



Jesus: Man of the Bible

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NOT FOR SALE


Bible Study Center

“Jesus: Man of the Bible”

WELCOME!

This is a 12-lesson Bible study course and it has been designed to educate, inform, challenge, and inspire people to become more active participants in the revealed will of God. It will help you learn many important things about God and the Bible, and, at the same time, help you learn unbiased Bible study skills. This material has been designed to complement our in class discussion and so follows the lesson progression of the classroom material.

The reason why we need a study course like this is a simple one. Perhaps you have seen all of the different things being taught and practiced in the religious world around us. In the world today, there are hundreds, if not thousands, of groups claiming to be Christians and each one has its own particular set of doctrines and practices. Since most of these differences in some way relate back to the Bible, it is necessary to study it to find out which teachings today are correct.

The way this study material works is simple. Your class will meet twice a week for six (6) weeks. After a general introduction to the theme of our study in Lesson One, in which you and your fellow students will be taken through the material in class, you will be asked to find, read, and carefully think about the meaning of hundreds of passages from the Bible. You will be assigned to study through the material and answer the questions at the end of each lesson before coming to class. To properly study through the course, you will need the lesson material and a Bible you can use for your reading assignments. Study each lesson carefully. Be sure to stop and read all of the passages carefully.¹ Some lessons also have supplementary **WORKSHEETS** included. If you encounter this symbol: then please **STOP** reading the lesson material at that point and complete the research assignment before returning to the lesson material. 

Once you have completed working your way through all of the material for the lesson you then proceed to answer the test questions found at the end of each lesson. Read each question carefully and consider all the possible answer choices. Then record your answers on the **Answer Sheets** for each lesson that we will provide and submit your completed answers sheet to your instructor at the beginning of each class meeting. We will check and record your grades for our records and if you can average 70% over all of the lessons, you will fulfill our requirements for graduation and receive a special diploma, which you can hang on your wall. However, aside from a diploma, the wealth of knowledge you will gain from your study will be considerably more valuable!

One more thing. There is a **Survey Questionnaire** for you to fill out and submit at the first class meeting. Please read each question carefully and provide the requested information. There are dates for certain items and so try to provide those as best as you can. Bring the completed form when you come to the first class meeting.

If at any time you have questions about anything in your study, please feel free to bring them to class with you. We will do our very best to help you find the answers you seek. In addition, if you have friends whom you think might like to study this course please send us their names and mailing addresses and we will be very happy to reserve them a space in our next session of FREE classes at the Bible Study Center.

As a final thought before you start, please remember that we have gone to great lengths to make this study FREE of both cost and obligation. There is no tuition and by agreeing to take this course, you are not changing your religion or joining a religious group. All we are asking you to provide is the time to study and transportation to attend your classes. We sincerely hope that you enjoy your study and learn many new things about God and the Bible!

¹ **NOTE:** Unless otherwise stated, all Bible quotations contained in the lesson material come from the Easy-To-Read version.

LESSON ONE

THE MOST AMAZING BOOK EVER WRITTEN!

Of all the books ever written the Bible stands out as the king, and this is not for religious reasons alone. Consider the following.

1. The Bible has consistently been the best selling book year after year.
2. The Bible has been translated into more languages than any other book in existence.
3. More reference and commentary books have been made for the Bible than for any other book.
4. Historically, no other book has stirred up as much controversy as the Bible. Over the past 2,000 years, hundreds of thousands of people have died because of its contents!

Even in our time today there is still much controversy surrounding the Bible. Worldwide, hundreds, if not thousands, of different Christian groups claim the Bible as their guide! From its pages, these groups get their individual teachings and practices. When they are asked to defend their teachings, they debate one another hurling passages and interpretations from the Bible in support of their own church against all others. With all the confusion in the religious world today, it should not surprise us if we find it difficult to determine religious TRUTH.

However, our effort to find TRUTH does not have to end in frustration. There **IS** an answer! God gave a very special book to mankind to act as a guide to lead him out of confusion and into the light of understanding! That guide is the Bible and it was written so that any person who wants to can read and understand what it has to say and discover the TRUTH that is inside. Because of this, and because of all the confusion in the religious world around us, EVERYONE needs to learn to study the Bible for himself or herself. We at the Bible Study Center believe this very strongly. Not only do we want to help you find answers to your questions, but also **we truly want to help you learn HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE FOR YOURSELF**. With this thought in mind, we will now begin a journey together. It will be a journey with many challenges, but also one with many rewards! Having gone there before you, we promise that you will not be disappointed!

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BIBLE

Have you ever wondered why the Bible is called the “Bible”? You may not know it but we cannot find the word “Bible” in the verses that are found inside the English Bible! However, it is called “the Bible” for a good reason. The word “**BIBLE**” actually comes from a foreign language. It originally comes from the Greek word “**βιβλία**” (pronounced “**bib-li-a**” in English). If we translate this word into English it means “books”. Using this word as a title fits very well because the Bible is not only one book, but actually a whole library of books.

The Bible contains 66 books and is divided into two sections, or “testaments” as they are often called. There are **39 books** in the portion of the Bible called the **Old Testament** and there are **27 books** in the portion called the **New Testament**.

The history of the Bible is filled with many foreign languages and it should not surprise you to discover that the Bible was not originally written in English! In fact, each of the “testaments” was written in a different language. The Old Testament was written in the ancient **Hebrew** language, which was the native language of the Jewish people of whom most of the story of the Old Testament is about. The New Testament was written in the ancient **Greek** language, which was the “written language” of the Roman Empire during the times in which the events recorded in the New Testament took place. It should also be noted that some passages of the New Testament contain words and phrases from the **Aramaic** language. Aramaic was a dialect of the Hebrew language and was spoken by the inhabitants of Palestine during the time of Jesus.

There is evidence indicating that somewhere around **40 different people** wrote the different books of the Bible. However, it is difficult to arrive at an exact number because while some books contain the name of the writer, others do not. Evidence also indicates that a few books were written by several individuals working together while a few other books indicate that more than one person may have written their contents.

It took many years to complete the writing of all the books of the Bible. From the time when the first book was written (the book of Genesis) until the time when the last book was written (the book of Revelation) might have been as long as 1,500 years or more! The Old Testament was completed first. Even before Jesus lived on the

earth, it was already finished and in the same basic form that we have today! The collection of books we call the New Testament was completed about a hundred years or so after Jesus left the earth.

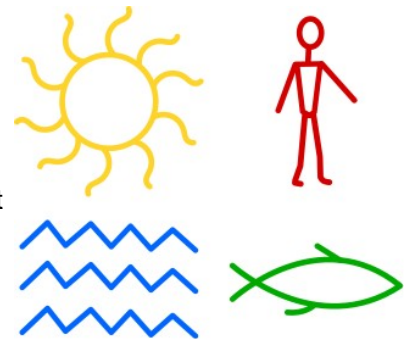
Yes, the history of the Bible is a very interesting picture when you consider that there were periods of time when several of the books were being written at the same time and yet it is possible that the authors of those books never met each another. It is even possible that they never even knew the other authors were alive, and yet when a comparison is made of their individual writings, the similarities between those writings are so clear that one might think the writers had been sitting together in the same room and working together!

When we consider all of these things, the Bible really is a very special book. There were so many people involved, spanning so many years, in so many places and languages, and yet there are no contradictions in its message. That is an amazing thing indeed!

A SHORT HISTORY OF WRITING

Another interesting area that has a very great effect upon the Bible is the history of **WRITING**. Writing has not always been the same as the way we know it today. It has undergone many changes, which began some 6,000-8,000 years ago and it continues to change even today!

The earliest known kind of writing was very different from our modern day “alphabet”. During those ancient times, people used **PICTURES** that they arranged in a certain order to communicate messages to each other (see the example on the right). This type of writing is called pictography or “picture writing”. This is still a common form of communication for non-literate cultures in many parts of the world and can be quite useful for things like warning signs. But this type of writing makes it difficult or impossible to fully express a spoken language, so systems like Egyptian hieroglyphics, Sumerian cuneiform, and Chinese characters were developed where the symbols could represent certain sounds or ideas in addition to the image itself.



Sometime around the year 2,000 BC, a form of writing was developed using simplified “letter characters” called an **alphabet**.² In an alphabet, each character only represents a sound. The letters can be combined to represent every word in the language exactly as it would be spoken. Most languages from that time onward have been based on this or a similar form of writing.

A SHORT HISTORY OF WRITING MATERIALS

The subject of **WRITING MATERIALS** has also had a major effect upon the history of the Bible. Today, we take for granted the fact that we can go to a store and purchase a piece of paper and a pen to write with, but it has not always been so easy! During the earliest years of human civilization, writing was done on **STONE**, which would usually be carved with a hammer and chisel. Sometimes people would write on stone with paints and inks made from crushing colored stones or from the colored juices of different plants. (You might recall that the original 10 Commandments of the Old Testament were written on stone tablets!) **WOOD** was also a common and abundant early writing material. **CLAY** tablets were also very common in ancient times. Wet clay would be gathered and shaped into small square plates. A message could then be written on the clay “tablet” with an instrument very similar to our pencil, which was called a stylus. The clay tablet would then be dried in the sun or baked in an oven until it became as hard as a rock. These tablets were very durable and many ancient libraries of these clay tablets have been discovered in our time.

Later in history, came the use of **LEATHER** as a writing material. The leather would be cut into long narrow sheets and rolled upon a stick to form a scroll. This was a very important development because the leather was very durable and could hold much more information than a clay tablet. It was also much more convenient to store and transport leather scrolls than it was pieces of wood, or stone, or clay tablets. (The ancient laws of Israel were kept on leather scrolls.)

Another very important ancient writing material was **PAPYRUS**, which was made from the stems of the papyrus plant, a tall grass that grew beside many rivers throughout the Bible lands. The long stems would be shaved into thin layers that would be woven together like a mat and then pressed and dried in the sun. These dried sheets would then be cut and wound into scrolls. Papyrus sheets could even be washed and reused again. This material

² Many people believe that the word “alphabet” comes from the ancient Greek language, where the first two letters were “alpha” and “beta”. Others believe it goes back to the Hebrew language which starts with “aleph” and “bet”.

was the most widely used writing material in the time of Jesus and it is very likely that the original copies of the books of the New Testament were written on this material.

After papyrus, the next major writing material to be discovered and used was **PARCHMENT**, or **VELLUM** as it was sometimes called. This material was made from animal skins, but it was different from the leather mentioned earlier. These animal skins were scraped until they were very thin and then they were bleached so that they became very white. Even though parchment was used to make scrolls, like leather and papyrus, it was the first major writing material used in the making of the first “books,” where people would cut long scrolls into pages of the same size and then sew them together along one side. (The oldest surviving copies of the complete Bible that we have in existence today were written on parchment!)

Our modern form of **PAPER** did not come into existence until about the 14th century AD, which was only about 700 years ago! If you consider the thousands of years mentioned in this section, paper has only been around for a very short time!

What can we expect to see happen to writing materials in the future? There was a time when people thought papyrus would be the writing material for all time, and then there came parchment! We now use paper, but will paper continue to be a writing material until the end of time? Right now, the world is moving closer and closer to a world without paper, switching instead to electronic writing on computers! It is now possible to purchase the Bible in an “electronic book” format on a computer and carry it with you on a small device that fits into a pocket or purse. Is this the future of printing? Who knows, but you can be certain that the Bible will be there whatever the future holds!

A SHORT HISTORY OF BOOKS

Aside from writing systems and materials, the **COPYING OF INFORMATION** has also had a great impact upon the Bible. Imagine how slow things would be done in our world today if we did not have copying machines, printing presses, and computers! How did the people of ancient times copy their documents? Until a few hundred years ago, ancient copies of any document had to be done by hand. A professional copyist, called a “scribe”, would be paid to spend days, months, or even years making handwritten copies of original documents. This was long and frustrating work and it was **expensive**. A book the size of the Bible might take two or three years to complete and might cost one year’s wages in today’s money! We are very fortunate to live in a time when we are able to purchase a copy of the Bible, or any book for that matter, for such a small price!

Early copying was not without its problems too. While time was the greatest obstacle, sometimes the scribes were able to overcome the problem by using a technique involving what became known as a “scriptorium”, which was a special room where a group of scribes would gather to make multiple copies of a document at the same time. Instead of working individually, they would let one person read aloud the original text while the rest of the group would listen and write down what was read. While this was considered a great advancement during those ancient times, the number of copies that could be made was still far less than what is demanded in our time. It is truly a good thing that we live in such an advanced age!

HOW MODERN BIBLES ARE MADE

Many students are curious to know how our modern translations of the Bible are made. The advancement of writing methods, materials, and books has had a great impact upon the history of Bible translations. The original copies of the Bible books were most likely written on papyrus scrolls and early copies were made by hand. Since papyrus was not very durable, we no longer have any of the original copies of the Bible books. In fact, the earliest surviving complete copy of the entire Bible we have with us today is written on parchment and dates back to about 300 years **after** Jesus died and went back to heaven! However, we do have some small papyrus fragments of individual books that might date back to as early as 100 years after Jesus left!

The people who make our Bibles today try very hard to give us the most accurate copies possible by following a careful procedure. A group of specially trained scholars collects all of the ancient pieces and fragments of Bible books together in one place. Then they compare all the wordings of the verses and create a complete copy of each Bible book in its original language. They do this for each of the two portions of the Bible. The result of their work is a special kind of Bible called a “translation text”. The translators of our Bibles then use this text when they translate the Bibles we find on sale in bookstores. Most of the Bibles we have available today are the work of groups of translators, who work in groups in order to minimize the possibility of one person making translation mistakes or of including their own personal religious opinions in the translation.

Science has made very important contributions to our modern Bibles, especially the science of Archeology. Archeology is the study of the ancient past and Archaeologists have traveled all over the world digging in the ruins of ancient civilizations. As time passes, Archaeologists who focus upon studying places mentioned in the Bible sometimes find new pieces of ancient copies of the Bible and any significant discoveries regarding the text of the Bible are then added into the “translation text”. This helps to make certain that new translations of the Bibles will be more and more accurate!

Aside from the discovery of new Archaeological evidence, it is often necessary to make new translations of the Bible because of changes in the languages into which the Bible has been translated. We know that in any language words often change meaning as the years go by. New Bible translations are made, and older ones are revised, in order to make certain that the original thoughts contained in the ancient Bible are translated into accurate words of the languages of today. If this were not done then it might be possible that, over a long enough period, the words used by translators of the Bible in one generation might change to mean something completely different, or perhaps even the opposite, in a future time! Can you imagine how dangerous that would be? Just think for a moment. What would happen if the words “white” and “black” were to exchange their meanings, or perhaps the words “stop” and “go”?

WHICH BIBLE IS THE BEST ONE TO USE?

This is a very common question asked by students at this point. It is not an easy question to answer because there are several factors to consider. **First, it must be understood that every Bible translation contains mistakes!** Inside practically any kind of Bible you read, there will be portions of it that are 100% accurate, but there will also be portions that will be questionable or perhaps even translated incorrectly! The simple fact is that there is no such thing as a “perfect Bible translation”. The first thing students should do is find a translation which is based upon the original languages and uses the most up-to-date “translation text.” In addition, find one that was translated by a group of people who come from a variety of religious groups as this will help to ensure that the translation will have a certain degree of objectivity and accuracy.

Another factor in determining a good translation is the vocabulary used in wording the translation. A translation that uses a more “formal” vocabulary will contain words and phrases that may be difficult to understand. What good is an “accurate” translation if the ones using it cannot easily understand what they are reading? Finding a translation that is easy to understand and, at the same time, accurate can be a difficult task!

The best way for anyone to overcome these many difficulties is to **use several different kinds of Bibles**. Make comparison for each passage. The differences in the way the different translators worded their sentences can help you better understand what you are reading. In addition, the use of different translations (which were made by different groups of translators with different religious backgrounds) will help to ensure that you are getting an unbiased view of what the Bible says!

This ends our introduction to the Bible. In our next lesson, we will ask the Bible some questions about itself and let the verses provide us with the answers. (That will be fun!)

Before proceeding, answer the following test questions for Lesson 1:

Each of the following questions has several possible answers. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the CIRCLE for that answer choice on the answer sheet. Bring the answer sheet with you and turn it in to your teacher. We will grade your answers and record your grade in our records.

1. Having so many different Christian groups with different teachings
 - a) promotes unity.
 - b) makes the church more effective.
 - c) makes it hard to determine truth.
 - d) is a good thing.
2. Which of the following is the **MOST** important?
 - a) Learn how to study the Bible for yourself and do your own research.
 - b) Find a good teacher and accept whatever they say.
 - c) Ask your friends about religion and accept whatever they tell you.
 - d) Join a church that teaches what you want to hear.

3. Which of the following languages **WAS NOT** one of the **original** languages of the Bible?
 - a) Latin
 - b) Greek
 - c) Aramaic
 - d) Hebrew
4. The Old Testament of our Bible has a total of how many books?
 - a) 2
 - b) 27
 - c) 39
 - d) 66
5. The New Testament of our Bible has a total of how many books?
 - a) 2
 - b) 27
 - c) 39
 - d) 66
6. TRUE or FALSE: We know the names of **ALL** the writers of the books of the Bible.
 - a) True
 - b) False
7. The system of writing that uses pictures to communicate thoughts and ideas is know as
 - a) an alphabet.
 - b) pictography.
 - c) stylus.
 - d) none of the above.
8. The system of writing based upon an "alphabet" can be traced back to about
 - a) the 14th century AD.
 - b) 2000 BC.
 - c) 6000-8000 BC.
 - d) 33 AD.
9. The writing material commonly known as **papyrus** was made from
 - a) stone.
 - b) clay.
 - c) paper.
 - d) a kind of plant.
10. The oldest surviving **COMPLETE COPIES** of the entire Bible are written upon
 - a) papyrus.
 - b) stone tablets.
 - c) clay tablets.
 - d) parchment.
11. In ancient times, a person who worked as a professional copier of documents was called
 - a) a scriptorium.
 - b) a scribe.
 - c) a Pharisee.
 - d) an apostle.
12. The oldest surviving complete copy of the Bible dates back to about
 - a) the time of the creation.
 - b) the time Jesus Christ lived on the earth.
 - c) three hundred years after Jesus died.
 - d) 1611 AD.
13. The science that has helped make our Bibles more accurate today is called
 - a) Archeology
 - b) Chemistry
 - c) Biology
 - d) Psychology
14. Choose the one that **IS NOT** a valid reason why new translations of the Bible need to be made today.
 - a) Words in our languages of today change their meaning over time and so modern Bible translations need to be updated to reflect these changes.
 - b) We live in modern times and so the original message of the Bible must be changed to make it acceptable to our modern ways of thinking.
 - c) New discoveries in archeology might bring about a need to change the wording of the "translation text" used by scholars to make our modern Bibles.
 - d) Over a long period of time, it is possible for words to change so much that they might mean the opposite of what they once did.
15. The **perfect** translation of the Bible today is
 - a) King James Bible.
 - b) the New American Bible.
 - c) the New International Version (NIV).
 - d) none of the above; all translations have some mistakes in them.
16. Something a person can do in order to avoid being misled by mistakes in Bible translations is to
 - a) always study using several different translations of the Bible.
 - b) never put complete trust in one particular translation of the Bible.
 - c) use Bibles that were translated by groups of people instead of by one person.
 - d) all of the above.

LESSON TWO

SEARCHING FOR TRUTH IN RELIGION TODAY

In the previous lesson, we looked at the very interesting history and background of the Bible and noted all of the interesting events that have shaped it through time. We begin this lesson by asking a very important question, **“Why should we study the Bible?”**

Most of us already know about the Bible and the special story it contains. We know that the Bible introduces us to God, the Father, and helps us understand his character, ways, and his special plans for us. The Bible also tells us about God’s special son, Jesus Christ, and how he was sent to the earth on a special mission to save mankind through his death on a cross. It is also from the pages of the Bible that we learn about the history of the universe. However, perhaps the most important thing we learn from the Bible is God’s answer to life’s most basic and important questions, “Where did I come from?”, “Why am I here?”, and of course, “Where am I going?” Without these answers where would we be?

Many people today do not believe that the Bible is so important. They believe that the Bible is just another ordinary book that deserves no special recognition. From what we saw in our previous lesson, it should be easy to see that the Bible is anything but ordinary! Since there is so much controversy over the matter, let us investigate further and see what we can find.

We have already discovered that there were approximately 40 different people who wrote the 66 books of the Bible, but were these people **really the true authors** of the books they wrote? We will look at some passages from the Bible that might give us an explanation about this matter.

Let us begin our search by looking at how Jesus thought of himself and his own authority. (Please read **Matthew 28:18**.)³ Please notice how **ALL AUTHORITY was given to him IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH**. During his earthly life, Jesus began the process of revealing the teachings of what we now call the New Testament. The first four books, more commonly known as “the Gospels”, give us a detailed account of his travels and teachings. We should obey Jesus’ teachings because they are actually the teachings he received from his Father in heaven and passed along to us. (To understand more about this point please stop and read what Jesus said about his teachings in **John 7:16-17; 8:28-29; 12:48-49; and 14:10-11**.) Did you notice how Jesus was careful to point out that he had no authority in himself, but that all the things he did and taught were the things that his Father wanted? The authority behind Jesus work and teachings was always God!

Now let us turn to **2 Timothy 3:16-17**. Most Bibles will read something like, “**All SCRIPTURE⁴ is INSPIRED** by GOD.” If you will remember our last lesson, you might recall how we mentioned that the New Testament was originally written in the Greek language. In verse 16 of this passage, where most English Bibles have the word “inspired” the original Greek language literally says that all scripture is “**God-breathed**”. The meaning of this word simply carries the idea that the Bible comes to us **from God and NOT** from men.

This is a very important point because since it is **FROM GOD** then the scripture is **a useful tool for us!** The writer here continues to develop his thought by listing several things the scripture is useful for. First, he says that it is useful for **teaching**. Then he mentions **reproof** – which is a word that means showing someone what is wrong in their life or refuting errors people might teach. Next, he says that it is useful for **correcting** – which means making something that is wrong to become correct again or helping people improve themselves. Next, he mentions the **instruction/discipline in the way of justice⁵**. Once he completes his list, he ends the thought by indicating that

³ **“The Book of Matthew, chapter 28, verse 18.”** Bible references have three parts: the book name, the chapter number, and the verse number. You can find the list of books in the table of contents of any Bible or listed on a Bible app or website. These names are often abbreviated to three or four letters. The chapter numbers are usually listed in large bold letters throughout the books of the Bible. For short books with only one chapter, sometimes the chapter number is omitted. Finally, the verse number (or range of numbers) comes after the colon (:). These are usually written as small numbers in the text of the paragraph, but some Bibles print each verse on a new line. For long references, commas (,) and dashes (-) will separate verses and semi-colons (;) will separate chapters. Chapter and verse numbers were not included in the original Bible, they were added later to help people find passages.

⁴ The Bible is not called “the Bible” in the verses found inside it. Instead, the original languages call it “scripture”, which is a word that simply means “writings”. The word “Bible” came to be used as a title for God’s message many years after Christianity began.

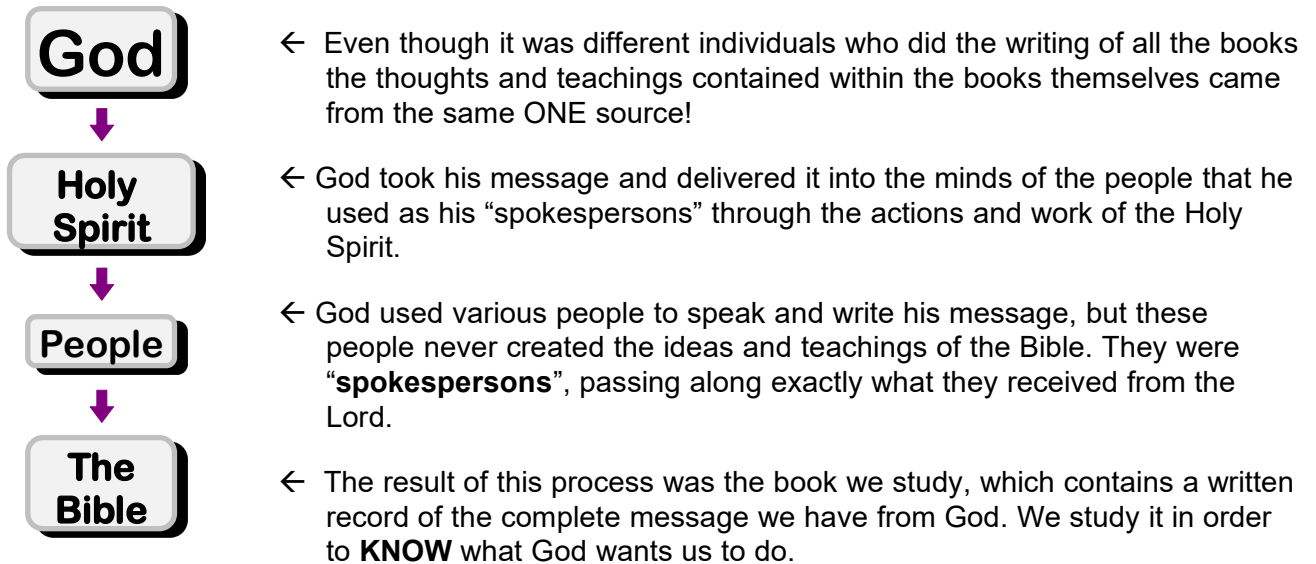
⁵ Most Bibles contain the word “righteousness” in this place, but the original word found in the text is the word that the Greek people commonly used for our word “justice”. So think of “justice” whenever you see the word “righteousness”.

all of these things are true for a purpose, **“So that the person who belongs to God might be completely ready, being completely equipped for any good work.”** If we summarize everything that is said we find that the Bible comes from God, it is useful for us, and that if we have it then we are completely equipped to serve God! Moreover, please do not forget that the only reason why the Bible accomplishes all of this in our lives is **because** it comes from God and not from man!

This same idea is also found in the passage, **2 Peter 1:20-21**. Here the topic of discussion is “prophecy”. When the Bible speaks of prophecy, it has a different meaning than most of us think of when we hear the word today. When we hear this word, we usually think of someone making predictions about the future. “Prophecy”, as it is used in the Bible, simply means, **“a message which comes from another person.”** This message is usually delivered by a person who acts as a “spokesperson”. The Bible refers to these spokespersons as **“prophets”**. Therefore, prophets are simply people who deliver messages that come from other people. It is important to know that prophets do not make up their messages. They **receive** their messages. **They speak only what they receive!** This is very similar to what a “Press Secretary” does for the President of a country. The job of the Press Secretary is to pass along messages from the President to the people. He does not have the authority to make up messages. Whatever the President tells him to say, he says!

This is the main point Peter is making here in this passage. He states that “written prophecy” (his point would apply the same whether the message was written or spoken) never came about as the result of what the prophet wanted to say. Instead, he explains that God (through the Holy Spirit) guided the minds of the prophets and gave them the messages that he wanted them to speak and write. Therefore, when we read the written message from God today, we should not simply read it and tell or teach **what we think** it means. We must study it carefully until we can understand what God meant to say and then tell and teach that message to others. **We should never teach our opinions in place of God’s true message!**

God used prophets in much the same way as you and I use writing instruments, like ballpoint pens or pencils, in our lives today! Therefore, although we might say that there were about 40 different people who **wrote** the books of the Bible, there is really **only one true author** for the Bible message and that is God! He made the message and placed it in the minds of his prophets, who in turn, spoke it and wrote it for the people. Understanding this point explains how it is possible for there to be 1,500 years, 40 different writers, several different languages, in different places, and yet there are no contradictions!



This is not some modern theory of ours. There is evidence that the New Testament Christians believed that the teachings they received from their different teachers did not originate from the minds of their teachers. Consider what we read in **1 Thessalonians 2:13**. The writer praises these people because they believed that those teachings came from God and this is why, today, we also believe that the Bible is the word of God!

WHY IS THE BIBLE DIVIDED UP INTO TWO PARTS, OR TESTAMENTS?

This is another very good and important question. Almost everyone is familiar with the fact that there is an **Old Testament** and a **New Testament** inside the Bible. Please get a Bible right now and find the place that divides between the two testaments. Notice how the Old Testament is much thicker than the New Testament. What

exactly **IS** a **testament**? If we look in a dictionary, we discover that “**testament**” is a word that was commonly used in Old English and it referred to **an agreement made between two or more persons**. Perhaps the most common word in modern English for such an agreement would be “**contract**”. Therefore, if we apply this modern word to our discussion about the two parts of the Bible, we find that there are two **contracts** in the Bible—an **OLD contract** and a **NEW contract!** While this wording might sound a strange, it is an accurate translation of the word! The Bible message explains many things about these agreements, which we will learn as we advance through our studies.

◆ The Bible ◆	
“God speaks to mankind”	
2 different messages	
The first message	The second message
The old times	The last times
Through the prophets	Through the SON
For the JEWS	For ALL people

Please turn to the passage, **Hebrews 1:1-2**, and read it carefully. This passage tells us about God **speaking** to mankind. The writer of this book mentions **different times**, and **different messages** from God, and **different prophets** that were used by him. In the ancient times of the Bible, God spoke to a certain group of people, whom the writer calls “our ancestors”⁶, and God spoke a message to them through people the writer called “prophets”. Then the writer makes a contrasting point and indicates that in a different time, “these last days”—which was the time in which the writer and the people he was writing to were living—and through a different prophet (his son, Jesus Christ), God gave another (second) message.

What does this mean? If we understand the writer correctly, it seems that there are actually **TWO different messages** from God contained in the Bible! They are **different** in several ways. Perhaps the diagram on the left will help illustrate what the writer is trying to say.

If we give a little thought to what he is saying, we will recognize that the **first message** is what we usually refer to as the “Old Testament” and, if we understand the writer’s point correctly, that message was **only** for the Jewish ancestors of the ancient times. The Old Testament is not the message in which God speaks to us today! The writer continues by saying that the message that is for us today is the **second one**—which would be the New Testament. This is the message where we find the teachings of Christ. (We will expand a lot more on this point as we progress through this study course.)

Isn’t this an interesting point? Do not worry because there is much more study yet to come!

All right, let us explore a follow-up question. “**If the teachings of the Old Testament are not considered as OUR MESSAGE from God, today, then why is the Old Testament included inside of our Bibles?**” Once again, we will go to the Bible to look for the answer. Please turn to **Romans 15:4**. This book was written to people who were Christians and it explains many things about their faith. Here in this passage, the writer speaks to them about things that were “written before”. If you consider carefully what the writer is saying in all of chapter 15, you can understand that he is referring to the Old Testament because the Old Testament was the only Scripture that was written down and collected together at that time. While the teachings of the New Testament existed at that time in spoken form, they were not written down until the middle and end of the 1st century. Therefore, the reference here to “things written” could only refer to the writings of the Old Testament. What does he say about those writings? He tells his readers that those writings that were written in the **OLD TIMES** were written as **EXAMPLES for OUR instruction**. This is interesting, don’t you think? He says that the Old Testament is for Christians too!

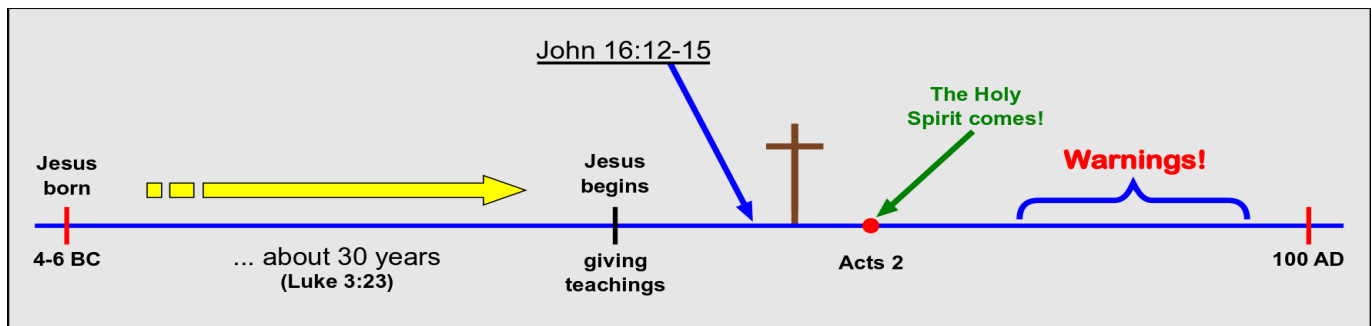
Another passage speaks on this same topic. Please turn to **1 Corinthians 10:6-12**. Although similar to the previous passage, this one goes on to explain things more fully. The writer says that we can know if God is pleased with us by comparing our lives to the **examples** of all those people we read about in the Old Testament. If we do the same things that they did, then we will receive the same response from God that they did. Therefore, the main purpose of the Old Testament today is to teach us **through the examples of the people** we read about in the stories found there! However, we do not go directly to the teachings of the Old Testament for our specific instructions from God today. God gave his specific instructions for Christians in his second message. The New Testament teachings of Jesus are **OUR message of instruction** from God for today! We must apply the examples of the people we read about in the Old Testament, how they reacted to THEIR OWN message, as we consider what we will do with our message from God. If we choose to do the same thing they did then we will receive the same result!

⁶ The writer of the book of Hebrews was a Christian who possibly came from a Jewish background. When he speaks here of “ancestors” he is referring to the ancient Jews who lived during the time of the Old Testament.

IS THE BIBLE THE ONLY BOOK WE NEED?

This is another very common and important question in the minds of many students. To find an answer we need to do a little historical research into the giving of the New Testament message in order to build upon a point that we discovered back in the first passage of this lesson; **2 Timothy 3:17**. There, it was mentioned that a person having the scripture (Bible), “**is completely ready, being completely equipped for any good work.**” That seemed to be the conclusion being taught in early Christianity as the time of the New Testament was ending and the final books were being written. From other parts of our lesson material today, we know that the **second message** was supposed to be delivered by Jesus because he is God’s son and it was said that the second message was to be delivered from God **through his son!** Therefore, since so much of the message depends upon Jesus, the answer to our question needs to begin with look at his life and teaching history.

By comparing secular history to the details we find mentioned in the story of Jesus, we learn that he was born somewhere around the year 4 to 6 BC. (Please note the diagram below.) From that point forward, we know very little about his childhood and teenage years. We know that he grew up in much the same way as other boys of his time. He had parents who took care of him and he learned his father’s trade—carpentry. The Bible tells us that from the time he was about thirty (**Luke 3:23**) he traveled from place to place teaching people about the Kingdom of God. During his third year of teaching, the Jews had him arrested and crucified on the cross. However, the Bible says that Jesus rose from the grave and returned to heaven, where he waits today for the time when he will come back down here for a second time. If we look carefully at that period of time we find some very interesting things to consider about the message Jesus came to deliver from his Father and the completeness of that message.



(A Timeline⁷ for the Giving of the New Testament Message)

Please turn to **John 16:12-15** and read it carefully. If we look at the surrounding verses, we discover that Jesus was speaking to his disciples about his upcoming death and return to heaven. All at once, he makes a very remarkable statement. He states that even though he came to deliver teachings from God he would not be able to deliver **ALL** of the teachings of the second message personally. Wow!

However, did you notice how Jesus continues his explanation by saying that after he is gone, God will send the Holy Spirit to them, and that the Spirit will **guide them** to the complete truth?⁸ There is no way we can be confused about the point here because the original Greek language literally says that the Spirit will guide the disciples, “in every truth”⁹. This is an important point because some people today try to say that this verse simply teaches that whatever the Spirit reveals will be the truth (as opposed to being false), but the point is very different. Jesus first said that the message will be incomplete when he leaves to go back to heaven and that the Spirit will deliver the remaining portion of the second message direct to these disciples, and, after they have received this remaining portion, then the second message will be complete. Please notice how Jesus carefully states that the Spirit will not bring something new, rather, the Spirit will take Christ’s message and give that to them. Therefore, we learn that one of the main works of the Spirit will be the continuation of the message Jesus started and that work will end once the remaining portion of the message is delivered.

Not long after Jesus spoke these words, he was killed, rose from the dead, and returned to heaven. If we turn to the book of Acts and read chapter 2, we read about the coming of the Holy Spirit into the lives of Christ’s disciples. This coming was the fulfillment of the promise Jesus made to them in John 16 and it was after this time that the

⁷ A **timeline** is a line representing the passing of time. Earlier time starts on the left end and later times are found as we move to the right. We can place marks on the line to represent different events that happened during the time period. Once these events are marked, we have a picture showing how things happened and this often helps us to better understand things. Our timeline here begins with the birth of Jesus, which happened in about 4-6 BC, and ends at the year 100 AD.

⁸ For more information on the coming of the Holy Spirit, you might also want to read John 14:25-26.

⁹ The Greek text here reads “*ἐν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πάση.*” This phrase literally translates “in the every truth”.

disciples went out into the world teaching and preaching the message of Jesus. About **thirty years later** one of these disciples, the apostle Paul, while writing to a young missionary, named Timothy, in **2 Timothy 3:17**, indicates that a person possessing the scripture is “complete, equipped for every good work”¹⁰. If something is considered to be **complete**, then is it lacking anything? Of course not, and so we should be able to assume that by the time Paul wrote Timothy, whatever was lacking in the second message when Jesus left, had been given!

WARNINGS!

(If you look back at the timeline diagram on the previous page, you will notice the last portion of the first 100 years has an area marked “WARNINGS!” This section explains.)

With the point of **2 Timothy 3:17** in mind, let us consider some additional evidence on the topic before we make any conclusions. Please find and read **1 Corinthians 4:6**. This book is actually a letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to a group of Christians living in the Greek city of Corinth. If we begin reading this book in chapter 1, we would find that the situation in Corinth was filled with disunity. All through chapters 2 and 3, Paul tried to reason with the people, telling them in many ways, that all Christians must have unity both in thinking and in teaching. They must also reject the wisdom of the world and accept the wisdom of God revealed through his Spirit in his word. The passage we are interested in, here in chapter 4, is part of a summary placed at the end of a section. Note how Paul wants them to learn the principle of “not going beyond that which has been written”. God had spoken through his prophets in the Old Testament and was now making known the New Covenant through Jesus and his apostles. Paul was warning these Christians who were proud of their earthly wisdom that they needed to go back to the writings of the prophets and apostles because their pride was causing division, but in the word of God there was unity. Likewise, if we want unity in the church today, we must abandon our earthly wisdom and pride and “**not go beyond what is written**” in the Scriptures.

Another passage we need to consider is **Galatians 1:3-9**. It forms the introduction to a letter that was written to Christians living in several towns located in the same geographical region. Once again, we should notice that there seems to be a problem with unity in these places. Evidently, according to what the writer says, there were actually people going around in these areas (and most likely other areas as well) **changing** the original teachings of Christianity! It also seems evident that many good Christian people were being confused by these teachers. The writer tells the readers not to accept any teaching that disagrees with **the original teachings they received** when the writer first visited them and taught them about Christianity. Let us think very carefully about this. The people were being asked to take the original teachings they had received and use them to compare with any new things they might hear. They were told to reject anything that did not agree with those original teachings. How could they be asked to do this unless those original teachings they received were both true **and complete**? Logic would demand this!

We should also consider **2 John 9-11**. The time of this writing is at least 10 years later than our two previous passages and the situation in Christianity had become very discouraging. Aside from persecution, there was a very widespread movement of people claiming to be Christians but who were spreading wrong teachings! In this very short letter, the apostle John¹¹ writes a very strong warning about what “truth” and “lies” really are, and, how genuine believers should respond to those who do not teach the truth. Notice how he speaks of the “**teaching of Christ**” and says that **ANYONE** who does not remain faithful to this teaching does not have God! Then notice how he adds a second warning when he states that Christians should not even welcome **ANYONE** who does not bring this teaching, and, that welcoming such a teacher would make them a partner with his evil works! Therefore, we see that **at that time**, delivering teachings that were **different** from Christ’s was considered to be an evil work. The point here is the same as in the previous passages we have studied in this section. The readers were being asked to compare what they had received in the beginning of their faith to anything new they might hear from new teachers. **If anything these new teachers might say turned out to be different from the original teachings then they were told to reject both the teachings AND the teachers!** The only way this could be possible would be if the original teachings they received were the complete teachings of Christ!

These passages have several things in common.

1. Each one indicates that **at that time** there were people claiming to be believers and yet teaching what was considered by the writers to be “false teachings”—teachings that were **different** from the original ones the readers received from the writers!

¹⁰ This wording is found in the Revised Standard Version translation of the Bible.

¹¹ By this time, John was probably the only surviving member of the original 12 Apostles of Jesus Christ.

2. Each writer appeals to the readers not to violate or depart from the true teachings, which already existed and were known by the audience. In other words, they set forth the idea that the original teachings received were to be used as a “measuring device” with which to judge all future teachings the people might receive. Any new teaching that did not match the original ones should be rejected!
3. The **Galatians** and **2 John** passages are both bad news for **anyone** who teaches things that are different from the “standard set”, and upon **anyone** who accepts different teachings being circulated among the churches, or upon **anyone** who accepts those who are teaching these false teachings.

Without a doubt, this is a very serious matter! Please remember that the only way these warnings would make any sense at all to the original readers, and, influence them to be extra careful would be if a couple of things **had** to be true:

1. The completed set of true teachings, or the “ALL TRUTH”, Jesus referred to in the promise he made back in John 16:13 must have already been received during the lifetime of those people.
2. These teachings were common knowledge among the Christians of the 1st century. Why? Because the teachings were commonly taught by the **legitimate** teachers who went from place to place teaching people how to become Christians!

Otherwise, if the truth was not yet complete when the Christians received the above-cited letters, how could they determine the difference between a true teaching and a false teaching? A visitor **could** teach something different from what they had originally heard and then simply **claim** to be “under the guidance of the Spirit just like Jesus promised” and thus explain that they were giving the people a **NEW TEACHING** from God. From the passages we just studied, it seems likely that this was actually happening all over the Christian world **at that time** and the true apostles were concerned enough about the problem to issue warnings indicating that the **REAL TRUTH** was already complete and that no one should change it or stop following it!

DOES THE PROMISE OF JOHN 16:12-15 APPLY TO OUR TIME TODAY?

With this in mind, here is a very important point to consider regarding what we see happening today. Many religious groups today **claim** to receive special guidance, enlightenment, or illumination from God through the Holy Spirit. Some even go so far as to say that a person cannot truly understand the Bible unless they are guided by the Holy Spirit. Most who make these claims will turn to passages like **John 16:12-15** and use the promise Jesus made as justification for their claiming this special guidance. We often hear this claim given as a reason why we should accept their teachings and join their groups—because they believe that they are truly receiving **DIRECT** guidance from God himself!

The first point we need to consider is this. If the promise Jesus made in John 16 applies to our time, then that would mean that the message which Jesus left unfinished would also have to be considered “unfinished” **in our time**. The reason is simple. Jesus made that promise of guidance for a specific purpose. That purpose was so that his people **would receive the remainder of the teachings of the second message that he was not able to give personally while he was alive**. He was about to leave and the message was not yet complete. He promised that after he left, the message would be completed. He promised that this completion would happen by means of special guidance that the ones he was speaking to would receive after he left. This means that once the message would be completed then the promise would be considered fulfilled. If the promise was fulfilled in that time then it no longer applies to us. Therefore, the question of whether or not we can receive this promised guidance today is connected to the question of whether the second message is completed or not. If the message is now complete then there is no more promise. If we say that the promise applies to us, then that means the second message is still not complete. It cannot be both ways because Jesus told us the purpose of the guidance –to complete the message he started. We have just seen evidence that the ones who were guided by the Holy Spirit in the time of the New Testament believed that the message was completed in their lifetime. How then could we say that the message is not complete today when we **KNOW** that the message was completed during the lifetime of those Jesus made the promise to? If that promise Jesus made has been fulfilled then it does not apply to those of us living today!

To claim guidance and to receive such guidance are two different matters. Let us consider a very simple illustration. We know that it is a common practice today among religious minded people to ask God for spiritual guidance at the beginning of a Bible study. Through **sincere** prayer people ask the Lord for guidance to truth, and when the study time is over, the participants depart **believing sincerely** that the results and conclusions they

made during their study time are true because they believe that during the study the Holy Spirit was guiding their minds. However, how can we be certain that guidance from the Holy Spirit actually happened? How can we know? Is there any way to **prove** whether this guidance has happened?

Consider the following observation. When we examine the conclusions of one of these study groups today, and then compare them to the conclusions of other similar study groups, who are also asking God for this guidance, do we always see an identical set of teachings that leads to a unity of believers? No, we do not! In fact, as we pointed out at the beginning of this course, most religious groups believe and teach different things, even though many **CLAIM** that their teachings come direct from God through Holy Spirit guidance! This observation proves that something is not right! If all the groups who pray for and claim to be guided by the Holy Spirit are in fact being guided by the same one Holy Spirit that guided the original Christians, then **should not ALL of the groups today receive exactly the same guidance**, no matter what country they are in or what language they speak? In addition, **should not that truth they receive today ALWAYS be the same truth that was originally revealed by the Holy Spirit during the time of the original disciples?** If this guidance is taking place today and if it is from the **SAME Spirit**, and if he is revealing the **SAME message**, then all groups today should receive the same message, and, all groups today should receive the same message that was given to the original Christians.

How can we determine if a group of people claiming to be true Christians today is in fact teaching true Christianity? If the message for today is the same message as that which was given in the time of original Christianity, and if that message is the one contained inside the pages of the Bible, then all we have to do is listen to the claims of people today and compare those teachings to the ones we find in the Bible. If the teachings of the groups agree exactly with the teachings of the Bible then they are teaching true Christianity and they are TRUE CHRISTIANS. However, if their teachings and practices are not exactly the same then they are not! While that may sound judgmental, it really is not. After all, can a person CLAIM to be a Christian, and not follow the teachings of Christ? Is there **more than one** set of teachings that come from Christ? The warnings we studied earlier show us that there is not. Therefore, those warnings about not following anything different than what was originally revealed by Christ and his Apostles applies to us in exactly the same way it did to the original believers!

Considering all of the difficulties we face, and especially with all of the confusing teachings around us, we need to follow the example of the people mentioned in **Acts 17:10-12**. Please take time to stop and read about them. Those people are very good examples of the proper attitude each one of us ought to have about "religion". Those people never accepted anything they were told until they first examined the scriptures to make certain that what the teachers were saying was true. This is how we must be today...because... it **DOES** make a difference what we believe and practice!

We are now at the end of Lesson 2 and we hope that you can now see that the Bible is truly no ordinary book. It has a special origin and an equally special purpose in our lives. In it, we are given the answers to all of life's problems, but we must remember that it comes to us from God and, because of that, we must be very careful how we use it. Used in a right way, the Bible can lead us to a full and happy relationship with God. However, used in a wrong way, it will become the source of confusion and death!

Before proceeding, please answer the test questions for Lesson 2:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lesson. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the CIRCLE for that answer choice on the answer sheet. Remember to bring the answer sheet with you and turn it in to your teacher. We will grade your answers and record your grade in our records.

1. TRUE or FALSE: All people **living today** believe that the Bible comes from God.
 - a) True
 - b) False
2. In **Matthew 28:18**, Jesus told people that
 - a) he had earned all authority in heaven and earth.
 - b) all authority in heaven and earth had been given to him.
 - c) all people are free to create their own kind of Christianity.
 - d) all people should always do exactly what their religious leaders tell them to do.

3. The first four books of the New Testament, which tell about the life of Jesus, are commonly called
 - a) the Koran.
 - b) the Torah.
 - c) the Septuagint.
 - d) the Gospels.
4. According to the evidence we studied about Jesus and his teaching, when he taught his lessons while on earth,
 - a) he always taught according to what his mother told him to teach.
 - b) he always taught according to his own ideas.
 - c) he always taught according to what his father in heaven told him to teach.
 - d) all of the above.
5. The passage **2 Timothy 3:16** teaches us that
 - a) God is the one true author of the Bible message.
 - b) the Scripture is useful for teaching, reproof, and correcting.
 - c) the Scripture is useful for training people to do what is right.
 - d) all of the above.
6. Considering the lesson material so far, we might say that the **most important** reason why the message of the Bible is useful to us is because
 - a) it comes from God and not from man.
 - b) it has been printed in almost every language of the earth.
 - c) it is very easy to read and understand.
 - d) religious people believe it.
7. Which passage below teaches that a person who has the Bible is **completely equipped** for doing good things?
 - a) John 3:16
 - b) 1 Corinthians 10:13
 - c) Acts 2:38
 - d) 2 Timothy 3:17
8. TRUE or FALSE: The word "Bible" **cannot** be found **in the verses** of the Bible.
 - a) True
 - b) False
9. **Hebrews 1:1-2** teaches us that God gave mankind **two distinct messages** in the Bible and that they are
 - a) too difficult for ordinary people to understand.
 - b) different from one another in the areas of when they were written, to whom they were written, and the messengers that brought them.
 - c) written in the Hebrew language.
 - d) no longer applicable in our time today.
10. TRUE or FALSE: When the Bible uses the word "prophecy" it **always** means a message about **the future**.
 - a) True
 - b) False
11. In the Bible, a **prophet** is
 - a) a person who predicts the future.
 - b) a spokesperson who speaks a message from another person.
 - c) a person who performs miracles.
 - d) a person who makes money by "fortune telling".
12. The passage which explains to us **how** God guided his spokespersons is
 - a) 1 John 2:3-6
 - b) Hebrews 10:4
 - c) 2 Peter 1:20-21
 - d) Matthew 28:18-20
13. In **John 16:12-15**, Jesus told his disciples that
 - a) the world would end in a few years.
 - b) there were still many teachings left to be revealed in the second message.
 - c) many of them would soon be put in prison.
 - d) they would never be able to understand the truth of what God was telling them.
14. In the same passage, Jesus told the disciples that the Holy Spirit would come and
 - a) help them overcome temptation.
 - b) guide them to the remaining truth that had not yet been revealed.
 - c) protect them from being persecuted.
 - d) give them the ability to perform miracles.
15. TRUE or FALSE: Jesus gave **ALL** of the teachings of God's second message **personally from his own lips**.
 - a) True
 - b) False
16. In the section of this lesson titled "**Warnings!**", the main point is
 - a) no person has the authority to change a message that came from God.
 - b) we should not accept any new teachings **unless** they come from an angel from heaven.
 - c) modern day prophets will come and teach additional things which should be added to the Bible.
 - d) only the church has the authority to change a teaching found in the Bible.

17. **One main fact** showing why the New Testament message is complete and should not be changed is
- the Bibles sold today in stores contain the same number of books.
 - the original writers warned their readers not to accept any new teachings.
 - the church has declared that it is complete.
 - none of the above.
18. How can we know if a religious group is teaching **the truth** today?
- We can simply ask the leaders if they are Christians and if they say, "Yes!" then they are true believers!
 - We can ask our church leaders to tell us which churches are good and then follow their judgment.
 - We must study the Bible and compare its teachings to those of the different groups. Only those whose teachings agree 100% with the Bible are true Christians.
 - Only God knows. Therefore, we must accept every group as Christian and accept their teachings.
19. If the Holy Spirit is going to guide people today, then **which** of the following should be true?
- All people receiving this guidance should receive the same teachings.
 - The teachings received today should be the same as those received by the original Christians.
 - The teachings received should agree with the recorded teachings of the Bible.
 - All of the above.
20. TRUE or FALSE: The promise of Holy Spirit guidance that Jesus made, in **John 16:12-15**, applies equally to **all believers living in all times**.
- True
 - False
21. TRUE or FALSE: People today should **always compare** any teaching they hear to the teachings contained in the Bible **and only accept** teachings that are the same as the ones found in the Bible.
- True
 - False
22. Summarizing what we have learned so far, the teachings of Christianity **will never change** because
- Christ never changes.
 - God's expectations for mankind never change.
 - all people living in all times have the same God, the same message, which came through the one Spirit.
 - all of the above.
23. The **main source** of information for people wanting to establish a relationship with God TODAY is
- God's first message – Old Testament
 - God's second message – New Testament
 - the Koran
 - the Apostle's Creed
24. TRUE or FALSE: The Holy Spirit revealed truth to the original Christians and **forced them to obey** that truth.
- True
 - False

LESSON THREE

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE – PART 1

In our previous lessons we have seen how the Bible has come to us from God and that **HE IS THE ONLY REAL AUTHOR**. We have seen that the Bible is a book that has two parts and that each part is a different message from God to people living in different times. We also discovered that it is a complete guide for all mankind! Now we will examine the topic of **“How To Study The Bible.”** The reason why this topic is so important is because of all the negative things we noted so far. The fact that there are so many religions CLAIMING to follow the Bible means that something must be wrong. How can there be **one** message from **one** true author, and yet have **so many different groups**? In addition, there are so many people today CLAIMING that they are receiving personal guidance from the Holy Spirit and yet, once again, we have different teachings and confusion! **This cannot be right!** Therefore, we must see what the problem is. If the only source of our message from God today is the Bible and if the Bible contains only one consistent message, then if we find different teachings in religion today **the problem** most likely can be found in the way people are studying the Bible. Because of this, we need to be very careful how we study God’s message. By keeping in mind a few guidelines, we believe that anyone can properly use the Bible and discover the truth that God intended.

Before we proceed, we will look at some ways that people study.

INTRODUCTORY POINT #1

As an introduction to our topic, we will go back to a point from our previous lesson. Have you ever noticed that when people get together to study the Bible together they begin the study with a prayer? What do they usually pray for? Usually it is for some sort of guidance from God, or the Holy Spirit. Does God guide your thoughts and minds so that you automatically get the truth from the Holy Spirit? Do you remember our previous discussions about this matter? We saw how God set up his plan to guide the original disciples to the truth through the Holy Spirit. The result of **that guidance** was the completion of the message of the Bible. We know that the Spirit guided all of those people to the SAME truth. Today we are in a different situation. We are trying to get the truth **OUT OF** the Bible.

Many people today believe that by asking the Holy Spirit for guidance he will give the same kind of guidance he did to the ones who originally received and wrote the message. The question we have to answer is whether this kind of guidance **is** available, and if so, then how will we know that we are receiving it? One thing we can conclude from common sense is that if two people ask for and claim to have received such guidance from the Holy Spirit in their study, and yet they come to different conclusions, then **one of two things MUST be true!** Either 1) the Holy Spirit has changed his pattern of consistently revealing the same message to all people in all places, or, 2) what we are seeing today is in fact **NOT** guidance coming from the Holy Spirit.

The point we want to make here is this. **IF** the Holy Spirit **is** guiding people today then **we ought to see consistency BOTH in the message being received by the people and the message being taught by the people!** The fact that we see such a great **INCONSISTENCY** in belief and teaching today **PROVES** that simply claiming to be guided by God does not mean that guidance is being received!

Therefore, simply saying a prayer before studying the Bible is not enough.

INTRODUCTORY POINT #2

Sometimes when people get together to study the Bible they will sit around a table, read a passage, and then the study leader will ask each person around the table to give their opinion of what the passage means to them. (*This is often referred to as “Bible sharing”.*) Is this the correct way to study the Bible? We must remember that the Bible is **God’s message** and he wants us to **understand** the meaning **that he intended**. In “Bible sharing”, there is a great danger that the participants might simply make the Bible **say what they want it to say**, and completely miss the meaning that God intended. This is not the proper way to study the Bible.

INTRODUCTORY POINT #3

The story is told about a man who began each day with a breakfast devotional in which he would ask the Lord for guidance for the day. To find the answer to his prayer he would take his Bible, and while flipping through the pages, without looking, he would forcefully plant his finger on a page. He would take whatever verse his finger happened to fall upon as God's direct instruction for him to do that day.

The story continues that one day while having his breakfast he turned his eyes toward heaven and asked, "Lord, what would you like for me to do today?" As was his custom, he energetically began to flip the pages of his Bible, closed his eyes, and then placed his finger on a page. He then opened his eyes and discovered that his finger had landed upon **Matthew 27:5** which says, "Judas went out and hung himself." He thought for a moment, then with much confusion in his heart turned his eyes to heaven, and said, "Lord, surely you don't want me to hang myself." He decided to try it again and so closing his eyes tightly and concentrating seriously, he began flipping through the pages of his Bible again. When he had planted his finger on a page he opened his eyes to find that he had landed upon **Luke 10:37** which says, "You go and do likewise." He thought for a moment and, suddenly, a cold chill ran through his body. He then pleaded, "Lord... **SURELY** you don't want me to hang myself!" Filled with terror, and with cold sweat streaming down his face, he began flipping the pages of his Bible one more time, and then, with much hesitation..., he planted his finger for the third and final time. Afraid to open his eyes, he slowly peeked out of one squinted eye and to his dismay, discovered that he had landed squarely upon **John 13:27** which reads, "And whatever you do, do it quickly."

This is definitely **NOT** the proper way to study the Bible.

INTRODUCTORY POINT #4

Think for a just a moment about your studies back when you were in school. If, for example, you were to enroll in a Chemistry course, how would you study Chemistry? Would you pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit? Would the teacher read a section of the textbook and then go around the room asking each student for their opinion about what they think the section means to them? Would you ask questions and find your answers by flipping through the textbook pages and planting your finger? Of course not! You would open your Chemistry book, starting from page 1, and then you would read and study from there. You would also re-read everything carefully and go over it again and again and again! This is how Bible study is done. The **process of Bible study is the same** as studying in school. What is different is the book we study. Our Chemistry book was made by man but the Bible came from God!

GUIDELINES FOR BIBLE STUDY

We must learn to think of the **process** of studying the Bible the same way as the process of study we would use in a school situation. We have to use the minds that God gave us to reason out and test all the things that we study. Our primary instrument for Bible study is common sense and the **process** of Bible study is rational and logical, even if the conclusions which we might come to as a result of the process are not!

The following guidelines are suggested to assist in studying and reasoning out logically what God is trying to tell us. After we discover the true meaning of the message, then it will be up to each one of us to decide whether we will follow God's instructions.

1. THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE BIBLE IS TO CHANGE OUR LIVES, NOT TO INCREASE OUR KNOWLEDGE.

One fact we all must accept about the Bible is that there is a finite amount of information contained within its pages. Knowing this to be true, we should remember that there is not specific answers for every possible question we might ask. Rather than being like an encyclopedia, the Bible is more like a speech in which the speaker is trying to give specific information that applies to a topic about which he has chosen to speak. God has chosen what to speak about and it is our responsibility **to listen to and follow** what he says.

Let us now turn to and read some passages that illustrate this point. We will begin with **John 20:30-31**. Notice that the purpose for the author writing his book is clearly stated. He is not trying to write a general history of the life of Jesus but rather a very specific and carefully constructed view of certain portions of Jesus' life that would – in the opinion of the writer – **convince** any reader that Jesus is the Christ.

Another passage we need to consider is **2 Peter 1:3-4**. Notice how Peter indicates that God has provided us with all things (information and instruction) which we need “for life and for godliness” and how there is a PURPOSE behind God giving his message to mankind. That purpose is “change”!

Another important passage is the **2 Timothy 3:16-17** we looked at in our previous lesson. As we discovered, it contains the idea that, because the Bible comes from God (and not from man), it is “**USEFUL FOR**” a number specific things. This would indicate, once again, that the message from God came in order to accomplish something besides reading for entertainment.

Ultimately, we must accept that it is not enough simply to devote ourselves to daily Bible reading or even to memorizing certain passages. God’s intention for all mankind continues to be for us to listen carefully to all of what he says, but, more importantly, for us **to follow** whatever he says!_

2. THE BIBLE COMES FROM GOD.

All the information we have seen in our studies so far shows us that the Bible comes from God and belongs to him. Since this is true, each person should be very careful to accept each and every teaching found inside. Bible study is not like eating at a cafeteria, where a person can select only the food they like and pass over the food they do not like. The only choice a person has is whether to BELIEVE and FOLLOW God. If we choose to do so, then we MUST accept and submit to EVERYTHING that God says. Therefore, if conflicts arise between the teachings of a certain religious group, and what is taught in the Bible, then **we must choose** which one we will follow. Ignoring the problem will not make it go away! Unfortunately, deciding NOT to choose ... IS to choose!

Let us consider an interesting passage from the life of Jesus. **Matthew 7:21-23** contains a warning to anyone wishing to become a follower of God. It explains that it is not enough for a person to claim to be a follower and be a “religious” person. What God is looking for in a follower is someone that will **do the things HE wants** them to do. This means that the message God gave us in the Bible contains all things that **he wants** his followers to do and anyone seeking to be one of his followers must choose to accept those things and do them in the way God wants them done.

Ultimately, since the Bible comes from God, we must accept it as the final authority on any subject. We must also reject any person or idea that does not agree with its teachings – no matter how sincere or religious they may appear! It is “the will of the Father” that we must seek to follow and **that will** is contained only in the Bible.

3. GOD’S MESSAGE HAS ONLY ONE MEANING AND SHOULD NOT BE CHANGED.

Since the message of Christianity comes from the New Testament, and since the New Testament message was completed during the time of the first Christians and written down for all time, then the teachings and practices of Christianity today should be the same as those of original Christianity. Since we have the same God and the same message, then if we understand and follow exactly what the Bible says we will become the same kind of Christians they were!

God’s message will never change even though time and technology might. The world today is much more advanced than it was during the time of Jesus. During his time, people didn’t have any cars, buses, television sets, radios, airplanes, gas stoves, and the Internet. However, God’s message is not intended to make man more advanced in the area of technology. The part of man that the Bible message affects does not change with the advances in technology. Man today still sins in the very same ways that men were sinning back in the time of Jesus. The Bible seeks to help man eliminate sin from his life and so the message of the Bible is just as much for **US** as it was for **THEM!** God’s message is the same for all people living in all times and all places and so **genuine** Christianity will always be the same anywhere it happens to be found and in any time period.

4. WHEN WE STUDY THE BIBLE, WE MUST PUT ASIDE ALL RELIGIOUS IDEAS THAT WE WERE TAUGHT IN THE PAST.

Religious **bias**¹² is perhaps the most dangerous enemy of good Bible study. It sneaks into a person’s mind very slowly over the years and causes a person to believe very strongly in one certain way of thinking, to the point where they can easily become close-minded to any beliefs which differ from their own.

¹² Bias happens when a person assumes that what he has been told is true even though he has never investigated to see if there is evidence to prove that it is true.

The main problem with this is that, in reality, those beliefs that have been planted in the heart of an individual **may not be correct**. For most people, religious bias comes from the years of exposure to their “family religion” and, while this may seem innocent it must be admitted that growing up in a certain religious environment causes one to trust whatever beliefs and practices one has been exposed to – **without the proper investigation**. One reason why religious bias is so dangerous is that it is hard for a person who is biased to realize it because, as it usually turns out, their biased view of religion is the only one they have ever known and they have never studied the Bible to make certain that their beliefs are true. Evidence that religious bias exists can be seen in the fact that so many people today are drawn to believe that certain things are right and wrong without any real explanation for why they think so. Many people will simply oppose any teaching or practice **which is not found in their own church** because of the conviction in their heart that, “My church is the right church and since we don’t practice that teaching then it must be wrong because if that teaching was correct then my church would be doing it!” This way of thinking has led many sincere people to conclude that the most important thing in religion is to belong to the **right group**. The idea seems to be that if a person is in the right group then they are “covered” by the group’s good behavior and practices. In such a situation the individual would no longer have to think about what they personally believe, but rather, they would simply need to follow whatever the group’s leaders told them to do. This idea is very wrong!

Where does this religious bias come from? Once we become adults one of the most dangerous things we carry with us into Bible study is the knowledge we have learned from our past religious experiences. Most of the things we know about religion were learned by listening to friends, family members, and various religious leaders. **Very few of us can say that we believe as we do because of careful Bible study!** However, how can we be certain that all of the things we heard from all those people are true **if we never study the Bible to check to see if they are true?** Does the fact that a certain religious group has existed in a particular country for hundreds of years prove that what they teach is correct? What if this same religious group currently has millions of followers? Does that prove that its teachings and practices are genuine and come from God? Of course not and yet it is very possible that a person involved in such a group might be biased and mistakenly think so.

Even in Bible study, our bias might keep us from seeing and accepting God’s truth. After all, the thought of having to accept that the religion of one’s family is teaching error is a powerful force to overcome! However, whenever we study the Bible we **MUST put aside** all former teachings we learned over the years and pretend that we have never heard about them. Then we **MUST** study the facts presented in the Bible without being biased! We **MUST** make conclusion based only upon what the facts presented by God in the Bible tell us. Once we have finished our research and made our conclusions is the time we can bring back our religion’s ideas and compare them side by side with what we have learned from our Bible study. If what we have learned from our Bible study matches what we were taught in our religion then we have nothing to worry about. However, if the two are different then we have a problem. We must decide which of the two we will follow—our religion or God’s teachings!

This is the difficulty everyone faces when they decide to study the TRUTH of the Bible and it takes much strength and courage to carry through to the end.

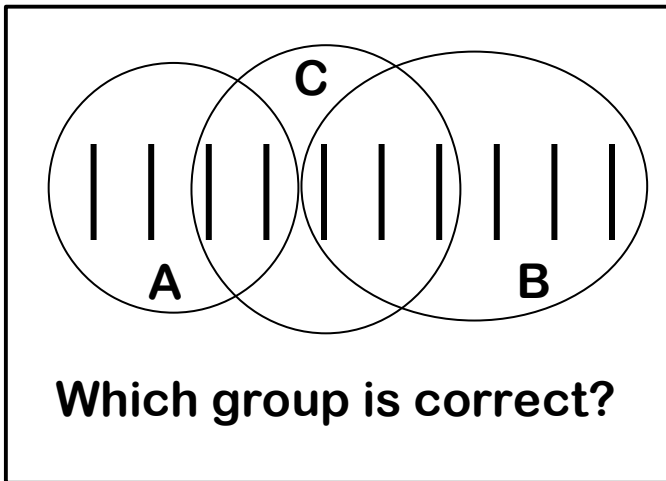
5. STUDY ALL AVAILABLE MATERIAL ON A SUBJECT BEFORE YOU MAKE ANY CONCLUSIONS.

Another reason why people sometimes come to wrong conclusions about what the Bible teaches is because they only study a portion of all the evidence found in the Bible. We are all familiar with making conclusions based upon evidence because it happens every day in the courts of our land. Judges make rulings based upon the presentation of evidence and as long as they are not biased, and, they examine **ALL** of the evidence, then it is possible for them to make fair and truthful judgments.

In many ways, there is a parallel between our example of a judge in a courtroom and studying the Bible. When a judge hears a case, the lawyers for each side present their evidence. One side will go first and then the other. Suppose that a certain judge presides over a case in which there are a total of ten (10) witnesses. Let us say that there will be five (5) for the prosecution and five (5) for the defense. Would it be proper for the judge to hear the testimony of the five prosecution witnesses and then stop the trial and make his decision? Of course not because that would not be fair! After all, no matter how convincing the first witnesses might be there might be a witness from the other side that would prove the truth of the matter beyond a doubt. **Therefore, a good judge MUST consider ALL evidence before making any conclusions!**

Consider the following hypothetical illustration. Let us say that there is a topic we are very interested in learning about and the Bible has ten (10) verses that provide the details of what God has to say. Now let us say that there is a hypothetical religious group, we will call it “**Group A**”, and they begin a search for what God says on the matter. These people are very sincere and honest but they only accept 4 out of the 10 possible verses.

While they take great care in putting these 4 passages into context their conclusion is only partly correct because they refuse to add the remaining 6 pieces of evidence. Now then, let us say that there is another religious group, “**Group B**”. They accept the remaining 6 verses which “Group A” would not accept, but this new group refuses to accept the 4 that are used by Group A! Naturally, their conclusion is “different” from Group A!



To make matters even more confusing for us, let us say that there is a third group, “**Group C**”. They take 2 of the verses from “Group A” and 3 of the 6 used by “Group B” to come up with a completely different conclusion, which they feel is a **compromise** between the extreme positions of the other two!

Notice that while each group makes a conclusion which they can say is “based upon what the Bible says” **none of the three** is accomplishing what they should because none are looking at **ALL** of what the Bible says regarding this particular question. Each group arrives at a conclusion and each conclusion is a little different. The problem is that each group **CLAIMS** to be teaching the truth and has Bible

verses to support their belief!

The ultimate question we must ask is, “**Which group is correct?**” The answer of course is, “None of them!” While all three groups go to the Bible for evidence on which to base their conclusion, they do not consider **ALL** of the evidence. The result is that their different teachings come about due to their only looking at **partial evidence**. However many passages God might give for consideration, our conclusion **MUST** include information contained in **ALL OF THEM!**

In reality, our sample using three groups does not accurately represent what is happening today because there are literally hundreds of groups creating different ideas and teachings based upon partial evidence!

It isn’t enough for someone to simply say that they have **found a certain Bible verse** to support a certain teaching they have or answer a question. Each individual verse must fit together with the other passages which speak about the same subject in much the same way pieces of a jigsaw puzzle fit together to form a picture. Each piece fits only one way and a person cannot understand the meaning of the picture unless all the pieces are assembled in their proper place. We know from our experiences in school that in order for a person to adequately understand a lesson, all the points presented in the material must be understood and linked together logically. It is the same for studying and understanding the Bible.

6. WE MUST CAREFULLY PUT EACH AND EVERY VERSE INTO ITS PROPER CONTEXT.

One of the most common mistakes people make when they study the Bible is taking a passage and attaching a meaning to it which is out of the original **context**¹³. Context plays an extremely important part in all communication and it is **especially important** when determining the correct meaning of written communication. A sentence that is part of a paragraph might have several possible meanings if it is looked at by itself. However, when a person looks at that sentence **in the context** of the other sentences found in the same paragraph then the **intended meaning** of the original writer is much easier to determine.

In Bible study, we must remember that each individual verse is actually a sentence, or a portion of a sentence, and that each sentence is part of a paragraph, and that each paragraph is part of a thought, which in turn is combined with other thoughts presented by God through an author to communicate something to the intended readers. It may become necessary to read the entire chapter of a Bible book, or even an entire book, before we can understand the intended meaning of a single verse!

In addition to the context of the sentences **we must also consider such things as the historical, cultural, and social backgrounds** of the original writer and the readers in order to understand the intended meaning of the verses of the Bible.

When it comes to Bible study, there are **two basic types of context** we need to understand:

¹³ Context means looking at how something fits together with the things going on around it.

1. **NEAR CONTEXT** is concerned with how a passage fits together with verses that come before and after it.
2. **BIBLE-WIDE CONTEXT**, as the name implies, seeks to understand how the meaning of a particular verse, and its surrounding verses, fit together with other passages speaking about the same subject which are found elsewhere in the Bible.

Adding this point about context to what we have already learned, we find that proper Bible study is done by finding all available information on the topic we want to study and then putting each passage into its proper context so that we can discover each passage's intended meaning. Once we have done that we can combine the individual details together like puzzle pieces to create a "picture" which will answer our question.

7. BIBLE STUDY IS A TWO-PHASE PROJECT. WE MUST FIRST SEEK TO OBTAIN THE ORIGINAL INTENDED MEANING. THEN WE CAN DETERMINE IF THAT MEANING APPLIES TO OUR TIME.

Does every verse of the Bible have an application for us in our time? When we read the story of Noah in the book of Genesis and find that God gave instructions to build a giant boat are we to build that boat again today? It is doubtful that anyone would answer, "Yes", to that question because context shows us that those instructions were only for Noah. What about the other passages and teachings found in the Bible? How can we determine which portions of the Bible we should and should not follow in our lives today?¹⁴

Here is where we come to the heart of what the process of Bible study is all about. While some might try to say that Bible study is simply a matter of reading the Bible and doing **everything** it says, it is a bit more complicated than that. The case of Noah and his giant boat shows us that there **are** instructions found inside the Bible which are only for certain people living in certain places and in certain times. Because of this, we learn that Bible study is in fact **a two-phase process**.

The first phase of Bible study is discovering the intended meaning of the original writer. This is done by carefully investigating each verse **in its context**.

Once the original meaning has been understood then we must see if the intended meaning has any application in our lives today. This is the second phase of the Bible study process. In this phase we must look more closely at the background of the passage and see who is doing the speaking and to whom is the person speaking. In order for something to be applicable for us in our time it needs to be established that the instruction was really intended for us.

We should also be aware of the fact that not all instructions found in the Bible come to us in the same form. Some instructions are given in the form of direct statements, or commands, which everyone must accept and follow in exactly the same way. (An example of this kind of teaching would be the commandment, "Thou shall not kill.") However, other instructions take the form of principles, which can be applied in various ways, depending upon the circumstances. (An example of this kind of teaching would be "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.") Even if we determine that a passage of the Bible applies to us, we need to consider whether it applies in our time in the same way as it did in the time of the Bible people. This can be very difficult to do!

8. NO PASSAGE FROM THE BIBLE THAT IS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND WILL CONTRADICT ONE WHICH IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND.

Analyzing a passage of the Bible is not always easy to do because some passages are very difficult to understand. However, most Bible studies will include verses that will be easy to understand and some not so easy. We must remember that any conclusions we might make concerning a difficult passage should not contradict verses which are easy to understand. In such cases the easier passages make a foundation of understanding for that topic and the more difficult passages must be studied while considering those easier ones. There cannot be two different (or opposing) conclusions for any one subject.

If we encounter a difficult passage that seems to contradict a conclusion that can easily be seen from looking at a number of very simple and clear passages, then we must conclude that our understanding of the difficult passage is wrong. It is not logical that God would say one thing using very simple statements and then say the opposite using statements which are difficult to understand. (Going back to our example of the puzzle, a person cannot **force** a puzzle piece to fit where it does not belong! We establish where a piece of the puzzle belongs by

¹⁴ Do not forget that we have already seen how God has spoken to man in TWO messages and that the second message is the one intended for us today. That message is the New Testament.

carefully looking at the surrounding pieces.) If working out the context of the passage does not help then look for other verses that give information about the same subject. Perhaps the meaning of those other passages will be clearer and help understand the intended meaning of the difficult passage. (If we go back to the puzzle illustration, if there is one piece that gives people a problem at the beginning of the puzzle, all you have to do is leave it aside until the very end and it will be easy to find where it goes because there will be only one space left!)

A very good and simple illustration of this point from the Bible is found when we compare two parallel statements made by Jesus. In **Luke 14:26** he says that anyone who “does not **hate**” his relatives cannot be his disciple. The use of the word “hate” gives us some difficulty because it is a very strong word in our language today. Does Jesus mean that disciples must carry true hatred in their hearts for their relatives as a requirement for being a disciple? This is confusing. However, there is a parallel passage for this topic. It is found in **Matthew 10:37-38**. Here, context reveals that Jesus is speaking about **the same topic** – the commitment of discipleship – and once again he speaks of the believer and his attitude regarding relatives. (The context here is extremely important in establishing a link with the one found in Luke 14!) Here Jesus **more clearly** brings out the meaning of what he said in Luke 14. By looking carefully at both passages – and considering also the rest of Jesus’ teachings on commitment, discipleship, love, and hate — **we can more easily understand** that Jesus intended for the people of Luke 14 to understand what is more clearly explained in Matthew 10.

9. BIBLE EXAMPLES HELP TO CONFIRM OUR UNDERSTANDING AND CONCLUSIONS.

After completing research and coming to a conclusion, if we can identify examples of people in the Bible doing or teaching the same thing that we have concluded, we can be fairly certain that our own conclusion is correct. On the other hand, if we find examples of people from that time, and in the same situation, doing or teaching something different from what we have concluded then that would be an indication that our own conclusion might not be correct. Bible examples may not always be present, but when they are we should pay careful attention to what they show us.

Simply finding an example of someone doing or not doing something may or may not be an indication of some kind of instruction from God. It may or may not be something that all believers are supposed to do. The discovery of a single example of someone doing something in the Bible does not **in itself** mean that we should or must do the same thing. Even the continued occurrence of one or more people doing something repeatedly in the Bible does not **in itself** indicate something that everyone must do. **Frequency alone** is not sufficient evidence to make such a determination. We might be fairly certain that an example is being intended if we find people **in different places** and **different contexts** doing the same things. In such cases it could be possible that there is some instruction from God that is causing the consistent pattern of behavior. However, concluding such, **without any accompanying instruction**, even if a consistent pattern can be seen, would still be guessing!

10. THE EXPLANATIONS WHICH GOD GIVES IN THE BIBLE SHOULD ALWAYS TAKE PRIORITY OVER OUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, FEELINGS AND EXPECTATIONS.

Sometimes people have what is often called a “**RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE**”, which may take the form of anything from seeing a vision in a dream to receiving what some people call “the baptism of the Holy Spirit” during a religious gathering. While none of us can say what God may or may not do to communicate with people today we should remember that even if something unique like this might happen to us we do not have the right to say that we no longer need to study the Bible! Whatever we might experience, the facts we learned in our last lesson remain. God said that his message has already been revealed, during the first century, and every person who lives after the death of his son is required to understand and follow that message. This fact will never change. Ever since Jesus left the Earth people have wanted to “experience” God in a personal way. Unfortunately, this desire has often led sincere people to believe that they have experienced something which in fact they did not. Some people after receiving these kinds of experiences have left the Bible message behind believing, instead, that have direct guidance from God.

We must never allow “personal religious experiences” to become more important than what we read in the Bible. If we feel that we have experienced God’s direct action or revelation in our own life then we should examine the Bible carefully to see if it describes the same experience as something which is indeed from God. If the Bible is silent or explains things differently—in even a small way—then our experience isn’t from God because we have discovered that God will not say or do something to you that he has not previously said or done in the lives of the original Christians!

Before proceeding any further, please turn now and read the verses found in **2 Thessalonians 2:9-11**. Please read through this passage twice.

This is an amazing Bible passage! It speaks of miracles, and deception, and the power of the **Evil One**¹⁵, and it also speaks of God acting in a way that seems opposite of his usual character! Let us take the points one by one as they are presented. All the negative statements are introduced by the portion that describes the hearts and minds of the people being spoken about. They are people who will no longer hold fast to the truth and instead will put their trust in what they **have experienced**. Notice that it is **their desire** for these miraculous powers that causes them to not be satisfied with the truth. This desire blinds them to the point where they can no longer see that the power they are witnessing is from the Evil One. Since they refuse to love the truth, God responds by doing something very interesting. The passage says that he will send to them “a working of deception” to **cause them to believe** that what they are seeing and experiencing is from him when in fact it is not! What can **we** learn from this passage? One very clear thing is that you cannot be certain that all powerful things you see with your eyes are from God! We also learn that God’s power and God’s message will always agree. We also learn that Satan can CLAIM to be doing God’s power, and that the only way to know the difference is by examining the message that is found together with that power.

This warning is echoed in **2 Corinthians 11:13-15**, where we are told that people will be deceived by the servants of the Devil. They will believe that what they are seeing is true when in fact it is not. With warnings such as these we surely cannot accept everything we see or experience as being genuine simply because it is being done “in the name of God”. We first must verify what we have seen or experienced by testing it against what we find being taught in the Bible.

There is a direct relationship between what we are saying here and what Jesus taught in **Matthew 7:21-23**. Remember how he spoke of people doing miraculous things “in his name”, but how he will reject those people because their lives were not based upon God’s will — the truth?

We all would like very much to have a very direct relationship with God in which we could constantly receive personal guidance and instruction. However, we should remember that God has already decided how he will relate to us. He gave to us his second message and has shown what he expects people to do. It is our responsibility to accept what God offers and accept these things **on his terms**. If we start placing too much desire upon our wishes for how we would like God to communicate with us in our lives, then we should not be surprised if all the things we desire begin to happen just as we want them to. However, just because our expectations become realities this does not mean that what we are receiving is some sort of reward from him. Considering the warnings mentioned above, we may in fact be receiving a “powerful delusion” from God and, in reality, everything we are experiencing might be a lie! The only way we can be absolutely certain we are in a right relationship with God is if we learn his message and carefully follow what he says. There is no substitute for studying the Bible.

Illustration: A Story About A Man Caught In A Flood

Once there was a man who lived in a house beside a river. After several days of heavy rain the river began to rise and when the water entered his house the man escaped by crawling up on his roof. As the water continued to rise he became afraid for his life and so began praying to God that he might be delivered from this terrible situation. A few minutes later, a man in a very small boat came paddling over to the house and he offered to take the man to safety. The man replied, “No thank you for I have prayed to the Lord and he will save me!” The man in the boat scratched his head and left. Time passed and the water continued to rise until it was up to the level of the roof! Again, the man prayed to the Lord and a few minutes later, a man in a large motor boat came by and offered to take him to safety. The man replied, “No thank you for I have prayed to the Lord and **I know** he will save me!” The water continued to rise until even though the man stood at the highest point of his roof the water was up to his knees! Once again the man prayed to the Lord, this time with loud cries and tears, and a few minutes later, a helicopter arrived and the pilot sent down a ladder and offered to take the man to safety. Once again, the man replied, “No thank you, Sir, for I have prayed to the Lord and **I just know** that he will save me!” Shortly thereafter the water swept the man away and he drowned. All at once he found himself standing in the presence of the Lord. The man suddenly became upset and asked, “Lord, why did you desert me and leave me to die when I asked you three times to save me?” In reply, the Lord said, “How can you say I left you to die? Didn’t I send you a man in a small boat, then one in a large motor boat, and finally one in a helicopter?”

¹⁵ The phrase “Evil One” is often used to refer to Satan.

The lesson is simple. The man **expected** a certain reaction from God based on **what he wanted** God to do. His biased expectations blinded him to the point that he did not recognize God's hand in the offers of the men that tried to rescue him. God speaks to us and tells us exactly **what HE wants** and **in the way that HE wants!** We cannot demand that he do the things we want and in the way that we want them done! **He is God and does things his own way!**

11. EVERY INDIVIDUAL HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO STUDY THE BIBLE FOR HIMSELF/HERSELF.

Please read and consider very carefully **Romans 14:10** and **2 Corinthians 5:10**. Both of these passages speak about the same topic. What is that topic? It is the Judgment Day! Both passages emphasize one point, how the Judgment will take place. Each person will be responsible for their own actions, and the determination of where they end up will be based upon the things each person has done.

Since the final judgment will be a matter that is between each individual person and God then it is very important for each person to make certain they know exactly what they are supposed to do. You cannot blame anyone but yourself if you do not find the truth!

12. A RELIGIOUS GROUP DOES NOT DETERMINE WHAT THE BIBLE DOES AND DOES NOT TEACH REGARDING A CERTAIN MATTER. IT IS THE BIBLE THAT DETERMINES WHAT A RELIGIOUS GROUP SHOULD AND SHOULD NOT TEACH!

Considering the attitudes of people in modern religion, this might be the most important guideline to remember. Just because a group of influential religious people (whether they might be preachers, priests, pastors, elders, apostles, or even angels from heaven) decide that a certain teaching should or should not be taught **does not** make it correct! **If a teaching is genuine, then we should be able to find it explained and taught to the original Christians inside of the Bible!** Following teachings that originate from men is wrong. We already have enough things given to us by God to do. We certainly don't need the added burden of having to follow additional teachings given by religious leaders. The message of the Bible belongs to God and if we want to establish a relationship with him we must **LISTEN TO WHAT HE SAYS** and disregard the opinions of men! Always remember that God's word must take priority over the opinions and teachings of **ALL MEN!**

Consider carefully the following passages, paying careful attention to their context.¹⁶

Galatians 1:6-9 - *"I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!"*

2 Timothy 3:1-5 - *"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power."*

2 Timothy 4:1-5 - *"In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry."*

Do you remember what we mentioned back in our introduction to this course material, about the hundreds of Christian groups? **It isn't enough for people today to simply CLAIM to be Christians, or to CLAIM to follow the truth! If we CLAIM to follow God then we must truly follow him!**

¹⁶ These three passages are quoted from the **New International Version** of the Bible.

13. USE BIBLE RESEARCH AND REFERENCE BOOKS TO HELP YOU FIND THE TRUTH.

Seeing that, in some instances, it is necessary to study through as many as a hundred verses or more before making a conclusion, one might wonder how we go about finding all those passages. Fortunately, there are a number of helpful reference tools which can make our study efforts easier and more fulfilling. One such reference book is called a **CONCORDANCE**. This is a special book that provides lists verses from the Bible that speak about a certain subject. These books do not explain teachings or give commentary on the verses. They simply provide lists of verses. This tool will help find all of the “puzzle pieces” and make it much easier for us to do research.

A **LEXICON** is also a useful tool. This is simply a dictionary for the Bible languages and we can find lexicons for both the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, and the Greek language of the New Testament. We can use lexicons to look up the meanings of the words found in the original language text of the Bible.

To gain more understanding, sometimes it helps to look for information on the English topic using a **BIBLE DICTIONARY**. These books are good because they often give historical and cultural information on the people and places we read about in the Bible.

COMMENTARIES are books that are written by men and women who feel they can help people by explaining the passages of the Bible. Commentaries come in various types. Some commentaries might deal with a certain book of the Bible and go through its content verse by verse. Other commentaries are topical and deal with a certain subject or question. We should always **be cautious when using commentaries because the people who write them are NOT being guided by God as the original writers of the Bible were!** Many times these people misinterpret the Bible because they fail to apply the guidelines for Bible study we have learned. Therefore, when reading a commentary one should never take the comments of the author without first studying the Bible and finding the truth. Use commentaries only to see if other people have come to the same conclusions you did in your own study!

The Bible is the **only BOOK** which contains God’s message for man. It is the only one we can completely trust!

CONCLUSION:

Bible study is one of the most important endeavors we will ever perform! We cannot follow God unless we know what he wants us to do. We cannot know what he wants us to do unless we study. This is a simple truth that will not change throughout time! By keeping these few guidelines in mind you will find that you **can** understand the Bible and form your own conclusions, and these conclusions can be based upon facts. However, always remember that **YOU are responsible to answer to God for what YOU believe!** Do not neglect this or you **will** regret it!

In addition, never forget that it is not enough to simply study the Bible and CLAIM to be a Christian. God’s goal is not fully accomplished in our lives until we obey what he has told us to do. As a closing thought to our lesson, let us examine **1 John 2:3-6**. Notice how the writer here states, in a similar way Jesus did in **Matthew 7:21-23**, that it is not enough for someone to SAY they believe in God. If the claim of belief is not supported by the action of obedience, then there is no truth in the claim! This is why Bible study alone is not sufficient. **Bible study helps us to know God’s will. Obedience to that will makes us his possession!**

In this lesson, we discussed many points relating to how proper Bible study is done. In our next lesson, we will continue this discussion and try to apply what we have learned in a practical way.

Before proceeding, please answer the test questions for Lesson 3:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lessons. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the CIRCLE for that answer choice on the answer sheet. Remember to bring the answer sheet with you and turn it in to your teacher. We will grade your answers and record your grade in our records.

1. The problem with the man who was caught in the flood was that he
 - a) should have kept a boat beside his house in case of an emergency.
 - b) did not believe in God.
 - c) was expecting God to do what he wanted instead of accepting what God offered to him.
 - d) should have prayed with more respect to God.
2. TRUE or FALSE: Not having enough time to study or experiencing difficulty while studying are **valid** excuses for you not studying the Bible.
 - a) True
 - b) False
3. Perhaps the greatest reason why many people find Bible study difficult is
 - a) the size of the printing in the verses of most Bibles is too small to read well.
 - b) religious leaders are smarter than ordinary people and so they feel hesitant to study.
 - c) the church forbids regular members to study the Bible for themselves.
 - d) the information they need to study is often scattered throughout the Bible and not always easy to find.
4. What lesson do we learn about Bible study from the story of Noah and his giant boat?
 - a) It was possible for people to construct giant objects even though their technology was not advanced.
 - b) Not every story in the Bible applies directly to our time today. Some only teach us principles.
 - c) We should all go out and build another giant boat and prepare for another great flood to destroy the world.
 - d) We cannot believe every story in the Bible because no single person could build such a big boat alone.
5. The story of Noah and the Ark illustrates how **all** Bible study is
 - a) not a matter of simply reading a few pages from one of the books.
 - b) sometimes difficult to determine how a passage applies to our time today.
 - c) a **two-phase** process.
 - d) all of the above.
6. The **first phase** of Bible study is
 - a) reading the entire Bible from cover to cover.
 - b) establishing the original meaning of the one who wrote the passage we are studying.
 - c) praying for God to guide our minds to the truth.
 - d) making a chart to record our research findings.
7. The **second phase** of Bible study is
 - a) asking a church leader to explain the passage to us.
 - b) looking at the passage we are studying in different kinds of Bibles.
 - c) determining if the original meaning has any application in our time today.
 - d) checking our findings inside of a Bible commentary.
8. As we study the Bible, we should be aware of the fact that the instructions from God come to us in the form of
 - a) direct statements and commands.
 - b) stories which teach lessons in the form of principles.
 - c) both A & B.
 - d) neither A or B.
9. The only sure way for a person to be able to separate truth from the confusion of errors we find in religion today is
 - a) consult their family preacher, pastor, or priest and believe whatever they say without questioning.
 - b) study the Bible for himself/herself and make a comparison between their findings and what is being taught.
 - c) pray for God to show them the difference between truth and error.
 - d) listen to what their heart tells them to do.
10. TRUE or FALSE: The **process** of Bible study is different from how we study something in school.
 - a) True
 - b) False
11. According to our lesson material, the main difference between Bible study and studying in school is
 - a) the nature and origin of the material being studied is different.
 - b) school studies are graded and Bible studies are not.
 - c) Bible study requires guidance from God and school studies do not.
 - d) school studies are taught by school teachers and Bible studies are taught by preachers, pastors, or priests.
12. One of the most important things we learned about the process of studying something is that
 - a) it is always difficult.
 - b) if you don't get good grades you will be kept back.
 - c) the teacher is always right.
 - d) the process of study **MUST** be unbiased.

13. TRUE or FALSE: When it comes to studying something, “understanding” and “being unbiased” mean the opposite of one another.
- True
 - False
14. TRUE or FALSE: One reason why there are so many different religious groups today is that most people always study the Bible in an unbiased way.
- True
 - False
15. When we speak of putting a Bible passage into **context**, we are saying that
- we should look at a verse together with the verses that come before it and after it so that we can understand the thought the author was intending.
 - we should consider the historical and cultural background of the people who wrote and received the original message.
 - we should consider how this passage fits together with all other passages throughout the entire Bible.
 - all of the above.
16. TRUE or FALSE: Each time we study a passage from the Bible we must read and analyze it in context.
- True
 - False
17. TRUE or FALSE: One reason why there are so many different religions today is that many people take individual verses from the Bible and do not put them into their proper context.
- True
 - False
18. TRUE or FALSE: We can discover errors in religion today by taking the verses given by a certain group, in support of their teaching, and checking the proper context. If the modern teaching does not fit with the original context then it has to be wrong.
- True
 - False
19. Considering our 13 guidelines, two basic building blocks of Bible study, which if applied consistently will produce a faith that is based upon **UNDERSTANDING**, are
- a good Bible translation and a quiet place to study.
 - getting rid of bias and always looking at the context.
 - listening to your religious leaders and living a good life.
 - prayer and fasting.
20. A good judge **always**
- listens to one side and then makes a ruling.
 - makes his ruling based upon the educational background and physical appearance of the accused.
 - makes his conclusion only after listening to ALL of the evidence from both sides.
 - none of the above.
21. TRUE or FALSE: One reason why there are so many different religions today is that many groups have teachings which are only based upon “partial evidence”.
- True
 - False
22. After we finish a study and make our conclusions, we can confirm that our conclusions are correct by
- asking our religious leaders if they agree with our findings on the matter.
 - searching the Bible to see if there are examples of people believing and/or doing what we have just concluded from our research.
 - searching commentaries of our favorite writers to see if they agree with our conclusions.
 - none of the above.
23. If God provides us with 10 verses of information on a certain topic, then how many of these should we study before we make any conclusions?
- At least 2 out of the 10.
 - A simple majority of 6 out of 10 should be enough.
 - It should be at least 9 out of 10.
 - We should study all 10 of them.
24. Very often, we can determine that a certain religious teaching is wrong by
- checking to see if it agrees with **all** of the information contained in the Bible.
 - discovering that the leaders of the religious group are involved in some kind of illegal activity.
 - comparing the teaching to the common religious traditions of the people living today.
 - simply asking our own religious leaders what they think about the teaching.

25. Although proper Bible study is based upon a simple idea, the fact remains that some Bible studies
- a) might involve working through hundreds of passages.
 - b) might take hundreds of study hours to complete.
 - c) might require us to research the meanings of words from the original languages of Hebrew and Greek.
 - d) all of the above.
26. The point we find in **Galatians 1:6-9** is
- a) we should only accept different teachings if they are given to us by angels.
 - b) there were people at that time who were claiming to be Christians but who were changing the teachings.
 - c) any teaching is good as long as it is good..
 - d) all of the above.
27. TRUE or FALSE: If people want to believe that wrong religious teachings are “right”, then God will send them something so that they will believe those things, because **they** refused to love his truth.
- a) True.
 - b) False.
28. The point we find in **2 Timothy 4:1-5** is
- a) people will forget the truth be attracted to religious groups that say the things they want to hear.
 - b) we should always look for a religious group that has a popular teacher.
 - c) true Christianity is determined by the number of people who are members of a particular church group.
 - d) all of the above.
29. TRUE or FALSE: We should always trust the writers of commentaries more than our own Bible study because commentaries are written by experts and we are not experts.
- a) True
 - b) False

LESSON FOUR

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE – PART 2

We hope that you have enjoyed the course so far and that you have been able to discover answers to some questions that might have been in your mind for a while. Surely you will have noticed that we have already examined a very large number of Bible verses and that these verses have provided the force to all points we have made in the course thus far. This has not been by accident. We believe that **2 Timothy 3:16-17** is true and that God gave us the Bible as a guide to answer our questions. In addition, we believe that it is a **complete** guide for finding all the information we need to have a happy and productive relationship with God. However, in order to have this kind of relationship, we must study the Bible in the correct way.

In our previous lesson, we discussed a few guidelines for Bible study. As you look back at them, you will notice that common sense plays a very important part in studying the Bible. You will also note how similar studying the Bible is to studying any other subject. The main difference between studying Chemistry and Bible IS NOT in the way the study process is done, but in the fact that while Chemistry books are written by men, the Bible was written by God. Studying involves finding information and understanding it in context. Then any application of that understanding can be made as needed.

YOU CAN DO THIS KIND OF BIBLE STUDY FOR YOURSELF

At first, this kind of Bible study sounds pretty simple. However, please understand that it is not quite **THAT** simple. In the previous lesson material, one of our illustrations involved a simple model using ten (10) passages. In reality, there are some topics in the Bible that will involve studying through several hundred passages and the study time will be considerable. You will find that the most difficult price to pay in Bible study is **time!** However, if you are willing to spend the time, the reward will be a faith that you **UNDERSTAND** and embrace **out of CONVICTION!** We hope that this reward might motivate you to start your own journey of Bible study. In order to help you get a taste of what we are talking about, we want to take you through a sample study that will use all of the ideas about Bible study we have so far discussed. Let's give it a try.

A MAN IS ATTACKED... AND YOU MUST FIND HIS ATTACKER!

During the final day of Jesus' life, he was involved in an incident, which is recorded in four different locations in the New Testament. As you will soon discover, each account is slightly different and no single account contains all of the details. By studying through each account and then combining all of the details together you will be able to see the whole picture and experience how Bible study really works.

Before we begin our research, consider this special note. Very often, the kind of Bible we use will determine the amount of understanding we obtain from our study. Some Bibles are easier to understand than others, while some are more accurate than others. You should make a goal for yourself to own a translation that you can both read and understand because if you own a Bible, but have difficulty reading and understanding it, then how will you be able to study?

The exercise you are about to do is designed to use the **King James Version**¹⁷ of the Bible. Since this version of the Bible is not so common today, we have provided you with the King James Version text of the four accounts of the incident we will use in our sample study. Please read and compare them carefully before proceeding with the rest of the lesson.

¹⁷ This version of the Bible was translated back in 1611 AD, in England, and is one of the most popular Bible translations ever produced. Many people today no longer use this translation because many of the words contained in it are no longer part of the everyday English language. In fact, you will be surprised to know that some of the words have changed their meaning so much that, in our world today, they mean almost the opposite from what they meant back in the year 1611! In any language, as time goes by, words change their meaning and so this is one reason why making new translations of the Bible is necessary.

Account #1

Matthew 26:46 Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me. 47 And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. 48 Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. 49 And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him. 50 And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. **51 And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.** 52 Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.

Account #2

Mark 14:44 And he that betrayed him had given them a token, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he; take him, and lead him away safely. 45 And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him. 46 And they laid their hands on him, and took him. **47 And one of them that stood by drew a sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.** 48 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves to take me? 49 I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and ye took me not: but the scriptures must be fulfilled.

Account #3

Luke 22:47 And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. 48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? 49 When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? **50 And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.** 51 And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

Account #4

John 18:3 Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. 4 Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? 5 They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. 6 As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. 7 Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. 8 Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: 9 That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none. **10 Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus.** 11 Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?

The specific verses we will be studying are **Matthew 26:51**, **Mark 14:47**, **Luke 22:50**, and **John 18:10**. (They have been highlighted for you above in **bold** print.) We have provided the other verses so that you can see a little of the context. Read each of these highlighted verses carefully. Do all four accounts say **exactly** the same things? No they do not. While they all mention some common details, each account contains individual information that is unique. The most important thing to notice is that **NONE of the four passages contain 100% of the information we need in order to make a final conclusion** about what happened that night when Jesus was arrested. To get the full story, **we must COMBINE** the details together.

One of the first things you will notice about these passages is that the English is not very easy to read and understand. Aside from the strangeness of the wording¹⁸, you will notice that the word “**smote**” is used in our passages several times. **Smote** is not a common word in our English language of today. What does this word mean? Finding words that we do not know is a common problem in Bible study. However, very often we will find that parallel passages use other words that we **DO** know and understand and by taking note of how the difficult words are interchanged with words we know in the parallel passages, we can often figure out the meaning of a difficult word or phrase. Because the word **smote** (in **Mark 14:47**) is interchanged with the word **struck** (in **Matthew 26:51**) we can determine that **smote** most probably means “**to hit**”. A quick look at a dictionary confirms that this is the correct meaning.¹⁹ The attacker smote/struck the servant with a sword. The reason why the ear came off was because he struck the ear with a sword instead of a stick or his hand!

¹⁸ You will notice that the King James Bible uses strange words like **ye**, **thee**, **thou**, **thy**, and adds **-est** at the end of words.

¹⁹ The word **smote** is past tense for the word, **smite**. According to *Webster's Dictionary* “smite” means to strike hard with the hand or anything held in the hand.

The best way to accomplish Bible research is to make a chart for recording details. (We have provided you with a chart below.) Your assignment is to read each verse from the King James Version (text provided above). Then you will notice there are columns in the chart with questions at the top of each column. Using the details provided by the context of each verse, record the answers to the questions found at the top of each column in the space provided for each verse of the study. Be very specific about what you record in each box. Make certain that the details you record are what is actually stated in the verse. Write what it actually says, not what you think it says! Try it! It will not be difficult.

THE STORY UNFOLDS ...

Verse	Who committed this crime?	What was the weapon used?	What did he do with the weapon?	Who was the victim?	What was the resulting injury?
Matt. 26:51					
Mark 14:47					
Luke 22:50					
John 18:10					

Now that you have completed the survey of all the individual passages, proceed to the chart below and write a summary of all the combined details in the space provided to discover the “**full story**” of what really happened. Be certain to include **all** details. (**PLEASE NOTE:** We will provide you with the answers to the chart when you come to class.)

THE STORY OF MALCHUS’ EAR

Verse	Who committed this crime?	What was the weapon used?	What did he do with the weapon?	Who was the victim?	What was the resulting injury?
The Full Story					

Here is an interesting thought to consider. As you think about the story of Malchus, what if for some reason we did not find the passage **John 18:10**? We would only have considered the first three accounts. How different would our conclusion have been? The most outstanding difference would be not discovering the final identity of the attacker. We would have found that the attacker was part of a group that was with Jesus but we would not have learned his name. This would have created a gap of information in the story. In the absence of any direct evidence, we could have easily **speculated** that the attacker was John, because the Bible documents that John was a very close friend of Jesus and surely he could have done this to help his very close friend! It would have been very **logical** to expect a close friend of Jesus to try to save him. **John seems like an excellent choice!**

Do you notice how **GOOD** all of the reasoning sounds? Jesus and John had a close friendship... Friends defending friends is very logical... Nevertheless, **we KNOW that this assertion is wrong!** The one remaining piece of evidence (**John 18:10**) **clearly states** that it was Peter and not John who attacked the High Priest's servant! Imagine how important the information from one single verse can be! This is why we cannot afford to skip any verse in the list.

What if the subject we were studying here was "man's salvation from sin" instead of "Malchus' ear"? Leaving out the details of even one verse could mean the difference between spending eternity in heaven or in hell! This is why it is so very important to try to get **ALL** the details **before** making **ANY** conclusions.

Bible study is not simply a matter of finding one or two verses and making a conclusion. Bible study is making conclusions based upon all available information!

We hope that you were able to complete the exercise and that you understand a little more about what Bible study is like. The most important things to remember are 1) to place each verse in its proper context, and 2) to draw conclusions from a **complete list of the facts**. Failure to do these will result in information which is applied incorrectly, or gaps of information into which you will be forced to insert opinions! Perhaps the greatest difficulties we face in Bible study are 1) locating all of the passages which we need to study in our research, and 2) then finding the necessary time to go through them ALL in a proper way. Finding lists of passages can be accomplished by using many of the study tools that are available today.²⁰ Finding the time to work through the context and think carefully about the meaning is something that will challenge us. **YOU** will have to determine how high a priority having a faith that is based upon **understanding the whole truth** really is!

THINK ABOUT THESE THINGS...

It isn't difficult for us to understand why one passage may not contain all the information we need in order **for us** to make a conclusion. We should remember that the Bible is not arranged in **topical** order. It is written in more of a history book style and does not always cover a particular topic completely the first time it speaks about it. Since God reveals details over time then we must find and consider all passages from inside the Bible before making any conclusion. This is why we must consider a Bible-wide context on every subject that we study because we do not want to leave out anything that God might have said down through the years.

Another consideration is the fact that some of the Bible books were letters written to help people overcome certain problems they were having. When the writer wrote his letter (book), he knew that his readers already had a certain amount of knowledge about the topics he wanted to write about. However, **we do not know** what this prior knowledge was. We cannot, therefore, assume that what we read about a certain topic in one particular book of the Bible represents 100% of all that God has to say about that topic. If we were to put this point into a formula then it might look something like this.

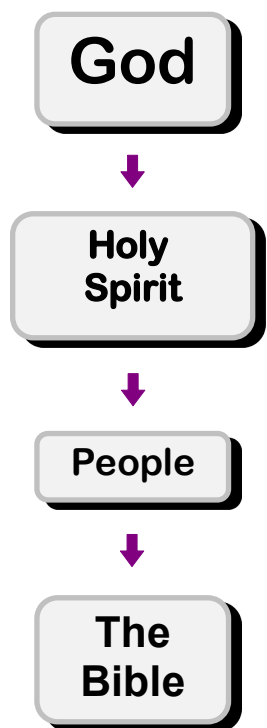
(The readers' prior knowledge) + (What the writer says) = (God's COMPLETE explanation)

This is the main reason why Bible study should be done carefully. Never forget the basic points that we learned are our foundation for study! Turn once again to **2 Timothy 3:16-17** and read. After all that we have seen in this lesson perhaps you can understand why we said that this is one of the most important passages in the whole Bible! Always remember that the Bible 1) comes from God—is "God breathed"; 2) that it is useful to us for guidance and correction; and 3) that with it, we are completely equipped for anything we need to do to serve God!

²⁰ A **concordance** is an example of a Bible study tool that can help us find lists of verses that use a common word.

INTERPRETATION VERSUS UNDERSTANDING

Please turn once again to **2 Peter 1:20-21**. This was a very important passage back in **Lesson 2** because it was in this passage we learned **HOW** the message came from God into the minds of the people who spoke and wrote for him. Do you remember the diagram? There is another point there that relates to how we should study the Bible.



In verse 20, the writer tells the readers to, “**UNDERSTAND** that no scripture is a matter of private **INTERPRETATION**”.²¹ This brings up one of the most, **if not THE single most**, important point to consider about Bible study! It is a point that is contained within the two highlighted words in the verse quotation above; **INTERPRETATION** and **UNDERSTANDING**! Think very carefully for just a moment about the meanings of these two words. How are they similar and how are they different? While they both carry the idea of possessing certain knowledge, they differ greatly in the way a person processes and passes along that knowledge.

Interpretation, allows a person the freedom to evaluate something **according to their opinion** and then pass their opinion along to others. If we apply this idea into a group of individuals then different people could **interpret** the same set of conditions in different ways and come to different conclusions because each person would have a different perspective and opinion. Finding **absolute truth** would be very difficult because each person would be tempted to believe his or her own opinion is the truth. Truth **would be different** for each person!

Understanding is different. It accepts a common explanation that is given by someone who is accepted as the authority on the matter. There is no opinion or interpretation in understanding because understanding accepts the conclusions that have been evaluated and defined by the authority. If we apply this idea into a group of individuals then they will share a common belief because they all would accept the one evaluation and conclusion which was made by the one commonly accepted authority. Truth would be the same for all because they would **ALL KNOW the same thing and accept it as “TRUTH”!**

The basic point we want to bring out here is the same one that Peter seemed to be saying in his letter. **Understanding creates unity** and **interpretation creates division**. The Bible is not something for us to form personal opinions over because no passage in the Bible ever came from the personal opinions of the one who wrote it. Peter explained that those people were “carried along” by God and that they spoke and wrote what God wanted them to say because he guided them to the message he wanted to give. Therefore, our task today in Bible study is to read the message they wrote and **UNDERSTAND it, not INTERPRET it!**

Some people might respond by suggesting that the difference between **INTERPRETATION** and **UNDERSTANDING** is very small and that we should not worry about it. As we consider this possibility let us look back to our study of **Malchus’ Ear**. Remember that if we had stopped our research after only seeing the details from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we would have discovered many things. Perhaps we would even be considered by some people to be “experts” on the matter, but, suppose that you were asked to give a lecture to a group of people regarding the question, “Who was the attacker of Malchus?”, what would you say? Since you did not look at what John said then how could you possibly **know** that it was Simon Peter? In the absence of this revealed fact you would have to make a guess and give your **interpretation; your OPINION!** Now you might have spent hours thinking things through carefully and people might really consider you an expert on the matter, but suppose that you said, “I believe that it was **John**, because the Bible record shows that he was a very close friend of Jesus and I just cannot see how John could stand by while his best friend was being arrested and taken away! **It HAD TO BE John!**” As we said before, although this explanation sounds very convincing **it is still WRONG!** We do not need to interpret, speculate, or guess because the answer is given by the evidence.

This is the way it is when we study **any** subject found in the Bible. All of the information God intended for us to have is located somewhere in the Bible. **We have to be patient and dedicated enough to find all of the information and then cautiously assemble it together in a logical manner, being careful to establish the context for each verse!** Always remember that God knew exactly what he wanted to tell us, and he had it written down for us to read and understand. Our task is to understand and follow all that he has instructed us to do.

²¹ This is the way the verse is written in the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

If everyone is allowed to follow their own **interpretations** when they read the Bible then how can there be **unity of belief**? If people focus upon doing **WHAT THEY THINK** God says, instead of doing **EXACTLY WHAT** God says, then unity will never be achieved because each person thinks, feels, and sees things differently. What will happen is that people of similar opinions will group together and form churches! In fact, this is exactly what is happening in our world today, This is the main reason why there are hundreds or thousands of groups instead of one!

Today, “feelings” have become a very common way for people to determine “truth” and many times, when two people disagree about religion, we will often hear, “**Well, that’s just your interpretation!**”, being used as an excuse not to accept truth. This is very sad.

During the time of Jesus, there were people who **felt** very certain that their faith in God was correct and Jesus condemned most of these people because, as it turned out, their faith was based upon their own interpretations and not upon what God really said! In **Mark 7:6-8**, Jesus spoke to the religious leaders who lived during his time. What did he tell them? He told them that their acts of devotion to God were **useless** because they had substituted their opinions and traditions in place of God’s words. Even if we do good things, if we base **our** faith upon **our OWN** interpretations then God has no authority in our lives!²²

WHY CAN MAN NOT GUIDE HIMSELF?

The simple fact is that man **does not have the capability of guiding himself** in the ways of God! This idea is mentioned over and over again in **BOTH** Testaments of the Bible. Perhaps the best explanation offered in the Old Testament is found in **Isaiah 55:6-9**. Please stop and read this passage. God himself tells us that his way of thinking and our human way of thinking are very different. The things that God likes and dislikes are not necessarily the same things we like and dislike, so while something might **seem right** in our human minds it may in fact be wrong as far as God is concerned!

This same idea is echoed again in **Proverbs 14:12**. Since a person does not know, **by instinct**, what God wants them to do then any person choosing to guide himself must resort to speculation, “human reason”, or guesses when making decisions. This is what **interpretation** is! Therefore, a person cannot judge religious truth by what **he reasons in his mind to be RIGHT and then by any good feeling he might have in his heart as he does it!** IN GOD’S EYES, that logical way, which feels so right, may be the wrong way!

Another point to consider is found in **Jeremiah 10:23**. Here we see once again the idea that man does not possess the capability to guide himself and so needs to submit to God in order to survive.

If we go on to the New Testament, the argument continues. Please take a moment to review what we studied from **Matthew 7:21-23**. Remember how Jesus explained that it is possible for a person to **DO** “good things”, to **BELIEVE** sincerely that they are doing right, to **CLAIM** that Jesus is Lord, to even possess miraculous powers, **AND YET STILL BE LOST**. The issue he raised was not about whether or not man is capable of doing good things. He brought out the point that each person must seek out, understand, and then submit to that thing he referred to as, “**the will of the Father.**” The Father is the only authority and, therefore, people cannot decide for themselves **what they think** is right or wrong, or, **what they think** they should or should not do. Instead, each person must rely completely upon what God says in the Bible, understand what God says, and then do what God says!²³

Another reason why man cannot follow his own opinions is found in **1 Corinthians 2:11-12**. What does it say? This passage points to the reality that no one knows what God is thinking just as we do not know what any another person is thinking. Since we cannot read God’s mind then the only way we will be able to know his will is to listen carefully to what he tells us.

For a final thought concerning this subject, consider the point brought out in **1 Corinthians 1:25!** This is an amazing point! Try to think of the wisest and strongest person alive in the world today. This is probably impossible because the strongest man may not be the wisest and the wisest man may not be the strongest. Nevertheless, try to imagine such a person in your mind. Then try something even more difficult. Try to imagine the God of heaven in a state of weakness and ignorance. The point the writer seems to be making here is that even in this very depressed condition, God would still be both stronger and wiser than that strongest and wisest person!

²² Please do not forget what happened to those people Jesus talked about in **Matthew 7:21-23!**

²³ Remember the passage **1 John 2:3-6**? It was there we learned that it is not enough to claim to know God. If we say that we know him then we must follow what he says. Otherwise, we are liars and **not** Christians!

So, what does all this prove? The main point is that man is helpless without God to guide him. Since God's ways are different from man's ways, we cannot presume to know what God wants us to do. It has very little to do with intelligence and more to do with the fact that God is an individual and he is in charge! We do not know **HOW** God thinks or **WHAT** he is thinking, and **we do not have the authority** to make our own decisions about what God should and should not require of us. As long as these things are true then we must listen carefully to and **do exactly** what God says, not "what we think God says". If all people today will do this then we will be successful in our personal war against evil, we will be unified into one body²⁴ together with all other followers of God, and God will truly reign supreme!

According to what we have learned what is the **key to success? Sincere, unbiased Bible study and a willingness to trust and obey whatever those instructions might tell us to do!** This means doing the kind of study that follows a logical process, even if the result is a conclusion that is not logical! It means taking whatever time is necessary to learn the skills needed to accomplish this kind of study. It also means taking the time to study all the material given and make proper conclusions. The main thing to note is that proper Bible study will take time! This time and effort will be an investment for the future; **YOUR FUTURE!** After all, **how much is YOUR future in Heaven worth?**

**Nothing of any real value is easy to acquire.
If you want to have this kind of faith then you
have to commit the time necessary to achieve it!
So... How badly do YOU want to know God's truth?**

Proverbs 3:3-9 tells us that the only way to **KNOW/UNDERSTAND** what God wants is to listen to and trust him instead of trusting in ourselves! This is what Bible study is all about and we hope and pray that you understand this and that you will commit yourself to the idea of studying to find the will of God for you and that you will then have the courage to follow whatever God's will might tell you to do, regardless of the consequences!

This brings to a close our discussion about how to study the Bible. We will now proceed into the heart of the material for this course. In our next lesson, we will begin a detailed study about Jesus in which we will look at his origin and background, the issue of his being God and man, and why Jesus had to become a human. (Prepare yourself to be amazed!)

Before proceeding, please answer the test questions for Lesson 4:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lessons. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the CIRCLE for that answer choice on the answer sheet. Remember to bring the answer sheet with you and turn it in to your teacher. We will grade your answers and record your grade in our records.

1. The Bible passage **1 John 2:3-6** teaches that if we claim to be a follower of God, but do not obey what he has said then we are
 - a) immature.
 - b) liars.
 - c) weak Christians.
 - d) only human.
2. Which of the following statements about the King James Bible is **NOT** true?
 - a) It was translated in the year 1611—or almost 400 years ago.
 - b) The English that is used in it contains some words which have reversed their meaning.
 - c) It is one of the easiest translations for today's students to read and understand.
 - d) It is one of the most popular Bible translations of all time.
3. TRUE or FALSE: The fact that in any language some words naturally change meaning as time goes by is one reason why there will always be a need for new translations of the Bible.
 - a) True
 - b) False
4. In our sample study of Malchus' Ear, the most important Bible study observation we made about the four accounts of the incident was that
 - a) the victim, Malchus, was a servant of the High Priest, Caiaphas.
 - b) as we consider each account individually, none of them contains ALL of the information we need to make our conclusion.
 - c) Jesus picked up the cut ear and stuck it back on the head of the servant!
 - d) The strange word **smote** is used.

²⁴ The Bible often refers to the church as "the body". Therefore, "one body" would mean **one church!**

5. If you encounter a word or phrase in a passage that you do not understand, the best way to determine its meaning by
 - a) looking it up in the dictionary.
 - b) looking for parallel passages and checking to see if they might use a different word which you know.
 - c) praying for God to reveal the meaning to you.
 - d) guessing.

6. TRUE or FALSE: One of the best ways to record your findings when studying through a list of passages from the Bible is to make a chart.
 - a) True
 - b) False

7. The speculation that John was the attacker of Malchus is **wrong** because of which of the following reasons?
 - a) John was the "best friend" of Jesus.
 - b) John's own account of the incident clearly states that Simon Peter was the one who attacked Malchus.
 - c) It is logical for a friend to defend a friend and so John could have easily defended Jesus in this way.
 - d) All of the above.

8. In the story of Malchus' Ear, the account that gives the **most** detailed information is
 - a) Matthew
 - b) Mark
 - c) Luke
 - d) John

9. The account that gives the **least** amount of detail is
 - a) Matthew
 - b) Mark
 - c) Luke
 - d) John

10. Thinking back on all of the things we learned about Bible study, if we reach the point in a Bible study where we are ready to make a conclusion, we must be careful to
 - a) include all details no matter how small they might be.
 - b) include only those major details and ignore the small ones.
 - c) include only the details which you like and ignore the rest.
 - d) none of the above.

11. Which of the following is true about the process of Bible study.
 - a) Bible study is not a simple matter of finding a couple of verses and making a conclusion.
 - b) Bible study is making conclusions based upon all available information.
 - c) Bible study requires that we put every passage in our study into its proper context.
 - d) All of the above.

12. Considering all we have learned about Bible study, the greatest difficulty we will most likely experience will be
 - a) not having enough money to buy a good Bible.
 - b) not having enough Bible commentary books to study from.
 - c) having too many different kinds of Bibles so that we cannot decide which one to use.
 - d) locating all of the passages which speak on the topic and finding the time to study all of them.


13. Considering that some topics we study might have a hundred passages or more to work through,
 - a) we will need to shorten the list down to the 10 or 20 best verses of the list so that we can conserve time.
 - b) we will never be able to arrive at a conclusion simply because we do not have enough spare time to finish such a study.
 - c) we will have to be willing to commit many hours of study time to be able to arrive at a conclusion.
 - d) we should give up and let our preacher, pastor, or priest study these subjects for us because they are trained professionals. We should restrict our own studies to lesser topics.

14. Which of the following statements best summarizes all the points of Lessons 1-4?
- Religion is a family matter and so each person should be very careful to keep the traditional religious beliefs passed down by relatives from generation to generation. One should never go against the religion of their family.
 - God is the father of all people and since people are different from one place to another, he accepts all religions and churches and only desires that people respect him and live in peace with one another.
 - Since there is only one God and he only has one religion, then all people should be forced to join the one true church and if they refuse they should be punished by the religious leaders.
 - Since religion is a matter between each person and God, then each person should take an interest in what they believe and never blindly accept another person's word simply because they are supposed to be an "expert", or, in a position of religious authority. Everyone should study the Bible for himself or herself.
15. TRUE or FALSE: It is **not** possible for ordinary people to read and understand the Bible.
- True
 - False
16. TRUE or FALSE: When generally considering the process of study, one of the most important considerations when making a conclusion is **context**.
- True
 - False
17. The idea of a person evaluating and explaining something **according to his own opinion** is
- Interpretation.
 - Understanding.
18. The idea of accepting **a common explanation supplied by an accepted authority** is
- Interpretation.
 - Understanding.
19. The main point brought out in the lesson, about interpretation and understanding, is that
- everyone is entitled to their own interpretation.
 - interpretation is only natural because we are all individuals.
 - understanding is not possible because there are too many religions.
 - interpretation creates division and understanding creates unity.
20. One major reason why it is difficult for people today to easily understand the original meaning of what a Bible writer wrote to his readers is
- people today are not smart enough to figure out what the message of the Bible really means.
 - few people today go to Bible schools to be trained in interpreting the Bible.
 - today, we do not know what the original readers knew about the topic before they received their letter.
 - none of the above
21. The Bible study tool that helps us find lists of verses that speak on a particular topic is called
- a concordance.
 - a commentary.
 - a lexicon.
 - none of the above.
22. The passage that teaches that if a person claims to know God, but does not follow his commands then he is a liar, is
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
 - John 3:16.
 - 1 John 2:3-6.
 - none of the above
23. In **Mark 7:6-8**, Jesus became angry with the Jewish religious leaders because they
- did not teach the people to go to church on Sundays.
 - substituted their own opinions in place of the teachings of God.
 - were trying to kill him.
 - none of the above.
24. The reason why man is not capable of guiding himself in the ways of God is
- that man does not know what God is thinking.
 - that man does not know by instinct what God wants him to do.
 - that the way that man thinks is not the same as the way God thinks.
 - all of the above.
25. TRUE or FALSE: If all people would UNDERSTAND God's will then everyone could have unity of belief.
- True
 - False
26. TRUE or FALSE: Even if I understand what the Bible says, but it goes against the teachings of my church, then I don't have to follow what the Bible says.
- True
 - False

27. The inconsistency of the results, when people today pray for guidance from the Holy Spirit and then come to different conclusions in their Bible study, indicates
- that the Holy Spirit is guiding people to a new and different message.
 - that it does not matter what we believe today and that God approves.
 - that the Holy Spirit is not guiding them.
 - none of the above.
28. TRUE or FALSE: The true test of a person's love for God is whether or not they are willing to obey him, no matter what the consequences of that obedience might be?
- True
 - False
29. If we discover that the Bible teaches things that go against the teachings of our religion, we should
- ignore the differences and just pray more.
 - eliminate the verses from our study that go against our church.
 - find the church that teaches exactly what the Bible says.
 - all of the above.
30. TRUE or FALSE: During the time of original Christianity, there was only one church.
- True
 - False
31. The point Jesus was making in **Matthew 7:21-23** is that
- it is possible for a person to think they are a Christian but in reality not be one.
 - it is possible to do things that are good and helpful to people and still be lost.
 - if a person does not study to find the specific things that God wants done and then do them then that person will be lost.
 - all of the above.

Now that you have completed the introductory part of the course, we will now proceed into the main study material in which we will begin an intense look into the **person** of Jesus Christ. We will study through many passages and look at several different ideas that relate to Jesus, before he came to the earth, and while he was living here on the earth.

Since this is a genuine STUDY course, again, you will be asked to find, read, and carefully think about a large number of passages from the Bible. Always remember the points you learned about Bible study from Lessons 1-4! Pay special attention to placing each passage into its proper **context**. If at any time you do not understand what you are supposed to do, contact us and we will assist you. If you apply the skills mentioned in the previous lessons, you should have no trouble finding the answers to the test questions.

The procedure for the remaining lessons of the course is the same as the previous ones. You will study through each lesson and answer the test questions before coming to class. However, as you move along through the new material, you will notice that some lessons will have **WORKSHEETS** for you to accomplish. These are located at the back of this textbook have been designed to help you research through lists of passages that form the evidence from which the points of the lesson are taken. Any time you encounter a  sign then simply follow the special instructions found there.

We know that you will learn much from this study. If you happen to encounter some things that seem "different" from what you have grown up believing, please remember that we are not demanding that you agree with anything we present in the course. All that we ask is that you study through all of the evidence presented in the course material, establish the context, and then combine the facts together as you make your conclusions. What you do with the conclusions is up to you.

Remember that if at any time in the study you have questions about the content of the material or the procedures, please feel free to contact us. We will do our very best to help you find the answers you seek. In addition, as we said at the beginning of this course, if you have friends whom you think might like to study this course please give us their names and mailing addresses and we will reserve them a place in our next session!

Good luck and enjoy your study!

LESSON FIVE

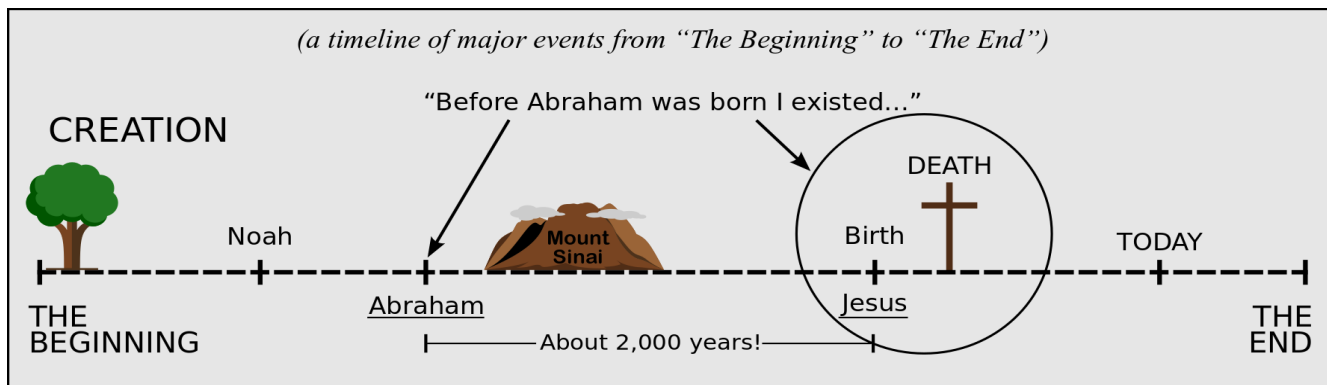
NOTE: Please remember that at various points in the course we will be asking you to study your way through different lists of passages on your own. The purpose of these worksheet assignments will be to supply you with necessary background material and context needed to make accurate and objective conclusions. We will help by providing you with special worksheets to assist in your research. Just do the best you can and don't worry if you have difficulty doing it the first time or two. We will go through each verse with you so that you will be able to see the point of the passage.

WHERE DID JESUS COME FROM?

In our last few lessons we looked at a general view of what the Bible is and how to study it. The rest of the material of this course will be devoted to a study of material found in the Bible that speaks about Jesus Christ. As we travel along the way we have tried very hard to apply the ideas and principles of Bible study which you have learned so that aside from learning new facts about Jesus, you will gain more experience in studying the Bible for yourself.

To help you gain a better picture of how the various findings of our study fit into place, we are going to make extensive use of a type of illustration called a **TIMELINE** which, as its name implies, is a simple line which represents the passing of time. The earlier time begins on the left end of the line and the later times are seen as one moves to the right. On this timeline we will mark different events in history that are an important part of our study so that you can see how each event fits together with other events of that period of history. The timeline represented below provides a general view of the entire history of the universe—from **THE BEGINNING** down through history until **THE END** of time.

THE HISTORY OF OUR UNIVERSE



Our study begins with an incident that happened during the life of Jesus. (Please read **John 8:57-58** and remember to begin reading a few verses back so that you will be able to see the overall context of what is happening.) In this scene, Jesus was explaining to the religious leaders that he had come to them from the Father and that even their very famous ancestor, Abraham, looked forward to Christ's coming. When Jesus mentioned the name of Abraham, the people seemed to think that Jesus was saying that he actually **KNEW** Abraham personally. They reacted to this by pointing out to Jesus that he was not even 50 years old and so how could he possibly know Abraham? To this, Jesus made a very surprising reply, "**Before Abraham was born, I existed.**" This astonished the crowd. By judging the reaction of the people it seems that they thought he was crazy! After all, they **KNEW** Jesus was the son of Mary and Joseph, and they also knew that he was born in the small town of Bethlehem some 30 years earlier. Suppose you were taking a history class in school and one day your teacher began class by saying, "Napoleon Bonaparte was my good friend and we used to sit for hours discussing his views on the topic of revolution." Wouldn't you also think he was crazy?

The situation we see in John chapter 8 is very interesting! Don't you think? What was Jesus saying here? He hinted to the people that he seemed to have some sort of **PRE-EXISTENCE**. In other words, Jesus seemed to be saying that he was alive long **BEFORE** he was born in Bethlehem! This claim made the people feel upset and it invites us to look deeper into the **origin** of Jesus. Where did he come from and when did **his** time begin?

Let us begin by reading **Luke 2:1-7** and taking note of the background and context. What significant detail do we learn about Jesus from this passage? It records the historical fact that Jesus—the man who we know was crucified on a cross some 30 years later—**was not** a living and breathing human being before Luke chapter 2! This is a fact

and cannot be denied because the birth and childhood of Jesus were **HISTORICAL FACTS!** Local people **saw** Jesus as a baby and they **saw** him as a boy growing up. It was these two facts of history that stood behind the objections of the crowd in John 8. They **KNEW** him, and so how could Jesus possibly expect anyone to accept the idea that **he was actually alive during the time of Abraham?** And yet Jesus seemed to be implying that very thing when he said, “Before Abraham was born, I existed.” If you will refer back to the timeline above, you will see that Abraham lived some 2,000 years before Jesus walked on the earth! Considering this fact, it was no wonder the people were upset. This seeming contradiction creates a problem, which we will need to investigate further.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO EXPLAIN HAVE CAUSED MUCH CONFUSION!

The origin of Jesus Christ has been a source of controversy for centuries and there have been many attempts throughout history to explain where he came from. During the 4th Century (the 300s) there was a fellow, named **ARIUS**, who came up with the theory that Jesus originated as the very first thing that God created “in the beginning”. The text of the Bible tells us in several places that Jesus was “born” from God. Arius took this wording to mean that Jesus was “brought into existence” by God. Since he believed that Jesus was “born” from God then he could not have existed before the Creation like God did. Therefore, according to Arius’ theory, Jesus was a created being—the **first** of God’s creations! Arius’ belief, known as **ARIANISM**, became very well accepted among the people. For several decades during his time, his theory was the “official belief” of Christianity. Some time later, things changed and most people abandoned Arius’ idea in favor of other explanations.

In the 16th Century (the 1500’s), another idea, called **SOCINIANISM**, became very popular. This idea stated that Jesus came into existence at birth, just an ordinary man, and that he had no pre-existence at all. It goes on to state that because Jesus was perfectly obedient and succeeded in his mission, God transformed him into a God. If we simplify the idea it basically means that Jesus began his existence as an ordinary human, just like you and I. He lived and died as a human being. Then, after his death and because he was successful in his mission, God changed Jesus into a God! This is very different from the idea of Arius. While Socinianism had some believers, this explanation also was ultimately rejected because it did not include a pre-existence.

In our time today, there are many different views circulating about the origin and existence of Jesus. For example, the **JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES** group believes that Jesus was God’s first creation. In this way they are very similar to ARIANISM. However, they teach that Jesus was actually Michael the Archangel living in a human body. They believe that Michael was the first thing God created. They teach that Michael assumed a human existence—in the form of Jesus Christ—and that he accomplished his assigned task as Jesus Christ. After his assignment was complete he returned to his original existence as Michael back in heaven—where he remains to this day.

Another interesting idea from our time comes from the **MORMON CHURCH** (the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints). They believe that before his birth Jesus was one of the millions of “pre-existent spirits”—which also included all people living today and even the demons! They believe that Jesus’ spirit came into a body when he was born in Bethlehem and at the end of his life he became a God. They also believe that you and I came to exist here in our bodies in the same way and that we, like Jesus, can also become Gods.

If we compare these ideas are they the same? The existence of these conflicting views, and seeing how popular some of them are **TODAY**, shows how important this topic really is. Where **DID** Jesus come from? What **DID** Jesus mean in John 8? There is a need for us to study the Bible and see what evidence comes out that might help us to unravel all the confusion.

As is usually the case when major confusion is found in religion, much of the problem here has come about because of people misusing passages from the Bible. Do you remember our discussion about **CONTEXT** in Bible study back in **Lesson 4**?

WHAT THE BIBLE REALLY SAYS ABOUT THE ORIGIN OF JESUS

(Please keep in mind that our goal in this lesson is not to prove or disprove anything regarding Jesus being God. We are only seeking to determine what Jesus was saying when he made the statement, “before Abraham was I existed”.)

If you remember back to our lesson about “How To Study The Bible”, we learned that conclusions are made by locating and **combining the information** from the passages which have something to say about our topic. What we need now are passages from the Bible that have some information about Jesus’ origin. We have provided you with a supplementary assignment, which is titled “Worksheet for Lesson 5”. This handout provides you with a list of

verses that speak about the origin of Jesus. Take each verse and read it carefully. Put the verse into context—as we have learned to do from our past discussions—and use the space on the worksheet to record your findings. Remember that in this lesson, **we are looking for specific TIME references about Jesus and his origin**. After you finish your own research then return here and we will go through the verses together and compare notes.



PLEASE STOP HERE AND WORK THROUGH THE ASSIGNMENT WORKSHEET for this lesson. After completing your study of the list of passages then you may continue on to the next page.

Welcome back. We hope that you were able to complete your assignment. There will be other worksheets for you to research through later in the course. We will now go through the verses together and see how you did.

The first passage in the worksheet is **Micah 5:2**.

“2 But you Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are the smallest town in Judah. Your family is almost too small to count. But the “Ruler of Israel” will come from you for me. His beginnings are from ancient times, from the days of eternity.”

The first thing we must investigate is whether this passage ought to be in a list of passages that apply to our study about Jesus. This is accomplished in a two step process. The first is looking for any clues that might make a connection between what it says and Jesus. This passage seems to predict that someone will be born in Bethlehem and that the origin of this person is described as being **“from the days of eternity”**. “Bethlehem” seems to be a key word in the passage. Moving backward and forward in the passage does not seem to be able to give us any help. However, when you consider the fact that this same phrase if found in the New Testament book of Matthew it suddenly becomes very important. When he introduces Jesus to his readers in **Matthew 2:6** he quotes this and indicates that it was speaking about Jesus. The fact that Matthew quotes the Micah passage is the proof we need to apply it to our study. Therefore, Jesus was the person being spoken of, the one who would 1) be born in Bethlehem and 2) have an origin from ancient days! The passage has to mean that the **origin** of Jesus would **predate** his birth in Bethlehem. In more simple terms, the point here seems to be that Jesus was alive before his birth in Bethlehem!

The next verse in the worksheet is **John 1:1-3 and 14**.

“1 Before the world began, the Word was there. The Word was there with God. The Word was God. 2 He was there with God in the beginning. 3 All things were made through him. Nothing was made without him.”

and then verse **14**...

“14 The Word became a man and lived among us. We saw his glory—the glory that belongs to the only Son of the Father. The Word was full of grace and truth.”

This is a difficult passage to understand when one first looks at it because the main character being mentioned here is someone who is called *“the WORD”* by the writer. He says that this WORD person: **1) was with God in the beginning; 2) that he also was God; and 3) that he created everything** that was created. This is interesting because the writer is definitely speaking of a male person because he used the word “he”, but who is this person he calls “WORD”? To get the context all we need to do is continue reading down to verse 14 of the chapter and there we receive information that helps us discover the identity of the person. We find that the Word is actually **Jesus**, because Jesus fits the description, “the son who came from the father”. So, what do we learn about the origin of Jesus from this passage? The time reference here is “in the beginning”. The context surrounding the reference “the beginning” would seem to mean the Creation beginning. This is because of the reference to the things that were made by the Word. The beginning was definitely a long time before Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem!

Next in the list we look at **John 1:30**.

“30 This is the one I was talking about. I said, ‘A man will come after me, but he is greater than I am, because he was living before me—he has always lived.’”

This is a very important passage because of the identity of the person speaking. If you go back to verse 29 you will find that the speaker is John “the Baptist”. According to what we learn from Luke chapters 1 and 2, John “the Baptist” is an older relative of Jesus. We know that the mother of John and the mother of Jesus were related. (See:

Luke 1:36) The main point we learn from these chapters is that **John was born before Jesus was born**. Yet, in **John 1:30**, John “the Baptist” looks at Jesus and makes a very clear statement that Jesus “ranks before me because he **WAS** living before me”. In speaking these words, John seems to be pointing out that he believed that Jesus existed before he did! This would be a historical impossibility because everyone who knew both John and Jesus **KNEW** that John was older than Jesus. Therefore, John must have been speaking about a **pre-existence** of Jesus!

The next passage is **John 3:13 and 31**.

“13 The only one that has even gone up into heaven is the one who came down from heaven—the Son of Man”

and ...

“31 The one (Jesus) that comes from above is greater than all other people. The person that is from the earth belongs to the earth. That person talks about things that are on the earth. But the one that comes from heaven is greater than all other people.”

If you look carefully at verses 10 through 13 and then at verses 31 through 36, you will find numerous statements which help us identify that it is Jesus who is being referred to in these passages. Both sections mention him as having **come down** to the earth **FROM HEAVEN**. To say that a person CAME FROM a certain place means that he first existed IN THAT place before leaving to go to the new location. This statement about Jesus implies that he was alive in heaven **before coming down** to the Earth.

This same idea is mentioned in **John 6:41-42**.

“41 The Jews began to complain about Jesus. They complained because Jesus said, “I am the bread that comes down from heaven.” 42 The Jews said, “This is Jesus. We know his father and mother. Jesus is only Joseph’s son. How can he say, ‘I came down from heaven?’”

The context of this passage is pretty clear. The Jews seem to think that Jesus is saying that he was alive in heaven and that he came down from there. From what they are saying it seems pretty clear that the idea of Jesus **coming down** from heaven was something that was being taught in public. Of course, Jesus was not crazy and thus, again, we find evidence that Jesus experienced a pre-existence before coming down to the earth.

The next passage in the worksheet is **John 16:27-28**.

“27 No! The Father himself loves you. He loves you because you have loved me. And he loves you because you have believed that I came from God. 28 I came from the Father into the world. Now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.”

Again, the context here is very clear. Jesus reveals the entire picture to us. He states that he **came from** the Father, arrived here on the earth, and is about to **return** to the Father. This provides us with even more evidence showing that Jesus was alive, in heaven, before he was alive on the earth!

Next we have **John 17:5**.

“5 And now, Father, give me glory with you. Give me the glory I had with you before the world was made.”

This is perhaps the earliest time reference. In a conversation with the Father, Jesus mentions his being with the Father **“before** the world was made”.

Another passage in our worksheet is **Philippians 2:5-11**.

“5 In your lives you must think and act like Christ Jesus. 6 Christ himself was like God in everything. Christ was equal with God. But Christ did not think that being equal with God was something he must keep. 7 He gave up his place with God and agreed to be like a servant. He was born to be a man and became like a servant. 8 And when he was living as a man, he humbled himself by being fully obedient to God. He obeyed even when that caused him to die. And he died on a cross. 9 Christ obeyed God, so God raised Christ to the most important place. God made the name of Christ greater than any other name. 10 God did this because he wants every person to bow for the name of Jesus. Every person in heaven, on earth, and

under the earth will bow. 11 Every person will confess, 'Jesus Christ is Lord.' When they say this, it will bring glory to God the Father."

This passage explains more detail about what Jesus mentioned in **John 16:27-28**. Jesus is first described as having "equality" with the Father. Then it says that he "gave up" that position in order to "be born" on the earth. Then, after accomplishing a mission, he returned to heaven. (This passage will be very important for future lessons in this course.)

The passage in **Philippians**, together with the one found in **John 16**, show the full cycle of Jesus' existence.

- Jesus existed in heaven **before** he came to this world
- Jesus **came down from heaven** into the world
- Jesus **went back** to his former place with the Father

Our last verse in the worksheet list was **Revelation 22:16**. We are going to look at this passage from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible because it has a very literal translation of the original sentence found in the text.

"16 I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

Jesus is speaking in this passage. (He was the one who gave the message of the Book of Revelation.) In this closing statement, he describes himself as being both the "**root**" and the "**offspring**" of David. In speaking this way, Jesus is using the word root in a figurative way. In context, the word "root" refers to the **ancestor** of a person. It is the opposite of the word offspring, which refers to a **descendant** of a person. To better understand what Jesus is saying here it might help if you think of the illustration of a tree. A tree gets its **origin** from its roots. A tree then produces its fruit as its offspring. In this statement, Jesus seems to be saying that he is both the root and the fruit of David! He claims to be both the ancestor of David **and** the descendant of David! How can this be? We know that Jesus physically lived on the earth hundreds of years after David died and so how could Jesus claim to be David's root (living before David) **AND** offspring (living after David)? The evidence from our study of this lesson is here for you to consider. You must draw your own conclusion.

As we finish this lesson let's take an inventory of the evidence and see what conclusion we can draw.

Jesus was not an ordinary fellow, as far as his origin is concerned because even though he was born into the world just like you and I, Jesus was alive long before he was born to his parents, Mary and Joseph! The evidence that we found traces the origin of Jesus back before the time of "the beginning". In fact, we did not find any indication that there was ever a time when Jesus DID NOT exist! As a closing thought, before you go to answer the test questions for this lesson, please read carefully the statement made about Jesus in **Hebrews 13:8**.

Before proceeding, answer the following test questions for Lesson 5:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lessons. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the CIRCLE for that answer choice on the answer sheet. Remember to bring the answer sheet with you and turn it in to your teacher. We will grade your answers and record your grade in our records.

1. In **John 8:57-58**, Jesus said that he existed before who?
 - a) Moses
 - b) Isaiah
 - c) Abraham
 - d) Peter
2. Who was Jesus talking to in, **John 8:57-58**, when he said "Before Abraham was born, I existed.?"
 - a) A group of Roman soldiers.
 - b) The Mormons.
 - c) A large crowd of people.
 - d) All of the above.
3. Why did the Jewish religious leaders react negatively when Jesus said "Before Abraham was born, I existed.?"
 - a) Because Jesus was a young man.
 - b) Because Abraham had existed hundreds of years before Jesus.
 - c) They knew Jesus' family and that he was only around 30 years old.
 - d) All of the above.

4. Look at the time line "THE HISTORY OF OUR UNIVERSE." About how many years passed between the time that Abraham lived and the time Jesus was born?
- 50 years
 - 2,000 years
 - 10,000 years
 - none of the above
5. What does it mean when someone is **pre-existent**?
- It means that they lived long ago.
 - It means that they lived after someone.
 - It means that they existed in one place before they existed in another place.
 - It means that they were living in a place before someone else lived there.
6. The 4th Century theory which taught that Jesus originated as the very first thing that God created "in the beginning", was known as
- Arianism.
 - Socinianism.
 - Mormonism.
 - Jehovah's Witness.
7. Which controversial teaching included the idea that Jesus began his existence as an ordinary human, just like you and I, that he lived and died as a human being, but that, after his death and because of his successful mission, God changed Jesus into a God?
- Arianism
 - Socinianism
 - Mormonism
 - Jehovah's Witness
8. The modern religious idea that before his birth, Jesus was one of the millions of "pre-existent spirits", that Jesus' pre-existent spirit came into a body when he was born in Bethlehem, and that at the end of his life he became a God, is
- Arianism.
 - Socinianism.
 - Mormonism.
 - Jehovah's Witness.
9. In addition to believing that Jesus was the first of God's creation, which group believes that Jesus was actually Michael the Archangel living in a human body?
- Arianism
 - Socinianism
 - Mormonism
 - Jehovah's Witness
10. In **Micah 5:2**, who is the "Ruler of Israel" that will come from Bethlehem?
- Abraham
 - David
 - Jesus
 - Pilate
11. Which of the following answers is **NOT** used to describe "the word" in **John 1:1-3** and **14**.
- He was God.
 - Did not participate in the creation.
 - Became man and lived among us.
 - He was there with God before the world began.
12. Who is the person called "WORD" in **John 1:1-3** and **14**?
- Jesus
 - John the Baptizer
 - Adam
 - Abraham
13. Who is speaking in **John 1:30**?
- Jesus
 - James
 - Luke
 - John the Baptist
14. In **John 6:41-42**, which statement is **NOT** used to describe Jesus?
- He is "the bread that comes down from heaven."
 - The Jews knew his father and mother.
 - He is the Messiah.
 - He is Joseph's son.
- Please read John 16:27-28 and Philippians 2:5-11 before answering the next two questions.**
15. What does it mean when it says "He (Christ) gave up his place with God and agreed to be like a servant"?
- He humbled himself by being fully obedient to God.
 - He put aside his being God and became a man.
 - He obeyed even when that caused him to die.
 - All of the above.
16. Finish the explanation of the cycle of Jesus' existence. Jesus existed in heaven **before** he came to this world, he **came down from heaven** into the world, and he
- went back to his former place with the Father.
 - died and remains buried here in the world.
 - went back to heaven but became an angel.
 - none of the above.

17. In **Revelation 22:16**, Jesus is described as

- a) the Alpha and the Omega.
- b) the root and the offspring of David.
- c) the root and the offspring of God.
- d) all of the above.

18. How is Jesus' existence different from that of men?

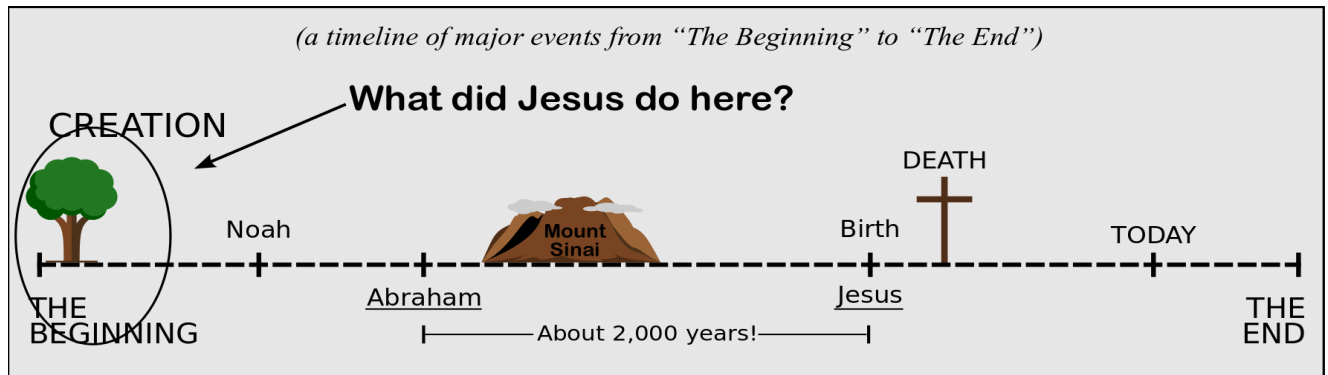
- a) He was alive long before he was born while we exist only from our birth.
- b) His origin goes back before "the beginning".
- c) There wasn't a time that Jesus did not exist.
- d) All of the above.

LESSON SIX

JESUS: THE GREAT CARPENTER

In the previous lesson, we discovered that Jesus was alive prior to his birth in Bethlehem. Information we found in our research established that Jesus actually had no point of origin or beginning! There does not seem to be a time when Jesus didn't exist. In this lesson, we are going to expand our understanding of Jesus. We will search for details about his existence back in "the beginning".

THE HISTORY OF OUR UNIVERSE



We begin our study by taking a closer look at a passage we looked at in our last lesson—**John 1:1-3 and 14**. You will recall that this passage brings out **THREE** very important details about Jesus' existence. **1)** Jesus was "with God in the beginning"; **2)** Jesus "was GOD"; and, **3)** Jesus "created everything". In this lesson, we will focus our attention on the last two points.

If we understand John's statement correctly, he seems to be saying that the man who was born in Bethlehem to Mary and Joseph was actually God and that he created us! During the time when this was written, this idea was, and still is today, a difficult thing for many people to understand and accept. But what about it? Is Jesus REALLY God? And did he really create everything?

There are other passages in the New Testament that contain information about this topic. One such passage is **Colossians 1:15-19**. (This book was written by the apostle, Paul, to a group of struggling Christians.)

"15 No person can see God. But Jesus is exactly like God. Jesus is ruler over all things that have been made. 16 Through his power all things were made—things in heaven and on earth, things seen and not seen, all spiritual powers, authorities, lords, and rulers. All things were made through Christ and for Christ."

The context of the passage clearly shows that this is speaking about Jesus. It also speaks about Jesus and the Creation. When we compare what is written here with what John wrote, we discover that Paul restated the same facts in almost the same words! The main summary points are that; **1)** Jesus is God; and **2)** Jesus created everything that was made.

There is another passage that we need to carefully consider. Please read **Genesis 1:26**. This passage speaks of how man was created on day #6 of the Creation. Look carefully at the wording. Notice how it tells how God said, "let **US** make man in **OUR** image". There is definitely more than one person involved here because we see the PLURAL pronouns being used in the text. But WHO are they? How many are they? (Note that these same plural pronouns are found in **Genesis 3:22 and 11:7**) From what we have learned from **John 1** and **Colossians 1**, we KNOW that the Father was there and we know that Jesus was also there.

Another passage which mentions Jesus and the Creation, is **Hebrews 1:2**.

"2 And now in these last days God has spoken to us again. God has spoken to us through his Son. God made the whole world through his Son. And God has chosen his Son to have all things."

We have already studied this passage in **Lesson 2**. This was the passage where we discovered that the two testaments of our Bible actually contain two messages from God to the people of the world. It helped us to

understand the difference between the Old and New Testaments in our Bible. However, there is a very interesting note at the end of verse 2, which speaks of Jesus and his role in the Creation. What does it say about Jesus, the Father, and the Creation? It seems to be saying that the Father **DID TWO THINGS** through Jesus; **1)** God spoke the second message through Jesus; and **2)** God created the world through Jesus. The Father created the world THROUGH the Son. It describes a situation in which the Father seems to fill the role of architect/designer and Jesus fills the role of contractor/builder. So this would explain why both John and Paul said that Jesus created all things. The Father issued the orders for the construction, but Jesus did the actual building! Isn't that amazing?

JESUS: THE GOD OF CREATION!

This brings up an interesting subject for us to investigate further. If Jesus was pre-existent with God from a time before the beginning, and, if Jesus was the one who did the creating of all things, then what about the part that also says that Jesus is God? With this question in mind, we will look at a few passages that speak about this matter and see what we can learn!

Once again, we have provided you with a supplementary assignment sheet, "Worksheet For Lesson 6". This handout provides you with a list of verses that speak about the topic of Jesus being God. Take each verse and read it carefully. Put the verse into context—as we have learned to do from our past discussions—and use the space on the worksheet to record your findings. Remember that in this lesson, **we are looking for specific information that speaks of Jesus being God**. After you finish your own research then return here and we will go through the verses together and compare notes.



PLEASE STOP HERE AND WORK THROUGH THE ASSIGNMENT WORKSHEET for this lesson. After completing your study of the list of passages then you may continue on to the next page.

The first verse in the worksheet is **Matthew 1:23**. How does this passage apply to our subject? It may not be easy to see at first. If we put it into context, we discover that this verse is commenting on the events surrounding the birth of Jesus. Reference is made to what Isaiah wrote back in the Old Testament (Read **Isaiah 7:14**) which predicts that the baby which will be born from a "virgin" mother will be called "EMMANUEL". As it turns out, this is the key for understanding the significance of this passage in our study. In the Hebrew culture, the name given to a baby very often had a significant meaning in that it said something about the person. If we investigate the name, Emmanuel, we see that it means "**God with us**". The point of emphasis here in Matthew seems to be Emmanuel being the name to be given to this special baby, and especially the meaning of that name. Notice that the translation of the name is even found in the verse! The point here seems to be that this baby would be "God with us". The fact that this name was applied to Jesus would seem to indicate that Jesus was "God with us"!

The next passage in the list is **John 20:28**. This is an interesting passage because it contains a personal testimony of confession by the apostle Thomas. If you trace the context, you see that this event took place after Jesus was raised from the dead. After seeing the resurrected Jesus, Thomas calls Jesus both his Lord and **his God!** If Jesus were not God then Thomas would have been guilty of calling an ordinary human being "God". But notice how Jesus did not correct Thomas. This has to be significant.

The next passage we have is **Titus 2:13**. This book is actually a letter the apostle Paul wrote to a young missionary, named Titus. Even though Paul is not specifically writing about the topic of Jesus being God, as he goes along in his writing he makes a remark about waiting for "the return of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ". From this, it seems pretty clear that Paul, like Thomas, was convinced that Jesus is God!

Another important passage is found in **Hebrews 1:3**. The writer describes Jesus to his readers by saying that Jesus "is the perfect copy of God's nature." In the original language, the word for "copy" is actually the word "character", which is a term used in the printing business. It is like the image on a rubber stamp. A rubber stamp is used to make an exact duplicate of something. The point here is that Jesus is an exact copy of what the Father is and so if the Father is God, then Jesus is God as well.

The next passage is **Hebrews 1:8-10**. This passage is perhaps the most important of all. The context shows that the speaker here is the Father himself. He speaks about his son—Jesus. In this passage, we find two of the three points of John chapter 1 mentioned in specific detail, and the third point being mentioned by implication. In **verse 8** we see the Father referring to the Son as "God". How much clearer evidence can we find? Then, in **verse 10**, the Father states that the Son made everything. The implication is that **if** the Son is God and if he did create the heavens, then the Son had to be with the Father in the beginning.

The last two passages in the worksheet are found in the book of Revelation. They must be considered together because they fit together to provide more evidence. **Revelation 1:8** contains a statement from “the Lord God”. In the statement he declares that he is “the Alpha and the Omega”. The final passage is **Revelation 22:12-16**. It is the closing thoughts of the letter. From looking at the context of what is said, we can see from **verse 16** that Jesus is the one speaking the message. If we examine what he is saying, we discover that he refers to himself as “the Alpha and the Omega” in **verse 13**. If Jesus is “the Alpha and the Omega” of **22:14**, and “the Alpha and the Omega” of **1:8** is “the Lord God”, then Jesus has to be “the Lord God”. (If A = B, and B = C, then A = C.)

Even though the evidence is so great in support of the fact that Jesus is God, some people still claim that he is just a man and NOT God! Some say that Jesus is **NOT** God because they believe that he was the first thing God created and so if Jesus was “CREATED” then he COULD NOT possibly be God because God was NOT created!

Please consider the following points very carefully.

One very popular passage that is often used TODAY by those who believe the idea that Jesus was the “first creation of God” is **Proverbs 8:22-31**. The book of Proverbs contains list after list of “wise sayings” that came from Solomon. Much of the book is written in poetry and so there is much figurative writing contained inside.

Figurative writing is often difficult to understand and MUST be considered carefully. The text of the **Proverbs** passage is as follows;

“22 I was the first thing made long ago in the beginning. 23 I was made in the beginning. I was made before the world began. 24 I was born before the oceans; I was made before there was water. 25 I was born before the mountains. I was born before the hills. 26 I was born before the Lord made the earth. I was born before the fields. I was born before God made the first dust of the world. 27 I was there when the Lord made the skies. I was there when the Lord drew the circle around the land and set the limits of the ocean. 28 I was born before the Lord put clouds in the sky. And I was there when the Lord put water in the seas. 29 I was there when the Lord set the limits for water in the seas. The water can't rise higher than the Lord allows. I was there when the Lord made the foundations of the earth. 30 I was beside him like a skilled worker. The Lord was happy every day because of me. I made him laugh and be happy all the time. 31 The Lord was excited about the world he made. He was happy about the people he made there.”

If you take a look at the passage you can easily see that someone is speaking here. You can also see that this someone is speaking about his or her origin. Many people will say that this passage is actually Jesus Christ speaking to us about his own origin. Then they will point specifically at **verse 22**, where it says that the Lord, “created **me** at the beginning of his works”. These people will say that the “**me**” in this statement is Jesus Christ and that this statement is, therefore, a direct statement from him explaining his origin and how he came into existence. If this assertion is correct then the idea that Jesus was God’s “first creation” would easily be proven because the speaker makes several specific statements which prove that he/she was in fact “created” by God. However, is this assumption that Jesus is the speaker correct? This is the real issue here.

All we need to do to resolve the matter is place the passage into its “**near**” context. If you look carefully, you will see that **verse 22** IS NOT the beginning of the “speech” that is being made. The speech itself has an introduction that begins back in **verse 1** of chapter 8! To put the passage into context we need to go back to the start of the chapter and begin reading there and continue to the end of the speech. Let us do this now and see what we find.

(Please read **Proverbs 8:1-31** before proceeding any further.)

The most important question we need to answer is, “Who is the one speaking in this passage?” **Verses 1 and 12** provide us with the answer. **Verse 1** says, “Does not **wisdom** call out? Does not **understanding** raise **her** voice?” **Verse 12** says, “I, **wisdom**, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion.” Careful analysis reveals that the speaker here is WISDOM, and not Jesus. Proverbs 8 is an example of a writer using PERSONIFICATION. This is where a writer gives human powers or senses to an animal, an object, or, as in this case, a character attribute. The writer is PERSONIFYING wisdom and allowing HER to speak for herself. Notice how the passage here even contains a reference to GENDER—“her”. Is Jesus a **her**? When we place this passage in proper context, we can easily see that it is not speaking about Jesus. The writer simply gave wisdom a voice and let “her” make a speech. Therefore, any teaching on the origin of Jesus that uses this passage as evidence to say that Jesus was “the first creation of God” is incorrect. We must never support religious teachings by using passages from the Bible out of context.

Remember that Bible study is a two-phase process. First, we determine the original meaning of the passage and then, second, we see how it applies to us in our time today. This example shows how people can take a

passage out of context and make it say something that is not true. As a thought for you today, “Is there anything in your faith which is based on Bible passages taken out of context?” Do you believe the things you do as a direct result of careful Bible study or did you receive them by simply listening to and accepting the ideas and teachings of others? We hope that, from this illustration, you can see how easy it can be to be tricked into believing something by not using the Bible in the right way. We also hope that you will make a personal commitment to research everything you have been taught in order to make certain that what you believe is true. Do you remember what we learned about the importance of following Jesus from **Matthew 7:21-23** back in **Lesson 1**?

In summary, we found, from our investigation, that Jesus not only had a pre-existence, but that he also **is God**. The significance of this can be seen when you consider that Jesus, our Creator, loved us enough to come here and become one of us—so that he could die to save us. Looking back to our previous lesson, we can now easily understand the comments made by Jesus in **John 8:57-58**. Jesus’ earthly trade was that of being a carpenter—a very applicable one since he had been making things longer than anyone could remember!

Before proceeding, answer the following test questions for Lesson 6:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lessons. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the CIRCLE for that answer choice on the answer sheet. Remember to bring the answer sheet with you and turn it in to your teacher. We will grade your answers and record your grade in our records.

1. Which of the following thoughts is **NOT** contained in **John 1:1-3** and **14**
 - a) Jesus was not the Word.
 - b) Jesus created everything.
 - c) Jesus was God.
 - d) Jesus was with God in the beginning.
 2. When we make a comparison of **John 1:1-3** and **Colossians 1:15-19** what similarities do we see?
 - a) Christ was born in Bethlehem.
 - b) Christ was at the creation and everything was created through him.
 - c) Christ was not God.
 - d) None of the above.
 3. Which of the following is an accurate summary of the points made in **Colossians 1:15-19**?
 - a) Jesus is the first thing God created in the beginning.
 - b) Jesus is not the ruler over everything.
 - c) Jesus is just like God and everything was created through him.
 - d) None of the above.
 4. Which of the following points are found in **Colossians 1:15-19**?
 - a) Jesus is exactly like God.
 - b) Jesus is ruler over all things that have been made.
 - c) Through his power all things were made, things in heaven and on earth.
 - d) All of the above.
 5. In **Genesis 1:26** is God alone?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
 6. According to verses like **John 1:1-3** and **Colossians 1:15-19**, who was with God the Father during the Creation?
 - a) Jesus.
 - b) The angels.
 - c) Adam.
 - d) No one.
 7. According to **Hebrews 1:2**, what did the Father do **through** Jesus?
 - a) God spoke the second message (New Testament) through Jesus.
 - b) God created the world through Jesus.
 - c) Both A and B.
 - d) Neither A or B.
- The rest of the questions are based on the verses from the Worksheet**
8. Based on a comparison of what you read in **Matthew 1:23** and **Isaiah 7:14**, who is “Emmanuel”?
 - a) God
 - b) Jesus
 - c) Matthew
 - d) Isaiah
 9. What does the name “Emmanuel” mean?
 - a) God is great.
 - b) God is powerful.
 - c) God with us.
 - d) Jesus.

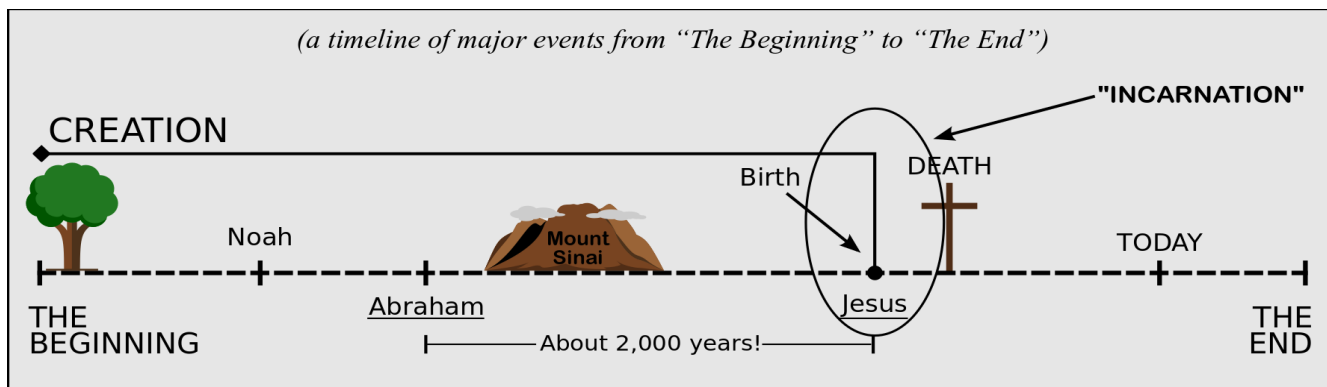
10. In **John 20:28**, who said, “my Lord and my God”, when he saw Jesus?
- Thomas
 - John
 - Peter
 - Paul
11. What does Paul call Jesus in **Titus 2:13**?
- Jehovah
 - Our great God and Savior
 - Emmanuel
 - None of the above.
12. In **Hebrews 1:3**, what does the writer say that Jesus is?
- A perfect copy of God’s nature.
 - God’s only begotten son.
 - The WORD who became flesh.
 - All of the above.
13. What does the word “copy” actually mean in the original language of the Bible?
- A duplicate item.
 - The original item being copied.
 - Something that is pirated.
 - A character – a letter of the alphabet in printing.
14. In **Hebrews 1:8-10**, who is the speaker?
- Jesus
 - God the Father
 - The Holy Spirit
 - None of the above.
15. In **Hebrews 1:8-10** the speaker says the Son is “God” and that the Son made
- a lot of trouble for bad people.
 - nothing.
 - the heavens and the earth.
 - the angels.
16. Who is the “Alpha and the Omega” in **Revelation 1:8** and **Revelation 22:12-16**?
- The Lord God.
 - Jesus.
 - Both A and B.
 - None of the above.
17. According to what we saw in **Proverbs 8:22-31**, who or what was “...created at the beginning of his work...”?
- Wisdom
 - Jesus Christ
 - The earth
 - The mountains
18. How do we know that **Proverbs 8:22-31** is **NOT** talking about Jesus?
- Proverbs 8:1 and 12 show us that “wisdom” is speaking the things being recorded there.
 - The context shows us that it is “wisdom” who is speaking.
 - The feminine pronoun is used for the speaker in Proverbs 8:1 and since Jesus is a male then it could not be speaking about him.
 - All of the above.

LESSON SEVEN

JESUS: THE GOD WHO BECAME A MAN

In our studies, we have seen Jesus as the great powerful God who created everything. We learned that although he was born as a man in Bethlehem, he was alive long before that time and, in fact, was alive even before the time of the Creation! Yet there are certain facts that we know are true—facts that cannot be denied! Jesus was born as a human being and when he was a little over thirty years old he died! He was killed on a cross. One of the most challenging questions people today can ask is, “If Jesus is really God, then why did he die? God cannot be killed. If Jesus was killed then that must mean that he is not God.” So, what can we say about this? Does the fact that Jesus died contradict the information we found in our previous lessons? Is Jesus **only** a regular person? It is the human side of Jesus—or rather the misunderstanding of his human side—which seems to be the cause of so much confusion in religion today. Today’s lesson will look closer at this “humanity” that we see in Jesus.

THE HISTORY OF OUR UNIVERSE



THE INCARNATION OF JESUS

We have already seen how Jesus existed long before he was born to Mary in Bethlehem. Since his humanity began at that place and time, our study should begin there as well. Birth is a very important time for all humans. It marks the beginning of our existence. As we have already established by our previous research, this was not the case for Jesus. He existed **before** his birth. Because of the special background of Jesus, many Bible teachers consider it improper and inaccurate to refer to what Jesus experienced in Bethlehem as a “birth”. Instead, you will find the word **INCARNATION** being used in books and commentaries. This is a rather uncommon word in our every-day vocabulary. What does it mean? Well – it **is not** a brand of powdered milk! Perhaps we are most familiar with this word through its use in the word **REINCARNATION**. Most people will recognize this word. It represents an idea in which a person is born, lives, dies, and is reborn over and over again. **INCARNATION** comes from Latin and simply means “to be made into flesh”. If you think for just a moment, you might be able to understand why Bible teachers like this word when trying to describe what happened to Jesus. Let us see how this word applies into our discussion.

In our past lessons, we looked at **John 1:14**. Let us take a closer look at it now in relation to “INCARNATION.”

“The Word became a man and lived among us. We saw his glory—glory that belongs to the only son of the Father. The Word was full of grace and truth.”

The passage tells us that the **WORD became flesh** and lived among us. Here is where we are introduced to the idea of incarnation. In Bethlehem, Jesus did not come into existence. He “became flesh.” What does all of this mean? Simply put, it means that when the time was right, our Creator came down and became a man! John 1:14 is perhaps the most specific passage concerning this important event.

From **John 1:14**, we learn **four basic facts** about the incarnation.

1. WHO was incarnated? : The eternal WORD → Jesus Christ
2. WHAT happened? : he became flesh → became a human being
3. WHERE did it happen? : he lived among us → he lived on this earth
4. The PROOF? : “We saw his glory” → it is a fact of history!

HIS COMING WAS NO ACCIDENT

Before proceeding any further, perhaps we should investigate **WHY** Jesus came down and became a man. It seems strange that the God, who existed before the beginning and created everything, would end up as a dead human on a cross in Jerusalem! It would seem that his **coming here** was not accidental! Perhaps his **becoming a man** was no accident either. Consider carefully the following passages.

Please read **Matthew 26:51-53**. This is a very remarkable passage don't you think? Imagine Jesus picking that man's ear up off the ground and “pasting” it back in place! As exciting as that may be it is **not** the point we want to focus upon. Instead, notice what Jesus **says**. He speaks of his being here for a purpose and he was dedicated to fulfilling that purpose, even if it meant being unjustly killed! He **could** have done certain things to ensure his escape from the police officials there, but **chose** not to.

Jesus made no secret of the fact that he was here on the earth for a purpose. One such place is found in **Luke 19:10**. Please read this passage and note how he definitely thought of himself as being here with a purpose to accomplish.

In addition, please read **John 12:44-50**. Here we find that Jesus is speaking about himself. It seems to be a very emotional situation because Jesus is shouting. Notice how he speaks of himself as being sent by someone. If we look at verse 49 we discover that it was the Father who sent Jesus. Therefore, aside from the fact that Jesus **CHOSE** to come here, we also discover that he was **SENT**.

Another important passage we need to look at again is **Galatians 4:4-5**. Notice how it states not only that God sent his son into the world, but that there was a time consideration. It says that “when the time was right” God sent his son. This implies not only a purpose, but also a **PLAN**!

One very important passage is **Acts 2:23**. The background of this passage is very interesting. (Please read all of chapter 2 of Acts.) The apostle Peter is making a speech and verse 23 is a statement from his speech. We must remember that many people in the crowd were the ones who asked Pontius Pilate to crucify Jesus. These people were very confident. They believed that when they asked to have Jesus killed that they were doing a good thing for God because they were convinced that Jesus was a fake. What Peter said here made many of them feel very bad. He told them that they had been used by God to fulfill a **PLAN**, which he had made long before they were ever born!

One of the more important passages is **Philippians 2:6-8**. We have already looked at this passage in our past studies. This passage not only shows that Jesus chose to come here, but also that he chose to come here under different **form** of existence. The explanation here is not difficult to understand. Jesus began his existence in a form that is described as “being equal with God”. However, when he decided to come down to the earth, he “emptied himself” and the result was that he took on a human form and thus became “equal with man”. We will discuss this passage in much more detail in a future lesson but for now please notice that all of this happened because Jesus **CHOSE** to have it happen.

Considering what these passages reveal, it should now be very clear that Jesus' coming to the earth as a man was not accidental!

OUTSIDE EVIDENCE PROVES EXISTENCE OF A MAN CALLED JESUS

One problem we face is that some people do not believe that a person named Jesus ever lived. They say that it is only in the Bible that we read about him and that he is only a myth. However, this is simply not true. The proof of Jesus' existence is a historical fact and is supported by sources other than the Bible! Historians who lived during the 1st Century AD verify his existence.

One of the most brilliant writers of the first century was a Jew named **Flavius Josephus**. He was born in 37 AD and became a Pharisee at the age of 19. He took the name of Flavius in honor of the Flavian Emperors. When he was 26 years old, he visited Rome and was so impressed that he spent the rest of his life trying to bring about better relations between the Jews and the Romans. In AD 66, he was the commander of the Jewish forces in

Galilee. Later, after his capture in a battle of the Romans against the Jews, he was sent to Rome. He became so highly respected by the Romans that he was with Titus when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD. During the latter part of his life, he even lived in the Emperor's palace in Rome, where he had access to all of the libraries of the Roman Empire. Josephus, a non-Christian, wrote concerning Jesus Christ:

*"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ, and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians so named for him are not extinct at this day."*²⁵

Cornelius Tacitus, who wrote in about the year 100 AD, was a Roman historian, Governor of Asia, and son-in-law of Julius Agricola who was governor of Britannia from 80-84 AD. Tacitus had a strong dislike for Christians. This fact, however, makes his testimony even stronger! In discussing the life of Nero, and the accusation that he burned Rome and blamed it on the Christians, Tacitus said:

*"But neither all human help nor the liberality of the Emperor, nor all the atonements presented to the gods availed to abate the infamy he lay under of having ordered the city to be set on fire. To suppress, therefore, this common rumor, Nero procured others to be accused, and afflicted exquisite punishment upon those people, who were in abhorrence for their crimes, and were commonly known by the name of Christians. They had their denomination from Christus, who in the reign of Tiberius was put to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilate."*²⁶

The summary of Tacitus' testimony, which is unchallenged historically, states that Christ is the founder of the Christians, and, that he was put to death by Pontius Pilate. This agrees completely with the details we find revealed in the Bible account.

The fact that we can find testimony in secular history that verifies the existence of Jesus Christ is very important. It is impossible for a person to say that Jesus was not a real person. He was seen and his deeds recorded by historians who were not his disciples. Jesus Christ is a person of history.

If we put this fact into our increasing knowledge about Jesus, regardless of the difficulties in understanding how God could become a man, it is an undeniable FACT of history that the MAN, Jesus Christ, existed and that this person was the same individual who made the earth and everything in it! That is an awesome thought. Don't you think?

HOW HUMAN WAS JESUS?

Now we must proceed to an even greater question. "**How HUMAN was Jesus?**" How much was he **like us**? The first four books of the New Testament are filled with pieces of evidence which, when put together, present a picture of the human side of Jesus. To help you research this matter on your own, we have provided another worksheet. Please stop here and carefully study your way through the list of passages and then we will go through them together.



PLEASE STOP HERE AND WORK THROUGH THE ASSIGNMENT WORKSHEET for this lesson. After completing your study of the list of passages then you may continue on to the next page.

The first verse in our worksheet is **Matthew 1:1**. Actually, the evidence is the whole first chapter of the book. Here we can easily see that this material applies to Jesus because it is introduced as a record of the **genealogy** of Jesus Christ. So, what do we have here? This is a list of the physical ancestors of Jesus. The main thing we learn from this is that the physical side of Jesus did not come into existence like the seas, or mountains of the Creation. Just as in the case of you and I, Jesus' chromosomes from Mary came as a result of generations of breeding. However, the fact we want to notice here is that Jesus, like all humans, **had relatives!**

Along with this we found **Galatians 4:4**. What did this passage teach us about Jesus? It tells us that Jesus was born from a woman like all other people were. Remember that Jesus did not materialize suddenly out of thin air. He

²⁵ Josephus, Flavius, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Chapter 18, Section 3.

²⁶ Tacitus, Cornelius, *Annals*; quoted in Documents of the Christian Church. Henry Bettenson, Editor. Oxford Univ. Press, New York, 1957.

was in his mother's womb for nine months just the same as you were. And he came into this world in the same way that you did.

By looking at **Luke 2:40 and 52**, we discover that Jesus did not miraculously grow up. He had a childhood and adolescence just like you and I. In fact, the Bible teaches us that Jesus was about 30 years old when he started his work for God. (Please see **Luke 3:23**.)

In **Mark 6:3**, we see several interesting facts about Jesus. One thing we see is that Jesus learned a trade. He was a carpenter. We also notice that Jesus had brothers and sisters. We even have the names of several of them listed in the text.

The next passage in the worksheet is **John 19:28**. Here we find Jesus experiencing thirst. Although this may not seem significant, we know from other passages that Jesus was completely human in that he had to eat and drink in order to survive.

In **John 4:6** we see Jesus was tired. In **Matthew 8:24**, we see him sleeping.

In **John 2:15**, we see him experiencing anger. In **Matthew 4:1** we see Jesus experiencing temptation. In **Hebrews 5:2** we learn that Jesus experienced times of weakness.

In **Luke 7:34**, we find that Jesus was continually being misunderstood by people around him. **Luke 5:16** shows us that Jesus found it necessary to seek seclusion. Perhaps this was due to the constant pressure he found himself under due to his work.

During Jesus' life he developed relationships with different people. Perhaps one of his closest friends was a man named Lazarus. **John 11:3** described Lazarus as a close friend. In fact, in **John 11:35** we find that Jesus experienced the extreme sorrows of humanity. An example of this is when he discovered that his good friend had died.

We also learn that Jesus experienced times of fear. **Mark 14:34** records Jesus' experience in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was here that he spent his last night alive struggling over the question of whether he would do what he wanted to do or what his Father wanted him to do. As he agonized there, Jesus himself tells us that he was afraid of what was going to happen to him the next day. Fortunately for us, Jesus decided to do what God wanted him to do. However, we can all relate to his experience of struggle and fear.

The next two passages are very interesting. They show Jesus experiencing some very human things. In **Matthew 27:46**, we see Jesus experiencing human separation from God because of sin. This is a very human thing. Jesus was not separated from God because he himself did something wrong. Jesus was separated because he took on the sins of the whole world. However, the fact remains that he experienced human separation from God!

The final verse in our worksheet is **Matthew 27:50**. This passage tells us that Jesus died.

If we look back over the whole list of passages in the worksheet, a picture emerges of the extent of Jesus' humanity. In conclusion, what we see is basically a person who was just like us. However, some of these human characteristics create problems for us when we try to think back over what we have learned about Jesus in our previous lessons. **If Jesus is God then how can God be KILLED?** Many people today point to Jesus' death as "undeniable" proof that Jesus is not God. Before we make that conclusion, we need to do further research into what has been written about Jesus. Perhaps there is other information that can explain how Jesus could be God and yet die a human death!

Before proceeding, answer the following test questions for Lesson 7:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lessons. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the CIRCLE for that answer choice on the answer sheet. Remember to bring the answer sheet with you and turn it in to your teacher. We will grade your answers and record your grade in our records.

1. What is the meaning of the word **incarnation**?
 - a) It is a brand of milk.
 - b) It means living your life over and over again.
 - c) It means "becoming flesh".
 - d) All of the above.
2. In **John 1:14** it says that "the word became _____ and lived among us." (choose the missing word below)
 - a) flesh
 - b) angry
 - c) an angel
 - d) God
9. In **John 12:44-50** Jesus says that he is being sent by someone. Who is it that sent him?
 - a) His Father.
 - b) His mother.
 - c) The angels.
 - d) All of the above.
10. By whose authority does Jesus say that he is speaking and teaching?
 - a) His mother.
 - b) The Emperor.
 - c) His Father.
 - d) His disciples.

Please read John 1:14 and answer the next three questions

3. Who was incarnated?
 - a) Michael the archangel
 - b) Arius
 - c) The devil
 - d) Jesus
4. Where did the incarnation happen?
 - a) Among us.
 - b) In Jerusalem.
 - c) In heaven.
 - d) At the temple.
5. What was the proof?
 - a) It was broadcast on CNN.
 - b) People saw him.
 - c) There is no proof. It is only a story.
 - d) We believe it by faith.
6. In **Matthew 26:52-53**, who did Jesus say would come to help him if he asked for it?
 - a) His mother.
 - b) Twelve legions of angels. (60,000+ angels)
 - c) The apostles.
 - d) The police.
7. TRUE or FALSE: Jesus told his disciples that if they were ever persecuted then they should fight back.
 - a) True
 - b) False
8. In **Luke 19:10** what does Jesus say is his purpose for being here on the earth?
 - a) To judge mankind.
 - b) To perform miracles.
 - c) To see what the earth looked like.
 - d) To seek and save the lost.
11. When does it say that God sent his son according to **Galatians 4:4-5**?
 - a) At the beginning of Creation.
 - b) When the time was right.
 - c) In 1933.
 - d) At Mount Sinai during Moses' time.
12. What does **Galatians 4:4-5** say is the reason that God sent his Son?
 - a) So that he might become like man.
 - b) To redeem man.
 - c) So that Jesus could become famous.
 - d) All of the above.
13. Who is speaking in **Acts 2:23**?
 - a) God
 - b) Jesus
 - c) Luke
 - d) Peter
14. Who were the people he was talking to?
 - a) Romans living in Jerusalem.
 - b) Gentile Christians.
 - c) People of Israel who had come to Jerusalem for the feast.
 - d) People from the house of Cornelius.
15. Who is the main subject of his speech?
 - a) Jesus
 - b) The Emperor of Rome
 - c) The prophet Joel.
 - d) Mary, the mother of Jesus.
16. He states that Jesus was killed according to the
 - a) wishes of the people.
 - b) definite plan and foreknowledge of Satan.
 - c) desire of his own will.
 - d) definite plan and foreknowledge of God.
17. Did God have a plan for saving man before Jesus came to the earth and became a man?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No

18. Who did God use to accomplish his plan of Jesus dying?
- a) The evil people who chose to kill Jesus.
 - b) Satan.
 - c) The angels.
 - d) The apostles.

Please read Philippians 2:6-8 again and answer the next five questions

19. Did Jesus come to earth in the "form of God"?

- a) Yes
- b) No

20. Was Jesus equal with God in heaven before he came to earth?

- a) Yes
- b) No

21. What did Jesus have to do in order to come to earth as a man?

- a) He had to empty himself of all that made him different from man.
- b) He had to take the form of a servant.
- c) He had to be born in the likeness of a man.
- d) All of the above.

22. TRUE or FALSE: Jesus did not give up his equality with God.

- a) True
- b) False

23. TRUE or FALSE: Jesus became a man by his own choice.

- a) True
- b) False

24. Who is Flavius Josephus?

- a) One of the 12 apostles.
- b) A roman emperor.
- c) A non-Christian, Jewish historian.
- d) None of the above.

25. What is important about his writings?

- a) He was the man who drove the nails into the hands and feet of Jesus.
- b) He mentioned the existence of a man called Jesus Christ in his writings.
- c) He denied Jesus 3 times.
- d) He was the person who decided that Jesus should be killed.

26. Why is the testimony of Josephus so important?

- a) Because he was not a Christian.
- b) Because he mentions that Jesus was a real person.
- c) Because he said that Jesus was a doer of wonderful works
- d) All of the above.

27. What major Roman official, mentioned in the Bible in connection with Jesus' death, is also mentioned in the writings of Josephus?

- a) Pontius Pilate
- b) Herod
- c) Zeus
- d) Julius Caesar

28. Who was Cornelius Tacitus?

- a) He was a Jewish Rabbi who taught during the time of Jesus.
- b) He was a Roman historian who disliked Christians.
- c) He was a Roman soldier who became a Christian.
- d) None of the above.

29. What Roman emperor does he mention in his writings who did not like Christians?

- a) Julius Caesar
- b) Augustus
- c) Pontius Pilate
- d) Nero

30. According to the writings of Tacitus, who was accused of burning the city of Rome?

- a) The Christians who were living there.
- b) Jesus Christ.
- c) The apostle Peter.
- d) The Roman soldiers who hated Nero.

31. What major Roman official, mentioned in the Bible in connection with Jesus' death, is also mentioned in the writings of Tacitus?

- a) Pontius Pilate
- b) Caiaphas the High Priest.
- c) Herod the king.
- d) Nero

32. Why is Tacitus' testimony about Jesus so important?

- a) Because it proves that the Christians burned Rome.
- b) Because it shows that Christianity was all based upon made-up stories.
- c) Because he was a Christian and therefore we can believe his testimony.
- d) Because it provides proof, outside of the Bible, that Jesus was a real person and the stories about him are true.

The remaining questions are taken from the Worksheet for this lesson

33. TRUE or FALSE: In **Matthew 1**, we have a list of the ancestors of Jesus Christ.
- True
 - False
34. **Galatians 4:4** says that Jesus was
- born from a female angel.
 - born from a woman.
 - born from God during the Creation.
 - None of the above.
35. TRUE or FALSE: **Galatians 4:4** shows us that Jesus appeared suddenly out of thin air.
- True
 - False
36. In **Luke 2:40 and 52** we see that Jesus had what very common human experience?
- He had a regular human childhood in which he grew up like other boys his age.
 - He came down from heaven miraculously and appeared as a grown-up man.
 - He easily became angry all the time.
 - He needed to sleep each night and eat food in order to survive.
37. We also see that Jesus grew wiser, he grew taller, that people liked him, and that
- he had many girlfriends.
 - he pleased God.
 - he did not like his father, Joseph.
 - he went about doing miracles during his childhood.
38. According to **Mark 6:3**, what kind of trade did Jesus work at?
- He was a carpenter.
 - He was a fisherman.
 - He made tents for a living.
 - He was a teacher.
39. TRUE or FALSE: **Mark 6:3** says that Jesus had brothers and sisters.
- True
 - False
40. What human physical need does Jesus show in **John 19:28**?
- Sleep
 - Hunger
 - Companionship
 - Thirst
41. In **Matthew 8:24**, where is Jesus sleeping?
- In a boat during a raging storm.
 - In his mother's house.
 - In the Temple.
 - None of the above.
42. In **John 2:15**, why is Jesus angry?
- Because a man selling goats did not give him back the correct change.
 - Because he was angry at his disciples.
 - Because people were making the temple in Jerusalem a place for buying and selling things.
 - All of the above.
43. In **Matthew 4:1** why was Jesus being led into the desert?
- So that he could be tempted by the devil.
 - So that his disciples could not find him.
 - Because he wanted to be alone.
 - Because he got lost.
44. TRUE or FALSE: According to **John 11:3 and 35**, Lazarus was a close friend of Jesus?
- True
 - False
45. TRUE or FALSE: When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, he was not worried about what was going to happen to him.
- True
 - False
46. In **Matthew 27:50** what human experience did Jesus have?
- He was hungry.
 - He was tired.
 - Jesus experienced death.
 - He was angry.

LESSON EIGHT

WHY DID JESUS BECOME A MAN?

In our previous lesson, we looked at the extent of Jesus' humanity and ended with more questions than answers! After all, how can Jesus be God and then die like an ordinary man? We still need to go deeper in our study and search for the missing pieces of the puzzle. So far, we have established that Jesus **DID** become a man and that his doing so was **NO ACCIDENT!** In this lesson, we will seek to discover more details so that we can know **WHY** he became a human.

There are many passages in the Bible that discuss reasons why Jesus came to the earth as a human, but perhaps no other mentions so many reasons in one place as does **Hebrews 2:9-18**.

*“9 For a short time Jesus was made lower than the angels, but now we see him wearing a crown of glory and honor because he suffered and died. Because of God’s grace (kindness) Jesus died for every person. 10 God is the one who made all things and all things are for his glory. God wanted to have many sons to share his glory. So God did what he needed to do. He made perfect the one (Jesus) who leads those people to salvation. God made Jesus a perfect savior through suffering. 11 The one (Jesus) who makes people **holy**²⁷ and the ones who are made holy are from the same family. So he (Jesus) is not ashamed to call those people his brothers and sisters. 12 Jesus says, ‘God, I will tell my brothers and sisters about you. Before all your people I will sing your praises.’ 13 He also says, ‘I will trust in God.’ And he says, ‘I am here. And with me are the children God has given me.’ 14 Those children are people with physical bodies. So Jesus himself became like those people and had the same experiences people have. Jesus did this so that, by dying, he could destroy the one who has the power of death. That one is the Devil. 15 Jesus became like those people and died so that he could free them. They were like slaves all their lives because of their fear of death. 16 Clearly, it is not angels that Jesus helps. Jesus helps the people who are from Abraham. 17 For this reason Jesus had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way. Jesus became like people so that he could become their merciful and faithful high priest in service to God. Then Jesus could bring forgiveness for the people’s sins. 18 And now Jesus can help those who are tempted. Jesus is able to help because he himself suffered and was tempted.”*

Please read this passage through several times and think about what is being said here. Notice that there are at least eight (8) different reasons given why Jesus HAD to become a man. Let us go through them one at a time.

FIRST. Verse 9 of this passage tells us, **“Because of God’s grace (kindness) Jesus died for every person.”**

The important fact that this statement brings forward is that **Jesus died**. If we recall what we learned about Jesus' origin from our previous lessons, we realize that this is saying that God died! This brings a very interesting question into our study. “Does death have any real **meaning** in the life of God?” It does not if we are speaking of the EXPERIENCE of death because God cannot DIE. It also follows that if he cannot **know personally** what it feels like to die, then he cannot know what we humans FEEL when we die.

In many ways, his situation is like that of a man who witnesses his neighbor’s house burn to the ground. He can have sincere PITY for his neighbor because he can see that his neighbor is hurting. He can see the tears of the family as their life’s possessions go up in smoke, and he can feel the heat from the flames. However, he cannot KNOW what the neighbor is FEELING INSIDE because it is not his house burning. Unless his own house should burn down, he cannot say, “I KNOW what you are feeling!”

Since God cannot die, his personal experience with death is similar to that of the man in the story. God can see us enduring pain and suffering and he can see our fears. He can detect our increased heartbeat as the moment draws nearer, but he cannot really KNOW what death is like—because he cannot die! (This same point can also be made concerning other areas of our humanity—like temptation, weakness, illness, and the like!)

When Jesus (who is also God) became a man then we can say that God was finally able **to experience** the pains of humanity firsthand. In other words, when Jesus gave up his equality with God and became human, it was as if he set his own house on fire so that he could know what it felt like! Because of this, God now KNOWS, through Jesus, what being human feels like!

²⁷ The word “**holy**” comes from a Greek word which means to take something and set it apart as being “special”, as opposed to something that is ordinary. The idea here seems to be that Jesus “sets us apart” as “special” for God.

Now the point here is very easy to understand. The only way that Jesus could have experienced death was for him to become human—just like us!

SECOND. Verse 10 of the passage tells us that God made Jesus perfect “**through suffering**”.

Perfection was a fact of life for Jesus. Almost everyone will tell you that Jesus was **perfect** in every way. Artistic representations of him all portray him as having a “halo” around his head—signifying his perfection and sinless life. The Bible clearly upholds the fact that Jesus was perfect and without sin. However, many people misunderstand these statements to be saying that Jesus was perfect **BECAUSE HE WAS GOD**. This is NOT what the Bible says. In fact, the point here in this verse stresses the fact Jesus was not perfect just because he was God. Perfection came only after hours, days, months, and years of blood, sweat, and tears. Human perfection is not at all easy. We know that all too well! Jesus had to become perfect through suffering and to accomplish that, he had to become a man and so he was sinless because every time he faced a temptation he made the correct freewill choice!

For a closer look at the kind of human existence Jesus struggled through, please read **Hebrews 5:7-9**. Note how it stresses that Jesus **LEARNED OBEDIENCE through what he suffered**. This was part of his human experience!

THIRD. Verse 11 states that Jesus came to, “**set us apart as his brothers**”.

The way Jesus sets people apart as being special for God is through his dying on the cross for their sins. That was one of the more important reasons why Jesus came to the earth. By dying, Jesus made it possible for all men to be set apart from the rest of humanity as his brothers in the family of God. Since the only way for him to accomplish this was to die, and since God cannot die, then the only way this could have been possible is if he became a man.

FOURTH. Verse 14 says Jesus, “**became like those people and had the same experiences people have**”.

In order for Jesus to share in every aspect of our humanity, notice how verse 17 indicates that he **had to be made like us IN EVERY WAY**. This is perhaps the most significant piece of evidence in our study for this lesson. It would seem that there is no difference between Jesus’ existence and our own existence. How could this be said about Jesus unless he truly gave up everything that made him equal with God and then truly became one of us—in **every** way?

FIFTH. Verse 14 also states that Jesus became a man and died, in order that he might, “**destroy the one who has the power of death—the devil**”

This one is amazing once you think about it for a few minutes. A question we might ask is, “Why would Jesus **have to become a man** in order to destroy the devil?” We know that Jesus was God before his incarnation in Bethlehem. We also know (hope) that God is more powerful than Satan. Right? Couldn’t Jesus have defeated the Devil while being equal with God? Of course, he could, so, why do we find this strange statement?

In heaven, Jesus is God. He has the power to do anything he wants. He can, with the simple touch of a finger, destroy Satan. So, why then did he have to come to earth as a man in order to destroy the devil? Consider the following reasoning very carefully.

If we survey the whole Bible, we can see a definite ranking of power in the universe. God reigns supreme at the top and everyone else occupies various positions of power and rank below him. Considering the point of the writer, here in Hebrews chapter 2, we can see something like this...

1. **GOD** - is the most powerful and ranks highest
2. **SATAN** - is lower in rank and power than GOD, but much higher than MAN
3. **MAN** - is definitely the lowest in rank and power

God and Satan have had their struggle against one another from some time back into eternity. God seems to have come out victorious because he is the one in control of everything, instead of Satan. How they settle their disputes is between them. However, from examining the Bible, we discover that they are in competition with one another over the **loyalty** of mankind. God desires man to choose him while Satan desires man to be loyal to him. Considering how serious is the outcome of their contest, why doesn’t God do something to eliminate Satan? That would be a great help to us!

The situation is a little complicated. We know that God **COULD** eliminate Satan. However, if this were to happen, then Satan would definitely complain that God had acted unfairly and that, had the contest been allowed to run its natural and just course to the end, he would have emerged as the winner! He might even be so bold as to charge that the people do not really love and respect God and that God is being blind to the truth... Does this kind of

reasoning sound familiar to you? It should. We can picture this type of response from Satan because these are precisely the matters he raised in the case of JOB, in the Old Testament.

(Please stop here and read **Job 1:8-12** and then **Job 2:1-6**.)

Isn't this **interesting**? What do we learn about God and Satan from these encounters? There seems to be a definite concern among them over the matter of "fair play". Satan accuses God of **bribing** Job for his affections and God is concerned that Satan will simply kill Job! Therefore, we might say that they came to an understanding about "fair play" in their contest over the soul of Job. This idea of fair play extends to all of us as well.

If fair play is an important issue with God then this might help explain the statement back in **Hebrews 2:14**. God may not be able to use his position of power to intervene and remove Satan from the game. That would not be fair play. However, what if God were to become HUMAN, and **then** compete with Satan? Once a man, he could then fight against Satan and Satan could not complain if he lost. He could not complain because he would have had the advantage during the contest. (Remember that SATAN is higher in rank and more powerful than MAN!)

Satan would welcome a challenge like this because he would have a powerful advantage. This also brings up a very important matter. What risks would there be for God if Jesus were to do battle against Satan **as a man**? What IF Jesus were to lose? (We will discuss this possibility in our final set of lessons, but for now let us focus upon the possibility of victory!)

If Jesus should win under these conditions, he would gain a very meaningful victory. He would have reached up, from a position of weakness and pulled down a more powerful adversary! This would be the kind of a victory that the angels up in heaven would celebrate! On the other hand, if God used his finger to defeat Satan, then Satan would be gone. However, would there be anything to sing or boast about in that kind of victory? Not really because we would EXPECT that result! After all, if God **cannot** defeat Satan then we all are in trouble, right? But what if God were to become a MAN and then defeat Satan? Now... If **that** were to happen, all the books of the world could not contain the songs and stories that would be written about such a victory, and what about the angels in heaven? One can only imagine the celebration they would have. To beat Satan at his own game, and to do it from a position of weakness, would be something indeed!

Surprisingly, this seems to be what actually happened! Jesus became a man and defeated Satan in the game, and the angels in heaven had a very great celebration! And best of all, here is the important part. The defeated Satan cannot complain about any violation of the "fair play" rule because **HE** had the advantage during the contest!

How does all of this relate back to our study of verse 14 of Hebrews chapter 2? The only way that Jesus could have accomplished this kind of victory is **IF** he became a man—just like us in every way. He could not have come here as God **disguised** as a man because he would still have all of his Godly powers and advantage during the battle with Satan. Then Satan would have complained about losing! Jesus **had to win** as a real man! Isn't this amazing?

SIXTH. Verse 15 of our passage says that Jesus freed us **from the fear of death**.

Jesus' victory over Satan was also a victory over death. Satan had Jesus in the tomb and perhaps thought he had won. But Jesus was raised from death by the Father and that assured him of his victory. Death could not keep him. His being raised up from death was also important for us because for the first time all people have proof that a man can rise from death, never to die again! Before Jesus rose from the dead, no person had any real proof that there really was a "resurrection to eternal life". In the past there had been people who had died and been brought back from death, but they eventually died again. Even Jesus himself was afraid of death! The fear of death was like a prison in which all of us were being held inside. However, now that Jesus has risen from the dead, **EVERYONE KNOWS THAT THERE IS A RESURRECTION** and eternal life! We know this because Jesus rose from death never to die again. The writer says that Jesus has set us free from our slavery. The only way that this could be possible is if Jesus' resurrection was the same one that we are also waiting to experience. His could not be a resurrection **BECAUSE** he is God. We would expect a God to be immortal. That would not help us in any way. However, if a fellow human were to be raised up, never to die again, then that would be important to us! It **would prove**, once and for all, that eternal life is real and that there is a resurrection! Because Jesus became a man, died, and was raised, we now **KNOW** that we no longer need to be afraid of death. If Jesus had not become a man—just like us in every way, then this would not be possible!

SEVENTH. Verse 17 of the passage says that Jesus became human so that “**he could become their merciful and faithful high priest**”.

From studying through the Old Testament, we learn that a priest is someone who stands between God and the people. He had to be dedicated to God, but at the same time close to the people. By becoming a man, Jesus learned about being human. He became very close to us. The writer here describes Jesus as having to become like us **in every way!** We also learn that his becoming human also helped him to become more merciful towards us. How could this happen if he did not become a man?

EIGHTH. Verse 18 tells us that Jesus is “**able to help because he himself suffered and was tempted**”.

For a more detailed explanation of this important point, please read **Hebrews 4:15-16**. The writer indicates that Jesus is not someone we need to be afraid of because he knows about our struggles and he sympathizes with us. Why is he this way? Because he was once one of us and knows what it is like to face temptation and weakness. He faced these things when he was alive on the earth. However, the only way the points made by the writer of Hebrews will make any sense to his readers is IF Jesus really did become a man—just like us in **every way**.

Because of all the things Jesus gained, suffered, gave up, experienced, did, and did not do during his human existence, he became, for us today, a most powerful friend and protector! **A friend who CAN HELP US!**

Aside from the points brought out in Hebrews chapter 2, there is a **NINTH** very interesting reason why Jesus had to become a man and live his life on the earth like us in every way. Please consider the following scenario:

“It is Judgment Day and a very bad man is **brought before the Father** who is seated behind his great Judgment Seat. Because of his evil behavior, it is not surprising when the man is sentenced to eternal punishment. In reaction to his sentence, he begins to accuse the Father of being unfair. He shouts that God has no right to send anybody to Hell because **he himself** never had to suffer and struggle against temptation and sin the way we humans did because **he was always immune** from such things! He continues his cries of criticism, to no avail, as he is dragged away to the Pit!”

The above story is not meant to cast insult toward the Father in any way. The story is told with the desire of focusing on the man who was judged. Think very carefully about his “complaint”. Of course, he has no basis for complaining because it wasn’t God who forced him to do all the bad things that caused him to be sent to the Pit. Only the man himself can be blamed for that! But what can we say about **his point?** We have already seen that God does not EXPERIENCE human temptation and weakness as we do. Therefore, it **IS** possible that some might complain, **IF THE FATHER IS THE ONE WHO SITS IN FINAL JUDGMENT!**

With this thought in mind, please read and consider the following passages, which speak about Jesus and the Judgment Day.

John 5:22-30 gives a vivid picture of the Judgment Day. Notice how it states that the Father gives the task of judging to Jesus. It also says that Jesus will judge in a fair way.

Acts 17:31 echoes this same idea by stating that the Father will judge the world **THROUGH** the Son. Notice how it also states that doing this will make the judging fair. This is an interesting point because it relates back to our judgment situation above. Jesus in the judgment seat will put fairness in the process because no person can say that Jesus lived using special powers, or that he does not know what it is like to live as a human. Jesus knows what being human is like and he will judge everyone in a fair way.

Romans 2:16 is another passage that states that God will judge the world **THROUGH** Jesus.

Another detailed account of the Judgment is found in **2 Corinthians 5:10**. This one states that all people will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. It also states that the basis of the judgment of Jesus will be the actions of each person’s life. Therefore, we have a fair judge who also will judge us only by what we alone have done.

Another passage that speaks of Jesus as the judge is **John 12:44-50**. This one adds a little more explanation to what we learned above. The actions of our lives should be patterned after the things Jesus taught. The judgment will be a fair process. Jesus will use those teachings he received from the Father as the measuring stick to compare against our life actions when he makes his judgment. Since we know this, we should study the teachings of the second message carefully and follow them each day of our lives. This is the best way to prepare ourselves for judgment.

If we summarize these passages, we see that God has made a fair plan for judging the people of the world. He has decided to let Jesus be the one to do this and he had assured that Jesus will be fair by sending him down to the earth to experience humanity. Because Jesus experienced humanity—remember that he was just like us in every way—he is perfectly qualified to judge every person. Jesus will judge each person according to the teachings he received from the Father, taking into consideration his own experiences as a man. No person will have a reason or a right to complain!

It must be noted that the only way that this fairness in judgment can be achieved is **IF** Jesus actually did come down and live as a man—like us in every way.

WHAT THEN IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INCARNATION?

As we conclude our study about the earthly side of Jesus, let us go back over the main points we have learned about the **INCARNATION**.

1. Because Jesus came down and became a man, we can see that human life must be worth something. We must remember that he voluntarily gave up his comfortable place in heaven so that he could come and save us from the grasp of Satan. The fact that Jesus did this must mean that we are worth something to him!
2. Jesus becoming a man furnishes us with the perfect example of what our lives are supposed to be like. If we imitate his life, we will be much closer to the Father than we imagine possible. Jesus came and showed us that Christianity is not something we devote ourselves to or belong to, it is a **LIFESTYLE**!
3. Jesus becoming a man gives us the best example of self-denial. Imagine it! Our God gave up so much for those who were so undeserving. If he did it, then we can too!
4. Jesus becoming a man was necessary in order to achieve a **MEANINGFUL** victory over Satan. To avoid any complaints and accusations, God beat Satan from a position of weakness. The result was a victory that the angels in heaven sing about!
5. Jesus becoming a man was necessary for the salvation of man's sins. He had to die, and for this to happen, Jesus had to become a man!
6. Jesus becoming a man gained him valuable experience as a human. It prepared him for his role as our merciful and faithful high priest. His experience also helps him understand our struggles better, ensuring fairness in the Judgment. **No one will be able to say that God does not know what it is like to be a human anymore!**

Before proceeding, answer the following test questions for Lesson 8:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lessons. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the **CIRCLE** for that answer choice on the answer sheet. Remember to bring the answer sheet with you and turn it in to your teacher. We will grade your answers and record your grade in our records.

Please read Hebrews 2:9-18 before answering the first 9 questions

1. In this passage, we can see several reasons why Jesus became a man. What reason is given in verse 9?
 - a) Jesus had to become a man in order to die because God cannot be killed.
 - b) He had to become a man to die in behalf of every person.
 - c) He became a man so that he could suffer and die on the cross.
 - d) All of the above.
2. What significance does Jesus' death have for us?
 - a) Now God knows first-hand what death is like.
 - b) His death can take away our sins.
 - c) By his death he defeated the Devil.
 - d) All of the above.
3. Which of the following statements is **NOT** true?
 - a) God can be killed.
 - b) Jesus experienced a human death.
 - c) God now knows what being human feels like.
 - d) Jesus came here to share in our humanity.

4. Jesus was perfect because
 - a) he was God.
 - b) his temptations were easy.
 - c) he always made the right choice when he was tempted.
 - d) None of the above.
5. Which of the following **is NOT** a reason why Jesus became human according to **Hebrews 2:9-18**?
 - a) To taste death for us.
 - b) To share in our humanity.
 - c) To become a merciful and faithful High Priest.
 - d) To visit the Holy Land.
6. TRUE or FALSE: Jesus was **perfect** because he was God.
 - a) True
 - b) False
7. TRUE or FALSE: Jesus' became a man to destroy the devil.
 - a) True
 - b) False
8. What additional fact did we learn about Jesus becoming a man from **Acts 17:31**?
 - a) Jesus also had a wife and children while he was living here.
 - b) Jesus had an easy time living as a man.
 - c) Jesus' experiences as a man qualify him to be the judge on the Judgment Day.
 - d) All of the above.
9. TRUE or FALSE: Jesus was just like us **in every way**.
 - a) True
 - b) False
10. TRUE or FALSE: God the Father will personally judge the world on the Judgment Day.
 - a) True
 - b) False
11. TRUE or FALSE: The Father will judge the world through his son Jesus.
 - a) True
 - b) False
12. Based upon what we have learned about Jesus' humanity, why will it be more fair if Jesus is the judge on the Judgment Day?
 - a) The Father is more strict than Jesus.
 - b) Since Jesus was like us in every way, he **KNOWS** what it is like to live as a human and will take this into consideration when he makes his judgments.
 - c) Because Jesus will ask his mother for advice about how he will judge people.
 - d) All of the above.
13. Jesus becoming a man
 - a) gives us a perfect example of human life to follow.
 - b) proves that we can obey God if we want to.
 - c) shows us that people are worth dying for.
 - d) All of the above.
14. In **John 12:44-50**, we discover that the Judgment process will be
 - a) based upon how many times we went to church.
 - b) based upon how much money you gave to the church.
 - c) based upon how well we have listened to and obeyed the teachings that Jesus gave.
 - d) None of the above.
15. Jesus dying and being raised from death should take away our fear of death because
 - a) since he was like us in every way, his resurrection was a human resurrection and so we now **KNOW** that there really is life after death—and so we no longer need to be afraid.
 - b) Jesus is God and he will raise everyone from the dead and take them to heaven.
 - c) it does not matter if you are afraid or not because everyone must die.
 - d) All of the above.
16. TRUE or FALSE: According to what we learned from the passages in the book of Job, Satan **does not** obey what God tells him to do.
 - a) True
 - b) False
17. TRUE or FALSE: Jesus was tempted to sin in the same way that we are, and yet he never sinned.
 - a) True
 - b) False
18. TRUE or FALSE: God allows Satan to do **whatever he wants** to do to trap us.
 - a) True
 - b) False

LESSON NINE

THE GREAT PARADOX!

The last few lessons of our course have been very interesting. Imagine the wonder of Jesus! First we saw him as the pre-existent God who created the universe. Then we saw him as an ordinary person—just like us in every way. The evidence for each side was easy to find and understand and overwhelming. The only problem we have now is trying to figure out a way to have both of these extreme pictures fit into the same person—Jesus! In Jesus, truly, the heaven and earth collide to form a PARADOX²⁸!

We have seen TWO SIDES of Jesus' existence...

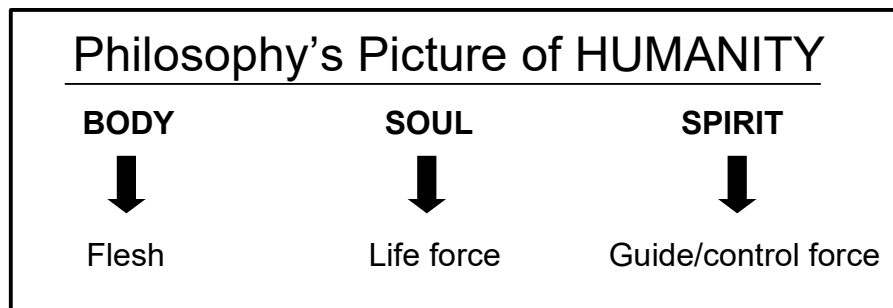


How can he be BOTH at the same time?

Is it possible that divinity²⁹ with all its perfection and purity can be joined to humanity with all its weaknesses and limitations—at the same time? This would seem to be the case when we speak of Jesus because we have already seen that he really IS God and he really IS man! Most religions believe and teach that when Jesus Christ came to the earth he was 100% God and 100% man, but is this possible?

A TWO THOUSAND YEAR OLD PUZZLE!

To get to the bottom of the issue we must first realize that people have been trying to explain the existence of God and man in Jesus Christ ever since he left the earth. It is a hard thing to do since none of us know what it means to be God! It isn't surprising then to see that most attempts to explain focus on the human aspect of the issue. Philosophers in the past have often described MAN as being composed of three basic parts: **body**, **soul**, and **spirit**. They explain that the **body** is the flesh and blood “house”, or “body” in which the spirit and soul live. The **soul** is the life force that makes a person a living being, and the **spirit** is the controlling force within a person that processes information, makes decisions, and stores memories.



There have been attempts to explain Jesus' humanity using this model. One such attempt was by a fellow named **Apolinarius**³⁰. He explained that Jesus assumed a human **body** and **soul**, but that the human **spirit** of Jesus was replaced with God. If this were true, then God would be living in a human body. However, if the spirit of Jesus (that part of him that would process information and make decisions) was God, then how could it be said that Jesus, “was tempted as we are?” If temptation involves making decisions, then, using the model above, it would be the **spirit** of Jesus that would be responsible for deciding what to do. The theory of Apolinarius would have the God part of Jesus receiving the temptations and he would easily defeat each and every temptation. Jesus would be sinless, but it would not be because he “was tempted in every way just as we are and yet without sin.” (**Hebrews**

²⁸ A **paradox** is something that seems to contradict but in reality might possibly be true. It's like mixing water and oil. While it sounds impossible, under the right conditions it **can** be done.

²⁹ This is a word used in literature to describe the qualities and characteristics of being a god.

³⁰ Apolonarius was a religious teacher who lived in the 4th century.

4:15) Unfortunately, this idea would destroy his ability to experience humanity! From what we learned in our last study, it should be very easy to see that the idea of Apolinarius is going in the wrong direction.

At about the same time, a fellow named **Nestorius** put forth another idea³¹. He believed that Jesus was more like two distinct persons that switched back and forth as the situation needed. Whenever we see Jesus doing **human things**, that is the time when “Jesus the Man” is in the foreground and “Jesus the God” is in the background. Whenever we see Jesus teaching, healing, walking on water, or doing other things that only God can do then “Jesus the God” is in the foreground and “Jesus the Man” is in the background. The main problem with this idea is that it makes Jesus to be like a person with a “split personality”. In addition, we cannot possibly accept this explanation and then say that Jesus was “like us in every way”, can we? Therefore, Nestorius’ idea is also lacking something.

Still another interesting idea came from a fellow named **Eutyches**³². He believed that Jesus was born as an ordinary man in Bethlehem. At that time, he was 100% man and 0% God. However, as Jesus grew older the God part of him slowly increased while the man part of him slowly decreased, so that by the time Jesus left the earth he was 100% God and 0% man. This idea totally discards the human side altogether and cannot be accepted if we are to believe that Jesus was truly “just like us in every way”!

By now, you should be able to understand the problem facing us. From past studies, we know that Jesus was completely God, AND, completely human. Therefore, any attempt to explain the relationship between God and Man in Jesus must not compromise either position. Considering how different these two are, this is not an easy thing to accomplish! Let us search in the Bible and see if we can find another possible solution to the puzzle.

A “HEAVENLY” CONFLICT UNDER “EARTHLY” CONDITIONS!

To begin our research, please turn to and read **Matthew 4:1-10**. This passage records the temptation of Jesus by the Devil. Thinking about the details recorded there, one must notice the following.

First, let us ask a simple question. Was this the first time these two individuals met one another? The answer has to be NO! Satan and Jesus are both pre-existent beings and evidence indicates that they knew each other before the Creation and have been adversaries since before the world was made!

This brings up the **second** point. If Satan KNEW who he was dealing with, then he also knew very well that Jesus was God. This, in turn, means that he also knew that he did not have a chance of deceiving God.

Therefore, if Satan KNEW Jesus was God, and knew that God cannot be tempted by him, then why did Satan tempt Jesus? Is Satan that foolish, OR, had a change occurred in Jesus that now made him vulnerable to Satan’s attack. Would Satan go to so much effort if he did not stand a chance at success? This is very interesting, don’t you agree?

There MUST have been some change in the person of Jesus that made him vulnerable to Satan!

THE EXPLANATION UNFOLDS

With this in mind, please turn to **Philippians 2:6-8** and read it through several times so that you will easily be able to remember it. Examining the passage verse by verse, we find some remarkable things.

First, let’s work out the context of the passage. Who is speaking and what is he speaking about? The writer (the apostle Paul) is writing to his readers (who are all Christians) about the subject of humility and placing the needs of others above one’s own. To illustrate his point he then uses the example of Jesus. This sets up our passage. What better context could we have?

His first statement for our passage is, “Your attitude should be like that of Jesus...”

He begins his explanation, in verse 6, by describing Jesus in his pre-incarnation state of existence. The phrase Paul uses is “equal with God.” (This matches the conclusions we made in our earlier studies about Jesus during that time.) However, Paul goes on to say that Jesus did not count this equality as being something he should **hold on to**. In verse 7, he continues by saying that Jesus gave up his equality **with God** and came down to the earth.

³¹ Nestorius was a religious teacher who lived in the 4th and 5th centuries.

³² Eutychus was a religious teacher who lived in the 4th and 5th centuries.

(This would be speaking about the incarnation we studied.) The resulting state of Jesus' existence is described in verse 8. Jesus became **equal with man** and, as a man, had to be obedient to the Father's will just like any other human. (This would agree with our study of **Hebrews 2:14-18**.)

This is remarkable! The true scope of what Jesus did can be seen. It is not only the great change that we see, but also the motivation behind it. Jesus did this because he was putting the needs of others ahead of his own needs! This is what many refer to as self-denial and is the lesson the writer is trying to teach to his readers.

However, in our study today we are also interested in the transfer and change that came over Jesus. What exactly is meant when Paul states that Jesus "**GAVE UP**" his equality with God? Here is the main focal point of our lesson and of our understanding what happened during the temptation in Matthew chapter 4.

The Greek word we find here is a form of the word **KENOO**, which means, "to empty, or, to make of no value or use." Literally, it means to remove the content of something. Figuratively, it means taking away the effectiveness of something. Most translations of the Bible read, "...he **emptied** himself...", however, they might just as easily have said, "he made his equality with God **of no effect**."

If we consider the context of all we have studied thus far, the writer implies that Jesus **VOLUNTARILY** agreed to give up those things that made it impossible for him to live life on earth as a "like us in every way" human. (The word "empty" in the text does not necessarily demand the actual removal of these things, but only that they not be used while he lived on the earth.) However one wishes to word it, we are certain that the result was a change in Jesus—which was described by the writer of Hebrews as Jesus becoming **like us in every way!** That, in turn, would explain why Satan tried so hard to defeat Jesus during the temptation. Jesus became a complete human and so was open to Satan's attack!

There is still one very great question facing us. "Did Jesus **stop being God** when he emptied himself and became human?"

The answer to this cannot be found by trying to work out percentages. You cannot have something be 100% of one thing and then be 100% of another different thing at the same time. That adds up to 200%! Instead of percentages, the real issue here is one of **IDENTITY!** Identity involves everything that makes a person an individual—who he or she really **IS**.³³

Identity has to do with a person's origin, background, character, physical appearance, etc. Your identity is **who you are!** As a person experiences new things they become a part of his character and are **added** to his identity. A person's situation may change, and new experiences and characteristics might become part of his identity, but the identity itself does not change. New experiences do not erase or change who a person **was**, but rather, they add to who he is now, and remain a part of him as he goes forward into the future.

For example, a person who is poor might one day become rich. However, if he should become rich, that does not change the **FACT** that the man who is rich **NOW**, was once a poor man. **He is still the same person!**

This is how it is with Jesus. His past identity was not lost when he became a man. The man who was seen dead and hanging on the cross was the same individual who was there on **DAY ONE** of Creation and who made the light! No person could say that Jesus was not "the God of Creation", even though at that particular time he was a dead human hanging on a cross! If we look back at the way John explained things in chapter 1 of his book, the fact that the **WORD** "became flesh" did not mean that he was no longer the **WORD** who was with God in the beginning and who had made all things. The whole force of John's argument lies in the fact that the man Jesus, whom everyone knew and saw every day, was **REALLY** God!

It is not productive to become involved in the attempts of people to place percentage figures on the levels of **GOD** and **MAN** in Jesus, because it is not a question of **HOW MUCH** of Jesus was **MAN** and **HOW MUCH** was **GOD!**

What we see in the final analysis is that:

1. Jesus **IS** our **GOD** and Creator. He made us and everything else in the universe and he is just like the Father **IN EVERY WAY**.
2. He gave up **ALL** that made him different from us and came down to the earth to live.
3. On the earth he became a **MAN** to the extent that he was "like us **IN EVERY WAY**."
4. However, **BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER** all of this, he **NEVER** stopped being Jesus!

³³ The Random House College Dictionary says that **identity** is the state or fact of remaining the same one or ones as under varying aspects or conditions. The condition of being oneself or itself, and not another.

It is also important to note that **Philippians 2** is not describing a situation where Jesus was initially God and then he became a man (thus **CEASING** to be God), then later he became God again (thus **CEASING** to be man). If this were true, then it would make everything we studied in our last lesson mean nothing. (Please look again at **Hebrews 2:18** and **4:15-16**.) The only way Jesus can help us is if his **HUMANITY** was kept and brought back with him when he returned to his **ORIGINAL PLACE** and status. Jesus' **HUMANITY** became a **permanent addition to his identity**, and that addition has changed his importance in our lives forever!

Someone is said to have discovered an ancient anonymous proverb written about Jesus. It contains words that he himself might say in order to summarize what we have been trying to grasp in our lesson today.

I AM WHAT I WAS	→ GOD
I WAS NOT WHAT I AM	→ MAN
I AM NOW CALLED BOTH	→ GOD/MAN

This gives tremendous meaning to **Hebrews 13:8**, which simply states,

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

Before proceeding, answer the following test questions for Lesson 9:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lessons. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the **CIRCLE** for that answer choice on the answer sheet. Remember to bring the answer sheet with you and turn it in to your teacher. We will grade your answers and record your grade in our records.

- A **paradox** is
 - two doctors treating the same patient.
 - two events happening at the same time.
 - two seemingly contradictory things that might be true under some circumstances.
 - all of the above.
- In religious literature, **divinity** is
 - a kind of candy.
 - the qualities of being a god.
 - the qualities of being a witch.
 - none of the above.
- Using philosophy's idea of man being composed of a body, soul, and spirit, the **spirit** of a person is
 - that part which holds the life force.
 - the life force itself.
 - the part that makes decisions and experiences things.
 - all of the above.
- The idea that Jesus had a human body and soul, but that his spirit was God, was taught by
 - Eutychus.
 - Nestorius.
 - Apolinarius.
 - the Mormons.
- The idea that Jesus was two distinct persons that continually switched back and forth was taught by
 - Eutychus.
 - Nestorius.
 - Apolinarius.
 - the Mormons.
- The idea that Jesus was born as a man, but that he slowly became less man and more God as he went through his life was taught by
 - Eutychus.
 - Nestorius.
 - Apolinarius.
 - the Mormons.
- Any attempt to explain the existence of God and man in Jesus must
 - assign a percentage for each part – one for God and one for man.
 - not compromise the facts that Jesus was **both** completely God and completely man.
 - be something that is easy to understand.
 - include the opinions of modern scholars.
- The passage that records the temptation of Jesus by the Devil is
 - Matthew 1:1-5.
 - John 1:1-3 and 14.
 - Acts 2:38.
 - Matthew 4:1-10.

9. TRUE or FALSE: It was possible for Jesus to sin when he was tempted by the Devil.
- True
 - False
10. TRUE or FALSE: Before Jesus came to the earth to live, he was equal with man.
- True
 - False
11. In order for Jesus to become a man, he had to first
- give up his equality with God.
 - die on the cross.
 - be baptized by John the Baptist.
 - None of the above.
12. When Jesus came down and became a man, the result was that he was
- like us in every way.
 - equal with man.
 - living with all the limitations of humanity in his life.
 - All of the above.
13. The meaning of the Greek word **KENOO** is
- to come down to the earth.
 - to become flesh.
 - to call upon the name of the Lord.
 - to empty, or, to make of no value or use.
14. TRUE or FALSE: The best way to describe Jesus being God and man is by using a percentage formula.
- True
 - False
15. Define **identity**.
- The idea that Jesus was both God and man at the same time.
 - The condition in which a person changes his past and becomes a new person.
 - The condition of a person remaining the same unique individual through various different experiences.
 - None of the above.
16. TRUE or FALSE: Jesus' identity **as God** was erased when he became a man.
- True
 - False
17. TRUE or FALSE: Jesus' identity **as a man** was erased when he returned to heaven.
- True
 - False
18. TRUE or FALSE: When Jesus became a man he stopped being God.
- True
 - False
19. The point the writer of **Hebrews** brings out in **2:18** and **4:15** is that
- Jesus can now help us **because** he remembers what being a human was like.
 - we can never be like Jesus because he is God and we are only human.
 - Jesus forgot all his human experiences once he returned to heaven.
 - None of the above.
20. The main point of **Hebrews 13:8** is
- The world around us is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
 - Jesus Christ is the same person, yesterday, today, and forever.
 - Man is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
 - All of the above.

LESSON TEN

THE GREAT PARADOX ... CONTINUED

Up to this point, we have spent considerable time trying to understand the person of Jesus Christ. In our previous lesson, we tried to find a way to make the two sides of Jesus (God and Man) fit together into a single individual who could be described as being **like us in every way** and yet remain **like God in every way**. The key we proposed was that of **identity**. Although Jesus faced every second of his earthly existence as an ordinary human, he never stopped being who he always was—God! So, what does all this mean in simple words? **Jesus, the God of Creation, gave up his place in heaven and lived his life on the earth as an ordinary person.** We must also remember that he did this to accomplish several things—all of which would **NOT** have been possible unless Jesus was made like us in every way! Being just like us in every way demands that we explain some of the things that happened in the recorded life of Jesus.

HOW CAN JESUS BE “JUST LIKE US” AND PERFORM MIRACLES?

In order for Jesus to be described as being like us in every way, he would have to live with the same ordinary human powers that you and I see in one another every day. However, when we look at the record of Jesus' life we cannot help but notice him doing many things that are very different from our ordinary human abilities. If he was just like us in every way, then how do we explain these miraculous abilities? Any time he wanted to, Jesus could walk on water, raise the dead, and heal sick people. These are things which ordinary people cannot do, but God can easily do. Wouldn't these miracles, then, be **proof** that Jesus is God? Many Bible teachers would agree with this point without hesitation and many today, in fact, teach “the miracles of Jesus prove that he is God!” They reason that since only God can do miracles, and since Jesus performed miracles, then he **MUST** be God!

If it were not for the fact that certain New Testament writers we have studied in previous lessons placed great emphasis upon Jesus being **like us in every way**, then we could easily accept this idea. However, the fact that our previous studies stressed that Jesus was **just like us** has to make us wonder if this modern teaching is the only possible conclusion one can make regarding Jesus' ability to do miracles. Does the fact that Jesus could perform miracles **have to mean** that he was doing those things **because** he was God? If Jesus made a decision to empty himself of all of HIS OWN powers, when he came down to the earth to live as a man, does this mean that he could no longer perform miracles? These are very good questions to think about.

As we consider these questions, we need to think deeper on the matter. Let us consider another question. Are there any cases in the Bible where **ordinary people** have performed miracles? Yes, there are several. The Bible records the cases of people like Moses, Elijah, and many of the other prophets in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, we also have the cases of ordinary people like Peter, Paul, and other Christians. All of these people were ordinary humans who possessed no special powers of their own. They were “just like us in every way”, and yet **they** performed miracles. Did the fact that **these** people performed miracles indicate that they were God? Of course not! These humans were only able to do these things **because they were given the necessary power by God.**

With this thought in mind, let us do some research into the things that Jesus did while he was alive on the earth and see if we can discover anything that might help explain this difficult situation.



PLEASE STOP HERE AND WORK THROUGH THE ASSIGNMENT WORKSHEET for this lesson. After completing your study of the list of passages then you may continue on to the next page.

The passages of this worksheet fit into **two categories**. The **first category** is made up of passages in which Jesus spoke about himself. The first section of this list contains passages in which Jesus spoke, in a very general way, about his work and its relationship with the Father.

WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT HIMSELF

We begin the list with **John 5:36**, in which Jesus says that the things he does are the things the Father gave him to do. The point is very simple to understand. Jesus received all of his instructions from the Father.

Next, we have **John 10:18**, where Jesus speaks about giving his life. He mentions that he alone gives his life. However, notice how he closes the statement by saying that this is a command he received from his Father. Again, we see that the Father is behind the work Jesus came to do.

In **John 14:31**, Jesus speaks very clearly when he states that he loves the Father and that he does exactly what his Father has commanded him to do.

Next in the list is **John 15:10**, where Jesus defines love in terms of obedience. He points out that he obeyed the Father's commands and so we should also obey his commands. Jesus did not do anything from his own authority. He completely submitted to the will of his Father.

All of these passages agree with what we learned about Jesus in Philippians chapter 2. Remember that it was there that it was explained how Jesus humbled himself and became obedient to the Father, although this obedience caused him to be killed on a cross! It was because of his obedience to the Father that Jesus was exalted!

The next section of passages in the worksheet contained statements from Jesus specifically about his teachings. Once again, let us put them into context and see what he has to say.

In **John 7:16**, Jesus clearly stated that the teachings he gave to the people did not originate from within him. Everything he taught he received from the Father.

The same idea can be found in **John 8:26-28**. Jesus said that the things he told the world were things he received from the Father.

Perhaps one of the best and clearest passages is **John 12:49-50**. Jesus indicated that he only spoke the things that the Father commanded him to say. He goes on to say that these very things he received and taught will form the basis for the Judgment on the last day!

Another very clear passage is **John 14:10**. The interesting point here seems to be that the things Jesus taught were things that the Father **actually taught through him**. The Father was living in him and working through him.

WHAT OTHERS SAID ABOUT JESUS

The **second category** of passages in the worksheet is those spoken by others in explanation of Jesus and his works. The first two passages found in the list were spoken by the apostle Peter. He was an eyewitness to the life and works of Jesus and he knew him much better than most people did.

The first passage we have is **Acts 10:37-38**. The context of this passage is very important. Peter is making a speech in the house of the first non-Jewish person to become a Christian—a Roman soldier who was named Cornelius. He is telling the story of Jesus to this man and those people living in his house. In his description of Jesus, Peter states that Jesus was given the Holy Spirit, and that he then went around from place to place performing miracles **because God was with him!** The point here is that Jesus did miracles because God was with him. It would have been very easy for Peter to say that Jesus went around doing miracles because he was God, but this is not what he said. He emphasized the humanity of Jesus!

Another important passage is **Acts 2:22**. In this passage, Peter is making a speech to a crowd of people in Jerusalem, after Jesus went back to heaven. He is telling them about how God used them to kill Jesus and how he made Jesus the Messiah. When Peter introduced Jesus in his speech, he described him as **a man who was approved by God** and then pointed out that the proof of this "approval" was all the signs and miracles that **God did through him!** The point here is that God did miracles through Jesus. It would have been easy for Peter to tell those people that Jesus did the miracles by his own power because he was God, but Peter did not say that. Instead, Peter emphasized that Jesus was "a man"!

Finally, let us consider the record of one of the actual accounts of Jesus healing someone. **Luke 5:17-26** tells the story about Jesus healing a paralyzed man whose friends lowered him down through a roof of the house where he was teaching. Notice that in verse 17 it states in very clear words, "... **the power of the Lord was upon him to heal.**" Jesus healed that man using power that he received from his Father!

FINAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ABOUT JESUS' ABILITIES...

The situation we face here is truly interesting! Don't you agree? On the one hand, we have the demands of humanity that we have noticed from our previous lessons. If Jesus did these special things using **his own** Godly power then it would not be possible to describe him as being **just like us in every way!** On the other hand, we have the seeming contradiction of the fact that Jesus did many miracles; things that ordinary people simply cannot do but things that God **can** do! We now have the new testimony of this lesson, which clearly shows that Jesus **did not** do those special and wonderful things using his own power. Instead, we discover that he did all of those miracles using power that he received from his Father. In fact, it was actually stated that God himself did those things **through** Jesus. God did those special things **to show the people** that Jesus was approved by him, and that Jesus was his Son!

Earlier in this lesson, we asked a question. **“Are there any cases in the Bible where people we know to be ordinary humans perform miracles?”** At that time, it was pointed out that the Bible contains **many** examples of ordinary people doing miracles, in the same way Jesus did. We know that those people were not able to do those things by their own ability because humanity does not possess the necessary power to do those things. Those people were able to do those miraculous things **because God was with them. God did those things through them!** God did miracles through these people to confirm to everyone that he was with these people and that they had his approval. (For additional evidence on this point, please read **Hebrews 2:1-4**. Notice how the miraculous work of God was **for the purpose of confirmation**.) This seems to be the same with Jesus' miracles. As we have learned from past lessons, **Jesus emptied himself of his own special powers when he became a man.** The only reason Jesus was able to perform miracles was because God was doing them through him, just as God had also done miracles through other people, like Moses, Elijah, Peter, Paul, and many other humans. This explanation allows Jesus to be **just like us in every way** and still do all of the wonderful special things he did.

And what about all of the special knowledge Jesus had? **“Are there any cases in the Bible where people we know to be ordinary humans had miraculous knowledge from God?”** In our first few lessons, we studied about how **MANY** people in many times and places were given miraculous knowledge from God. That is how the Bible came into being! (Remember **2 Peter 1:20-21**) Remember that Jesus **HIMSELF** mentioned time after time how **NONE** of the things he taught came from himself, but from the Father! Therefore, Jesus' own special knowledge was set aside when he “emptied himself” and, instead, was replaced by the knowledge God decided to give him, in the same way that God had decided to give special knowledge to all of the other ordinary humans who served him before and after the time of Jesus!

COULD JESUS BE SINLESS AND STILL BE “LIKE US IN EVERY WAY”?

Aside from the miracles Jesus did, another important difference we see between Jesus and ordinary people is his sinless life. How could Jesus be **just like us** and remain sinless? After all... “Doesn't the Bible say that it is **impossible** for a human to live without committing a single sin?” Many people are confused about this matter. If Jesus was really **like us in every way** then he would have sinned, right? Therefore, if Jesus was sinless, and if all humans have to commit sin, then the only way Jesus could have remained sinless was if he did it as God. This is how many people today reason out the sinless life of Jesus. However, is this the correct way of explaining the situation? Could Jesus live a sinless life as a man—being just like us in every way? Let us investigate this further and see what we find.

“ALL PEOPLE HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF GOD'S GLORY!”

Many people insist that Jesus was sinless **because** he was God. In addition, most religious minded people have been made to understand that no human being can live without sin. **Romans 3:23** is commonly quoted “to prove” that this is true. The logic commonly used goes something like this;

PREMISE	→ IF – <u>ALL</u> humans sin, and fall short of God's glory. (Romans 3:23)
OBSERVATION	→ AND IF – Jesus was sinless,
CONCLUSION	→ THEN – Jesus was sinless BECAUSE he was God!

However, careful examination will show that this is not the proper way to apply logic to this scenario. **Proper logic** would be stated as follows;

PREMISE	→ IF – <u>ALL</u> humans sin, and fall short of God's glory.
OBSERVATION	→ AND IF – Jesus was sinless,

CONCLUSION → **THEN** – Jesus was not a human!

Of course, we cannot accept the logical conclusion that Jesus was not a man because that would go against every piece of evidence we have seen in our study of the humanity of Jesus. Therefore, we need to examine his sinless life more closely to see if there might be another explanation.

The key to understanding Jesus' sinless life lies in understanding two basic points. **First**, we must understand how sin works in the life of a human. **Second**, we must understand **Romans 3:23** in its proper context.

UNDERSTANDING HOW SIN WORKS...

We begin this part of our investigation by looking at a very important verse. (Perhaps this is one of the most important passages in the entire Bible. (This is a good passage for you to memorize and recite each morning when you wake up.) If you remember it and do what it says, it will save your life!) The Bible passage in question is **1 Corinthians 10:13**. The context here is long but easy to establish. The apostle Paul is writing a letter to a group of Christians living in the Greek city of Corinth. It was a city of about 500,000 people and was filled with all kinds of immorality. Most of the Christians in that place came from this evil world and were struggling in their commitment to live the life of true faith. From what we read in the beginning of the letter, it seems that they were continually fighting with one another and practicing things in their lives that went against everything they had been taught about God's will. In short, they were missing the main point of Christianity and were in danger of losing their souls! Paul wrote this letter, hoping to change their understanding so that they might change their lives. (It is a difficult letter to read because of the many details of their struggles! It is hard to accept that "Christians" living in that time struggled with the problems mentioned in the letter.)

The basic problem with these people was that they had not become the kind of people God intended them to be. In Chapter 10, Paul is making a very strong point. He reminds his readers about the people of Israel, in the Old Testament. At one time those people were very fortunate. They had a very special relationship **given** to them by God and yet later they treated him as if he did not matter to them. They did many bad things and because they did those bad things, God gave them up and they were lost. Paul pointed out to his readers that the stories of those Israelite people were written down so that they (and also us today!) might learn from the example of their mistakes.

Then we come to verse 13, where he says,

"13 The only temptations that you have are the same temptations that all people have. But you can trust God. He will not let you be tempted more than you can bear. But when you are tempted, God will also give you a way to escape that temptation. Then you will be able to endure it."

This passage is remarkable because it reveals to us that there are actually some rules governing how temptation works in the lives of all humans. If we list down the facts that are presented here, we find the following;

1. **Temptation is the same for all people!** In other words, no person can ever say that the temptations they face are different from those being faced by other people.
2. **God is faithful and will not let a person be tempted beyond their limitations!** This is the key to the whole picture of temptation and sin. God places a limitation on how far the temptation can go. He will never allow a person to be tempted so much that the person **is forced to sin!**
3. **God will always give each person a way to escape each temptation** so that the person can endure the temptation. This means that if God always provides a way to escape each temptation, then there will never be a time when a person is forced to sin.

Therefore, if a person is experiencing a certain temptation, then that person must understand that God has confidence that he/she can endure it, because if they could not endure that particular temptation then God would not allow them to be tempted in that way! Remember also that God is faithful! Paul wrote this to these people in order to help them see that they were accountable for their actions and that they did not have to do all of those bad things they were doing. He wanted them to stop sinning!

When temptation comes into the life of a person, it requires that person to make a choice. From what we learn in this passage, we know that every temptation will have **two choices!** When a person faces a temptation, that person **can choose** to do the right thing, or, that person **can choose** to do the wrong thing. As long as God keeps his promise to us, no person can ever say that they were **FORCED** to commit a sin. (The promise God makes, in this passage, forms the foundation for what we all like to call the "FREE WILL" of man.) If a person **desires** to live without committing a single sin, then he has the "free will" right to do so. Therefore, it **is** possible for a person to live

without committing a single sin because if a person always makes the correct choice and takes the way of escape provided by God, then they will never sin. **Living a sinless life is not a matter of “capability”, rather, IT IS A MATTER OF CHOICE!** Isn't this a great gift that God gives to us? Isn't it unfortunate that most of us never discover it until long after we have committed our first sin. If we had only known more then perhaps things could have been different!

TEMPTATION
(involves making choices)

A ← You must choose → B

**You may choose whichever you like but you MUST choose!
Which choice is the correct one? Which one is the way of escape?**

There is another important passage concerning temptation that we need to study. Please turn to and carefully read **James 1:13-15**. What does this passage teach us about the relationship between temptation and sin? We discover that **sin follows a process**. It is a process that begins with wrong thoughts and desires and takes place inside of a person's mind. These thoughts lead to wrong choices, which lead to wrong actions—which is SIN! James points out that it is wrong to blame God for sin in our lives. If we have sin, it is our own fault. We sin because **we make wrong choices** when we are tempted!

Once again, we must understand that sin happens as a result of a **free-will decision** that a person makes. If a person wants to do so, he does not have to sin. He **can** choose to do right each and every time! It is his free-will right.

This would also apply to Jesus. If he was just like us in every way, then he was also living under these same promises that God made to all **other** humans. No temptation would come to him that was greater than he could bear and God would provide him with a way to escape, just as he does all other people. When tempted, Jesus had the FREE WILL right to make any choice he wanted. Therefore, temptation and sin for Jesus was exactly like temptation and sin are for every other human. The difference is that while most of us often choose to do the wrong thing, Jesus always chose to do the right thing. That is why he was sinless.

With this in mind, let us now go back and look at **Hebrews 4:15**. What did it say about Jesus and the temptations he faced? It showed us that Jesus was tempted **in every way just as we are and yet he did not sin!** Considering that he was “like us in every way”, and knowing that **1 Corinthians 10:13** applies to all people, we can see that it **was** possible for Jesus to be sinless without using any Godly powers!

Therefore, the correct logic to use in explaining the sinless life of Jesus would be something like this,

PREMISE → **IF** – ALL humans CAN CHOOSE to be sinless, (1 Corinthians 10:13)
OBSERVATION → **AND IF** – Jesus was “tempted like us in every way and yet did not sin”, (Hebrews 4:15)
CONCLUSION → **THEN** – Jesus was sinless **BECAUSE HE CHOSE** “the way of escape” every time!

The final passage we will study in this section is **1 Peter 2:21-25**. Please read it carefully. What do we learn here? It is very important to notice the point the writer is talking about people sinning. The amazing thing here is that he uses Jesus' sinless life **as an example** for his readers to imitate! In fact, the text here actually says that Jesus left his sinless life as **a pattern for all people to copy!** If Jesus' sinless life wasn't a HUMAN sinless life, then how could the writer expect his **human** readers to be able to copy it in their own lives?

We hope now you understand the sinless life of Jesus. He was not sinless because he used his Godly powers. Jesus was sinless, as a man, because he always chose to take the way of escape when he was tempted. We all can do this too, if we want to! If we will only take more time to think before we act then perhaps we will become more successful in avoiding sin in our lives!

UNDERSTANDING ROMANS 3:23

Earlier, we said that there were **two** points about sin that require our understanding. We have finished with the first and so let us now go on to the second. There is a very popular passage that people often say teaches that it is impossible for a human to live without committing sin; **Romans 3:23**. It is a very short statement and if you take it out of its paragraph and look at it alone, it can easily be misunderstood. Many people might say that this passage teaches that it is IMPOSSIBLE for a person to live without sin. However, is that what the writer meant to say in his letter?

In order to understand the proper meaning of any passage we need to establish its context, and this passage is no exception. In order to do this, we need to go back to the beginning of the book of Romans and carefully trace the writer's thoughts through each paragraph. In chapter 1, after his introduction and greeting, the writer (who is Paul the apostle) sets up a point with the statement that he makes in verse 18. (Please read this.) This statement speaks about God's judgment upon ALL bad conduct and injustice of men. Then, he speaks about two different groups of people and how each one relates to the statement. First, he mentions a group called **the Gentiles**.³⁴ Paul tells them that they are without excuse because although they recognized that there was a God, they **chose** not to ask him to be their guide. Instead, they made up their own rules and did many terrible things. The conclusion is that the Gentiles will definitely be punished by God for their disobedience!

The second group Paul speaks about is called **the Jews**.³⁵ These people were different from the Gentiles in that they knew God. Their ancestors had asked God for his guidance and he gave them a very special agreement at Mount Sinai. However, Paul says that these people were not much better than those Gentiles because although they had God's guidance and laws, the Jews **chose** not to follow them and they also did terrible things. Therefore, the conclusion is that the Jews are also facing God's punishment.

From chapter 3:21 to 26, which is one long sentence, Paul writes about how God's justice is revealed in the way he made for those people who believe in Jesus to be saved. His emphasis there is on how this point relates to the discussion of **the TWO groups** he has been speaking about since chapter 1. Notice how, in verse 22, he states there is "no distinction" between the Jews and the Gentiles³⁶. This seems to indicate that he is still speaking of the two groups in this section.

This brings us to that famous passage **Romans 3:23**. It is clear from the context, that Paul is continuing the thought he began in the previous verses because the verse begins with the word "For", or "Because". The point of the sentence is that God's justice is revealed unto all the ones (both Jews and Gentiles) who believe, "**because THEY all** sinned and are in need of God's glory!" There is no distinction! It is interesting to find that the writer uses a verb form here that **excludes himself** from the people he is speaking about. If we consider the point of the entire section (chapter 1-3), we actually find that it supports everything we have learned about sin. Paul's point through all of this is that **BOTH** of these groups of people are bad, **BECAUSE**, instead of **choosing** to honor and serve God, (which they certainly **COULD** have done) they **chose** to serve themselves! They **ALL** sinned, not because they had to, but because they **ALL CHOSE TO!**

As students, we must make a careful evaluation of what we are reading in these three chapters of Romans. Is Paul speaking about whether it is **possible** for a person to live a sinless life, or, is he speaking about the history of mankind's choices? **Context** clearly points to the second option. He is simply laying out a very short summary of the **HISTORY** of the bad choices mankind has made and the resulting difficult situation mankind faces due to those bad choices. We must assume that the Gentiles **COULD have chosen** to seek God and that the Jews **COULD have chosen** to follow God. If they had only done so, then the first three chapters of Romans would have been written differently!

Ultimately, we must remember what we read in 1 Corinthians 10:13; that **God is FAIR!** Therefore, if he is going to hold all people accountable for their sins—and punish people for the mistakes they make—then **FAIRNESS** demands that **people must have the ability to "not do" the bad things they will be judged for!** In order for there to be fairness in the judgment, each and every violation of God's will must be a situation in which the person who has violated that will **did so by choice!** The only way this can happen is **IF** it is possible for a person to live their entire life without making a single sin. From what we learned in **1 Corinthians 10:13**, combined with what we

³⁴ In many translations, the word **Gentile** is used to represent all of the people who were not part of the race of people called Israelites. Paul speaks about them from 1:18 down to 2:16.

³⁵ The term **Jew** is used to refer to the people belonging to the nation of Israel. Paul speaks specifically about them in Romans 2:17 down to 3:20.

³⁶ Paul's comparison of the Jews and Gentiles can easily be seen by looking at Romans 1:16; 2:9-10; 3:9. In addition, the idea that Paul intends for the phrase "no distinction" to mean the Jews and Gentiles can clearly be seen in Romans 10:12.

learned about the sinless human life of Jesus, we can be assured that **it IS possible** for humans to live without sin, and, that God will not be acting unfairly if he punishes sinners. If any person goes to Hell, they can only blame themselves!

SUMMARY:

In summary, let us try to remember that God has set rules that make it possible for us all to live a sinless life. Whether or not **YOU** and I actually live a sinless life is another matter entirely. Just because God makes it possible for us to be sinless, that does not mean that we will actually **be** sinless! It depends upon the individual choices each of us will make during each temptation we face during our lifetime. One fact we cannot deny is that Jesus came down and became a human and he was just like us **in every way**. Another fact we cannot deny is that Jesus was tempted in every way just as we are, and yet he did not sin. He could not have any special Godly power to help him accomplish this sinless life because if he did, then it could not be said that his temptation was just like ours or that he himself was just like us in every way. On the other hand, if Jesus **was** tempted like us in every way and yet he did not sin, then this means that he simply made the correct choice every time he was tempted. If his sinless life was a **human** sinless life, then this places accountability upon us! If he was an ordinary human and lived sinless, then we can also be sinless **if we CHOOSE to!** This thought makes us feel uncomfortable because we know how difficult it is not to sin. However, with the knowledge of right and wrong that God supplies us with in the Bible, and with the record of the example of Jesus, why should we be afraid? If God has given us all the information we need, and if he has set the rules of temptation in such a way that we will never be forced to do something against our will, then why **can't** we live without sin? Jesus was sinless because of the love and commitment he had for his Father. Perhaps if we imitate this example of commitment then **we** will be much more successful than we imagine possible. One thing is certain. We all will be called to account for our actions and there **will** be a Judgment Day! The choices you and I make today will decide where we will spend eternity!

Before proceeding, please answer the test questions for Lesson 10:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lesson. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the circle for that answer on the answer sheet. Remember to bring your answer sheet with you to class and turn it in for grading.

1. TRUE or FALSE: Although Jesus became a man, he never stopped being God.
 - a) True
 - b) False
2. TRUE or FALSE: In order for Jesus to be described as being "like us in **every** way", he could still keep and use his Godly power whenever he needed it on the earth.
 - a) True
 - b) False
3. TRUE or FALSE: Many Bible teachers teach that the miracles of Jesus prove that he is God.
 - a) True
 - b) False
4. TRUE or FALSE: When Jesus lived on the earth as a man, he did his miracles using his own Godly power.
 - a) True
 - b) False
5. Which ordinary men listed below performed miracles?
 - a) Moses
 - b) Elijah
 - c) Peter
 - d) All of the above.
6. TRUE or FALSE: The men listed above performed miracles with power they received from God.
 - a) True
 - b) False
7. After studying the passages in the first part of the Worksheet, which of the following statements best summarizes Jesus' understanding about himself?
 - a) Jesus knew all things because he was God.
 - b) Jesus had the authority to make up any teachings he wanted.
 - c) Jesus did nothing from his authority. He spoke and did as the Father commanded him.
 - d) All of the above.
8. TRUE or FALSE: According to **John 14:10**, Jesus made his own teachings and miracles.
 - a) True
 - b) False

9. According to Peter's words in **Acts 10:37-38** and **Acts 2:22**, which of the following statements are true?
- Jesus was a special man who was approved by God.
 - Jesus went about doing miracles because God was with him.
 - God did miracles **through** Jesus.
 - All of the above.
10. TRUE or FALSE: God did miracles through Jesus to show everyone that he approved of Jesus.
- True
 - False
11. TRUE or FALSE: Jesus was sinless **because he was God**.
- True
 - False
12. TRUE or FALSE: Jesus was sinless **because he was not a man**.
- True
 - False
13. The first major point in **1 Corinthians 10:13** is,
- The temptations experienced by some people are more fair than they are for other people.
 - Christians cannot be tempted.
 - Temptations are different for mortal and venial sins.
 - No one can say that the temptations they face are different from the temptations faced by other people.
14. The second point we learn from **1 Corinthians 10:13** is,
- God is faithful.
 - God knows each person's limitations.
 - God will not allow any person to be tempted beyond their limitation.
 - All of the above.
15. The third point we learn from **1 Corinthians 10:13** is,
- Temptations will be easy to endure.
 - It is impossible to escape every temptation.
 - God will provide a way to escape every temptation.
 - All of the above.
16. Which statement best summarizes the facts we learned about temptation.
- Temptation is a situation that requires a person to make a FREE WILL choice.
 - It is a sin to be tempted.
 - All temptations come from Satan.
 - Men face more difficult temptations than women do.
17. With God's promises of **1 Corinthians 10:13** and man's FREE WILL,
- no human can live a sinless life because all people must sin.
 - if a person desires to live without committing a single sin then he has the free will right to do so.
 - it isn't possible for a human to make the correct choice **every** time.
 - None of the above.
18. TRUE or FALSE: Living a sinless life **is not** a matter of **choice**; rather, it is a matter of **capability**!
- True
 - False
19. In **James 1:13-15**, we learned that most temptations come from
- Satan.
 - God.
 - ourselves.
 - other people.
20. TRUE or FALSE: All sin begins with wrong thoughts and desires in a person's mind that lead to wrong choices.
- True
 - False
21. People sin because
- it is impossible for a person to be sinless.
 - people make wrong choices when they are tempted.
 - the Devil forces them to do bad things.
 - they do not go to church often enough.
22. TRUE or FALSE: If a person wants to, he does not ever have to sin.
- True
 - False

23. Which statement best describes the temptations Jesus faced when he was on the earth?
- The temptations Jesus faced were different from the ones we face.
 - Jesus could not be tempted because he was God.
 - Jesus never faced evil temptations—like sex, robbery, or murder.
 - The temptations faced by Jesus were exactly like the ones we all face.
24. The reason why Jesus had no sin was because
- every time he faced a temptation he always made the right choice
 - his temptations were easy ones.
 - his Godly powers saved him from committing sin.
 - he was God and God cannot sin.
25. The passage that tells us that Jesus temptations were exactly like ours is
- Philippians 2:6-11
 - Hebrews 4:15
 - John 1:1-3
 - James 1:13-15
26. In **1 Peter 2:21-25**, Peter mentions Jesus' sinless life
- as a pattern for all people to copy.
 - as something which we cannot follow.
 - as a way for people to be saved.
 - All of the above.
27. Define the term **Gentile**.
- A person who has nice manners and helps people.
 - A person who was not part of the race of people called Israelites.
 - A person who was part of the race of people who had a special agreement in the Old Testament.
 - None of the above.
28. Define the term **Jew**.
- A person who has nice manners and helps people.
 - A person who was not part of the race of people called Israelites.
 - A person who was part of the race of people who had a special agreement in the Old Testament.
 - None of the above.
29. The point Paul is making in **Romans 3:23** is that
- all people that ever lived and will ever live must sin.
 - the Jews and Gentiles have all sinned.
 - it is impossible for any human being to sin.
 - None of the above.
30. TRUE or FALSE: The Jews and Gentiles that Paul spoke of in Romans sinned because **they had to**.
- True
 - False
31. If God is going to be fair in judging the mistakes of people, then
- he must simply overlook some of our mistakes because no person can live a perfect life.
 - he must punish everyone because every human that has ever lived has committed sin.
 - he must make it possible for a person to accomplish his demand of a sinless life.
 - None of the above.
32. TRUE or FALSE: Since God has made it possible for a person to live without sin, that means that everyone **will** be sinless.
- True
 - False
33. The thought of Jesus living the example of a sinless life as a real human makes us feel uncomfortable because
- if Jesus did it then we must do it, and we know how **difficult** it is not to sin.
 - we know that it is **impossible** for us to be sinless.
 - Jesus was sinless only because he was God.
 - All of the above.
34. TRUE or FALSE: There will be a Judgment Day when Jesus comes back the second time.
- True
 - False
35. TRUE or FALSE: The decisions we make when we are tempted will NOT determine where we will spend eternity.
- True
 - False

LESSON ELEVEN

JESUS: THE PIONEER OF THE FAITH!

From what we have learned in our past few lessons, we should be able to understand that Jesus, the God who created us, lived his earthly life as a real human—**just like us in every way!** The impact of this knowledge should give new importance to the **LIFE OF JESUS** in our own lives today. Most religious minded people today only think of Jesus as the savior who died on the cross for their sins. Certainly, this is true, and a very good thing to remember, but, as we have seen in our study, Jesus is so much **MORE** than that!

The writers of the New Testament describe a Jesus that many people today do not know. Please turn to the book of **Hebrews** and read all of chapter 11 and then the first 3 verses of chapter 12. The background of this book is interesting. The people who received this letter were Christians and they had been for some time. From other things the writer says, we can conclude that they were in danger of losing their salvation. Evidently, they reached a point where they no longer felt it necessary to grow. There is evidence showing that they even began to return to the bad things that they did before they became Christians. What they needed was a good reminder and that is exactly what the writer did. When he came to Chapter 11, he focused his attention upon the idea of **FAITH**. From the first few statements, we can see that he defines faith as knowing that something is real although you do not see it. In verse six, he describes faith as being a combination of two things. First, he says that faith means **believing** that God exists. The second thing we learn is that faith means **seeking** God. “Seeking,” means looking for something, and that means **action!** The idea is simple. God rewards those who believe and seek him!

After defining faith, the writer provides example after example from the Old Testament of people who possessed this faith! In chapter 12, he builds upon the testimony of the lives of these witnesses with a statement of encouragement. Notice how his encouragement calls for the reader to look to Jesus as the “**PIONEER** and **PERFECTER**”³⁷ of **THE FAITH!** There are several things in this passage that we need to understand because they relate back to discoveries we made in our studies!

First, we need to understand the words **PIONEER** and **PERFECTER** that he used to describe Jesus.

The word **PIONEER**³⁸ speaks of one who creates a path for others to follow. This is how the writer describes Jesus.

In addition, he uses the word **PERFECTER**³⁹, which speaks of a person who has completed something.

Together, they indicate that Jesus is the one who starts and the one who finishes! The writer applies both of these words to Jesus in relation to what he calls, “**THE FAITH**”⁴⁰. Jesus **completed** the faith for us, by means of his perfect **human** life, by the sacrifice of his perfect blood, and by his resurrection and victory from death! In doing these things, Jesus set the example for all believers who would come after him. He made a trail for the rest of us to follow. The writer tells his readers that as they struggle to establish their own faith in God, they should look to Jesus as a model to imitate. They should compare their experiences with his so that they might not give up when things get bad.

The New Testament contains many references to Jesus being our example. One of these is **John 13:15-17**.

“15 I did this as an example for you. So you should do for each other like I did for you. 16 I tell you the truth. A servant is not greater than his master. The person that is sent to do something is not greater than the one that sent him. 17 If you know these things, you will be happy if you do them.”

Perhaps the most important thing to notice about this passage is the fact that Jesus himself explains the situation. He set the example and those who claim to be his followers must follow.

Let us think about this in another way.

³⁷ This is the wording found in the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

³⁸ This word comes from the original Greek word, **ARCHEGOS**, which speaks of someone who takes the lead in something and thus provides an example for those who will follow later.

³⁹ This word comes from the Greek word, **TELEIOTES**, which speaks of one who has completed or finished something.

⁴⁰ The New Testament has several places where the phrase “the faith” is used to refer to a summary of all the different aspects that combine together to form what we know as Christianity—belief, proper attitudes, teachings and obedience.

From time to time, we all have been told to perform tasks that we do not know how to do. Because of the competitive nature of the world, we find that we are able to cope with these challenges more often than we realize. When a person joins a company, usually the **BOSS** tells an experienced employee to show this new employee “**the ropes**”⁴¹. (Does this mean that the experienced worker will lead the new person to a closet in which is hung a collection of ropes? Of course not.) Upon hearing this command, the experienced worker becomes “the teacher” and the new employee becomes “the student.” The teacher then proceeds to **SHOW**, or demonstrate, his/her responsibility for the new employee. If it is operating a piece of machinery, the teacher explains and then operates the machine while the student watches and listens to the instructions. Once the procedure has been explained and demonstrated, the teacher then steps back to allow the student try to do it. This is what it means to “show someone the ropes” and the success of the student depends upon his/her ability and willingness to **imitate**, or “**FOLLOW IN THE STEPS**” of the teacher.

This is where Jesus comes into the picture. Eventually, you and I get the opportunity to “join a company”, which we might refer to as **GOD, Inc.** Our responsibility is to learn the task of pleasing the **BOSS** and helping the company grow, but how do we learn **the ropes**? Does the **BOSS** have someone he can assign to demonstrate our responsibilities? The answers to this is, “**YES!**” God sent Jesus to the earth to be the **PIONEER** of the faith—**OUR FAITH!** He came to “show us the ropes!”

The thought of following Jesus’ example is discouraging to many people because of the perfection we see in him. When compared to our blunders and weaknesses, imitating Jesus can seem to be impossible, yet we encounter passage after passage in the Bible that tells us to do just that—imitate him! Let us not forget what we have already learned. It was **through SUFFERING** that Jesus became perfect and that he was **like US in every way!**

Look at this matter from the viewpoint of **LOGIC!** What good would it do for me to compare my life to Jesus’ if his life were **not equal** to mine? If it were not humanly possible for us to imitate Jesus’ life then would it be fair for God to tell us to do so? Of course not, and yet the fact remains that God tells us over and over again to do that very thing! Therefore, we must conclude that Jesus’ struggle against sin and human weakness **WAS NOT** done to accomplish anything for him. **Everything that he did, he did FOR US. Jesus died for us, but he also LIVED FOR US!** He became **LIKE US IN EVERY WAY**—in order to provide us with a **PERFECT EXAMPLE** of what God intended every human life to be like.

With this thought in mind, let us look at the following passages that speak on the matter of Jesus being our example and see what interesting things we might discover. In each, we will need to look for clues to understanding his success.

IS THIS REALLY POSSIBLE? CAN WE FOLLOW IN JESUS’ STEPS?

Perhaps there is still some doubt in your mind about this matter. After all, do not forget that “religion” has always told us that we are not perfect and that no one can **BE** perfect. Religion has not only told us that we should not try to live perfectly, but it says that anyone who **claims** to be able to be perfect is arrogant and a liar! On the other hand, we now have the witness of the Bible and the human life of Jesus to think about. Just so that there will be no confusion about what we are saying, please go back and read **1 Peter 2:21-25**. Remember that Peter told his readers that they had been called by God to do something. He explains that God calls his people to follow in the example of Jesus’ sinless life. In fact, Peter states clearly that Jesus saves people so that they would **die** to sin and live for justice! No matter what “religion” might try to tell us today, if a person is a Christian then it is necessary for him/her to “die to sin”. Jesus did not sin and that is the example he set for us to follow. If we claim to have faith, then we must follow in it!

If we go forward, we find several other passages that speak about this matter. The combined message is that our crooked lives will be straightened out **if** we follow in Jesus’ footsteps!

Philippians 2:3-11 is our first passage. (Please take a few minutes to read the passage beginning from verse 1 of chapter 2 and determine what the main point the writer is making in this paragraph.) What is the point the writer is making here? He is speaking about humility and putting the needs of others ahead of one’s own needs. Surprisingly, he tells his readers that they should follow the example that Jesus left. Then he gives a brief description of how Jesus put the needs of others ahead of himself and concludes that God exalted him because of the way he acted.

⁴¹ This is an idiomatic phrase from American English.

The lesson seems to be that God will also exalt anyone follows in the example of Jesus. Can **we** expect to be exalted if we do not have the same attitude as Jesus? Can we expect to be exalted if we do not have the same action Jesus had?

Another interesting passage we need to look at is **Matthew 16:24-25**. (Please stop and read this passage.) Jesus states the idea in much stronger terms, perhaps much stronger than we want to hear. The point is very simple. Jesus must be the most important thing in a person's life. It is not a situation where not following Jesus with a 100% effort will result in a person being a "bad" disciple, or an "unfulfilled" one, rather, the fact is clearly stated by Jesus that **such a person will not be considered his disciple at all!** The commitment God is looking for is an "all or nothing" kind of commitment. This is what God expected from Jesus and this is what he also expects from all of us. Jesus was able to accomplish this as a man—just like us in every way—and his life is the example for us to follow.

Please turn to and read **1 John 2:3-6**. This passage is particularly important because of the background. The time when the letter was written was a time of great difficulty and many Christians were starting to go away from the original teachings and create new teachings of their own. The writer fights hard to get his readers to return to the original idea of Christianity they received when they first became believers. In this passage, notice how he lays down a foundation on which a person will be able to **KNOW** if they are a follower of God or not. He indicates that obeying what God says is the distinguishing mark that separates a Christian, **IN NAME ONLY**, from a true Christian. The whole idea of Christianity can be summarized in the end of verse 6—walking **as HE** (Jesus) walked. To say that one "believes" in Christ implies that one agrees to follow in his steps. Not to follow Christ, while professing to "know God", is hypocrisy!

1 Corinthians 11:1 contains a very peculiar statement made by the apostle Paul. Listen to what he says. "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." Isn't it odd to hear Paul, who is only a man, instructing his readers to consider him as a living example of Christ, who in turn is our living example of human perfection? We rarely hear our religious leaders making such statements. However, should we feel uncomfortable if our leaders were to say this, and should we feel uncomfortable about saying this about ourselves? We should not **IF** we are truly following the example of Jesus! Perhaps this is God's plan for us. Perhaps he wants each of us to be a living example of "**THE FAITH**" for others to look at and imitate!

IS BEING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS GOING TO BE EASY?

Without a doubt, the verses above bring out the reality of Jesus' example in our lives. From this picture, though, we can see that being a disciple of Jesus is not going to be easy **AND** that the amount of dedication needed to survive is almost "super-human". However, before we give up, let us look at a few more points about what our goal should be.

Consider this... Most of the things we do in life were **learned** from "the world", and over the years they have become deeply rooted habits in our lives. When people become disciples of Christ, they all have areas of life in which changes must be made. The elimination of sin from our lives is an undeniable demand that does not go away when a person becomes a Christian. At the same time, is it reasonable to expect that **ALL** bad habits can be simply stopped overnight?

Please read and consider **Romans 12:1-2** very carefully. This is one of the most important passages in the entire Bible because it helps set down God's expectations in practical terms. One thing this passage teaches us is that God wants our **LIVES—our entire being!** He does not just want us for a day or for only a few hours on Sunday, **he wants all of us, all the time!** We are told to become "living sacrifices" to God. The passage goes on to say that this action is the **logical way** in which we are to **SERVE** God.⁴² What does "living sacrifice" mean in practical terms? How do we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice? Verse 2 provides an explanation. It seems that sacrificing ourselves means **CHANGING HOW WE THINK** about things! It means changing how we think about ourselves and about others. It means changing how we think about God and especially how we think about Jesus. However, this is not simply a matter of changing a person's way of thinking. This change of thinking must also lead to a change of action. It should bring about a **TRANSFORMATION!** However, the transformation that is described here is a gradual one, which occurs **in stages**. This verse contains a very interesting Greek word, **METAMORPHOSIS**, which is a term we hear used in Biology. It represents a life cycle that involves several developmental stages. For example, consider the life cycle of a butterfly. A butterfly begins life as an egg, which hatches into a caterpillar, which later sleeps in a cocoon, and finally emerges as an adult butterfly. The early stages look very different from

⁴² Some translations contain the phrase "spiritual worship" instead of "reasonable service". The correct translation should be something like "logical service", "reasonable service", or perhaps, "the reasonable way to serve God". "Spiritual worship" is **not** what the original Greek text says and is a wrong translation.

the final adult form and each stage has its own particular goals and obstacles. The idea seems to be that the change God expects is constant and continual, and that the final result of our changing will look different from what is seen in the various growth stages along the way.

This Greek word is also found in **2 Corinthians 3:18** and adds to our understanding how the idea of change through stages relates to Christianity. The idea of **METAMORPHOSIS** is used here to describe the transition of a Christian's becoming more like Jesus. The key to success is also given in the passage—looking at Jesus, who is **OUR EXAMPLE! As an illustration**, think of an artist who wants to paint a picture of a beautiful landscape. How does he include so many details into his painting? Does he simply take one single look at the landscape, then go into his studio and paint the picture? No, he does not. Instead, he will take his painting equipment and go to the site, and then he will begin sketching the scene. He will look at the scene and then draw a little. Then he will look a little more and then draw a little more. Again and again, the process continues through the drawing and painting stages until, at last, he is finished. The process of following Jesus is very similar. We study and learn a little about him and put what we have learned into our life and then change happens. Then we learn a little more and put that into our life and then a little more change happens. Each time we look and add we change and become a little more like Jesus than we were before.

The process of our **METAMORPHOSIS**, like that of the butterfly, is not without its obstacles. As we change, we will become different in the eyes of the world. People will not always react positively to this difference. All kinds of bad things might come our way, some because of our change while others may attempt to stop our transformation. However, we should not become discouraged because suffering is part of following the example of Jesus. Do not forget that Jesus himself suffered many of the same obstacles when he lived as a human. He became perfect **through** suffering!

Let us consider the point of **James 1:2-3**. James speaks here about the “testing of your faith”. The idea here is one of testing for the purpose of proving the genuineness or quality of something. He states that remaining faithful through such situations produces endurance.

This same idea was taught by the apostle Paul in **Romans 5:2-5**, and by the apostle Peter in **1 Peter 1:6-8** and **4:12-14**. (Please read these passages carefully.)

All of them speak of Christians suffering difficulties in their faith. Did you notice how they instruct the readers to **BE HAPPY**? Doesn't this seem like a strange encouragement to hear? We might expect to hear something like, “Be cautious!”, or “Be brave!”, but “Be Happy!”? That does not sound possible. However, the reason for this joy is made very clear as we read further into the passages. The obstacles come, not because Christians are bad people, but because they are becoming more like Christ. He was abused because he was different from the world. As a Christian becomes less like the world and more like Jesus, he/she will encounter obstacles that will make metamorphosis more difficult. The point that continues to surface over and over again is simple. Surviving the struggles of faith makes one stronger in faith!

If the struggles become more difficult the longer a person is a Christian, then more determination will be required. However, we should never forget the promise God made to all of us, that he will never allow us to struggle against more than we are capable of enduring. (Remember **1 Corinthians 10:13**?) In order for Jesus to live right, he had to have a very strong commitment and great concentration. The same will be true of anyone who decides to become a follower of Jesus.

Please find and read carefully through **2 Corinthians 5:14-17**. This passage mentions many of the points that we have seen so far but adds a couple of new ones that can help us achieve the goal. Why did Jesus die? Was it simply so that our sins might be forgiven? No. This passage tells us that Jesus died so that we might not live for ourselves, but **that we might live for him!** How are we able to do this? Paul mentioned that Christ's love had an influence in his own life. The love that Christ had for Paul motivated him to do what he had to do to become what God wanted him to be. We might even say that Paul lived for Christ because Christ lived for him!

We can also be influenced to do right by the **EXAMPLE** of love that Jesus showed by dying for us on the cross. He did not live for himself. If we are convinced, as Paul was, then this conviction will move us onward toward transformation and change! It will not be easy, but if we remember to always look to Jesus—as the **PIONEER and PERFECTER of OUR FAITH**—and allow him to lead the way, then success can be achieved!

AN EXAMPLE OTHER THAN CHRIST'S

As a final consideration, let us look closer at the life of the apostle Paul. We just saw his statement about how his convictions about Jesus motivated him to change his life. We have a record of many changes that occurred in

Paul's life recorded in **Philippians 3:4-14**. There are a number of special things to take note of. He started out as a very devout Jewish man before he was a Christian. His faith in God was very strong and he truly believed that he was doing God's will when he persecuted Christianity.⁴³ Once Paul became a follower of Jesus, he began to change and things began to change for him as well. Suddenly, his family and friends disliked him, and he became hunted by the same Jewish leaders with whom he once "hunted" Christians! All of this happened because of his transformation into Christ's likeness. Notice how, in verses 12-14, he speaks of a gradual process at work inside of him that is like what we saw in **2 Corinthians 3:18**, and how he says that he had not yet become the butterfly. Notice also how he mentions letting go of the mistakes of yesterday and concentrating on trying to change more **TODAY**, reaching always toward the future for the goal of getting rid of these problems and being able to finally rest. That is Christianity! Jesus made it to the goal and we can too!

All we have to do is put our feet into the footprints that he left behind when he pioneered the trail for us to follow.

Before proceeding, answer the following test questions for Lesson 11:

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lesson. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the circle for that answer on the answer sheet. Remember to bring your answer sheet with you to class and turn it in for grading.

1. TRUE or FALSE: One problem in religion today is that most religious-minded people **only** think of Jesus as the savior.
 - a) True
 - b) False
2. In **Hebrews 11:1**, the writer defines **faith** as
 - a) believing in your heart that Jesus is the Savior.
 - b) doing whatever your heart leads you to believe.
 - c) being sure of things we hope for and knowing something is real even though we don't see it.
 - d) All of the above.
3. The passage below which teaches that there are **two parts** to faith is
 - a) Hebrews 12:1
 - b) Hebrews 2:17
 - c) Hebrews 4:15
 - d) Hebrews 11:6
4. When the Bible speaks of "the faith" it means
 - a) the beliefs of Christianity.
 - b) the attitudes taught in Christianity.
 - c) the practices of Christianity.
 - d) All of the above.
5. Define **pioneer**.
 - a) Someone who carries others along so they won't have to walk for themselves.
 - b) A brand of very good stereo equipment.
 - c) Someone who makes a trail for others to follow.
 - d) Someone who intentionally causes problems for others.
6. Define **perfecter**.
 - a) Someone who completes something.
 - b) Someone who is perfect.
 - c) Someone who makes other people perfect.
 - d) All of the above.
7. When we speak of someone showing another person **the ropes** what do we really mean?
 - a) It means explaining a task to someone.
 - b) It means demonstrating a task for someone.
 - c) It means showing them a collection of ropes.
 - d) It means **both** explaining and demonstrating the responsibilities of a task to someone.
8. When we say that Jesus came to **show us the ropes** what we mean is that he
 - a) came to explain how we are supposed to live our lives.
 - b) came to demonstrate how we are supposed to live.
 - c) came to explain **and** demonstrate how we are supposed to live.
 - d) None of the above.
9. As we consider the perfection of the example **Jesus left for us to follow**, we must also remember that
 - a) Jesus was perfect because he was God.
 - b) Jesus was perfect through suffering.
 - c) Jesus was perfect because he always made the correct choice when he was tempted.
 - d) Both "b" and "c".

⁴³ The story of how Paul met Jesus is recorded in Acts 9:2-19.

10. If God demands that we **follow the example** of Jesus, then
- it must be possible for us to follow Jesus because God is FAIR.
 - we should not worry because God was not serious about that demand.
 - he must be willing to accept our mistakes because no person can follow Jesus completely.
 - Both "b" and "c".
11. The passage **1 Peter 2:21-25** contains **all** of the following points except which one?
- Jesus left his sinless human life as an example for us to follow.
 - Jesus trusted in God to provide justice for all the abuses that he suffered.
 - Jesus was able to live a perfect life because he was God.
 - Jesus died on the cross so that his followers would die to sin and live for justice.
12. Jesus once said that if we are not willing to **follow** him then
- we cannot be his disciples.
 - we will be bad disciples.
 - we will be unfulfilled disciples.
 - None of the above.
13. The **only** way that we can be completely certain that we are a Christian is
- if we go to church every Sunday.
 - if we say our prayers every day.
 - if we accept that all people are Christians no matter what different things they teach and practice.
 - if we obey what God says and walk in the same way that Jesus walked.
14. TRUE or FALSE: We should follow the example of our religious leaders even if they do not follow Christ.
- True
 - False
15. TRUE or FALSE: One reason why we should try to follow Christ is so that we can set an example for the people living around us.
- True
 - False
16. The logical way for us to serve God is
- by going to church every Sunday.
 - by doing many religious activities in the name of Jesus.
 - by changing the way that we think and act.
 - by following the commands of our religious leaders without asking any questions.
17. Define **metamorphosis**.
- It represents the idea of change happening in stages.
 - It is a condition caused by eating too much fat.
 - It describes how Jesus was born on the earth as a man.
 - It is the idea that things are born in an adult state of existence.
18. If we apply metamorphosis to the life of a person who desires to be a disciple of Jesus then the final goal of the process is
- to become a butterfly.
 - to become a god.
 - to become like Christ.
 - All of the above.
19. When an artist paints a picture of an object, he usually
- looks one time at the object he wants to paint and then paints the picture.
 - paints the object any way he wants to from his imagination.
 - looks at the object and paints a little, then looks again and paints a little more, etc.
 - None of the above.
20. TRUE or FALSE: Following the example of Jesus will make a person happy and well liked by **all** people.
- True
 - False
21. One of the main points we learn from **2 Corinthians 5:14-17** is
- that the love Christ showed when he came to the earth should convict and motivate a person to change.
 - that a person who follows Christ must put the needs of others ahead of his own needs.
 - that Paul lived for Christ because Christ lived for him.
 - All of the above.
22. TRUE or FALSE: Paul's life remained peaceful and easy going after he became a follower of Jesus.
- True
 - False
23. Once Paul became a follower of Jesus, his growth was
- slow and filled with many difficulties.
 - immediate and without any problems.
 - easy because he had the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
 - None of the above.

24. Paul's advice to fellow believers about handling the challenges of following Christ **could** be summarized,
- a) Don't worry about things too much because nobody is perfect.
 - b) Sin is not so bad if you don't have too many of them.
 - c) Don't be too good and don't be too bad.
 - d) Learn from past mistakes, concentrate on today and don't give up!

LESSON TWELVE

SUMMING IT ALL UP

We are now at the end of the material included in this course and it is time to go onward to additional courses and new sets of topics. However, before we leave this very interesting course behind, let us take time to review the main points brought out in our study.

TAKING A CLOSE LOOK AT RELIGION TODAY

We began our journey by looking at the realities we find in religion today. We brought out the fact that in our world, hundreds of groups claim to be “Christian” and follow the Bible and yet no two groups are the same. Many people claim to have special guidance from the Holy Spirit and yet their studies result in inconsistent teachings. How can this be a good thing when what we see in the Bible is, “one body”⁴⁴ with one set of consistent teachings?

We examined and found that the original idea of Christianity carried at its heart a unity based upon complete submission to God. The original Christians had that kind of submission and if we want to be genuine Christians today then we also must make that same commitment to God.

We have provided evidence to show that the religious world of today, with its hundreds of different “Christian” churches, **IS NOT** what Jesus gave his life for on that cross outside the city of Jerusalem.

Jesus gave his life for the one church mentioned in the Bible and it is our task today to submit to God’s will so that he will join us into that one church—the church that belongs to his son, Christ!

When we accomplish this, we will no longer be “Catholics”, or “Protestants”, or “Evangelicals”, or any of the other names we find being used today. These names did not exist during the time of Christ because, unlike today, there was only **one kind** of Christianity back then. If people living today will submit themselves to God and become obedient to his word (the Bible), they will simply become “Christians”, in the same way that the first believers became Christians. Therefore, without a doubt, there is a great need for everyone today to study the Bible frequently and carefully and then follow exactly what it says.

Please do not forget what we learned from **Matthew 7:21-23**. It is possible for a person to **feel** secure in their faith, to **be very active** in doing things “for Christ”, and **yet be rejected** by him in the end. From this, we can definitely see that it is not enough for a person simply to be a “religious person”. In order to be accepted by Christ, we must be people who do what the Father wants, and that means submission and obedience to whatever God tells us to do in the Bible. How can we know what God wants us to do unless we study the Bible?

TAKING A CLOSE LOOK AT THE BIBLE

Since the Bible is the key to our finding and living New Testament Christianity today, we discussed many things about its origin and purpose. One of the first things we noticed was that the message of the Bible did not originate from within the mind of man. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** showed us that the Scripture comes from God, and because it comes from God, it is useful to us in many ways. God gave us the Bible so that we could teach, correct, scold, and train one another in the true will of God.

We also discovered the basic reason why there are the two parts or “testaments” inside of our Bibles. The two parts actually represent two distinct messages from God. We saw from **Hebrews 1:1-2** that God—who is the only **TRUE** author—gave these messages to **TWO** different groups, through different agents, and at **TWO** different time periods. From the context, we noticed that the second message, the New Testament, is the message intended for **US TODAY**.

We discovered, from passages like **1 Corinthians 10:6-11**, that even though God’s first message, the Old Testament, was written for another group of people who lived in a different time, there are many lessons that **WE** can learn from it today. For example, we learn about the meaning of **FAITH** because we see, in the stories of all those people, a **PATTERN** of God’s expectations for man. When God tells people to do something, he rewards those who do what he says and punishes those who disobey him. Perhaps the most important thing we learn from

⁴⁴ For a better understanding of this point, please go back to Lesson 1 and read Ephesians 4:4-6.

the Old Testament is God's **PLAN** for saving us, how Jesus fits into this plan, and why he did the things that he did when he came down and lived as a man—"like us in **EVERY** way".

We also discovered that the Bible is **OUR ONLY SOURCE OF INFORMATION** for religion today and that it is a complete guide. This was a very important point because there are so many confusing things happening around us today in religion that confuse our hearts and minds. We need a measuring device so that we will be able to determine when someone is telling the truth and when they are not. It was encouraging to find out that God gave the **BIBLE** to us for just that purpose!

We traced the history of the New Testament message from its beginning, through the personal teaching of Jesus, to its completion at the hands of his apostles, who were guided through the Holy Spirit. As the end of the first century came close, some very interesting remarks by some writers in their letters indicated that the second message had finally been completed. They consistently **WARNED** people against accepting **NEW THINGS**, which would contradict the things they had already received. The existence of those warnings was evidence indicating that the message had to have been completed during the lifetime of those first disciples. Therefore, **ANY** modern teaching that is truly Christian **must be found** inside the New Testament!

On a related point, we saw how many people use certain passages of the Bible out of context by saying that the promise of Holy Spirit guidance that Jesus made⁴⁵ was also intended for you and I today! Many pray for and subsequently **CLAIM** that they receive this guidance. However, we noted that while claims like this may be easy to make there should be visible proof to verify if this guidance is taking place. We observed that most of religious groups begin their Bible study sessions with prayers of guidance—asking the Spirit to show them the truth. However, we also observed that the results of these "guided studies" have no consistency.⁴⁶ This was very important because if **genuine** Holy Spirit guidance is in fact happening today then the Spirit will not teach one thing to one particular religious group and then teach something completely different to another group! When we consider the different teachings found in religion today, even though these groups **CLAIM** that their teachings are received from the Spirit's guidance, it is a very confusing situation.

However, by simply comparing the message these folks are teaching with the original message of the New Testament we can determine the truth and end the confusion. We learned that everyone **MUST** follow what is written in the Bible and that religious leaders are no different from "regular members". If we see our leaders teaching or following teachings that cannot be found in the Bible, we must not follow them, no matter what the consequences of such a stand might be. The idea of opposing religious leaders might be frightening because many are quite powerful but consider the alternative. Would you rather stand before God on the Day of Judgment and have to explain **why you decided to follow MEN instead of HIM?**

We learned **HOW** the Holy Spirit guided the people God used as writing instruments in order to get his message to the people of the world. God sent the Holy Spirit to **GUIDE** the people to the complete message he wanted to give the people of the earth. Peter describes it best in **2 Peter 1:20-21**, where he says that the message, which these spokespersons gave, was not their own and that they got this message direct from God through the guidance of the Spirit. God used around 40 such "instruments" in the writing of the Bible message.

HOW TO STUDY THE BIBLE

We learned many useful things about studying the Bible. For example, we discovered that studying the Bible is similar to the work of a judge in a courtroom. A judge decides the guilt or innocence of a person based upon the facts presented as evidence. He **MUST** listen to all sides and consider all the evidence before he can make a conclusion. We **MUST** find all the available information the Bible has to give and consider all of it **BEFORE** we make any conclusion.

Because of the confusion in religion today, we found that many people decide to "follow their hearts", or "do what **FEELS** right to them". While it is certainly not wrong to have conviction, conviction itself **DOES NOT** prove what is right or wrong. We saw, in **Proverbs 14:12**, that there is a difference between what God says and what man thinks. The reason we cannot follow what we think is that we might be wrong! We must always study the Bible and make certain that what we are doing is the same as what God really says.

Perhaps the most important single point we learned about Bible study was **context**. We discovered that every passage in the Bible must be put into its place with the verses before and after it. Remember that "verses" in the Bible are just sentences and they can easily be taken out of their places and incorrectly applied. A single sentence, viewed by itself, can mean just about anything, however, if we put the sentence with the sentences which come before and after it, looking at the entire thought, we can correctly understand and apply its meaning to our lives.

⁴⁵ Remember our discussion of John 16:12-15 back in Lesson 2?

⁴⁶ Remember Paul's solution for UNITY back in Lesson 2?

JESUS: THE PRE-EXISTENT ONE

After finishing our lessons about the Bible and Bible study, we looked at some very interesting material about Jesus Christ. As you think back on these studies, you should first remember that he was alive in heaven long before he was alive on the earth. We know this because of the many passages, like **John 1:1-3 & 14**, which tell us that he existed, **IN HEAVEN**, long before he came down to earth. We also discovered that Jesus is God and that he created everything that was made in the Creation.

JESUS: THE GOD WHO BECAME A MAN

After studying about Jesus as God, we looked at the HUMAN side of Jesus. The idea of Jesus the God becoming a man is very confusing for many people, and yet the Bible clearly says that this is precisely what happened. The extent of Jesus' humanity was explained by the writer, in **Hebrews 2:17**, where he indicated that Jesus was "like us in every way". How remarkable it was to discover that there was no difference between Jesus and the rest of the people living during his time, except for the fact that the human, Jesus, was the same individual who made the light and other things on the first day of the Creation!

We also saw many interesting reasons why Jesus became a man. We discovered that most of those reasons revolve around the reality that **GOD** cannot experience many human things because, being God, he is "immune" to them. Because of Jesus becoming a man, God now **KNOWS** what it is like to be a human! God also has a way to put justice/fairness into the Judgment Day. Jesus will sit in judgment instead of the Father, and so no person can complain.

JESUS: THE GOD/MAN

After finishing our discussion of Jesus as a man, we worked to find a way to put the **TWO**—seemingly conflicting—pictures of Jesus together. How could Jesus be **GOD** and, at the same time, a **MAN**? We noted several previous attempts to explain and noted that the question of **HOW MUCH** of Jesus was God and **HOW MUCH** of Jesus was man could not be answered by assigning a **PERCENTAGE**. Instead, we proposed that this topic is not a matter of establishing a level of "how much human" as opposed to "how much God" there was **at any one point** in Jesus' life on Earth. It is, instead, a matter of **IDENTITY**! As we stated earlier, **THIS MAN**—Jesus, who was like us in every way—**is the very same fellow** who was there on **DAY #1** and created everything in our universe!

Then we studied deeper into Jesus' miracles and we noted that many people mistakenly point to his miracles as **PROOF** of his being God—stating that since no human can perform miracles, and since Jesus performed miracles, then his miracles are proof that he is God. However, we saw that just the opposite is actually true. Two passages in particular (**Acts 2:22-23** and **Acts 10:38**) clearly stated that although Jesus did perform miracles, he did not perform miracles **BY HIS OWN POWER**. Instead, these passages indicated that Jesus was able to do these miracles **BECAUSE GOD WAS WITH HIM**. In other words, **God gave Jesus the power**—just as God also gave this same power to many of the other ordinary humans so that they could perform miracles.

We also took a deeper look at the sinless life of Jesus because understanding this matter is another area of confusion in religion today. Many people mistakenly explain Jesus' sinless life as being the result of his being God. As a human, however, we saw how Jesus faced his daily life with the same tools that every **other** human does. He had the freedom of choice and the same promise from God that we all have regarding temptation and sin. (**1 Corinthians 10:13**)

Remember that we also looked at how many people mistakenly explain **Romans 3:23** and noticed that the statement about "all men sinning" is actually one of historical fact **AND NOT** a statement expressing man's capabilities. From our study about Jesus' sinless life, we discovered that God has set rules in place so that **IT IS POSSIBLE** for a person to live without ever committing a single sin. Since we all have the freedom to choose, and since God promises that we will **ALWAYS** have **TWO CHOICES**, this proves that man has the possibility of choosing the right way every time. It is up to each person and the exercise of their free will.

The main point we found in our final discussion focused upon the equality of Jesus with the rest of mankind. If he were truly "like us in **every** way" then he would have to face his temptations just the same way as we do. Otherwise, if not, then how could it be said that he was like us **IN EVERY WAY**? Jesus was sinless because every time he faced a temptation he made the correct free will choice. Jesus had to try very hard to know God's will and to follow that will perfectly. If our degree of commitment is as great as Jesus' was then we would not sin either!

Ultimately, we discovered that when Jesus was living on the earth he was **just like us in every way!** Remember that Philippians chapter 2 explained to us that Jesus “**emptied**” himself of all things that made him “equal with God” and that he took on the form of a human. The result of that incarnation was that Jesus became “like us in every way.”

JESUS: THE PIONEER OF THE FAITH

Then, in our previous lesson, we attempted to put all of our material about Jesus into perspective. “Why **did** Jesus come to the earth?” Certainly, we can say that Jesus came here to save us. However, he did not come here only to save us. He came to do so much more than that. **Hebrews 12:1-2** described Jesus as the **author** and **perfecter** of our faith. It is important to remember that Jesus had nothing to prove and nothing to earn. Everything that he did was for our benefit. He established “the faith” and then he lived it! He demonstrated what we are all capable of doing in order to provide a living **HUMAN** example of what our lives can and should be like.

From that material, we learned that the primary task of a disciple is to follow in the steps of the master. Following Christ **IS** what Christianity is all about! From the passages we examined, we found that God is serious about seeing a change in our lives. We discovered **metamorphosis**, which is a biological term used to describe the life cycle of certain living things. **It is change that occurs IN STAGES** and we found the idea in several very important passages. **Romans 12:1-2** used it to show that the goal for us as “living sacrifices” is **CHANGE**—from what we are now into something different. That change will happen if we change the way that we think. Changing the way that we think will cause us to change the way that we act. **2 Corinthians 3:18** went a little further to show us that we are not to become changed into butterflies, but into the likeness of Jesus. This process is gradual and only happens if we live as Jesus lived his own life on earth. That is why we are told to **IMITATE** him.

Jesus was like us in every way and so his life is an example for us to follow in every way. Jesus never sinned. If we follow his footsteps then we will also never sin!

Speaking of footsteps, there is a very popular religious poem and song entitled “**Footprints**”. It is very popular because it is filled with confessions of human “weaknesses” and deep emotions. It also shows Jesus as a compassionate and loving savior! The story begins with the speaker walking down the beach side by side with the Lord, representing his daily struggle of living as a disciple of Jesus. He relates that most of the time he sees two sets of footprints in the sand along the beach behind them; one set belonging to himself and the other belonging to the Lord. As things proceed, however, the speaker encounters great difficulties in life and notices only one set of footprints. Thinking that the Lord had deserted him, he inquires from the Lord. In the poem, the Lord explains that the two sets of footprints were the times when the man was able to walk under his own power and he enjoyed a happy walk with the Lord side by side. He then explains that the times when there was only a single set of footprints were not times when the man was left walking alone...deserted by the Lord. According to the Lord, in those times, the man was not walking at all. The times when there was only one set of footprints were times when the Lord **carried him!**

“**Footprints**” is a poem that causes great emotions inside of those reading it, but is the message of the poem accurate? In the poem, **WALKING** along the beach is representative of a person **LIVING** day to day in the world and the steps therefore represent the choices and actions of the person. Now, as we consider what we learned from our studies, is there ever a time when Jesus **will actually do our thinking for us, make our decisions for us, and then do our actions?** No, he will not! From our study, we learned that while God **wants** us to do good, and Satan **wants** us to do evil, but **neither can force us to do anything** because that would take away our **FREE WILL** and thus we could no longer be held responsible for our actions because we were forced into action. In addition, if Jesus were to get involved in the life of one person, then **justice would demand** that he would have to do the same in the lives of every other person. After all, doesn't the Bible say that **God loves ALL people?** Therefore, the reality is that God must stand by and watch us as we walk alone down the beach. He cannot do anything except plead with us to follow his will!

However, there **IS** help available! We might say that there really **are** footprints in the sand; but only one set going out before us into the distance. These are the footprints that Jesus left as a path for us to follow almost 2,000 years ago! Our task is to follow that path by putting our feet cautiously into those footprints, step by careful step. The promise is that as long as we will put our feet in his footprints then we will not sin. Expressed another way, we find that the goal in Christianity **is not** to let Jesus carry us, but for us to choose to walk as he walked. (See **1 John 2:3-6**.) Only when we **choose to follow Jesus' example of obedience** will God's love truly arrive at its intended goal in us!

A good thought to end our study with is contained in the words of Jesus himself recorded in **Matthew 11:28-30**.

“28 Come to me all you people who are tired and have heavy burdens. I will give you rest.

29 Accept my work and learn from me. I am gentle and humble in spirit. And you will find rest for your souls. 30 Yes, the work that I ask you to accept is easy. The burden I give you is not heavy."

BRINGING THIS STUDY TO AN END!

As we draw this course to a close, we hope that you have enjoyed your studies and that you have learned many new and useful things. We encourage you to continue studying, either through the other study courses we offer at the Bible Study Center, or, through your own study efforts. We will be happy to assist you in any way that we can.

This is the last set of test questions for this course.

The questions for this lesson work the same as the ones for the previous lesson. Read each question and review the lesson material carefully. Choose the answer that best fits the question and darken the circle for that answer on the answer sheet. Remember to bring your answer sheet with you to class and turn it in for grading.

1. The fact that there are hundreds, perhaps thousands, of groups claiming to be Christian shows that
 - a) many people are not studying the Bible in a correct way.
 - b) many people are not basing their conclusions on all the facts found in the Bible.
 - c) many people are not putting the passages of the Bible into proper context.
 - d) All of the above.
2. According to what we have learned, God called all people who lived in the time of early Christianity to become
 - a) Catholics
 - b) Protestants
 - c) Jews
 - d) Christians
3. God gave us the Bible so that we can
 - a) be able to learn all of his instructions for our daily life.
 - b) correct wrong things we see being taught and practiced in religion today.
 - c) have everything we need in order to find and understand his will for us today.
 - d) All of the above.
4. The message from God that is for all people **living today** is
 - a) the first message (Old Testament)
 - b) the second message (New Testament)
 - c) whatever the church and religious leaders tell their people to do.
 - d) All of the above.
5. TRUE or FALSE: If the Holy Spirit guides people today then the message will be different for different people.
 - a) True
 - b) False
6. TRUE or FALSE: If the teaching of a particular religious group today differs from what the Bible says, then we should follow the group and reject the Bible because the Bible is outdated.
 - a) True
 - b) False
7. In Bible study, we learned that context is
 - a) looking at the verses that come before and after a selected verse from the Bible.
 - b) considering the historical and cultural background of the people and places mentioned in the Bible.
 - c) looking for similar discussions on the same topic that are found in other parts of the Bible.
 - d) All of the above.
8. TRUE or FALSE: If a situation occurs where a person must either trust in their heart or the results of their Bible study, they should trust in their heart.
 - a) True
 - b) False
9. TRUE or FALSE: **John 1:1-3** and **14** teach that Jesus was the first thing God created in the Beginning.
 - a) True
 - b) False
10. We learned that while living on the earth, Jesus was
 - a) different from us because he lived here as God, but we live here only as ordinary humans.
 - b) a special man who had **some** human characteristics but who also used his own miraculous powers.
 - c) an angel who came here in human form but later returned to heaven as an angel.
 - d) None of the above.

11. The best way to explain how Jesus could be God and man at the same time is
- by saying that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man.
 - by combining all of his experiences, as God and as a man, into his one single identity.
 - to say that Jesus was two separate beings. One was God and one was man.
 - to simply say that Jesus was part God and part human.
12. TRUE or FALSE: Jesus was sinless because he always made the correct choices when he was tempted.
- True
 - False
13. When Jesus emptied himself, he
- gave up all things that made him equal with the Father.
 - became equal with all humans.
 - he became "like us in every way."
 - All of the above.
14. In Christianity, **metamorphosis** describes,
- the process of how a person becomes like Jesus Christ.
 - the process of how a person becomes a butterfly.
 - the process of how a person becomes saved.
 - All of the above.
15. The poem/song that many people mistakenly believe describes how Christ helps us in our daily lives is titled
- "The Touch Of The Master's Hand"
 - "The Road Not Taken"
 - "Footprints"
 - None of the above.
16. TRUE or FALSE: If you become discouraged, God will intervene in your life and carry you.
- True
 - False
17. When the Bible speaks of Jesus as the **pioneer** of the faith, it means that
- Jesus lived his life to become an example to show us how we should also live.
 - Jesus came here and lived a human life in order to "show us the ropes."
 - Jesus came here for more reasons than just to become our savior.
 - All of the above.
18. TRUE or FALSE: **Romans 3:23** teaches that it is impossible for a human being to be sinless.
- True
 - False
19. When studying a passage from the Bible, the **most important** thing to consider is
- the translation of the Bible you are using.
 - the explanation given by your religious leaders.
 - the context of the passage.
 - All of the above.
20. In studying the Bible, it is always important to
- study all the available material on the topic you are studying before making a conclusion.
 - read all Bible passages in several different kinds of Bibles so that you can check for different wordings.
 - compare all things you see and hear about religion to what is taught in the Bible.
 - All of the above.
21. Jesus Christ can best help us because,
- he became a human, like us in every way.
 - he died on the cross for our sins.
 - he was tempted just as we are and yet he did not sin.
 - All of the above.

CONGRATULATIONS!

You have now completed the last set of test questions for this study course. As always, if you have any questions that you would like to ask, please write them down and bring them to class with you. Do not forget to tell your friends or family members about this course and let them know that it will be offered in our next session of classes that should start in a couple of weeks!

We take this opportunity to invite YOU to enroll in the follow up course—“**Jesus: Lord of Our Lives**”! You will increase your understanding of this material even more! It is FREE and, as always, we provide each student with his or her own copy of the study material!

Thank you for your continued interest in learning God’s word! We hope that the things you learned from this course have helped you better understand the Bible and Jesus Christ. We also hope that the study skills you learned will help you do your own research in the Bible. Never stop questioning and never stop studying. Remember that our Lord once said, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free!”

May God be with you!

--- From the Bible Study Center Staff...

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Bible Study Center

Jesus: Man of the Bible

Student Worksheets

For Lessons 5, 6, 7, & 10

Bible Study Center

Worksheet for Lessons 5

We have provided you with a supplementary assignment for Lesson 5. This handout provides you with a list of verses that speak about the **ORIGIN** of Jesus. Take each verse and read it carefully. Put the verse into context—as we have learned to do from our past discussions—and use the space on the worksheet to record your findings. Remember that in this lesson, **we are looking for specific TIME references about Jesus and his origin**. After you finish your own research then return to the lesson material and we will go through the verses together and compare notes.

1. Micah 5:2 and then see Matthew 2:6-7
2. John 1:1-3 and also verse 14
3. John 1:30
4. John 3:13 and also 31
5. John 6:41-42
6. John 16:27-28
7. John 17:5
8. Philippians 2:5-11
9. Revelation 22:16

Bible Study Center

Worksheet for Lessons 6

For Lesson 6, we have provided you with another supplementary assignment sheet, which provides you with a list of verses that speak about the topic of Jesus being God. Take each verse and read it carefully. Put the verse into context—as we have learned to do from our past discussions—and use the space on the worksheet to record your findings. Remember that in this lesson, **we are looking for specific information that speaks of Jesus being God**. After you finish your own research then return to the lesson material and we will go through the verses together and compare notes.

1. Matthew 1:23 (See also Isaiah 7:14 for further clarification.)
2. John 20:28
3. Titus 2:13
4. Hebrews 1:3
5. Hebrews 1:8-10
6. Revelation 1:8 and then 22:12-16

Bible Study Center

Worksheet for Lessons 7

To help you research this matter on your own, we have once again provided this worksheet. Please carefully study your way through the list of passages below and then return to the lesson material so that we can go through them together. Remember that in this worksheet we are looking at passages that show the humanity of Jesus. Therefore, **look for references to Jesus possessing human characteristics**. Some passages might contain more than one point and so be thorough in your analysis.

1. Matthew 1:1-5

2. Galatians 4:4

3. Luke 2:40 and then 52

4. Mark 6:3

5. John 19:28

6. John 4:6

7. Matthew 8:24

8. John 2:15

9. Matthew 4:1

10. Hebrews 5:2

11. Luke 7:34

12. Luke 5:16

13. John 11:3 and also verse 35

14. Mark 14:34

15. Matthew 27:46

16. Matthew 27:50

Bible Study Center

Worksheet for Lesson 10

For Lesson 10, we have provided you with a final supplementary assignment. This handout provides you with a list of verses that speak about how Jesus was able to do all the things he did. Take each verse and read it carefully. Put the verse into context—as we have learned to do from our past discussions—and use the space on the worksheet to record your findings. Remember that in this lesson, **we are looking for information speaking about the origin of the miraculous power, knowledge, and teachings of Jesus**. After you finish with your own research, then please return to the lesson material and we will go through the verses together and compare notes.

Section 1: These are passages where Jesus speaks about himself.

1. John 5:36
2. John 10:18
3. John 14:31
4. John 15:10
5. John 7:16
6. John 8:26-28
7. John 12:49-50
8. John 14:10

Section 2: These are passages where others speak about Jesus.

1. Acts 10:37-38
2. Acts 2:22
3. Luke 5:17-26