

HOME BIBLE STUDY SERIES

Jesus:
The Son of God
#205

- 1. He is God in the Flesh**
- 2. He is the Perfect Sacrifice for Sin**
- 3. He was Raised from the Dead**
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*Lesson One***"He is God in the Flesh"**

In these studies we will be looking at the **Deity** of Jesus and what His coming has done for mankind. But to refer to a man as being God is not something that is easily believed or understood. Some outstanding claims were made about Jesus and by Jesus that would be highly unusual to be made about Him or by Him if He was a mere man. These claims state that He is God in the flesh (Matthew 1:23; John 1:1-3, 14). For a Human to have this said of him or for him to make such a claim would be rejected immediately and written off as a person of unsound mind. And also, for someone to state that they believe Jesus was a great and honest teacher who had good intentions, but was delusional—such would seem to be highly inconsistent. The claims about Him and by Him need to be looked at carefully and examined to see if the evidence is sufficient to believe that He was truly God in the flesh.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea over 2000 years ago (Matthew 2:1). Was that the beginning of His existence as a being? If so, He was only a mere man like all other men. But the Bible portrays Jesus as Deity—as God—as equal with the Father (John 10:30). His birth was of a miraculous nature—conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20) and born of a virgin (Matthew 1:23). Jesus not only claimed to be God, but was condemned by the religious leaders for such a claim (John 5:16-18). He used expressions that identified Him as being equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 13:14). If Jesus is Deity, then, his fleshly birth would indicate that God has come down in human form and lived among men (Matthew 1:23)—the very thing that was foretold of Him by the prophets

"THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE!"

The biggest problem that the Jewish religious leaders had was accepting His claim of Deity in the light of the strong emphasis upon the "ONENESS" of God in the Old Testament Scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:4). If there is only one God—then, how could Jesus be God also? But two things should have been obvious to them, if they had just stopped to evaluate: (1) Genesis 1:26, etc., uses the plural pronouns "us" and "we" which would indicate a plurality in some sense; and (2) The use of "one" in talking about the marriage of Adam and Eve certainly did not take away from there being two persons (Genesis 2:24). "Oneness" carries with it the concept of unity and harmony, which obviously can be said of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! We use such terms as the following to indicate this oneness of God: Triune God; Trinity;

and Tri-unity. Man is portrayed as one, but made up of body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). By the same reasoning—God is one—but is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

THE NATURE OF GOD

An important concept that must be kept uppermost in this discussion is the Nature of Deity. We normally think in human, fleshly terms and therefore have a hard time accepting that Deity could come down in human form and live among us. But open your mind to a God who is not limited as mortal man is limited. The following statements will help to illustrate: **"God is Spirit"** (John 4:24); **"God is not a man"** (Numbers 23:19); **"No one has seen God at any time"** (1 John 4:12); **"The heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain Him"** (2 Chronicles 2:6). Deity is pictured as being outside of time and unlimited in His presence everywhere (Acts 17:28; 2 Peter 3:8; Revelations 22:13, etc.). Once we understand God's nature, it should not be a problem accepting the idea that Deity has come down to live among His creatures as a human being—if the evidence is sufficient to uphold the idea.

THE PRE-EXISTENCE OF JESUS

The very fact that Jesus claimed to be equal with the Father (John 10:30) would obviously suggest to us that Jesus had a pre-fleshly state of existence. The Bible clearly indicates such. Jesus makes the claim that He had been with the Father and upon His physical death would go back to His Father (John 16:28). The Gospel of John begins with this concept that the Word (the Son of God) was in the beginning with God (the Father), but was made flesh (Jesus) (John 1:1, 14) and dwelt among us. In reality, before there was a beginning (of man and his world), the Word (Jesus) was or existed! Jesus clearly laid claim to this concept when He said to the Jewish people, **"before Abraham was, I am!"** (John 8:58; 16:28). This was what Jesus was trying to help the Jewish leaders to see when He asked them about a statement of David in the Old Testament (Matthew 22:41-46). Even the Old Testament prophets indicated Jesus' pre-fleshly existence as they foretold of the coming Messiah (Micah 5:2; Isaiah 9:6). But in Genesis chapter one we have two obvious things that should help us to believe in the pre-existence of Jesus: (1) The plural word for God (ELOHIM) that uses a singular verb; and (2) The pronouns "Us" and "Our" certainly indicate the possibility.

JESUS, THE REVEALER OF THE FATHER

Not only does the Bible claim Divinity for Jesus, but that He was the perfect revelation of God, the Father, to mankind (John 1:18). And why shouldn't He be the perfect revelation for He had been with the Father from all eternity (John 16:28)! Jesus' statement to Philip shows that those who have seen Jesus have also seen the Father (John 14:9). Thus, the invisible God has now become visible in Jesus, the man! Jesus is revealed to us as the revealer of the Father fully.

JESUS' DIVINE AND HUMAN NATURE

A question that has been debated for centuries has been over the possibility of Jesus being fully human and fully Divine at the same time. It should be obvious again that we are looking at things from a human nature viewpoint only. Jesus is God—nothing is impossible for Him to do (Luke 1:37). We have statements that indicate his full humanity (Luke 1:35; 2:52; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 4:1-3) along with the many statements that we have been looking at that uphold His full Deity.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

To uphold the claims made about Him and by Him: (1) Jesus pointed to the Old Testament Prophets that foretold of His coming and His mission (Matthew 1:18-23); (2) He taught as no man ever taught (with authority) (Matthew 7:28-29; John 7:46); and (3) Performed all kinds of miracles to show that He was who He claimed to be—God's Son in the flesh (John 20:30-31).

Jesus is not presented in Scripture as merely a gifted speaker or an above average man, but as "God with us!" (Matthew 1:23). He is God that has also become a man, lived as a man, and died as a man.

If you desire further study on the things discussed in this lesson, please feel free to ask or go to a book store or someone's library that would have much additional information on the Deity of Jesus. This is a very critical issue that is basic to Christianity as an acceptable religion and the salvation of our souls. Be concerned enough to realize that these claims were made and evidence are given to uphold them.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What were some things unique about the birth of Jesus?
 - a) Matthew 1:20
 - b) Matthew 1:23
2. Did Jesus claim to be equal with God? (John 10:30)
3. How do you explain this concept in the light of the statement, "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is ONE God?*" (Deuteronomy 6:4)
4. What are the evidences for believing that Jesus pre-existed before His fleshly birth?
 - a) John 16:28
 - b) John 1:1, 14
 - c) Micah 5:2; Isaiah 9:6
 - d) John 8:58
 - e) Matthew 22:41-46
5. In what sense has Jesus revealed the Father unto mankind? (John 1:18; 16:28; 14:9)
6. To whom is the creation of all things attributed? (Genesis 1:1; Colossians 1:16-17)
7. What have you learned about Jesus from this lesson?

Lesson Two**"He is the Perfect Sacrifice for Sin"**

Man's origination is dealt with in the first two chapters of Genesis. How man came into being has everything to do concerning the question of "Redemption!" If man merely evolved as some would have us believe, then he is only a higher form of a brute and therefore has no need of "Redemption." But, if man was created by God by design, then man is a responsible being, has free-will, and can make his choices in his life. If those choices lead to man's separation from God, he will need "Redemption" from the just penalty of his wrong choices. And as chapter three of Genesis reveals, man exercised his choice, made a bad decision, and the outcome was what God had threatened—DEATH! (Romans 6:23) The word "death" has two basic connotations: (1) Separation of the spirit from the body (James 2:26); and (2) Separation of man's spirit from God (Ephesians 2:1, 5). As a result of sin, all men will die a physical death (Hebrews 9:27). But man will also die a spiritual death (separation from God). The sad thing about sin is that we have no means of our own to rid our lives of that sin and its penalty. It is therefore said of man that he is in "bondage" to sin—he can't get loose from its hold! (Romans 6:6) Therefore man needs a "Redeemer"—one who can pay the price for his freedom from the hold of sin. Jesus is pictured in the Scriptures as being that "Redeemer" for mankind.

A REDEEMER FORETOLD

The Scriptures indicate that God planned for man's redemption before he created all things (Ephesians 1:4-5; 3:11; 1 Peter 1:18-20). The Old Testament Scriptures record the promises of God of a redeemer to come in the following verses: (1) Genesis 3:15-16—To be of the seed of the woman; and (2) Genesis 12:3; 22:18; 26:3-5; 28:10-15—To bless all nations through the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The New Testament Scriptures point out that the "seed" (descendant) of Abraham that would come and bless all nations is "JESUS!" (Galatians 3:15-16). The New Covenant Gospels of Matthew and Luke show that Jesus is of the lineage of Abraham (Matthew 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-37). And the Prophet Isaiah foretold that this "servant" of God would be a "guilt offering" (NAS) and would "justify the many" and would "bear their iniquities." He also stated that He "bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors." (Isaiah 53:10-12). The prophetic indications are that the one who would come would die for the people to redeem them. Sin and its penalty had to be dealt with or man would be forever lost.

JOHN, THE FORERUNNER OF JESUS

The last Old Testament writing Prophet ended his book with a promise of the coming of the redeemer and of a forerunner to prepare the way for Him (Malachi 3:1; 4:4-6). The Gospel of Mark opens with a quotation from Malachi that indicates that John the baptizer was the one sent by God to prepare the way for the coming Redeemer (Mark 1:1-4). The inspired Apostle Paul stated in Galatians: ***"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."*** (4:4-5). It is stated about John that he was filled with the Spirit even from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). At the proper time, John began preaching to prepare the way for the One who would redeem lost mankind. He told the people that ***"There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose."*** A short time later, he pointed to Jesus of Nazareth as being the One that was to come. John vividly portrayed Him as: ***"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*** (John 1:29). Jesus (God in the flesh) had now come to become the sacrifice sin-offering for lost mankind. John also told the people that: ***"I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."*** (John 1:34). He also added that Jesus must increase, but that he would decrease (John 3:30). A short time later, John was imprisoned and beheaded—for his work had been WELL-DONE!

JESUS OFFERED HIMSELF

Jesus understood and clearly stated why He came to earth and what His mission was: ***"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."*** (Luke 19:10). He knew that He would be put to death (John 12:32-33) and the purpose for it. On the night of His betrayal, he instituted the "Lord's Supper" as a continual reminder of His death that He would soon die for the sins of the world or ***"for the remission of sins."*** (Matthew 26:26-28). However, as the time came for His arrest, trials, and death, He was exceedingly sorrowful, even to death and sought refuge in praying to the Father. He even prayed that this coming sacrifice could be avoided; but, if not, He was resigned to carry out the Father's Will! (Matthew 26:38-46). Jesus also made it very clear that men had no power to take His life unless it was the Will of the Father (John 19:10-11). He stated that he had the choice to keep his life or lay it down (John 10:15-18). When the time came for his arrest by the soldiers from the chief priests and Pharisees, He willingly surrendered to them (rebuking Peter in his efforts to defend him with his sword) (John 18:1-11).

THE PERFECT SACRIFICE

The idea of a sin offering is giving something of value in the place of that which should be punished. An innocent animal had to die as a "sin-offering" in the place of the one who had sinned. God had ordained that this was to be done until the perfect sacrifice for sin had been accomplished in Jesus. The blood of bulls and goats could not really atone for sin—even though God required that such be offered (Hebrews 10:1-10). Full atonement had to come from a human who lived perfect and did not justly deserve death—Jesus was that man! (2 Corinthians 5:21). In His death, He became the "sin-substitute" for those who have faith in Him. He did not deserve death, but He willingly chose to die in our stead (shed His blood) so that we might be set free from the just penalty of our sins (Romans 5:6-10). Through His death: ***"He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified."*** (Hebrews 10:14). Again, we emphasize that Jesus had to be a perfect man in order to redeem fallen man. He was like: ***"a lamb without blemish and without spot."*** (1 Peter 1:18-21).

GOD'S LAW UPHELD

Why so much emphasis upon the perfection of Jesus? (Hebrews 5:8-9). The answer is simple—to show that God was just (righteous) in all His actions! His Law states that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). If God did not punish sinful man; then, He would become unjust in His actions toward His creatures. Jesus' death satisfied the demands of the Law, and thereby God could forgive us and look upon us as perfect (when we were not!) (Romans 3:20-26). Jesus, as a perfect man, could take our place, pay our penalty, and the Law of God would be satisfied and upheld and God would be shown to be just in His actions. ***Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."*** (John 15:13-14). ***"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*** (Romans 5:8). The ***"Law of sin and death"*** (You sin—you die) has been successfully removed for those who put their trust in Jesus

God's great scheme of Redemption has now been completed in the death of Christ. Man's freedom has been paid for in full! God's justice has been shown, His Law upheld, and His love for His creatures provided a way for Him to be merciful to sinful man. True fellowship with God has become a reality and a great hope for the future made possible by the perfect sacrifice for sin. Has God's great love for man been shown sufficiently through His Son's death that you are motivated—not only to come to Him for redemption, but to serve him out of love all of your life? Have you become a devoted follower of Jesus, the Son of God?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In what sense was Jesus to bless all nations? (Genesis 22:18)

2. How did Jesus become man's sin offering? (Isa. 53:5-6; 2 Cor. 5:21; Matt. 27:46)

3. How is Jesus our propitiation? (Isa. 53:11; Rom. 3:24-25; 1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10)

4. If the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, why did God require such? (Heb. 10:1-10)

5. How do we know when a sacrifice is able to truly redeem us? (Heb. 10:11-18)

6. How does Jesus prove God to be just in forgiving man's sin? (Rom. 3:21-26)

7. What made men free from the Law of sin and death? (Rom. 8:1-4)

8. Why is the New Testament called the perfect law of liberty? (James 1:25; 2:12)

Lesson Three

"He was Raised from the Dead"

God became flesh to redeem fallen man! But the question arises: *"For what purpose(s) has He redeemed us?"* or *"Unto what has He redeemed us?"* Is it:

1. **To live a better life here?** This certainly would be a part of the answer assuredly because we have been given access to *"all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."* (Ephesians 1:3).
2. **To glorify God by our words and actions?** Yes! This too is emphasized in the word of God: *"Do all to the glory of God"* (1 Corinthians 10:31).
3. **To tell others about Redemption to be found in Christ?** The "Great Commission" makes this very clear as being a part of the reason for our being redeemed (Matthew 28:18-20).

But, we believe there is another reason that gives us new meaning and assurance to our lives—that is, He has redeemed us unto *"A living hope"* through the resurrection from the dead (1 Peter 1:3). And in being raised from the dead He became Lord over the *"living and the dead"* (Romans 14:9).

The inspired Apostle Paul showed the great necessity of having this hope when he said: *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."* (1 Corinthians 15:19). It is critical for us to not only believe in Jesus' death for our redemption, but to also believe in His resurrection from the dead for the hope of eternal life! Of what value is redemption, if that is all there is to the existence of man? It is in reality meaningless because we will all die a physical death anyway and that will be the end of the story! Generally speaking, we don't want to believe that physical death is the end of man. And besides, the very concept of redemption is that we are freed from the punishment for sin (eternal punishment—Matthew 25:41, 46); and, we have been given that hope of eternal life with God after this life is over (Philippians 3:20-21). The resurrection of Jesus not only proves Him to be the Son of God with power (Romans 1:4), but it has assured us of a "living hope" of life with God when this life is over. It is this hope that "saves us" and motivates us to keep living for God till the day we die (Romans 8:24; Revelation 2:10b). The Apostle also states vividly: *"If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!"* (1 Corinthians 15:17). He is clearly pointing out the worthlessness of the death of Christ if there is no resurrection from the dead! But Christ is raised and we do have a great hope.

WHAT THIS HOPE INCLUDES

When we talk about "going to heaven" or "the hope of heaven;" just what do we mean, or what is involved in this concept. The following ideas will help to explain the Biblical concepts involved:

1. **Our bodies are to be raised (1 Cor. 15:35-42).** It is the body, not the spirit that is raised. Our spirit will evidently be clothed with our resurrected body. What will this body be like?
2. **It will be a new "spiritual" body (1 Cor. 15:44).** It is a new body that is fit for our new existence. Even though the Bible speaks about the resurrection of our bodies (old bodies); yet, it also points out that the old body will be changed into a spiritual body.
3. **This new body is raised as:** (1) An incorruptible body; (2) It is raised in glory; and (3) It is raised in power (1 Cor. 15:42-43). Our new body will not be limited as our own body was.
4. **It will bear the image of the heavenly man (1 Cor. 15:48-49).** Our new body will be conformed to Christ's glorious body (Phil. 3:21). When we read about the resurrected body of Jesus we can get some idea of what our new body will be like.
5. **Our new body will be immortal (1 Cor. 15:53).** It will never be subject to death as our old body is. We are given the victory over death because of our body is not mortal (1 Cor. 15:54-57).
6. **It will be a "house" (the dwelling place of our spirit) from God that is not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (2 Cor. 5:1).** Again emphasizing that will no longer be mortal (that is, subject to death!).

EVIDENCES FOR THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Upon what can we base our faith that we will be raised like the above passages state? Blind faith is nothing more than wishful thinking. True faith is based on evidence! What are the evidences for believing in the resurrection of Jesus?

1. **Prophecy.** David foretold of the resurrection of the Christ in Psalm 16:8-11. The Apostle Peter quotes this reference and points out that David could not have been talking about himself, for his tomb was still among them at that time. So, he had to be speaking about the Messiah that was to come. Even though he would be put to death, he would be raised up from Sheol (Hades).

2. Jesus' Foretelling. Jesus not only foretold about His coming death (and what kind of death it would be), but also foretold of His resurrection. He even used the graphic event in Jonah to compare it to: *"For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."* (Matt. 12:39-40).

3. The Empty Tomb has always been a thorn in the side of the skeptics. The angel told the women: *"He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay."* (Matt. 28:6). All the Jewish had to do to stop their preaching of the resurrection of Christ was to produce the body—which they could not do!

4. The Appearances. Jesus appeared to His Apostles on several occasion after His resurrection (Acts 1:1-3). In Acts 2, the Apostle Peter preached that Jesus had been raised according to prophecy—and then added: *"This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses."* (Acts 2:32). But the Apostle Paul stated: *"He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the Apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time."* (1 Cor. 15:5-8).

The evidences for His resurrection are there to be examined and evaluated as to their legitimacy. The honest inquirer will do so **and then** will draw his conclusions. Jesus' resurrection from the dead is one of the great proofs of His Deity (Romans 1:4).

"Resurrection unto life" has a great appeal to humanity. It has through the centuries. This is one of the reasons why the message was received and still is being received by people—it promises us that death does not end man's existence. Jesus' resurrection from the dead is our assurance—not only that all men will be judged (Acts 17:31)—but that all men will be raised someday. Some will be raised to life and others to condemnation (John 5:28-29).

Whatever decision we make about Jesus, we had better make it as sure as we can, because much is at stake. He is either the Son of God or an imposter! He was either raised or we are all without hope. When Jesus asked His close disciples would they also leave Him as some other disciples were doing, their answer should be and could be ours as well: *"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* (John 6:66-69).

Lesson Four

"He is Lord and King"

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18-20); born of the virgin Mary (Matt. 1:23); grew up as a human being (Luke 2:52); lived a sinless life (1 Pet. 2:22); and then offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins (Phil. 2:8). As a result, God raised Him up from the grave and set Him on His Own Right Hand:

- 1) **Exalting Him highly;**
- 2) **Given a name which is above all other names;**
- 3) **So that all should bow before Him;**
- 4) **And that all should confess that Jesus is Christ and Lord to the glory of God (Phil. 2:9-11).**

The Apostle Peter stated by inspiration that this was foretold by David (Acts 22:32-33). Daniel also indicated this in his vision about One like a Son of Man ascending to the Ancient of Days....and He was given: ***"dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him."*** (Dan. 7:13-14). Jesus is **KING** over His kingdom!

KING OVER HIS KINGDOM

The Prophet Daniel foretold of Jesus being given a kingdom, but David was told by God that one of his descendants would sit on the throne of this kingdom (2 Samuel 7:13-14). Peter indicated that this kingdom was set up with Jesus sitting on David's throne in about AD 29-30 (Acts 2:33-35; 8:12; Col. 1:13-14). Jesus did not come to set up an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom! (John 18:36-37). The Jewish people were expecting an earthly kingdom because they had already pre-judged what kind of a kingdom it would be. Jesus made it clear that His kingdom is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, joy, and peace (Rom. 14:17). It is called the "kingdom of heaven" because it is of heaven, not of this earth. Jesus is reigning on His Throne in heaven, not on the earth. He came so that God could reign in the hearts and lives of men—not in a political or material manner. The kingdom of Christ is His church (Matt. 16:18-19; Luke 22:29-30). When Christ returns for His own, then He will give up His reign and deliver the kingdom up to the Father (1 Cor. 15:23-27). John, the baptizer, came preaching: ***"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"*** (Matt. 3:2). About three years later, Jesus is sitting (figuratively speaking) on the throne of David (in heaven!). Paul stated clearly that ***"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"*** (1 Cor. 15:50).

JESUS IS LORD

Those who make up this kingdom must be "born again" of the water and the Spirit! (John 3:3-5). It is a spiritual birth into a spiritual kingdom! But, it is also an "everlasting kingdom" (2 Pet. 1:11). Jesus is to be confessed as "Lord" to our salvation (Rom. 10:9). To confess Him as Lord is to confess Him as "Deity!" But, it is also giving recognition to his authority over us. In Jesus' time on earth the word (κυριος) was used with reference to idolatrous gods, Roman Emperors, and high ranking officials in the empire (1 Cor. 8:5). Among the Jews, it was used with reference to God—denoting His Sovereign authority over mankind (or over heaven and earth) (Matt. 11:25; 9:38; Acts 17:24; Rev. 4:11). Two of the words in the Old Testament that were used of Deity were (Adonai and Yahveh). When the New Testament quotes passages with these two names, they are used to identify Jesus (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1—Mark 1:3), etc. The 12 disciples used the term to refer to Jesus. He stated: ***"You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."*** (Jn. 13:13-14). Jesus taught the people as ***"One having authority!"*** and He did! (Matt. 7:29). While on earth Jesus was Lord, but it was after his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension that He was so highly exalted by God, the Father (Phil. 2:9-11). He has been seated at the right hand of the Father, been given a name that is above every name, and at the name of Jesus every knee should bow (in heaven, on earth, and under the earth), and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father!

But, it is one thing to recognize and confess that Jesus is Lord and quite another to truly let Him be the Lord of my life! Confessing Jesus as Lord is required, but so is obedience as well. Confessing without obedience is hypocrisy (James 2:22-27). Jesus openly rebuked the people in one of His audiences with these words: ***"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"*** (Luke 6:46). He went on to point out the blessings that come to the person that not only hears Jesus' words, but does them! (Luke 6:47-49). The Apostle John stated it this way: ***"He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous."*** (1 John 3:7). He warns his readers not to deceive themselves in thinking otherwise. If Jesus is truly Lord of our lives, we will be obedient to His Will—without questioning! Love for the Lord will cause us to be obedient servants of Jesus (1 John 5:3).

THE DEMANDING "LORD"

Towards the end of Jesus' public ministry, many of His disciples turned and walked no more with Him. Why? Why would anyone in their right mind turn from the only One who could give them eternal life? (John 6:59-69). The answer given was brief and to the point: ***"This is a hard saying who can understand?"*** Jesus wanted followers who trusted in Him so His demands would be followed. Discipleship to Jesus is not determined by our wishes or our convenience, but by His Will or His commands. He sets the standards to be met for those who want to answer His call. The very concept of being a disciple is one who is willing to be taught and willing then to put those things into practice in one's life.

Several different expressions are used to communicate Jesus' demands for being His follower. Some of the more obvious are found in Matthew and Luke's Gospels. The following will give a general idea of what would be involved.

- 1) **Take up one's cross (Matt. 16:24).** Whatever burdens or hardships that may be placed on us because we are a disciple of Jesus, we must willingly bear it!
- 2) **Deny one's self (Matt. 16:24).** A person will either do his own will, or the will of someone else, or the Will of God. He makes the choice! Jesus is calling for us to do the Will of the Father in heaven if we want to follow Him.
- 3) **Lose one's life (Matt. 16:25).** To try to keep one's life for himself is to lose it, but to give up one's life for righteousness, he will gain it.
- 4) **Hate parents and family (Luke 14:25-26).** The concept of hate in this place carries with it the idea of loving them less than God. If we love them more than God, then when a choice has to be made between listening to them or God, we will choose our family over God!

Jesus' demands are not arbitrary, but practical. A choice has to be made as to which will be first in our lives—God or other things, or other people! (Matt. 6:24). It just isn't possible to serve two masters! If we are not willing to renounce all, we cannot be a true follower of Jesus. Jesus wants to be the Lord of our lives, the King over His subjects—for our own good!

Many want the blessings that Jesus offers, but are not willing for Him to be the Lord of their lives. Many voices are calling out and making their appeal for people to follow them. They make an appeal to our selfish interest to get a following. The appeal that Jesus makes is to let Him be the Lord of our life and He will give us "eternal life" with the Father (Rev. 2:10). It is up to us to

make the choice of who we will follow. Why not follow Jesus—for only He can give us eternal life (John 6:68; 14:6).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. When was Jesus to be given the position of King over His domain? (Dan. 7:13-14)**

- 2. Was Jesus "Lord" and "King" while He was on earth?**

- 3. What is the difference between being "Lord" and "King?"**

- 4. How does Jesus identify His kingdom? (John 18:36-37; Rom. 14:17)**

- 5. How does one come under Jesus' kingship? (John 3:3-5)**

- 6. Why must one confess Jesus to be Lord? (Rom. 10:"9)**

- 7. Did Jesus acknowledge His Lordship? (John 13:13-14)**

- 8. Why did some of Jesus' followers leave Him? (John 6:66-69)**

- 9. What are some of the demands of Jesus if we are to let Him be the Lord of our life? (Matt. 16:24-25; Luke 14:26-27)**

- 10. How do we show our hypocrisy to Jesus as Lord?**

Lesson Five

"He is the Way to the Father"

When asked, most people will say and possibly honestly believe that they are going to heaven! But can a person really know that he is going to heaven or not? Is there a danger of being deceived into believing something that is not true? According to the following passages, it is possible to be wrong about some things:

"There is a way that seems right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Proverbs 16:25)

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes; but he that hearkens unto the counsel is wise." (Proverbs 12:15)

"All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits." (Proverbs 16:2)

"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." (Acts 26:9)

Not only is it possible for a person to be wrong about some things, but we can be self-deceived into believing something that is wrong. Notice who the Bible calls a liar:

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." (1 John 1:6)

"He that says, 'I know Him,' and keeps not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John 2:4)

"If a man say, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God who he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20).

The book of 1 John is a book of "knowing!" The word occurs over and over, such as: *"By this we know that...."* If we really want to know that we are on our way to heaven, it would seem very wise to read the book of 1 John! Notice that all three of the above passages states that people are claiming something that they do not have. Jesus said about the people of His day: *"This people draw nigh to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." (Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:7-8).* One thing that is worse than being called wrong—that is, to be wrong! Jesus challenged people with these words: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My father in heaven." (Matt.*

7:21). Mankind advocates that there are many ways to heaven (the Father); so, how can I "know" which way is right?

JESUS, THE WAY TO THE FATHER

Jesus made this claim in His own words: ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*** For a mere man to make such a claim is not only astonishing, but also most unbelievable! But Jesus was not a "mere man," but God in the flesh! If anyone could make such a statement, it could only have been Him. For only Deity could know for sure the way to heaven (or to the Father). And Jesus, being God in the flesh, certainly ought to know the way that man must travel in order to be with God, the Father, someday.

When Jesus asked His 12 disciples who the Jewish people thought that He was, their reply was varied: ***"Some say you are John the baptizer, some Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."*** (Matt. 16:13-14). Most of the Jewish people were confused and were not sure of who Jesus really was. But we have the same problem today—for even people who claim to believe in Him do not really believe that He is the only way to the Father! A misguided world, or even the wisest among them, have rejected this concept that He is the only way to the Father (1 Cor. 1:20).

HOW IS JESUS THE WAY?

In the first place, the answer to this question has to go back to the study on Jesus as the perfect sacrifice for sin. If sin is what alienates us from God—and it is—then, what can remove that sin in order for me to be reconciled to God and to be able to be where He is? The wages of sin is death, not heaven! (Rom. 6:23). The way to the Father has to deal with the outcome of sin in our lives. Without cleansing and forgiveness, we will pay the ultimate penalty of our sin—eternal death (not eternal life with the Father). The Sacrifice of Jesus paid the price for our redemption so that we could be reconciled to God (Rom. 5:6-11). The benefit of His death goes back to the first man who sinned (Adam) up to the last man that will sin before this world is destroyed by God.

But, in the second place, the answer to this question has to also deal with man's part in his redemption. In the words of Jesus, ***"Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord," shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven."*** (Matt. 7:21). Jesus' death has made the way possible for man to be with the Father, but man has to accept God's offer by obedience to His Will. Jesus' warning words are again appropriate: ***"Why call***

me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" (Luke 6:46). Do you show by your obedience to Jesus that you believe He is the way to the Father?

AN EXAMPLE TO MEASURE BY

If we want to know for sure that we are in the way that leads to life, we need to turn to an example of those who began their travel by their obedience to the Gospel. In Acts 2, we find "devout Jews from every nation under heaven" being drawn to the Temple area to listen to some men who were speaking about God's work in Christ. The Apostle Peter explained the miraculous events that were occurring and then began to preach Jesus to them. He told them that God had raised up Jesus whom they had put to death by the Roman soldiers. Also, he told them that this was foretold by the Old Testament, and that they were eye-witnesses of His resurrection. Upon being raised, He was shown to be both Lord and Christ. The message was readily received by 3,000 people who cried out wanting to know what they can do to be right with God. When told to repent and be baptized, they gladly obeyed. They were forgiven by the blood of Jesus, made right with God, and became a part of the new kingdom of God on their way to heaven.

FAITHFULNESS REQUIRED!

"Be faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life!" (Rev. 2:10b). It is not enough to begin our walk in "the way," but we need to abide (continue to walk) in "the way" to heaven (John 15:5-11). The Apostle John said that we need to *"walk in the light as He is in the light."* (1 John 1:7). We need to be aware of the dangers of sin that can harden us and we will not hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end (Heb. 3:12-14). The assurance that we are on our way to heaven comes from the following:

1. **Obedience to the Gospel.** I no longer walk in darkness, but in light (Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:1-2; 1 Jn. 1:6); and, I have been baptized into a relationship with Christ (Gal. 3:26-27).
2. **Continue to walk in the Light.** Jesus' blood continues to cleanse me (1 Jn. 1:7); I have an advocate with the Father (1 Jn. 2:1); I continue to love my brethren (1 Jn. 2:9-10); I am doing the will of God (1 Jn. 2:17); I walk in righteousness (1 Jn. 3:7-10); I am willing to listen to God's Word (1 Jn. 4:6); I am fully persuaded that Jesus is the Son of God (1 Jn. 5:4-5).

The Apostle John said that he wrote this book so that we may know that we have eternal life (the hope of being with the Father)! We need this confidence in our hope, because it is this hope that saves us (Rom. 8:24-25).

Lesson Six

"He is Coming Again for His Own"

On the night of His betrayal, Jesus made a promise to His disciples. He said that He would have to leave them, but some day He would return for them and all others who have been pleasing to God (John 14:1-3). He could make this promise because:

- 1) **He was truly God in the flesh;**
- 2) **He was the perfect sacrifice for sin;**
- 3) **He was raised from the dead;**
- 4) **He is Lord and King;**
- 5) **He is the only WAY to the Father!**

Without these events, Jesus' promise of returning would have been a "pipe dream." It is because of the facts above that we can be assured of His return someday.

JESUS' PROMISED COMING

For some reason some of the Christians at Thessalonica were struggling with the "if" and "when" of Jesus' return. If He comes back while they were still living, what is going to happen to those who have already died? Will they be left behind at His coming? In chapter four, verses 13-17, Paul clearly points out about the Lord's return:

- 1) The living Christians will not precede the dead Christians. The dead will be raised up and they both will be caught up together to be with the Lord. In 1 Cor. 15:51-52, Paul states that the living will be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump!
- 2) The Lord will come with His holy Angels (Matt. 25:31) and it will be with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.
- 3) The redeemed will be with the Lord always.

Jesus, in discussing His return, never gives any definite date or time of His coming. He warns His disciples to watch and be ready at any time for you do not know the day nor the hour when He will come (Matt. 25:13). He made it very clear that neither men nor Angels know the time of His return, but only the Father (Matt. 24:36). He stated that His coming would be like a "thief in the night!" (2 Pet. 3:10; 1 Thess. 5:2-3). Even though He will come suddenly, Christians can be ready at all times for His coming. They do not need to be caught unawares (1 Thess. 5:4-6). In Paul's 2nd letter to the Thessalonians, he warns them about listening to the ideas of men about the Lord's return and there-

by be deceived. The Lord is coming, but there were some events that were to happen before He comes.

EVENTS TO OCCUR AT JESUS' COMING

2 Thess. 2:1-12 gives us an indication that some events will occur before Jesus returns. This and other events that are mentioned would more than likely have eased the minds of those early Christians who were thinking that His coming was imminent. We will not spend further time on these events, but rather concentrate on the events that will happen at His return.

1. The Resurrection of all mankind! Paul's letter to the Thessalonians only dealt with what would happen to the righteous at the return of Christ. Other passages do deal with not only the righteous but the unrighteous as well. All men will be raised at the same time (John 5:28-29)—some to life, others to condemnation. For some reason, the few passages that describes the resurrected body were written to encourage Christians and what they had to look forward to. Their bodies will be changed into a "spiritual" body that will not have the limitations of this present body of flesh (1 Cor. 15:44). It will be an incorruptible body, a glorified body, a powerful body, and an immortal body (1 Cor. 15:42-44, 53). This new body will be like Jesus' glorious body (Phil. 3:21). Paul describes the resurrection of the Christian as a victory over death (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

2. The Destruction of the World! The picture that is painted of the end of this world is one of a great conflagration—the burning up of the present heavens and earth! The inspired Apostle Peter describes it as *"the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up."* (2 Pet. 3:10). This present heavens and earth will be replaced with a *"new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."* (3:13). Please do not think of this as a material universe again—it is not!

3. The Judgment of all Mankind! This judgment will be not only of the unrighteous, but of the righteous as well. Peter stated: *"For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now 'If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?'"* Paul states that all will appear before Christ's judgment seat and be judged according to what each one has done, whether good or bad. Men need to be persuaded to be ready for this great Day (2 Cor. 5:10-11). When Jesus first came into the world, He said that He did not come to judge the world, but to save the world (John 12:47). The world needed a Savior badly, so that they could be

ready for His return in Judgment. Jesus came to offer Himself as man's deliverer, redeemer, or savior (John 3:17). God, evidently, has fixed a day in which He will judge the world by Jesus. He has given assurance to all mankind of a coming judgment by raising Jesus from the dead (Acts 17:31). His judgment will be just and righteous in that Day (2 Tim. 4:8).

4. Reward and Punishment. Our existence on earth has been made possible so that we can work toward one purpose or end—reward or punishment, heaven or hell, acceptance or rejection, to live with God or away from God forever. Jesus spelled it out very clearly: ***"these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*** (Matt. 25:46). To be away from God forever is described in some very undesirable ways:

- a) ***"everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels"***
(Matt. 25:41).
- b) ***"cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness. There will be the weeping and gnashing of teeth."*** (Matt. 25:30).
- c) ***"in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."*** (2 Thess. 1:8).
- d) ***"these shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."***
(2 Thess. 1:9).

But, on the other hand, to be with God forever is described in some very desirable ways:

- a) ***"new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness."*** (2 Peter. 3:13)
- b) ***"everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*** (2 Peter 1:11)
- c) ***"a crown of life"*** (Rev. 2:10)
- d) ***"a crown of righteousness"*** (2 Tim. 4:8)
- e) No more tears, sorrow, crying, or death (Rev. 21:4)
- f) Never thirst or hunger, no curse, and no night (Rev. 22:1-5)

Judgment Day can be a glorious Day for the faithful believer, but a horrible day for those who have refused to do the will of God in their lives.

The Lord is coming some day! We need to be ready for that day. We need to realize we are not of the darkness, but of the day, sons of light. We must not sleep, but be alert and sober. We need to put on the breastplate of faith and love and the helmet of the hope of salvation so that we can be faithful at His coming. As Paul told the Philippians: ***"So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling."*** (Phil. 2:12)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why is Jesus' promise of His coming so certain?

2. What will be the signs of Jesus' return?

3. What will happen to dead Christians at the Lord's return?

4. What will happen to the living Christians at the Lord's return?

5. What is meant by the expression: "a new heavens and earth?"

6. Will there be more than one resurrection of mankind?

7. Will there be more than one judgment of mankind?

8. For what purpose will the unrighteous be raised?

9. How is punishment described?

10. How is reward described?

11. How can you know you are ready for the Lord's return?

