without faith, had to acknowledge that it is scientifically impossible to deny that Jesus is the Christ."*

Obviously, we don't have the time to go through all of these specific accounts through which Jesus revealed Himself, but I did want to highlight one as proof that Jesus' revelation of Himself was truly clear, obvious, and recognizable, even though there were those who rejected Him.

Jesus forgave the sins of the paralyzed man and healed him.

- **Read Mark 2:1-12.**

This passage tells us Jesus was in a house in Capernaum. It says he was teaching. Actually, there was two "tracks" of teaching going on here. First was what Jesus was teaching "didactically." All we are told about that is in verse 2: *"and He preached the word unto them."* No specifics.

But the second aspect of His teaching was in terms of what He was revealing/teaching about Himself through His actions. Jesus is doing here exactly what God was doing all

through the Old Testament: revealing Who He really is and what He is really like through His interaction with mankind.

With Jesus being the "expressed image" of God (as we are told in Hebrews), we can see Him manifesting both His holiness, righteousness, justice, and His love, grace, and mercy all at the same time, just like we saw God do many times in the Old Testament.

Verse 5 says, "*when Jesus saw their FAITH*…." The main issue with God is always faith! Do you remember lesson 26 when Israel refused to believe God and enter the land of Canaan? Do you remember God's response? He judged their sin of unbelief by not allowing that generation to enter in.

The issue was NOT any sin that these people were committing on a daily basis! Remember, "Every thought and intent of their hearts was only evil from childhood." Therefore, they didn't have the capacity to stop sinning on a daily basis.

But because God had created them (all humans) in His image with a mind, will, and emotions, all mankind has the ability see God's revelation of Himself, learn about Him and His greatness, and believe that He is all that He's revealed Himself to be. Because He had gone to great and extreme lengths to reveal Himself to them, they were left without an excuse for their rejection of that revelation, and that was what God was holding them accountable for (**Romans 1**).

These men in **Mark 2**, on the other hand, had seen a whole lot less first-hand revelation of God than that generation of Israel had seen, and yet we are told they came "in faith." They had obviously seen and heard enough about Jesus that they believed He could and would heal their friend.

Jesus' response to such faith was one of compassion and forgiveness. We know it was one of compassion, for He calls him "son." This was a term of affection and compassion and should be contrasted with the way in which Jesus addressed the Pharisees at other times (brood of vipers, white-washed tombs). The difference was faith, not sinfulness. These men were just as sinful as the Pharisees, but the Pharisees rejected Jesus' revelation of Himself and walked in unbelief (even though they looked very spiritual on the outside).

Another aspect to the faith of these men is the indictment that it brings forth on all who refuse to believe or

who rejected Christ. When you have testimony of a Pharisee like Nicodemus recognizing Jesus as the Christ and you have men like these who recognize Him and you have demons recognizing Him, it stands to reason that Jesus' revelation of Himself and proof of Who He truly was, was clear and leaves all who rejected Him without excuse.

Jesus goes on in verse 5 and says, *"Your sins are forgiven."* The passage doesn't clarify what sins Jesus was talking about. It could have been sin that led to his paralysis. He could have been sinning in his attitude toward God because of his paralysis. We definitely know that he was born a sinner regardless. It could be that all three were true.

The main issue here isn't in determining what the man's sin was but in the fact that Jesus could forgive it. When the Pharisees accused Him of blaspheming, Jesus' response to them seems to have a sense of expectation with it. Expectation that these Pharisees should have known and believed Who He was, for the fact that these men had come to Jesus in "faith," was again proof that His revelation of Himself had been clear and recognizable.

Jesus says, *"Which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven? Or rise, take up your bed, and walk"?*

Have you ever had a problem with a computer or your car or something that you had no idea how to fix and some computer guru comes in and says, "Oh yeah, here's the problem, click, click, click, there you go." And you're like, "Wait a minute, what did you do?" That is kind of like what Jesus did. He's teaching in the house, these men lower the paralytic through the roof, He sees their faith and is like, "Oh, you can't walk, okay, your sins are forgiven." The Pharisees are like, wait a minute, what did you say? Who do you think you are? Jesus is like, "what"? Well, being that I am God the Son, neither one of these is any harder to do than other, so, which was easier to say? But, so that you will know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sin, "rise, take up your bed, and walk"! Meaning, not only do I have the power to heal but also the authority to forgive sin!

Notice the responses then in verse 12. The man was healed and got up and walked. The crowd was amazed and glorified God. It doesn't tell us about the Pharisees, but we know from other accounts that they continued to reject Jesus as the Christ regardless of how He manifested Himself to them.

The fact remains that Jesus' revelation of Himself was indeed clear and recognizable, for there were many who came to believe Who He truly was because of that revelation. This in turn left those who rejected Him without an excuse.

XXXVII. Lesson 37:
Jesus' Discipleship of Peter

Review Questions

1. **Name some of the things we have seen God do in order to set the stage for the Deliverer to come and fulfill His eternal plan of redemption.**
2. **God went to great lengths to make it easy for people to recognize the Deliverer. What were some of those that God did to reveal Him?**
3. **What is the main thing God holds man responsible for?**
4. **Give some evidences proving that Jesus' revelation of Himself was clean and recognizable.**

Introduction: The three main things that we have continued to highlight throughout all of these lessons in order to maintain a proper perspective have been:

- **The fact that God's eternal plan of redemption was determined before the foundations of the earth, and it has been God Who has carried out and fulfilled this plan. He has done all of the initiation and has carried it all out on man's behalf.**

- **Every thought and intent of man's heart is only evil from childhood; therefore, mankind is absolutely incapable of doing one thing for himself in terms of restoring our relationship with God.**

- **All of the recorded accounts we have looked at through this study God has given as physical examples that testify to the validity of the two previous points.**

These things were His focus in the Old Testament as well as now in the Gospels in the life of Jesus. Along with all that God was doing through Jesus' life to prove to the masses that He truly is the Son of God, the promised Deliverer, there was also the personal and up close revelation and "discipleship" He was doing in the lives of a few individuals, namely, His disciples.

In today's lesson, we are going to look at the life of Peter and Jesus' (Who is God the Son) interaction with him. It is very interesting to note that we will see Jesus emphasizing in the life of Peter the exact same things we saw God the Father emphasizing in the lives of all that we saw Him interact with through the Old Testament. The things that we saw Him emphasize through the Old Testament and through the life of Jesus in the gospels also hold true for us today as His children.

Before following the progression of Jesus' interaction with Peter and the other disciples, let's first look at a few verses that clue us in a bit on some of the spiritual understanding of Christ and His finished work that Peter had at the end of his life.

❖ **Read 1 Peter 1:14-16; 4:1-2; 2 Peter 1:3-4; 3:18.**

So, how did Peter get to this point? How did he become an Apostle of the church writing such deep spiritual truth? How did he go from being someone whose every thought and intent of the heart was only evil from childhood to being someone with this kind of deep spiritual understanding? Let's follow the progression of Jesus' interaction with him through the gospels.

❖ **Read Matthew 4:18-19.**

This is the first recorded interaction we have of Jesus with Peter and it begins with Jesus calling him to follow Him and stating that HE will make them "fishers of men." Because we know the rest of the story, we know that in calling these men to be His disciples, they were being chosen by God for involvement in the carrying out of His eternal plan of redemption. Their role would be to become Apostles, the first leaders of the church on earth, as well as to be those whom the Holy Spirit would inspire to write Holy Scripture. True to form, God once again works in a way that the world wouldn't have worked by choosing the type of men He chose for this role. Instead of choosing highly trained and educated men to become the first church leaders and writers of scripture, He chooses uneducated fishermen and a greatly despised tax collector for these roles!

This is no different than what we saw Him do in the Old Testament with the choosing of Abraham and Sarah, the Nation of Israel, Moses, etc. He chooses those whom the world would never expect in order to prove that it is HE who is carrying out HIS plan. His choosing of them was not based upon anything in and of themselves, but upon who HE was going to make them into becoming.

❖ **Read Matthew 4:23-25.**

These verses give us a quick summary of how Jesus did this work in their lives. He simply had them follow Him, listen to His teaching, and watch Him reveal Himself and Who He was through the things He did.

You are going to see that Jesus' discipleship of His disciples had a much different focus and emphasis than what we tend to think. Our discipleship is usually training people to

stop doing certain things and begin doing certain other things. But Jesus' discipleship consisted of the revelation of two things: first, you can't trust in yourself for anything. Second, I am the Son of God and your only hope is to trust in Me.

❖ **Read Matthew 8:14-16.**

Shortly after beginning to "follow Jesus," they go to Peter's house and Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law. Then that night, many demon-possessed people were brought to Him. He cast out the demons with a simple command and He healed ALL the sick. He was showing His compassion, His power, and His authority. This is Who I am.

❖ **Read Matthew 14:13-21.**

Verse 14 - Jesus got out of the boat, saw the crowd, had compassion on them and healed the sick. Again, revealing His compassion, power, and authority.

Verse 16 - Jesus said it wasn't necessary to send the crowd away, that the disciples should feed them. He knew they couldn't feed them, but this was all a "set up" to begin preparing them to see that they can't depend upon themselves; but because of Who He is, they CAN depend on Him.

It's also interesting to note that Jesus, Who is the expressed image of God, was also manifesting some of the same attributes we've seen God manifest in the OLD TESTAMENT—His love and compassion, His wisdom, power, and sovereignty.

❖ **Read Matthew 14:22-31.**

Verse 22 says that immediately after the bread was collected, Jesus INSISTED, MADE, or COMPELLED the disciples to get back into the boat and cross to the other side. Then it says that a storm blew up when they had returned half way across.

These men were seasoned fishermen. They knew when a storm was coming. They knew when it was good to go out on the water and when it wasn't. I think that's why it says Jesus MADE them get back in the boat. He was putting them into a situation in which they would clearly see who HE is, as well as who they are. These are the two main foundational truths that

must be in place in order for us to have an ability to trust God. First is an absolute confidence that He is Who He's revealed Himself to be, and secondly, that we grasp how hopelessly helpless we truly are to depend upon ourselves for anything.

Verses 28-31 – Peter asks Jesus to command him to come out on the water. Peter then sees the waves and wind and doubts and sinks. As you will see, Peter had a propensity for being impetuous and Jesus used it to set him up again to see his need for trusting in Christ.

❖ **Read Matthew 16:13-17.**

Jesus asked them, "Who do you say that I am"? It was revealed to Peter who Jesus truly was. In his head, he understood and believed that Jesus was truly the Son of God, but in terms of living it out, we will see that many of his actions and the things he said still lacked an ability to truly trust Him.

❖ **Read Matthew 16:21-23.**

Right after Peter gets praised by Jesus for giving the right answer as to Who Jesus truly is, he once again thinks more highly of himself and his own understanding by "correcting" Jesus in regard to His comment about being arrested and killed and ends up being rebuked by Jesus. This demonstrates that it really hasn't sunk into his heart Who Jesus truly is.

In vs. 23, Jesus says, "you are seeing things merely from a human point of view." Jesus was showing Peter that he cannot trust in his own human reasoning and understanding. He was also showing Peter that He Himself is God and that Peter's only hope would be to trust in Him.

❖ **Read Matthew 17:1-6.**

At the transfiguration of Christ, Peter once again sees things through his own human intellect and again gets a lesson on perspective: "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him." In other words, "This is God the Son; be quiet and listen. If you need to do anything, He will tell you. This isn't about you and what you think."

❖ **Read Matthew 18:21.**

Peter asks Jesus, "*How many times should I forgive someone? Seven times*?" Again, this shows that Peter was on any earthly level. A human to forgive someone seven times for the same offense would be considered to be very gracious. Jesus' answer presents the need to be trusting in Him: "*No, seventy times seven.*" In other words, "so many times that you would be incapable of doing it in and of yourself."

❖ **Read John 13:6-9.**

Jesus goes to wash Peter's feet and again Peter begins to spout off according to his own understanding. First, he isn't going to let Jesus wash anything. Then he wants Jesus to wash ALL of him. Peter is speaking and giving solutions according to what makes sense to him, rather than simply listening and trusting what Jesus was telling him.

As you can see, this whole process of Jesus teaching Peter to trust in Him instead of himself by means of "failure" has been progressing and building toward the climax of Peter's greatest failure of all.

❖ **Read Matthew 26:31-35.**

Peter here really provides a clear example of ways that we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Remember **Genesis 8:21**? "*Every thought and intent of our hearts is only evil from childhood*."

So here's Peter, a man who fits the description of **Genesis 8:21**, not only vowing a greater devotion and allegiance than ALL the other disciples, but he also totally contradicts the Son of God in doing so. Who is the "All wise One" here anyway?

Jesus answers and says in verse 34, "*Well actually Peter, you are going to deny me three times.*" Then in verse 35, Peter answers, "*NO, even if I have to die I will never desert You!"* Peter was vehemently arguing his own loyalty and commitment.

❖ **Read Matthew 26:36-46.**

Notice that in answer to Peter's last response, Jesus stops arguing with him and instead takes him out to the garden of Gethsemane and gives Peter a first-hand glimpse of what he will be able to expect from himself in terms of his own

devotion to Christ. Peter couldn't even stay awake and pray with Jesus for one hour, let alone be willing to die for Him. Then in verse 40, Jesus says, *"the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."* Meaning, in your heart, you very much want to do what is right, but within yourself there is no power to carry these things out. You cannot trust in yourself!

❖ **Read John 18:10-11.**

Once again, Peter faced with a problem, immediately turns to his own solution and pulls out his sword to defend Jesus. Jesus tells him to put it away and says, "*Shall I not drink from this cup of suffering that God has given me?*" Jesus had been teaching Peter that he can trust HIM, and now here Jesus models for Peter His own dependence and trust in God the Father.

❖ **Read Matthew 26:69-75.**

And so it happens just like Jesus promised it would. Peter denies Christ three times and then runs off weeping bitterly through the streets. No more proclamations of his self-will and understanding. Just brokenness. This was building.

The temptation today is to think that failures like this need to be avoided, but in reality, it needed to happen. Christianity is a relationship and not a religion, and in order for us to live it as God intends, we all must be brought to this point of recognizing two things. First, that we really are who God says we are (**Genesis 8:21**) and that He really is Who He's revealed Himself to be–The Great I Am. The Christian life is about knowing Him and communing with Him. It's not about being trained to do what's right.

❖ **Read John 20:3-6.**

John actually outruns Peter to the tomb, but it's Peter who burst in looking for His body. It's interesting to note that being broken didn't change Peter's make up or personality. He was still somewhat impetuous. You can see that now his impetuousness was being manifested as a desire "for Christ" rather than a dependence upon himself.

❖ **Read John 21:1-8.**

Peter says he's going fishing and the rest decide to go along with him. They fish all night and catch nothing. Jesus

shows up on the shore line and tells them to cast on the other side of the boat and they catch a huge load of fish. Peter realizes it is Jesus and he dives right in and swims to shore. We need to keep in mind what just took place in Peter's life a few days prior. He had just denied Christ and had been broken and brought to the end of himself. Now, there is Jesus standing on the shore. Peter's brokenness and coming to the end of himself increased his value for Christ and his desire to commune with Him. Jesus was now more the occupation of Peter's heart instead of himself.

❖ **Read John 21:15-17.**

All the disciples had come ashore with the catch of fish and now they were all sitting around the fire eating together. Jesus asks Peter, *"Peter, do you love me more than these?"* (Jesus was talking about the other disciples and not the fish.) Meaning, you had vowed that even if THEY ALL desert Me, YOU never will; so, do you love Me more than the rest do? Can your own love and commitment to Me be trusted to lead you to be more devoted than anyone else? We know Peter finally realized what Jesus had been trying to show him all along by comparing the terms for love that Jesus and he used.

Jesus asked him three times, do you love (*agape* love) Me? Finally the third time Peter responded, *"Lord, You know ALL things, You know that I love* (*phileo* love) *You."* You know that my love for You is only human or brotherly.

It's also interesting to note that Peter had denied Jesus three times and now Jesus asks him three times if he loved Him. He had denied Jesus while sitting at one fire and now he's restored to fellowship while sitting at another. Other than the fact that Jesus was showing Peter that he can't trust in himself, there was no focus put on the fact that Peter had denied Him.

Peter's failure in and of itself was not the real issue here, but coming to believe and understand Who Jesus is and the fact that Peter can't trust in himself was. These two things were at the foundation of Jesus making him to be a "fisher of men."

The following verses give us glimpses of how Peter's life was truly transformed: **Acts 3:12; 4:8-13, 19; and 10:25-26.** Notice not only the deep understanding of spiritual truth that he is communicating in these passages, but also the great

boldness that growing in the knowledge of Christ has brought about in his life.

Lastly, look at Peter's last recorded words to the church in **2 Peter 3:18**. Everything boils down to simply growing in the knowledge of God, our Savior Jesus Christ, and His grace! Growing in the knowledge of God will increase our ability to trust Him and walk in truth.

XXXVIII. Lesson 38: Jesus' Arrest

Review Questions

1. **What have been some of the main themes of this teaching that have stood out to you throughout the weeks?**
2. **What has been the purpose of this focus?**
3. **Over the past number of weeks that we have been focusing on the life of Christ, what major themes have stood out to you?**
4. **Has this focus had any effect in your daily lives?**

Introduction: As we continue through these last lessons, I want us to keep the same big picture view in focus that we've had throughout. See 2 Timothy 1:9-10 and Genesis 8:21.

I believe these verses set the "ultimate" context for the whole Word of God. In that light, then, the Old Testament is a progression leading up to the fulfillment of God's great plan in the gospels. The result of the gospels (Christ's finished work) becomes the provision for all that is in the New Testament. We have this Almighty, sovereign, supreme, loving, kind, gracious, just, and merciful God Who, because He IS love, is patiently and gently carrying out His plan for providing eternal salvation for an ignorant, blind, lost, and depraved human race.

To me, one of the most awesome facts about God and how He is going about all of this is that He doesn't just provide for our spiritual needs and leave us. He doesn't just carry it out in a distant or impersonal way. Instead, He recognizes how blind, ignorant, and fallen we really are, and He goes WAY, WAY out of His way to manifest Himself and His plan, so that even people who are as blind, ignorant, and depraved as we are can recognize it and respond in love, appreciation, and praise! He IS love and He wants closeness and intimacy with us!

That's our God, and to me that's the context for all we've been studying, and it's the context for today's lesson. Now we will skip ahead in our chronology to the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus had just celebrated the Passover with His disciples. Once again, God was fulfilling His eternal plan of redemption in their lives and they didn't have a clue. They were celebrating the Passover with the very One Whom the ceremony had been pointing toward since the night that God had delivered Israel from Egypt.

❖ **Read Mark 14:32-36.**

Talk about a clear display of Jesus' humanness. "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death." Jesus didn't use His attributes of being God to deliver Himself from the sufferings that not only go along with being human, but that especially went along with being the Lamb of God that came to

take away the sin of the world. Not only was Jesus about to be crucified—an extremely torturous death—but He was about to BECOME SIN on our behalf.

I believe Jesus' life provides a model or example for how God intends the Christian life for us to be. In the context of these extreme circumstances of suffering, Jesus as a man, in His soul is crushed to the point of death. He approaches God and addresses Him as Abba Father, revealing the intimacy and closeness of their relationship.

Based on the fact that God is almighty and supreme, Jesus asks God to deliver Him from this time of suffering. But because God is omniscient and all-wise, Jesus, more than wanting His own will, wants God the Father's will to be carried out. Look at **1 Peter 2:21-23**. For us, without knowing him intimately, we won't have that kind of closeness and intimacy, nor will we want His will above our own. We'll doubt God's goodness and therefore won't trust Him.

❖ **Read Mark 14:37-42.**

Back in verses 27-31, in the upper room, Jesus told them He would be struck down and that all of the disciples would desert Him. Peter said, *"even if they ALL desert You, I never will."* Jesus said*, "You will actually deny me three times." "NO, even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you."* So then here in verse 37, Jesus is like, "Peter, you just vowed that you'd be willing to even die for me, but now you can't even control your flesh enough to stay awake for just one hour." Then in verse 38 He says, *"You're about to be tempted, be alert and pray, for you truly desire to stand faithful with me, but the flesh is weak"* (the same as what Paul was saying in **Romans 7**).

❖ **Read Mark 14:43-47 & Matthew 26:52-56.**

It's important to go back and consider the whole context of Jesus' relationship with these disciples. We have to go back to the beginning where He calls them to follow Him and He will make them fishers of men. This was all a part of their discipleship. These men were going to become the original leaders of the early church, the Apostles.

They saw the anguish of heart that Jesus Himself had in the garden and they heard Him pour out His heart to God and watched Him entrust Himself into God's hands. Now, Peter once again takes matters into his own hands, and Jesus again

models His dependence upon God. Though it may be true that Satan was leading Judas and the others to do what they were going to do, the real issue was that God was using them and their evil intentions to bring about His will.

❖ **Read Mark 14:48-49.**

This is another example of God making it clear for us blind, ignorant, and depraved humans to know exactly Who the Promised One was.

❖ **Read Mark 14:50-52.**

In the upper room, all of them had vowed allegiance even unto death; but now that the One they thought had come to free them from the Romans was captured, they all deserted Him. These are the guys who became the Apostles! Not only was their desertion and denial of Christ never ever even mentioned again, but God called them to be the Apostles of the early church and used them to write the deep truths of the Epistles for the church!

I believe that this "extreme failure"—deserting Christ, denying Christ—was an extremely important part of bringing these men to no longer trust in themselves and to prepare them to rest solely upon Christ and His finished work. Not only was Jesus fulfilling God's plan of redemption, but He was still discipling the disciples.

❖ **Read Mark 14:53-65.**

Here's a clear manifestation of the sovereignty of God. Jesus came to pay for the sin and wickedness of our evil, fallen human race and God used the sinfulness and wickedness of men to accomplish His plan!

It's interesting to note that when the false witnesses were making up stuff about Jesus, He gave no answer. There was no defensiveness. But when He was asked, "are you the Son of God"? He had to answer! He is the "LIGHT" of the world, the "WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE"! You can't hide light! You can't hide life! He is so glorious and magnificent that He had to state who He is! The testimony of who He is can't be contained! It had to spring forth!

When Jesus was born as a child, He came to be our Savior! In verse 62, though, Jesus states that the next time He

comes, He will be coming as Judge! This is why the vision that John had of Him in Revelation looked so much different than what He looks like in the gospels.

The Jewish high priests and Pharisees didn't want to lose their power, and they had a hard time believing that Jesus was truly the Deliverer! In their minds He was born out of wedlock (in sin) to a poor carpenter family that lived in Nazareth!

How could someone like this be the great one that would deliver us from the Romans? Therefore, when Jesus again claimed to be the Son of God, the high priest became enraged. In their minds He had committed blasphemy!

Isaiah 50:6 and **Isaiah 53** were prophecies about how the Deliverer would be treated. **Mark 14:65** fulfills that prophecy. Notice the detail! Even down to how He would be treated! To me, God was making two main things very, very clear: first, Jesus truly is the Deliverer, and, second, the reality of the depravity and wickedness of man and man's desperate need for a Deliverer!

❖ **Read Mark 15:1-5.**

The Jews didn't have the authority to condemn a person to death because Israel was under the rule of the Romans. So the Jewish leaders took Jesus to Pilate, the provincial governor. They hoped that on the basis of the false charges they had prepared, Pilate would sentence Jesus to death. As a direct descendant of King David and in line for the throne of Israel, Jesus was the rightful King of Israel. Once again, Jesus is silent when being falsely accused. **Isaiah 53:7** prophesies about this.

❖ **Read Mark 15:6-20.**

To me, this whole scene and the crucifixion that follows, epitomizes both the sovereignty and supremacy of God and the depravity of man. To despise, reject, mock, and torture the very Son of God—you can't be any more depraved and wicked than that! However, from God's perspective, this was His plan all along. To send His Son down to become a man and die for the human race. It's because of that depravity and vile wickedness that required a Savior, and God used that unbelievable depravity to help bring about its payment! God is so amazing!

God had said through the prophet Isaiah that the majority of Jews would despise and reject the One He would send into the world. Through King David, God said His promised One would be hated by the Jews even through there was no legitimate reason for their hatred. See **Isaiah 53:3; Psalm 69:4.**

I'm sure you've all heard details about the flogging that Jesus received. Many people that were flogged like this back then never survived it to be crucified. After the flogging, Jesus was dressed in a purple robe and a crown of thorns was beaten down onto His head. The soldiers did this to mock Jesus, but were using it to show forth another truth. When Adam and Eve sinned, God cursed the ground and thorns and thistles began to grow. Thorns exist today because of sin's curse. I believe this was another symbol that, by His death, He was going to deliver those who believe on Him from the results of sin.

There is only one explanation why the Holy and Almighty Creator of the universe would allow sinful man to take Him out and crucify Him like a common criminal! That is **JOHN 3:16** – *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, shall not perish but have everlasting life!*

XXXIX. Lesson 39: Jesus' Death on the Cross

Review Questions

1. **As we have studied through the Old Testament and into the gospels, describe the big picture context that has been revealed regarding God and mankind.**
2. **In what way does Jesus' actions in the Garden of Gethsemane provide a model for our Christian lives?**
3. **How did God use the disciples' desertion and denial of Christ in their own discipleship?**
4. **Describe how the sovereignty of God is so clearly manifested in Mark 14:53-65.**

Introduction: Everything we've studied thus far has been leading up to the most important event in earth's history. We will see in this lesson how all of God's promises and prophecies concerning the coming Deliverer culminated. How people respond to this ONE event, determines where they will spend eternity.

❖ **Read Mark 15:20-22.**

We know that crucifixion was one of the main ways the Romans executed people. Death was slow, and it was often days before the person expired. Crucifixion is considered to be one of the most brutal forms of execution.

❖ **Read Mark 15:23.**

The Bible Knowledge Commentary states: *According to Rabbinic tradition, certain Jerusalem women provided sedative drinks for those about to be crucified to decrease their pain (cf.* ***Prov. 31:6-7****). The drink was prepared as an act of mercy and was mixed with myrrh, a sap taken from a small tree that had sedative qualities.*

❖ **Read Mark 15:24.**

It's interesting here that Mark just simply states they crucified Him. He gives no description of what the crucifixion was like. It is believed that Mark wrote this to Roman Gentiles, as there are places where he explained Jewish customs that would have been strange to Gentile readers (e.g., **7:2-4; 15:42**). He translated Aramaic words that would have been unfamiliar to Gentiles (**3:17; 5:41; 7:11, 34; 15:22**). Compared to Matthew and Luke, he used many Latinisms and Latin loan words,

indicating Roman influence. He showed special interest in persecution and martyrdom that would have been of special interest to Roman readers when he wrote (e.g., **8:34-38; 13:9-13**).

Many years before, God used King David to record this detail about what would happen to the Deliverer.

❖ **Read Psalm 22:16.**

Remember back when Jesus told Nicodemus that as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent on a pole in the wilderness, Jesus, too, had to be lifted up. The real issue in that analogy isn't so much that both Jesus and bronze serpent were raised on a pole, but that in both cases, deliverance was obtained by faith. The Old Testament is filled with physical pictures or foreshadowing of the need to place our faith in God's promises and provisions. Approximately 1,000 years earlier, God had guided King David to also write that the Deliverer's clothes would be gambled for. See **Psalm 22:18.**

❖ **Read Mark 15:25-26 and John 19:19-22.**

The Jewish leaders definitely didn't want this sign posted, as it seems to mock them as a nation or as a people—a "so much for your Deliverer" kind of statement.

❖ **Read Mark 15:27-28.**

The two thieves were being punished for their crimes, but Jesus had done nothing wrong. Being crucified with these thieves was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that the Deliverer would die along with criminals. See **Isaiah 53:12.**

I believe there could be no greater display of how vilely arrogant mankind is then to have an absolutely sinful and wicked human race judging our absolutely holy, sovereign, and supreme Son of God to be worse than a criminal—to be worse than the rest of the human race! This is the nature of ALL human beings, including us! When you look at it in that light, it makes you realize all the more how much our redemption is all about God making us His own as well as what it meant when God said, "*Every thought and intent of our hearts is only evil from childhood*."

❖ **Read Mark 15:29-32.**

These people were referring to what Jesus had said early on in His ministry, after He had gone into the temple and driven out those who were selling animals for sacrifices.

❖ **Read John 2:13-21.**

When Jesus said that if they destroyed the temple, he would rebuild it in three days, He was referring to His body, which He knew would be raised from the dead in three days. King David had also written that the Deliverer's enemies would mock Him and laugh at His sufferings. See **Psalm 22:6-8.**

Jesus being crucified was the whole reason why Jesus came to earth. Let's understand what God did so that we could be delivered forever from Satan, sin, and death. First of all, God could have never forgiven us and accepted us unless the punishment for sin was completely paid. And what is the punishment for sin? DEATH.

And what is the meaning of death? This is what God told Adam would happen if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If God were to forgive sin that was not fully paid for by death, He would be unjust. The only way that God could remain righteous and holy AND save us from the punishment that we deserved was to give His Son Jesus to become our substitute and die for our sins. Jesus had to be separated from God and die in our place.

This is where I apply **Colossians 1:16-18** – *"All things were created by Him and for Him,"* for Him to come and reveal the grace of the Father. He is the expressed image of God. When you really stop and comprehend the vileness of man, GRACE is that much more manifested! Because Jesus was sinless and perfect, He could die in our place and be our substitute.

❖ **Read Mark 15:33-36.**

For three hours, from noon to 3 p.m., the light of the sun was blotted out and there was darkness over the land. This darkness showed that God had turned away from His beloved Son, leaving Him to suffer alone. Since eternity, before creation, and right up through this moment on the cross, God the Son and God the Father had been in perfect loving unity. But now in Jesus' greatest time of need, God the Father turns away from Him. Why? God was punishing Jesus for our sins and for those of the whole world. Jesus was suffering separation from God, the penalty for our sins.

Some of the people around the cross thought He was calling on the prophet Elijah to come and rescue Him. Jesus was not calling out to Elijah to save Him. He was crying out in anguish to God who had turned away from Him as He took on Himself the full responsibility for our sins.

When Jesus was nailed to the cross, His blood flowed out of His body, just as the blood of the animals flowed out of their bodies when the Jews offered them to God. The blood of every animal sacrificed to God down through the years pointed forward to this moment when the Deliverer, God's Son, would give His life on the cross to pay for the sins of the world. Every animal sacrifice down through the years reminded the Israelites that the wages of sin is death.

❖ **Read Mark 15:37.**

Mark wrote that Jesus cried out with a loud voice just before He died, but Mark doesn't tell us what He said. However, in **John 19:30**, John tells us Jesus said, "*It is finished.*" We know that by this statement, Jesus didn't mean He had lost and His enemies had won. Instead, He meant what He had come into the world to do was completely accomplished! He had come to deliver sinners, and He had achieved His purpose. He had been separated from God and given His blood and His life as the full payment for our sins. God's plan from before the ages was now complete!

Now, there is no longer any need for anyone to be separated from God. Because Jesus paid all that was necessary, God forgives the sins of those who agree with Him that they are sinners and believe in Jesus and His death for them. To them He gives the gift of eternal life. In the Garden of Eden, God had promised He would send a Deliverer and He kept His promise. Jesus finished the work which His Father had given Him to do for us. He is the only way back to God. **John 14:6** states, *"I am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through Me."*

The deal where Mark reported that some said He was calling Elijah was most likely a form of mocking Jesus. Popular Jewish belief at the time believed that Elijah came in times of distress to deliver righteous sufferers. So, they would have been saying, "Oh look, He thinks He's a righteous sufferer and that Elijah will come to deliver Him."

Another interesting note is the way that Jesus cried out and then breathed His last and died meant that He didn't die the normal way crucified people died. Normally they would suffer and suffocate over a long period of time, slip into a coma from exhaustion, and then die. The fact that Jesus was conscious to the end showed He died voluntarily and suddenly.

❖ **Read Mark 15:38.**

The verb "tear" here is passive and, along with the direction that the curtain was torn, shows that it was done by God. This is an extremely significant point. All through the Old Testament, there probably is not a physical picture that more clearly showed and continually reminded people they were separated from God than this curtain separating them from the glory of God.

As there is nothing that more clearly shows man's separation from God because of his sin, likewise when Jesus died and God ripped the curtain in two, this act very significantly states that the price has been paid, man no longer has to be separated from God. Not only is man now able to approach God, but God is able to "come out," so to speak; He is able to accept us as His beloved children.

This showed that God was fully satisfied with the payment Jesus made. Man would no longer need to make any animal sacrifices because the Deliverer had come and paid the final payment.

All who agree with God about their sinfulness and trust only in Jesus and His payment for their sin will be fully accepted by God. Those who believe will never have to face God's judgment and punishment.

❖ **Read John 3:16-18, 36.**

❖ **Read Mark 15:39-41.**

I think it's really interesting that God includes this short little testimony of this Gentile Roman soldier. Mainly, I think it was an indictment against the Jews. They were given all of the promises and prophecies that would help them identify the Deliverer, yet they rejected Him and this Gentile Roman soldier recognized Him as the Son of God! This fits the pattern that you see a lot in the gospels:

- Samaritan woman
- The Roman soldier who said he also was a man of authority...just give the command.
- The woman who said, "Yes, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table."
- The tax collector and the Pharisee
- Jesus' statement, "I have not seen such faith in all of Israel."

I think this Roman centurion was one last testimony against Israel and their lack of faith. They call themselves chosen of God, yet they rejected the One that God sent to deliver them!

❖ **Read Mark 15:42-47.**

Jesus' body was placed in the burial cave belonging to an influential rich man, Joseph of Arimathea. God had guided the prophet Isaiah to write that the Deliverer would be buried in a rich man's tomb. See **Isaiah 53:9.**

❖ **Read Mark 16:1.**

These were some of the women who had believed in Jesus and who had witnessed His death. It was the custom of the Jews to put fragrant spices on the bodies of the dead before they are buried. Joseph had hurriedly wrapped Jesus with strips of linen and with spices, but the preparation had not been completed. So, early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb to complete the burial. That was when they found He had resurrected. God's orchestration is apparent. He can truly be trusted!

❖ **Read Mark 16:2-6.**

Another little minor detail that God took care of—before the women arrived at the tomb, there was a great earthquake and God sent His Angel to roll away the stone. God was making the truth of the gospel very obvious and undeniable. Jesus had said He would rise again, and He did! Jesus had told them all many times before He died He would rise on the third day, but it seems that everyone had forgotten it or didn't really believe it would happen. This was another point that God had led King David to write in **Psalm 16:10**.

❖ **Read Mark 16:7-8.**

The angel told the women not to be afraid and to go back and tell the disciples what had happened. They were so shocked and afraid that they didn't tell anyone along the way! The meaning of all of this still hadn't sunk in for them. It really wasn't until the Holy Spirit came that He illuminated their minds and enabled them to understand the gospel. The Jewish leaders didn't believe who Jesus claimed to be, but God raised Him from the dead and proved that He indeed IS who He claimed to be. God raised Jesus from the dead because He was satisfied with His payment for sin. Had Jesus' payment not paid for our sin in full, then He would still be dead. Christ died and rose again so we could be forgiven and receive eternal life.

As we agree with God that we are helpless sinners and put our faith in God's Son and the fact that He died on the cross to pay for our sins, God will forgive us for all our sins and give us eternal life. But receiving eternal life is only part of that we've received at salvation, in Christ.

XL. Lesson 40:
Jesus' Death on the Cross Saves Us!
From What?

Review Questions

1. **What event clearly proclaims the vileness of mankind more than any other event?**
2. **Why did God HAVE to send His Son to die in our place?**
3. **Why is it so important for mankind to recognize how sinful and vile he truly is?**
4. **When Jesus cried out on the cross, "It is finished," what did He mean?**
5. **What was the significance of the curtain in the temple being torn in two?**

Introduction: So we just spent 39 weeks progressively working our way from before the foundations of the earth to creation—up through the Old Testament, into the gospels, and just concluded with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. This is what we refer to as The Gospel, or Salvation. We believe the "gospel" and receive "salvation."

In most people's minds, the "gospel" is the fact that Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood as the payment for our sin, and "salvation" is the eternal life we receive when we believe the "gospel." Though this is true, the reality is that there is more to the "gospel" than Jesus dying as our substitute, AND there is more to "salvation" than just the fact that we've received a change in our eternal destination.

Yes, the "gospel" not only provides "salvation" from the future eternal damnation that we were headed for, but there is also an aspect of "salvation" that it provides for the here and now while we are still living on this earth.

Another phrase that we often hear thrown around regarding our salvation, is that "we were saved from our sin." Well, the reality is that there are actually three aspects of being saved from our sin. The moment we accepted Christ as our Savior, we received:

- **Salvation from the PENALTY of our sin**
- **Salvation from the POWER of sin**
- **Salvation from the future PRESENCE of sin.**

The rest of this lesson will focus on what it means to be saved from the penalty of sin.

<u>Saved from the Penalty of Sin</u>

❖ **Read Genesis 2:15-17.**

We looked at this passage way back toward the beginning of this study. We highlighted this interaction

between God and Adam for it is THE REASON why there is sin in the world, why we are sinners, and why we need a Savior. We also spent some time highlighting what God meant when he told them that they would die. Ultimately that death means "separation." We pointed out that man would experience three aspects of separation from God or "death" to God:

- First would be in regard to his fellowship or closeness with God. There would now be a separation in Adam's relationship with God.

- Second was regarding Adam's spirituality. He experienced spiritual death. His spirit was now "dead" to God. There was now going to be no communion between his spirit and God. Man now was born as a sinner with a sin nature. This affects every area of man's life.

- Lastly was eternal separation from the presence of God in hell.

These are the three main aspects of the "penalty of sin." In my opinion, they are the most important because they have directly to do with man's standing and relationship to God. There are other aspects of the penalty of sin though:

- God originally gave dominion over the earth to mankind, but when Adam and Eve sinned, they passed that dominion over to Satan. Now, all of mankind is born under Satan's rule and dominion.

- When Adam and Eve sinned, Satan acquired a position he did not have before the fall. That is, a position or authority to exercise the power of death AS just judgment from God.

- Another part of the penalty of sin is the curse that God put on the earth as part of man's punishment (the second law of thermodynamics–"everything tends towards random and decay").

The Moment We Accept Christ as Savior

Yes, the moment we accept Christ as our Savior, the moment we believe that His shed blood pays for the penalty of our sin, that very moment we receive salvation from the penalty of sin. We receive deliverance from all the penalty and

wages of sin that have been laid out above. We receive "salvation" from the death that we had received.

That relationship that was broken between Adam and God, and what we were born into instantly becomes restored. See **Romans 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 John 1:3-4.**

The spiritual death or being dead to God that we were born into we also receive deliverance from the moment we accept Christ as Savior. See **Romans 6:11; 1 Corinthians 15:22; Ephesians 2:4-5; Colossians 2:13.**

Then we also receive salvation from the third aspect of death, too, which is eternal separation from God. See **Romans 5:18-21; 6:23; 1 Timothy 1:16; Titus 1:1-2; Titus 3:4-7; 1 John 1;1-2; 2:24-25; 5:10-13.**

We also receive salvation or deliverance that very moment from Satan's dominion. See **Acts 26:17-18; Colossians 2:13-15.**

We have also specifically been delivered from his authority to exercise the power of death. See **1 Corinthians 15:54-58.**

Lastly, as another part of being saved from the penalty of sin, we will also receive deliverance from the curse that God had put on creation as a judgment on man's sin. See **Romans 8:18-25; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1-5.**

Salvation from the Guilt of the Penalty of Sin

There are two aspects to sin that we need to understand or have in mind. First is the fact of it as an offence against God. As our supreme and sovereign Creator God, He is our owner and He and only He has the right to determine what constitutes sin and how it can be paid for. Regarding this aspect, it needs to be forgiven (**Leviticus 17:11**). God determined that the payment would be blood.

The second aspect of sin is in regard to its defilement of the sinner, the defiling and polluting effect it has on the soul of every human being. Regarding this aspect, there is a "purging" of sin and guilt that needs to take place within the soul. Both Isaiah and David allude to this. See **Isaiah 1:18; Psalm 51:7.**

In the Old Testament, God has given us two physical pictures or foreshadowing of the provision for these two aspects of sin. First is the "sin offering" and the second is the "burnt offering."

"Sin offering" (**Leviticus 4:27-29**) – There is a lot of symbolism we could point to regarding the sin offering, but the one main thing I would like to focus on is the fact that the offerer's sin was paid for or "covered" by the transfer of his sin to the sacrifice.

"Burnt offering" (**Leviticus 6:8-13**) – The main focus here is on the fact that in this offering, the Lord's acceptance of the offering ("soothing aroma" **Leviticus 1:9**) is being transferred to the offerer.

So, the sin offering is a foreshadowing of our sin as an offense being forgiven by God. The burnt offering foreshadows purging of our soul or conscience from the defilement or guilt of our sin.

Spiritually speaking, today in our lives as Christians, both of these spiritual needs have been provided for through Christ's finished work on the cross. But I believe it's very safe to say that the issue for most fundamental Christians is not the fact of our "cleansing" or the fact of our sin being forgiven by God because of the blood of Christ. Most feel assured that they are cleansed, that their sin has truly been paid for. The bigger issue is in regard to the "purging" of our conscience, of Christ's shed blood satisfying OUR soul—not so much in regard to past sin (though that can remain an issue, too), but more in regard to sin we continue to struggle in. We can excuse the sin that we committed as unbelievers, for what else could you expect?! But when we continue to struggle with sin as a believer, this is where we struggle with acceptance before God and with feeling guilty.

"Cleansing" is a "positional" work, so to speak. It's a work God does by which we receive qualification and title to be in His presence, to be restored to oneness with Him, to be made His children.

"Purging" the conscience is the work that is done within us and it affects our daily condition. It regards the need for our sins to be as completely gone from us in our apprehension, as they are from before the eye of God.

Cleansing removes all our guilt before God; purging the conscience takes away the sense of guilt from our own souls.

Cleansing gives us the title or the right to stand before God; purging gives us the freedom and liberty to be able to enjoy His presence.

The reality is that some of us feel so condemned (by self, Satan, or others) that it's impossible for us to enjoy the fact that we've been made the children of God and the spiritual riches that are ours in Christ. We often don't feel worthy of being in His presence because of guilt.

❖ **Read Hebrews 9:11-14.**

The writer then goes on to further explain in **Hebrews 10:1-18**. Here the writer is establishing the FACTS. The FACTS of what Jesus has done and provided both as our substitute sacrifice and as our High Priest. Then, not only does he establish the facts of Christ's finished work, but also God's view of Christ's finished work, or His acceptance of it on our behalves. *"Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."*

In verses 19-25, the writer lays out the effects that the above facts should have on our hearts.

❖ **Read Hebrews 10:19-25.**

Verse 22 – *"Let us draw near with a sincere heart in the assurance that faith brings."* The writer is saying that Jesus' shed blood has paid for ALL of our sin, that God the Father is satisfied with His payment for our sin, and that He has promised He will remember our sin no more.

What sin? Only the sin we committed before salvation? When Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sin, how much of our sin was future? ALL OF IT! Even the sins that you will commit tomorrow as a child of God! So, when God says He will remember our sin no more, He is talking about ALL of it!

Jesus blood has completely paid for ALL of our sin, to the extent of God remembering NONE of it any longer. Therefore, the writer says believe these facts, believe that these things are so. Because the heart of God is completely satisfied with Christ's payment for your sin, you, too, can be satisfied with His payment for your sin and allow yourself to

"draw near unto God with a sincere heart" by being free to enjoy being in His presence. The way we can become free to enjoy the fact that we ARE in His presence, the writer says, is by faith – *"Let us draw near with a sincere heart in the FULL assurance that FAITH brings*." Faith that ALL of our sin has been cleansed and faith that the payment FULLY SATISFIES the heart of God!

Whenever we walk in the flesh and commit sin, whether it's a one-time thing or something that we have been struggling with for a long time, yes, we confess it as sin (**1 John 1:9**); but the moment we confess/admit our sin, that very moment we can begin praising Him for His death on the cross that paid for that sin and the forgiveness and redemption we've already received as a result.

If we continue to struggle with feeling guilty, we need to once again look back and deliberately "appropriate" the blood. Look back and say, "Wait a minute. Jesus already shed His blood for this sin. It is already paid for in full. I am free to feel fully accepted by God, for indeed I am."

❖ **Read Romans 8:1-4 and 31-39.**

XLI. Lesson 41:
The Mystery of God—Namely, Christ

Review Questions

1. **There are three aspects to our salvation; what are they?**
2. **Mankind has received five main penalties for sin; what are they?**
3. **At salvation, how are these five aspects restored?**
4. **If the blood of Jesus doesn't purge our souls of the guilt of our sin, how will this affect our Christian lives and relationship with God?**

Introduction: Throughout the course of this teaching, one of the main things we have highlighted over and over is the fact that it is God Himself Who is carrying out His eternal plan of redemption. It was He who determined it before the foundations of the earth and it's been He Who has been carrying it out and fulfilling it through Christ on the behalf of mankind and for His glory. God has only ever had one requirement for us as humans—FAITH. Simply believing that what He says is true. Faith in the facts of what He has revealed. In the Old Testament, it was faith in the promise of the coming Deliverer. Through the New Testament and up until now, it's in the fact that indeed the promised Deliverer came and He has finished the work and fulfilled God's plan of redemption. God left nothing for mankind to figure out on their own. It was He Who first determined His eternal plan of redemption before mankind even existed and since creation, He has gone to great lengths to faithfully communicate Who He is, what He is like, what He is doing, Who the Deliver is, and how mankind can be delivered.

❖ **Read Ephesians 1:11.**

Name one instance in the Old Testament where someone needed to be delivered from something and God left it up to them to figure out for themselves or where He did not divinely intervene to bring about His will. You can't! And it's all those accounts of physical deliverances that He accomplished for various ones through the Old Testament that form a clear pattern and example for the deliverance that we have needed from our spiritual death and all of its effects.

In our last lesson, we looked at the fact that being saved or delivered from the penalty of our sin is a part of the salvation that we've received through Christ's substitutionary death. In this lesson we are going to look at another part of the salvation we have received, sanctification, saved from the power of sin.

<u>The Mystery</u>

Throughout the Old Testament, all the people knew was that a Deliverer was coming. What He would actually do,

provide, and how He would affect His followers was kept as a mystery by God until the appointed time.

- **Read Colossians 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 3:1-7** (Jews and Gentiles becoming one in Christ); **Ephesians 5:32** (Christ and the Church); **Ephesians 6:19.**

Look at **1 Timothy 3:16** – In the first part of the verse Paul states, "without a doubt, great is the mystery of godliness" and then goes on to state what God has done (in a very condensed way) to make us godly. That is the finished work of Christ that is what He did. So, how does that produce godliness?

Now in **Romans 16:25-26**, Paul states this wisdom of God had been kept secret from before the foundations of the earth but that now it has been revealed by the prophetic scriptures. Then, in **Colossians 1:27**, he says, this mystery which has been hidden from ages past but has now been revealed to the saints.

<u>Sanctification – Saved from the Power of Sin</u>

So, first let's look at some of the passages of scripture where God has revealed or unpacked this "mystery" and what it entails. Let's begin with first establishing a definition of what the mystery is.

- **Read 1 Corinthians 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 1:9.**

It's pretty plain to see that the "mystery," or that which has been kept a mystery, has been the details of God's plans and purposes that would be accomplished through Christ—the eternal plan of redemption. Again, not so much that He was coming, but the details of what He would actually accomplish. More specifically, it's the "mystery of being in Him," in Christ, the "identification truths." See **Colossians 1:26-27.**

A number of lessons ago, when speaking about the prophecies of Christ, we made the statement that there is both an enlarging and a narrowing progression to the prophecies of Christ. The prophecies narrowed in the sense that they became increasingly pinpointed in who the Deliverer would be. But they became enlarged in the sense of revealing what it was that He would do and accomplish. These passages that unpack the "mystery of God's plans and purposes through Christ" are a continuation of the enlargement of the scope of Christ's

finished work. They are a revelation of what we have become, where we have been placed, and what we have received as the result of being IN CHRIST. Now, the details of the revelation of the mystery of being in Christ, in **2 Peter** is referred to as "all things pertaining to life and godliness."

We have received "ALL THINGS."

On the one hand, Paul's epistles refer to the effects of the finished work of Christ as a mystery, but Peter's second epistle states that we have absolutely received everything needed for the receiving of eternal life and godly living.

❖ **Read 2 Peter 1:2-4**.

It is God's divine power manifested through the finished work of Christ that has granted us ALL THINGS pertaining to life and godliness. This is referring to both our position and our condition. Position in the sense that it's pertaining to "life," eternal life. The moment we accepted Christ as our Savior, that very moment we were made alive. We were dead to God, but are now alive unto God. It's the truth regarding our position that makes our condition possible. Peter also refers to our condition, then, in the sense that Peter says it pertains to "godliness," godly living, or being God-like.

Notice that verse 3 tells us how we receive these things: "through the knowledge of Him" Who called us by "glory and virtue." The meaning here would be clearer had the translators used "to" instead of "by." God has called us or moved us to glory! The finished work of Christ moved us from being separated enemies of God whose every thought and intent of the heart was only evil from childhood, TO being restored to the place that He originally created man to be—perfect, sinless, enjoying perfect communion and fellowship with God.

Peter also states that through the knowledge of God, we have been "called by or to virtue." Virtue here speaks of us being made pleasing to God through the superiority of God as being manifested in the gospel. Again, this speaks of our position we received through Christ's finished work and it's affecting our condition.

Now, let's go on to verse 4. It begins with "whereby." Peter is saying that it's the fact of us being called or restored unto that glory and virtue that has led to us receiving or being given "great and precious promises" (or the great and precious

promises come along with the position), which in turn results in our becoming "partakers of the divine nature."

❖ **Read Hebrews 8:6.**

Positionally speaking, we've already been made alive and have been restored to the superiority and glory of oneness with God, through being in Christ; but conditionally speaking, it's believing that those "exceeding great and precious promises" are really true that enables us to experience or live out the divine nature that we've been given.

❖ **Read 1 Corinthians 2:12 and Ephesians 1:3**.

This means He is the One who intervened and acted so that our spirits might be made conformable to His Spirit, that by being in Christ or because we are in Christ, God has divinely intervened and given us all things that pertain to His Spirit and kingdom. He divinely intervened and made us fit for communion with Him or oneness with Him in His kingdom.

Paul then goes on to tell us what some of those spiritual things are that we needed to receive in order for that to happen. These things that Paul lists out as being "every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies" are the same "great and precious promises" that Peter was talking about in **2 Peter 1**.

<u>Ephesians Chapter 1</u>

Ephesians 1:3-4 – Verse 4 begins with "according" and it modifies being blessed with every spiritual blessing. We were blessed with every spiritual blessing ACCORDING or IN ACCORDANCE with the fact that we have been chosen in Him before the foundations of the earth. It means to "choose out of or from." It also includes the idea of kindness, love, and favor. It doesn't necessarily imply the rejection of that which was not chosen.

The argument here could be made regarding who is the "we." Believers as individuals or believers as a corporate body? For our purposes today, it doesn't matter, for we are chosen either way and it's the fact that we have been chosen by God Himself that constitutes our blessing.

Paul goes on to give us the purpose or the result of becoming so blessed by the fact that God has chosen us, which

is that “we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” Basically, this is the same thing that Peter described as “being partakers of the divine nature.”

Ephesians 1:5-6 – In verse 5, Paul is really doing the same thing that he did in verse 4, but he’s making it more intimate and personal. Paul will be spending the rest of the chapter listing out many things we’ve been given in Christ, but first he establishes the basis for it all, which is the sovereign will and grace of God!

In verse 4, he states that we’ve been blessed in accordance with the fact that we were chosen before the foundations of the earth. Now in verses 5-6, he goes on to say that God predestinated or predetermined our adoption as sons to Himself, through Jesus Christ, in accordance to the good pleasure of His will, AND for the praise of the glory of grace! Not because we earned it or deserved it. Not because He was obligated, OR EVEN BECAUSE WE NEEDED IT! But simply because He wanted us as His own, and He wanted to reveal His grace! There is a difference between God providing what we needed and providing according to the good pleasure of His will. We needed to have our sins paid for, we needed to receive eternal life, but we didn’t need to be made His children and joint heirs with Christ.

Take, for example, a street kid who is dirty, sick, in trouble with the law and malnourished. Explain the difference between a rich man coming along and meeting his needs (cleaning him up, providing medicine, paying his fines, and giving him food) or coming along and making him his child! Taking him home with plans of placing him in a position of great nearness to himself with great wealth and influence. Making him an heir of all that he owns. This would not be in accordance with meeting the kid’s needs but would be according to the pleasure and purpose of his own benevolent mind.

This is what God has done with us! He had in His mind a certain relationship for us and He destined us to that relationship, the state and place of being His own children. We didn’t need for this to happen. He could have simply rescued us from our sin and then given us the place of servant. But our relationship with Him is not according to our need; it is according to the good pleasure of His will!

Praise God that this is the pleasure of His will! That it's as good as this! We have seen this pattern all through the Old Testament:

- God created the world, the universe, and everything in it according to the good pleasure of His will.
- He created all things the way He wanted them to be, according to the good pleasure of His will.
- He created an enormous variety of plants, trees, insects, fish, birds, and animals, ALL according to the good pleasure of His will.
- He created the Garden of Eden and put man and woman in it according to the good pleasure of His will.
- He created man and woman in His image according to the good pleasure of His will.
- He chose Abraham and brought about the Nation of Israel according to the good pleasure of His will.
- He delivered the Nation of Israel from Egypt and led them to the Promised Land according to the good pleasure of His will.

WE have been chosen and predestinated from before the foundations of the earth to be made His children through Christ's substitutionary work, according to the good pleasure of His will!

All through the Old Testament God has revealed the fact over and over and over how it is He who is carrying out His will and plans according to the good pleasure of His will. All for the purpose of settling our hearts on the fact that we are His children today solely because He chose us before the foundations of the earth and predestinated us to be adopted as His children through Christ. He made us His own because He wanted us.

The "good pleasure" of His will is interesting. It denotes that which pleases goodness. It's saying that God chose us and predestinated our adoption as His children because HE IS GOOD!

This eternal plan of redemption we've been pointing to and talking about all through this study, which God kept as a mystery until the appointed time, is that through Christ, God would use a sinful and separated from Him human race to move from their sinful fallen state to His glory and virtue, in

order to reveal His goodness and the GLORY or magnificence of His grace.

In verse 7, Paul begins to list more of the detail of what we've received because we've been made His children. The more we know about what He's freely given us, the more the glory of His grace is revealed.

❖ **Read Ephesians 1:7**.

First, he says that we have been given redemption and the forgiveness of sin, ACCORDING to the RICHES of His GRACE! If you had the choice of a gift according to my riches or according to Bill Gates' riches, which would you choose? This highlights one of the biggest problems in our lives as Christians. Every single one of us believes there is a limit to God's grace! Oh, we might know in our minds the right answer, but we don't live and walk and relate to God with that belief. When you find yourself AGAIN doing that which you don't want to do (sin) and NOT doing that which you want to do (godliness), do you carry around guilt for a while? When you confess that sin to God, do you "feel" forgiven? When someone offends or sins against us again and we get angry. Sometimes we continue to feel anger towards them even though they may have apologized. We can often times ascribe that same type of response to God in His view of us.

Now, as a Christian, do you believe that good works are important for God's acceptance? Do you feel that God accepts you more when you don't sin as opposed to when you do sin? Can certain sins or a certain amount of sin cause God to withhold that which is good for us? In general, would you say that you feel God is pleased with you or displeased with you? What do you base that on?

Do you feel confident in bringing your needs to God just after you've sinned? When you sin, do you feel that God withdraws from you? Is grace that which makes up the difference between the best you can do and what He expects of you? Do you feel more deserving of answered prayer when you've been faithful to follow Him? Do you feel better about yourself when you've had faithful times of prayer and devotions? Are you blameless before God? Do you believe that God likes you? How do you view the Christian life? As being burdensome and difficult to live up to God's standards or as the opportunity to experience an unending supply of His goodness toward you?

When you miss your quiet time, do you think that things won't go well for you that day? Is it possible to make God love you more or less? Does your faithfulness to live the Christian life make you more useful to God? After confessing sin, do you feel forgiven?

XLII. Lesson 42:
Saved From the Power of Sin--Sanctification

Review Questions

1. **From the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, what is the one requirement that we only ever see God requiring of mankind?**
2. **Give examples when we have seen God leave mankind on his own to figure out the truth for himself.**
3. **What do we mean by the term "sanctification?"**
4. **How does our position in Christ affect our daily condition?**
5. **In Ephesians 1:5, what is the significance of the phrase, "According to the good pleasure of His will"?**
6. **Give examples of things that God has done according to the good pleasure of His will.**
7. **What is one of the biggest misunderstandings that exists in our hearts today regarding God and His grace?**

Introduction: Last week, we ended with a brief look at Ephesians 1:7 that said we've received redemption and the forgiveness of sin "according to the riches of His grace." So, if you want to know how "redeemed" you are or how much "forgiveness" you've received, then figure out the depth of the riches of His grace. Figure out how gracious God is, how much grace He has to give. There is no limit and no end to it. This is how it is with EVERY spiritual gift we've received from God in Christ. It's ALL according to the riches of His grace. Remember, grace is receiving what you don't deserve, and we haven't deserved any of this.

<u>Position vs. Condition</u>

If you remember back to our early lessons when we were talking about Adam and Eve and the fall, you'll remember that God had created them upright, perfect, and sinless; but when they disobeyed and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they received death just as God had promised they would. We talked about what many of the consequences were that they had received.

We know at that point they became sinners with a sin nature and were kicked out of the garden, separated from the presence of God. We also know their children and ALL future descendants have ALL been born into that same state and position. All humans from that point on were born separated from God with a sin nature. This position that all of us were born into greatly affects our condition. That's why babies are born instantly self-centered and the older they get the greater their ability to manifest that sin nature. Our condition or how we are living out our daily lives as unbelievers is fully determined by the sinful position we were born into.

This is exactly what God has been showing us that is true of us now as believers, that it's our new position of being in Christ that will determine our daily condition. Let me lay out the progression of what we've seen so far, or how all of this comes together.

The Big Picture of God's Eternal Plan of Redemption

We've talked a lot about the fact that God's eternal plan of redemption began before the foundations of the earth (**2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:19-20**) as the "good pleasure of His will" that would be carried out and fulfilled through Christ, God the Son. This plan included the choosing and predestinating us to the adoption of His children through Christ. Then, beginning in **Genesis 1**, God began the process of carrying out that plan. All through the Old Testament He was preparing, facilitating, orchestrating, and setting the stage for the plan to be fulfilled. All things were pointing to, typifying, and foreshadowing the coming Christ and what He would accomplish.

Jesus then came and paid the price to fulfill God's eternal plan of redemption by shedding His blood on our behalf as our substitute. The price He paid SO satisfied the heart of God, SO satisfied the justice of God that Paul states in **Ephesians 1:7** that we have indeed received redemption and the forgiveness of sin according to the riches of His grace. To be redeemed means that we were purchased back, bought back with a price. He purchased us with the blood of His Son in order to make us His own (**Acts 20:28**). Through the blood of Christ, God Himself purchased us, made us His own, and is now free to forgive ALL of our sin.

This redemption and forgiveness of sin we have received, then, is so complete and all encompassing—it has SO paid for the price of our sinfulness that it has also resulted in God being free to make us His children according to the good pleasure of His will. Because He's made us His very own children, along with it comes the FULL rights, privileges, and benefits of being His children.

- **Ephesians 1:6** – He has made us accepted in the beloved. This means we have been "highly graced/favored/honored." The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is in **Luke 1:28** where the angel calls Mary "highly favored" to be the one chosen by God to conceive the Son of God through the Holy Spirit. The beloved here means to be loved and esteemed. It indicates a direction of the will and finding

one's joy in something or someone. In being the children of God Himself, God has highly favored us and graced us with making us the joy and delight of His heart!

- **Ephesians 1:11** – As His children, we have obtained an inheritance that He predestined to us according to the good counsel of His will. This word for obtaining an inheritance actually means a "lot," like to cast lots, to determine something, to choose someone. In **Ephesians 1:11**, it means "in whom the lot has fallen upon us also, as foreordained thereto... to be." The idea expressed here is that Christians have become heirs of God due to the fact that God predestined them according to His purpose. In a manner of speaking, the "lot" fell to believers not by chance but solely because of the gracious and sovereign decision of God Almighty to select them to be His heirs. (Source: The Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament.)

- **Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5** – We have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. This speaks of sealing something up, to secure it, preserve it to be securely delivered. It also speaks of being proof of authenticity and genuineness. Another role of the Holy Spirit as our "seal" Who secures us and marks us being genuine and authentic is that of being a "deposit" or guarantee that we will indeed receive ALL that God has promised us in full!

ALL of our inheritance belongs to us right here and now, but we haven't laid hands on it all yet. It's like a boy being born into a royal family. All of the inheritance belongs to him positionally at birth, but his actual experiencing and control of it all will come incrementally as he grows into adulthood.

❖ **Read Ephesians 1:15-23.**

After giving these Ephesian believers (and us) a taste of the new position that God has given them, as well as some of the privileges and benefits that go along with it, Paul then tells them that he is praying for them regarding the following:

- Verse 17 – That God would give them a spirit of wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of Him. This is exactly what we've been talking about throughout the course of this study and all these

lessons—the importance of knowing God, Who He is, and what He's really like. Knowing His heart. This is so important, for without being convinced of what the heart of God is truly like, without being convinced of how gracious God truly is, it will be impossible for us to believe that He's really bestowed so much grace upon us. We will struggle to believe that we really are who He says He's made us to be in Christ. That we've really received all that He says that we've received in Christ.

- Verse 18 – And that God would open the eyes of their (and our) understanding to know what is the hope of His calling and to know what are the riches of the glory of the inheritance that we've received as His children. First, this means that we'd know and be convinced of what to expect through our having been called/invited and placed in the kingdom of God. Second, that we'd begin to become assured and convinced of how abundant and glorious the inheritance is that we've been given. The "glory" of our inheritance speaks of the fact that the inheritance we've received is so "excellent in perfection," so "divinely majestic," that honor, praise, and applause must be rendered unto it.

- So, putting these two together, that we'd begin to grasp what we can expect from being placed into God's kingdom and to begin to realize how perfectly excellent and divinely majestic the inheritance is that comes along with it.

- Verses 19-23 – Lastly, that we'd become convinced of the abundant power of God toward us who believe, that same power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at God's right hand and gave Him a new name which is above every name in heaven and earth. Paul is saying, *I pray that you will become convinced of what the heart of God is like, so you can then become convinced of how great and glorious the position and inheritance is that He's given you in placing you in His kingdom. And I pray that you will become convinced of His power and ability to truly bring this all about in your life. That the same power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that has worked to make all these things true of you.*

Why did Paul want the Ephesians (and us) to know these things? All through the Old Testament, we have seen various individuals, as well as Israel as a nation, get into many situations that they needed deliverance from. Each time it was God who provided the plan and way of escape. It was then God who went to great lengths to communicate to man how to obtain that deliverance. Man's only part in any of it was to believe what God told him. It's the same for us regarding this great salvation that we've received in Christ.

Justification – We needed justification. We needed to have our sins forgiven. God communicated the gospel to us, convinced our hearts of the truth of it, we believed it, and instantly received the forgiveness of our sin and eternal life.

❖ **Read Colossians 2:6**.

Now the same is true regarding our sanctification or the fact of our position becoming increasingly more experienced or made to be the characteristics of our condition or daily lives. Paul said in **Colossians 2:6** that this takes place the same way that we got saved, by faith.

This is why Paul was praying that the Ephesians' eyes would be opened to understand and become convinced of the position, privilege, and promises that God had given them, so that they then would BELIEVE that it's so. It's in believing we've truly received all that God says the finished work of Christ has given us that will enable us to live the Christian life, or that will allow who we've become positionally to be lived out more and more conditionally in our daily lives.

Paul states these same truths in other epistles as well. **Romans 6:1-2** – Paul's premise of this chapter clearly begins with a focus on the believer's daily condition, whether or not one should continue to walk in sin since it will lead to receiving of more grace. His premise for no longer walking in sin is the fact of our position being one of which we have been identified with or placed into His death and resurrection. See also verses 2-6.

Paul says that our "old man," our old humanity, who we were in Adam—that old position of being a separated enemy of God has been crucified with Christ. It's been done away with. That is no longer our identity. He says the moment we accepted Christ as our Savior we were placed into Him. And

being placed into Christ means that He is SO much our representative, that the full effects of all He has done and all He's received from God the Father as the result of all He's accomplished, ALL becomes equally ours through our having been placed into Him.

What is the current state and standing of Jesus' relationship to sin? Is He controlled by it? Is He under its authority? No, He is dead to it in the sense that He is free from it.

The state and standing of His relationship to it is now the state and standing of our relationship to it, too, because we are in Him. Not only has Jesus' death to sin become our death to sin, but Paul goes on to say that Jesus' resurrection to new life has also become our resurrection to new life. Therefore, he says, "even so we should walk in the newness of life." Again, he is stating this concept of our position determining our condition or daily walk.

In verse 6, Paul says we are to know that our old position of being people whose every thought and intent of the heart was only evil from childhood has been crucified, so that the power of sin in our lives could be broken or done away with, and that we'd therefore no longer live as slaves to sin. Again, the progression of knowing what's been done and who we are positionally, believing it to be true, in order to affect us conditionally on a daily basis.

In verses 7-10, Paul goes on to describe more about Jesus' death to sin and therefore OUR death to sin as well, but in verse 11, he says that we are to "reckon" or believe that we are dead to sin and alive unto God. That this is Jesus' state and standing before God, and because we are in Him, it's ours, too; therefore, believe that it's true of you.

In verses 12-14, Paul gives us the results of knowing and believing that these aspects of our new position in Christ are really true of us—namely, that faith in these facts will enable us to live as those who are alive and in communion with God rather than as those who are slaves to sin.

Faith in these facts of our new standing and position in Christ will enable us to present our bodies as instruments of righteousness, rather than instruments of unrighteousness.

Folks, this is the second part of our salvation which is sanctification or salvation from the power of sin and how it's meant to transform the daily condition of our lives. You will notice that it fits the same pattern we saw all the way through the Old Testament, as well as in regard to our justification. Simply faith in what God says He has done!

XLIII. Lesson 43:
Saved From the Future Presence of Sin--Glorification

Review Questions

1. **Describe the big picture of God's eternal plan of redemption.**
2. **What are some of the rights and privileges we have received as the children of God?**
3. **What truth will determine our ability to believe that we really are who God says we are?**
4. **What important principle do we see in Colossians 2:6 regarding our daily walk as Christians?**
5. **What does the "believer's identification with Christ" mean or refer to?**

Introduction: This whole series began 42 lessons ago with establishing the fact that God's eternal plan of redemption had been predetermined in His heart from before the foundations of the earth (2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:19-20). It has been HE who has been carrying it out and fulfilling through Christ ever since.

In the context of God carrying out and fulfilling His plan, there have been key characteristics that God has revealed about Himself, His heart, His plan, and mankind. We saw many physical examples or patterns of these characteristics all through the Old Testament that now provide a testimony that helps us understand the key points that now characterize our spiritual salvation. Here are some of those key characteristics:

- **God is the Lord God Almighty, the Sovereign Creator, Sustainer, and Owner of ALL things.**
- **Mankind is a finite and created being that God created in His image for the purpose of having a relationship with him.**
- **Through his own choice to sin, man lost the original position and condition that He had created him in and became a sinful, hopeless, helpless, separated enemy of God.**
- **God knew this would happen and because of His great love and mercy, He predetermined the bestowment of His grace through Christ even before the foundations of the earth.**
- **God has been carrying out and fulfilling this plan through Christ on our behalf ever since.**

Just as God left absolutely nothing for Israel to figure out on their own through the Old Testament, so He's left nothing for us to do or figure out for ourselves spiritually. He's faithfully revealed and communicated Himself and His plan with the utmost clarity and intention, to the point that all that is left for mankind to do is just believe.

<u>Called unto Glory and Virtue</u>

Do you remember highlighting **2 Peter 1:1-3** a couple of lessons ago?

❖ **Read 2 Peter 1:1-3**.

Do you remember the comments we made regarding what it meant to be "called to glory and virtue"? Being called to glory or being "moved" to glory means the finished work of Christ has SO transformed us from being people whose every thought and intent of the heart was only evil from childhood to being a new creation in Christ that it has restored us to the former position and relationship that Adam had with God before the fall. Being called to virtue or "moved to virtue" then refers to us being made pleasing to God through the superiority of God as being manifested in the gospel.

So Great a Salvation

❖ **Read Hebrews 2:3**.

Notice here how the writer of Hebrews refers to our salvation, as "SO GREAT" a salvation. This word for "great" here means "so mighty," "so vast," "so ALL-encompassing." What is interesting in this is the writer's premise for describing salvation as being so great and mighty and vast. In order to see that, you have to back up to chapter 1.

❖ **Read Hebrews 1:1-3**.

The writer's whole point in chapter one is in establishing the fact of the greatness of Christ. In verse 3, He refers to Jesus as being the "brightness of His glory." This is the only place in all of the New Testament where this word is used. It means that Jesus is the "emitted splendor" of God's glory! The "shining forth of," the "radiance." Then, the writer goes on to state that Jesus is the "expressed image" of God.

The word originally denoted an engraver or engraving tool. Later it meant the impression itself, usually something engraved, cut in, or stamped—a character, letter, mark, and sign. This impression with its particular features was considered as the exact representation of the object whose image it bore. It means that Jesus is the exact image of God's essence. Whatever the divine essence is, Jesus is its perfect expression!

Then the writer spends the rest of the chapter continuing to establish Jesus' greatness by revealing His superiority to the angels, mainly by comparing the difference between His relationship to the Godhead as opposed to the angels'. Chapter 2, verse 1, then, begins with "therefore." Since this is Who Jesus is, since this is how great, mighty, and awesome He truly is, "we must give greater heed to all that we have heard."

"What we have heard" is a reference to the big picture of salvation because he goes on to say, "for if we neglect SO GREAT A SALVATION." If we "neglect" this ALL-encompassing work of grace by the very Son of God, the very One Who is the exact expression of God Almighty Himself, what would be left?

This is exactly what we've been seeking to do, give a glimpse of how great and all-encompassing the salvation is that we've received. During the last few weeks, we've unpacked the big picture of salvation and showed how it includes salvation from the penalty of sin (justification), salvation from the power of sin (sanctification), and now salvation from the presence of sin (glorification). Each of these parts of salvation makes up our position as new creations in Christ. Last week, we talked about the truth regarding our position then being that which affects our daily condition.

So, in **2 Peter 1:3**, when Peter said God has called or moved us to glory and virtue, we talked about what that means for us positionally, but what does it mean for us conditionally? What will be some of the characteristics of it? First of all, I want to point out that there is a progression to our experiencing the truths of our position in our daily condition.

❖ **Read Philippians 1:6**.

That progression is exactly what this verse is talking about. As we continue to learn to walk less in the flesh and more in the Spirit, the more we will begin to live out who He's recreated us to be positionally. This progression will continue to take place until we either die or He returns and takes us to be with Himself. At that time, the last part of our salvation, salvation from the presence of sin, will become experiential. Right here and now, while we are still living in this fallen earth and in these cursed bodies that still have a flesh residing in them, we experience deliverance from the power of sin to the degree that we walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. We won't

experience our deliverance from sin's presence until we are with Him in heaven.

Salvation from the Presence of Sin

You know, all through the Old Testament we have seen some pretty clear and amazing physical pictures of spiritual truth. We've talked about God having these accounts recorded for the purpose of making it easier for us today, as His children, to understand and believe what He's done spiritually on our behalves.

Some of the pictures of **justification** are:

- Noah and the Ark
- Lamb sacrifices through the Old Testament
- Delivering Israel from slavery in Egypt
- The Passover lamb
- The laying of the hand on the lamb's head as it was killed for the offerer's sin

Some of the pictures of **sanctification** are:

- Leading Israel through the Red Sea, through the wilderness, and into the Promised Land
- The symbolism of the three pieces of furniture that were placed in the holy place within the tabernacle

In order for us to get a glimpse or a taste of what our future glorification is going to be like or look like, I think we have to go back and look at the characteristics of Adam's life before the fall. This was the only time in the entire Bible when mankind existed without the presence of sin.

So, let's look at some of the main characteristics of Adam's life at that time and compare it to what God has said is true of us spiritually. God had provided Adam with everything he needed, both physically and spiritually in order for God to enjoy a relationship with him. When Adam was first created, he was just a body until God breathed life into him. Just like Adam, we were spiritually dead and unable to commune with God until He made us alive through Christ.

❖ **Read 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 2:1-6.**

Because God had created Adam in His image with a mind, will, and emotions, Adam had the capacity to enjoy a relationship with God, learning about God's love for him and reciprocating that love. Because we have now been made spiritually alive in Christ, we, too, now have the capacity to know God's love for us and love Him in return.

❖ **Read 1 John 4:19.**

God created the world and everything in it and then He created a special garden, the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve. It contained all they needed to live as well as much that God knew they would enjoy.

❖ **Read John 14:1-3; 1 Timothy 6:17.**

Adam and Eve were created sinless and perfect and God could therefore enjoy being with them and they could be in His presence. Because our sin has been paid for in full, we are no longer separated from God. He is free to come out from behind the veil and we are free to enter into His presence.

❖ **Read Hebrews 4:16; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 John 1:3.**

In Genesis, we read that God would come down in the evening, in the cool of the day and would walk and fellowship with Adam. Because we have been restored to oneness with God, we can enjoy His fellowship here and now; but one day we will actually enjoy His presence face to face in heaven.

❖ **Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-7; Revelation 21:1-5.**

Being in the presence of God, walking with God, fellowshipping with God personally, I believe was Adam's reward. Look at what God once told Abraham.

❖ **Read Genesis 15:1**.

The New Testament talks a lot about rewards that we believers will receive, but nowhere does it actually tell us straight up what those rewards are. When you consider ALL things—the greatness of God, His heart, His grace, the glory and wonder and beauty of Christ, the fact of His great love for mankind and deep, deep desire for relationship—I can't imagine there being a greater reward than finally being with Him, in His presence, with no flesh, for ALL eternity! Christ has

been the FOCUS of God's heart from before the foundations of earth, and from **Genesis 1** on, He has been the focus of all of scripture.

Through His fulfilling of the eternal plan of redemption, He moved us from being dead in trespasses and sin to the "glory and virtue" of being made a new creation in Christ, thereby restoring us to that perfect and sinless state of position and relationship with God! To make anything else (other than Him) to be our focus and reward, in my opinion, cheapens God's glory. Hebrews refers to our salvation as "Such a GREAT salvation"! Glorying in anything other than being with Him weakens it. When God created Adam, He gave Adam a position of dominion over the rest of creation. But which was greater and more important, Adam's position or his relationship with God? His dominion over creation or the fact that the God of the universe would come and walk with him and commune with him every day? Just like that, we may be given various positions and work to do in heaven and in the new heaven and new earth, but it's Him and being with Him that will be our reward. HE is our exceeding and great reward!

I'd like to conclude with the reading of two passages.

- **Read 1 John 1-4**.

John is saying, this One who was planned from before the beginning, came and fulfilled the eternal plan of redemption resulting in our receiving eternal life, which is ultimately eternal fellowship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ! The fact that He truly came and fulfilled this plan, we were eye witnesses of. We were with Him, we saw Him, we talked with Him, and we touched Him. Our purpose for writing and laying all of this out for you is so that "*YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL*"! For there can be no higher or greater blessing and privilege than to receive eternal fellowship with the Godhead!

- **Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.**

From start to finish, from eternity past before the foundations of the earth to eternity future in the new heavens and the new earth, it's been God and will continue to be God Who is fulfilling His eternal plans and purposes according the "good pleasures of His will."

As Moses told the Israelites at the Red Sea in **Genesis 14:13**, "*Do not be afraid*." Stand still and see the salvation of

the Lord which He will accomplish for you today. God has done exactly the same thing for us spiritually. Our greatest need is not power to do great and wonderful things for God, but to simply sit pouring over His Word, looking to the Holy Spirit to reveal to us more and more the glory and wonder of our great and mighty God and His “great salvation” which He’s bestowed upon us by grace and through Christ!