

Who is Our Exalted Christ and Saviour?

13 Lessons with Study Questions

6 Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
7 but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death –
even death on a cross!
9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:6-11

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Table of Contents

Christ the King Now and Forevermore	3
Christ, Our High Priest	5
Christ, Our Lord and Savior	7
Christ, the Radiance of God's Glory	9
Christ, Our Redeemer	11
Christ, the Teacher	13
Christ, the Foundation and Founder of the Church	15
Christ, the Bread of Life	17
Christ, the Sacrifice for the Sins of Mankind	19
Christ, the Word of God	21
Christ the Bridegroom to the Church	23
Christ, the Victor over Death	25
Christ, the One Returning at the Last Day	27

Christ the King Now and Forevermore

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Is Christ Jesus now the anointed king, sitting upon his throne? If so, various doctrines of millennialism fail, for if Christ is reigning now, all that remains is his final victory with the resurrection of the saints from the dead. In brief, the scriptures are clear: Christ arose from the dead and ascended to rule over his kingdom – a kingdom composed of the faithful Christians, past, present, and future, which will last forever in this world and the eternity to follow.

The Old Testament Prophets

The Old Testament prophets spoke only of an eternal king and his eternal kingdom. In 2 Samuel 7:11-14 at the anointing of David, the Lord declared that while David was in the tomb, God would raise up his son, an offspring of David, establish his kingdom, and establish his throne forever:

The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: 12 When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

The specific time for the establishment of this eternal kingdom was to be in the days of the fourth kingdom from Daniel's time, or in the days of the Roman Empire. Daniel 2:44-45 also states the eternal nature of this kingdom which God will set up and which will endure forever:

In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. 45 This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands – a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

Zechariah 6:12-13 agrees with Daniel and Samuel:

Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: and he shall grow up out of his place; and he shall build the temple of Jehovah; even he shall build the temple of Jehovah; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

The New Testament Fulfillment

The New Testament asserts from its beginning to its end the truth of these Old Testament prophecies. The King, Christ Jesus, came in the days of the Romans, of David's lineage, to sit on David's throne, forever in this world and the one to come. The angel Gabriel spoke to Mary in Luke 1:32-33: "32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

Jesus affirmed the coming of his Kingdom and its eternal nature in Matthew 16:17-20:

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost after the resurrection and ascension of the Christ, and affirmed the fulfillment of the promise to David that the Christ would sit on David's throne:

30 But he [David] was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received

from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. . . . 36
"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord
and Christ." Acts 2:30-36

As Peter asserted, the when of Christ sitting on his throne was at his resurrection and exaltation about
which Paul spoke in Ephesians 1:19-23:

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised
him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and
authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also
in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over
everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

That Christ is now and forever King, sitting upon his throne, reigning over his kingdom, the church, is a
truth without contradiction in the entire Bible. The Revelation offers these concluding images:

They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords
and King of kings – and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers." Revelation 17:14.

16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. Revelation 19:16

Conclusion

Are you a called, chosen, and faithful follower of King of Kings and Lord of Lords? As the king reigns
forever from his exaltation in resurrection from the dead, so does his kingdom continue from that exaltation
forever and forever. Paul and John stated the case for all time:

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the
kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the
kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians
1:12-14

"To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and
priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen." Revelation 1:5-
6

Study Questions

1. In whose lineage would Christ the King be from? _____
2. In the days for which kings would he come? _____
3. On whose throne did Gabriel say Christ would sit? _____
4. When did Peter say that Christ sat on his throne? _____
5. To what and to where did God by his power raise Jesus (Ephesians 1:19-23)? _____
6. _____
7. Who are in this kingdom over which Christ reigns (Colossians 1:12-14)? _____
8. _____

Christ, Our High Priest

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Jesus—the King of kings—is to reign forever (2 Samuel 7:13). In Zechariah 6:12-13, we learned that the Branch would build the temple of Jehovah and would sit and rule upon his throne. Peace would be between the king and priest, for both priest and king would be one, the branch, sitting upon one throne:

Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: and he shall grow up out of his place; and he shall build the temple of Jehovah; even he shall build the temple of Jehovah; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 teaches that the Branch is “A King who will reign wisely” called “The Lord Our Righteousness.” Jesus became both King and Priest on his throne in the temple of Jehovah. Jesus is high priest. Hebrews 4:14-15 teaches clearly: “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess.”

Christ, a Better High Priest

Christ is a better high priest than any other is, because he sits eternally at the right hand of God and serves in the true sanctuary. Hebrews 8:1-2 teaches: “The point of what we are saying is this: We do have such a high priest, who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, 2 and who serves in the sanctuary, the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.”

Christ is a better high priest because he is able to sympathize with our weaknesses:

15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:15-16.

Christ is a better high priest because God, his father, appointed him:

5 So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."
6 And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." Hebrews 5:5-6.

As a better high priest, Jesus is an anchor for our souls. Hebrews 6:19 teaches: “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain. Verse 20 concludes: “Where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Christ is a perfect high priest forever: “ 28 For the law appoints as high priests men who are weak; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.” Hebrews 7:27-28.

Christ, At Once the High Priest and Sacrifice

Jesus shed his own blood as the sacrifice for our sins. In this way, he was high priest and sacrifice:

12 He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! Heb. 9:12-14.

Jesus died for once, offering the sacrifice for all. Hebrews 9:25-26a teaches: "Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. 26 Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world." He offered this sacrifice of his blood once for all:

But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, 28 so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. Hebrews 9:26b-28

The sacrifice that was once for all came "at the end of the ages" which is past tense. "He will appear a second time . . . to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him," is future tense.

Conclusion

That Christ is high priest forever parallels the fact that Christ is King forever. The dilemma of all millennialists (pre-, post-, trans-) is that Christ cannot be high priest eternally and not be on his eternal throne. The two—King and priest—abide now and forever in the temple of Jehovah. In the first lesson, the King was to build the house of God and establish a kingdom that would remain forever (2 Samuel 7:11-14). In this current lesson, the root of David was to build a temple of Jehovah from where he would sit on his throne and be a priest forever. Christ said in Revelation 3: 12: "12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God." Revelation 7:15 describes our relationship in the temple:

And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore,
"they are before the throne of God
and serve him day and night in his temple ;
and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them.

In Revelation 21:22-23, we find that the temple is really the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb: "22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple."

Christians are both part of the temple of God and priests in service in that temple. Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:4-5, "4 As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. [Emphasis added.]

Study Questions

1. As Christ sits upon his throne, what two offices does he hold? _____
2. Where does Christ now sit? _____ Upon what does he now sit? _____
3. Why is Christ a better high priest? _____
4. Who made Christ high priest? _____
5. How long will Christ serve as high priest? _____
6. How is Christ both priest and sacrifice? _____
7. Where is the temple of God? _____ Of what is the temple composed? _____
8. Who are the pillars? _____ Who are the living stones? _____
9. Who are in the royal priesthood? _____

Christ, Our Lord and Savior

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Lord and savior appear as descriptive titles of Jesus Christ. Lord, indicating authority and meaning master, was the common address used by the apostles, with no instances appearing during his personal ministry where they called him by his given name, Jesus. Lord, the more frequently used address, included the added meaning of deity when used of Jesus. Acts 2:36 records Peter saying, "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." In Acts 10:36, Peter said, "You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all."

The word translated savior also means deliverer and preserver. As a title, it extends to include the deity and power of Jesus when used with the title Lord as in 2 Peter 1:10-11: "And you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." In short, our master saves and delivers us.

Christ, the Lord

To use the title, Lord, in addressing Christ shows complete submission to him as master, with full understanding of his power and authority. The centurion in Matthew 8:5-11 illustrates the depth of commitment and obedience:

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. 6 "Lord , he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering."

7 Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him."

8 The centurion replied, "Lord , I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 9 For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

10 When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."

The recognition of Christ as Lord requires more than verbal acknowledgement and mere credence:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord , Lord , ' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord , Lord , did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" Matthew 7:21-23.

The recognition of Christ as Lord includes full, unwavering obedience. The result is salvation. Acts 2:21 quotes the prophet Joel: "And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." The conversion process itself begins with one's willingness to call on the name of the Lord. Paul also quotes Joel in Romans 10:12-15:

12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. 14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

What we hear from Christ our Lord, we must put into practice: "46 "Why do you call me, 'Lord , Lord , ' and do not do what I say? 47 I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice." Luke 6:46-48

Christ, the Savior

From the very beginning of his life on earth, Jesus was the savior. The angel of the Lord told the shepherds

in Luke 2:11, "Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord." The apostles preached Christ as the savior with the power to give repentance and forgiveness of sins:

30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead – whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. 32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." Acts 5:30-32

He is savior and saves us from our sins. Those that he thus saves constitute the church, his body. Paul explains in Ephesians 5:23, 25-27:

23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior . . . 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

In another sense, Christ the savior saves us from these lowly bodies (earthly bodies) and makes us like his glorious body: "20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." Philippians 3:20-21. Therefore, The Savior and his salvation bring life and immortality to us, saving us from this temporal and fleshly existence: "This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior , Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." 2 Timothy 1:9-11. Thus it is eternal life that comes to us from Jesus Christ our Savior. Paul writes in Titus 3:5-8: "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior , 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. "

Christ, Lord and Savior

Peter beautifully summarizes our relationship to our Lord and Savior in 2 Peter 1:4-11:

4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

10 Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Study Questions

1. What does the title Lord mean? _____
2. What does the titles Savior mean? _____
3. What did the centurion say that being under authority was? _____
4. What more must we do than to say, "Lord, Lord"? _____
5. List those things from which we are saved by the Savior. _____
6. _____

Christ, the Radiance of God's Glory

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There are many views on the nature of Christ. Some say that he was only a prophet like Moses and the rest; some, that he was only a good man, not divine at all. Others say that he was a poet in the class of a Milton or Shakespeare. Those who follow the historical Jesus slant deny his divinity and the truth of the gospel account regarding both Christ and his cohorts. One cannot hold to these views and believe the New Testament, which teaches that Christ is the very radiance of God's glory.

The Radiance of God's Glory and the Exact Representation of His Being

Is Christ the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being? Or is he merely human? Hebrews 1:1-4 forever answers this question: "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven." There is no arguing room as to the nature of the Son. He is exactly like his father in glory and being. Philippians 2:6-11 (the passage that keynotes this series) characterizes Christ Jesus, past and present. He reflected the radiance of God's glory before he came:

6 Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
7 but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.

He returned to a state of being above all else after his resurrection:

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

The Life, the Light of the World

The radiance of God showed in Christ when he came into the world. This Christ Jesus was in the beginning with God; he was God. John 1:1 teaches: "1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning." Any interpretation that makes Christ less than Deity contradicts this plain teaching of the scripture. It was his life that reflected the light shining to men: "4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. (John 1:4).

It was in this context, that Jesus could say in John 14:9-11: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work." Whether in the beginning with God, or on earth with man, Jesus Christ reflected God's (the One and Only) glory: "14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:14. No mere man, no mere poet or philosopher, no mere historical person, this Jesus is Christ who was with God and who was

God, and who reflects God's radiance.

The Image of the Invisible God and the Fullness of the Godhead

The son was the image of the invisible God and the fullness of the Godhead. Colossians 1:15-20 teaches, "15 He is the image of the invisible God, . . . For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him." In Colossians 2:9-10, Paul wrote further, "9 For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity [Godhead] lives in bodily form, 10 and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority." As Christ is the fullness of the Godhead, we have fullness in Christ. The full radiance of God's glory is in Christ, and the full radiance of Christ's glory is in the church. Paul beautifully expressed this teaching in Ephesians 1:19-23:

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

That Christ should so reflect the brilliance of God's glory and so exactly represent his being was God's eternal purpose. Paul further wrote, "10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord." Eph 3:9-11.

In a very interesting way, this radiance and representation of God in Christ and in the church, return to glorify God: Ephesians 3:20-21 reads, "20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

Conclusion

Christ as the radiance of God's glory leaves no room for Christ as mere man or poet, regardless of how great. Christ was and is deity. Likewise, the church is no mere substitute for a failed kingdom or for a kingdom to come in full glory after the resurrection of Christ. The glory to God is in Christ and the church and to Christ and the church for ever and ever.

Study Questions

1. How does Hebrews 1:1-4 represent the son? _____
2. Why is Christ not just a good man or a great poet? _____
3. Where was Christ in the beginning? _____ Where is he now? _____
4. Who is the fullness of deity in bodily form? _____
5. Who is the fullness of Christ? _____
6. When and in whom was God's eternal purpose accomplished? _____
7. In whom is God's glory seen? _____ Who is God's glory? _____

Christ, Our Redeemer

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The words redeem, redeemed, redeemer, and redemption appear often in the Old Testament, forecasting a redeemer of God's people yet to come. The Jews and even the twelve apostles mistook these prophecies to mean a physical restoration of the worldly nation of Israel. In Luke 24:20-21, the twelve told the Lord after his resurrection, "The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel." In this context, Jesus chastised them: "25 He said to them, 'How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?' 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself." Luke 24:25-27. From the patriarchal age, the faithful understood that true redemption was the eternal redemption of the soul. Job, recording prior to Moses, said in Job 19:25-26, "But as for me I know that my Redeemer liveth, and at last he will stand up upon the earth: 26 And after my skin, (even) this (body), is destroyed, Then without my flesh shall I see God (ASV)." Thus, it was clear, from the beginning that salvation was the redemption of the soul: "He redeemed my soul from going down to the pit, and I will live to enjoy the light." Job 33:28.

Both Jews and Gentiles Redeemed

God offered His son as a redeemer to both the Jew and Gentile. Of the Jews, Gal 4:4-5 reads, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." Of the Gentiles, Gal 3: 14 similarly says, "He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit." Therefore, redemption was to Jew and Gentile alike. All mankind needed the redemption that God provided. Romans 3:23-25 teaches, "23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood." The redemption came through Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God (John 3:16), to all mankind. Paul wrote,

11 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. Titus 2:11-14.

The Purchase Price of Redemption, the Blood of Christ

To redeem is to buy back, requiring a price to be paid. The purchase price of redemption is the blood of Christ. John 3:16 teaches, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." This eternal life is free to us, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom 6:23. Peter explained what happened in 1 Peter 1:18-21:

18 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. 20 He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. 21 Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

The redeeming power and the forgiveness of sins are through the blood of Christ, in accordance with the will of God. Eph 1:7-8 teaches, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding."

Redeemed in the Church

Having said no to ungodliness and worldly passion and having said yes to upright and godly living (Titus

2:11-14), the redeemed are added to the church (Acts 2:47) at the point of their salvation from their sins. When asked what to do to attain this redemption from sin, Peter told them to repent and be baptized in Acts 2:37-38: "When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' 38 Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"

Those redeemed from sin by the blood of Jesus, shed upon the cross, become the church. Paul admonished the elders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20:28-29, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." The church, so redeemed, is holy, cleansed, and radiant, without stain or any blemish. Penitent and baptized believers are the redeemed, and the redeemed are the church, washed with the water and the word: "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." Eph 5:25-27

Our Eternal Redemption, A Guaranteed Inheritance

We are given the promised gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) who insures our eternal redemption. Paul wrote in Eph 1:13-14: "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory."

Through this gift of the promised Holy Spirit, we know that God eternally redeems us by the blood of Christ. Paul wrote in Rom 8:16-17, "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." Therefore we, like Job, know that our bodies will be redeemed eternally with Christ and the Father: ". . . we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, . . . as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." Rom 8:23-25

Conclusion

All heaven rejoices in the redemption of all mankind through the blood of Christ:

9 And they sang a new song:

"You are worthy to take the scroll

and to open its seals,

because you were slain,

and with your blood you purchased men for God

from every tribe and language and people and nation. Rev 5:9-10

Study Questions

1. Why did Job say that he knew that his redeemer lives? _____
2. What did God have to do with our redemption? _____
3. What did Christ have to do with our redemption? _____
4. What must we do to attain our redemption? _____
5. To what does the Holy Spirit bear witness? _____
6. Who is in the church? _____
7. What is our eternal hope? _____

Christ, the Teacher

Online Access at WWW.GOSPELLESSONS.INFO

Christ is our teacher. He came as a teacher and taught from the beginning to the end of his life here on earth. Through his inspired word, he continues to teach mankind in each generation. As a boy 12 years old, Jesus was teaching in the temple: "After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. 47 Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers." Luke 2:46-47. Jesus began his ministry by teaching in Matthew 4:23: "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom."

Matthew records the Sermon on the Mount, as some now call it. In Matt 5:1-2, Christ began teaching: "Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them, saying: . . ." The sermon itself is, perhaps, the greatest lesson ever taught and, certainly, taught by the greatest teacher who ever lived. The certitude of the sermon and the ethos (moral nature) of the teacher were evident to the multitude of listeners who were amazed: "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law." Matt 7:28-29.

A Teacher by Example

The absolute righteousness of the Lord allowed him to teach by his powerful example. In setting this example, the Lord met all God's expectations. For example, when Jesus came to John to be baptized in Matt 3:13-15, John was reluctant. "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" he said. Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Because of his own righteousness, Jesus became an example to us and a demonstration of the father before us.

In Acts 1:1-2, Luke gave equal weight to what Jesus did and taught: "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven." His righteous life, recorded in Luke and the other gospels was so powerful that Jesus contended that when one looked at him, he could see the father. In John 14:8-11, Philip requested proof of God and said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." To which Jesus responded:

Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. [Emphasis added].

The Lord expects us to follow his teaching by example in the same way that we would follow his words. In John 13:13-15, he taught clearly, "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." The power of this Christ's example to edify and teach extended to the apostles and indeed to all true Christians. Paul taught in 1 Cor 11:1, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." The examples of Jesus and the apostles are just as much of the pattern as direct commands: "Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you." Phil 3:17. As Christ lived and taught by example, so should we:

7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness 8 and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us. Titus 2:7-8

A Teacher Using Stories and Examples

Just as Jesus taught by his example, he taught using examples. These examples were most often in the form of parables. The history of the word parable is interesting, going back to classical Greek languages:

parable n [ME, fr. MF, fr. LL parabola, fr. Gk parabole comparison, fr. paraballein to compare, para-+ballein to throw—more at DEVIL] (14c) EXAMPLE. specif: a. usually a short fictitious story that

illustrates a moral attitude or a religious principle. Merriam Webster's Collegiate, 10th Edition. [Note: Devil from Greek diabolos, from diaballein, to throw across, slander; dia + ballein. JAW]

Parables are not to be confused with fables. In parables, the characteristics and details are true to life and real. In fables, characteristics and details may defy true life, such as talking animals or flying humans. According to Peter, the apostles and prophets did not use fables. 2 Peter 1:16 says, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty [ASV]. .When Jesus told the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), the story may have been fictitious but the elements are true to life, making the fire, hell, torment, and Abraham's bosom real and true to life.

Jesus used parables to convey the spiritual truth to the people, leaving it up to them to understand or not:

34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. 35 So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

"I will open my mouth in parables,

I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world." Matt 13:34-35

He gave the apostles to understand the secret of the kingdom. However, Christ expects his students, including those of us still living, to see and believe, hear and understand, and turn and be forgiven, according to Mark 4:9-12:

9 Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables . 11 He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables 12 so that,

"they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,

and ever hearing but never understanding;

otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"

Mark 4: 33 explains that he used parables to teach "them, as much as they could understand." The passage concludes in verse 34: "But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything." The special treatment of the apostles continued after Jesus returned to the Father:

12 "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth , comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you." John 16:12-15

Conclusion

Christ is our teacher by his example and by the word that he left for us. However, we must perceive it, understand it, turn from sin to him, and be forgiven. In short, Christ has taught, but the will to learn is up to each one who lives. Jesus placed the will to learn on all those who come to him in John 6:44-48:

44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. 46 No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. 47 I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.

Study Questions

1. What is the difference in a parable and a fable? _____
2. In what ways was Jesus an example to us? _____
3. Why did Christ explain everything to the apostles and not the other people? _____
4. How can we be sure the apostles taught the things of Christ? _____

Christ, the Foundation and Founder of the Church

Online Access at www.gospellessons.info

In Akron, Ohio, the red neon sign read: "The Akron Baptist Temple, Dallas F. Billington, Pastor and Founder." Other religious groups trace their founding to human beings: Martin Luther, John Wesley, John Calvin, etc. The Roman Catholic Church ascribes its founding to Peter, the apostle, and falsely applies, to Peter, Christ's statement, "Upon this rock I will build my church." This study will show that Christ is both the foundation and founder of his church. Christ as the foundation and founder of his church is implicit in his teaching in Matt 16:13-19:

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Christ, the Foundation of His Church

Christ had just asked Peter, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter had answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." The truth—that Christ is the Son of the living God—came to Peter from the Lord's Father in heaven (verse 17). Christ then said in verse 18, "On this rock I will build my church." What is this rock? Christ the Son of the living God is this rock. Some will argue, to satisfy man-made theology, that the rock was Peter, whom they consider to be the founder of their church. The two Greek words PETROS, Peter a little stone, and PETRA, a rock suitable for a foundation, cannot be interchanged. W. E. Vine explains:

ROCK 1. *petra* NT:4073 denotes "a mass of rock," as distinct from *petros*, "a detached stone or boulder," or a stone that might be thrown or easily moved. . . . The distinction between *petra*, concerning the Lord Himself, and *Petros*, the apostle, is clear (see above). (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

When it is not obscured by man-made doctrine, the meaning here is clear, agreeing with other statements about Christ as the foundation of the church. Peter addressed the issue with the Jews in Acts 4:10-12. Peter, whom some erroneously think was the foundation of the church, was responding to the Jews following the healing of the crippled man in Acts 3:

It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11 He is

"the stone you builders rejected,

which has become the capstone [Head stone of the corner in a foundation. JAW]."

12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

Paul taught this same lesson to the Gentiles; namely, Christ is the foundation of the church and only in him is there salvation. In 1 Cor 3:10-11, Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. 11 For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." Jesus, Peter, and Paul all concur. Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church.

Christ, the Founder of His Church

Jesus Christ is not only the foundation of the church, but he is also the founder of his church. In Matthew

16, after Peter had confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus said, "8 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." With the Day of Pentecost, after the resurrection of the Lord, came the establishment of the Lord's church. After Peter's sermon, after the multitude cried out what should they do, after they gladly received the word, were baptized, and were saved, the Lord added them to his church: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (KJV)." Acts 2:47.

Being saved and added to the church are one and the same, and only the Lord can do it. Why? Because it is his church, that he built and that he saved. For, "Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior." Eph 5:22-23. Christ builds his church of those that he has saved. It is, therefore, without contradiction that Peter teaches in 1 Peter 3:21 that baptism is the culminating event in the salvation process, and Paul teaches in 1 Cor 12:13 that we are baptized in the one body, the church. Peter said "And this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God." Paul teaches in 1 Cor 12:13, "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." When the Lord saves us from our sins, he adds us to the church, which he founded and of which he is the foundation. Any church, founded since the Pentecost of Acts 2, is not the one that Christ built.

Christ, the Founder and Foundation of Only One Church

In the modern world, many want to have salvation, but be saved in some church that Christ did not build. God by his great power, "raised [Christ] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come." He also "appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way." Ephesians 1:20-23. His body is the church and there is only one—the one he founded on the day of Pentecost. Paul writes in Ephesians 4:4-6, " 4 There is one body and one Spirit— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all."

Paul also warned about men who found and establish their own churches and about those who follow them:

4 For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men?

5 What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe — .

. . . 6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. 7 So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. 1 Cor 3:4-9.

Conclusion

Christ said that he was the rock upon which he would build his church. He was. He said that he would build his church. He did. Paul said that we should not follow mere men. We should not. Those on the day of Pentecost cried out asking what they should do. We should cry out. Peter said repent and be baptized for the remission of your sins. They did. We should. The Lord added to the church daily such as were saved. The Lord will add us, also, to the church, which Jesus built, and which has Jesus as the foundation.

Study Questions

1. What are the two kinds of rocks spoken of in Matthew 16? _____
2. When did Christ found his church? _____
3. What two things occur when one is baptized? Give the scriptures. _____
4. Why are we not to follow men? _____
5. Why is it wrong for a mere man to start a church? _____
6. Give five synonyms in this lesson for baptized believers in Christ. _____

Christ, the Bread of Life

The Lord Jesus Christ is the bread of life. John 6 is a long sustained narrative opening with Jesus on a mountainside on the far shore of the Sea of Galilee. When Jesus saw the crowd coming up, he asked Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" John 6:5. Philip answered that eight month's wages would not buy enough for each one to have a bite. Andrew spoke up saying that a boy had five small barley loaves and two small fishes. "But how far will they go among so many?" Andrew asked. Having seated the people (about 5,000 of them), Jesus took the loaves and the fishes and distributed to the 5,000 as much as they wanted. When they gathered the leftover bread, there were twelve baskets of pieces.

Responses to Jesus' Miracle of the Fish and the Loaves

The response of the people. In response the people, whom Jesus fed, said, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." Chapter 6, verse 15, tells that Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain. From this early example, it is evident that Jesus did not intend to be an earthly, physical king. He avoided the idea of an earthly kingdom from the beginning. He taught in John 8:23, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world." Later, he taught in John 18:36-37, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." From the beginning, Jesus taught that neither he nor his kingdom was of this world. They were spiritual in nature and purpose.

The next day following his walking on the water, they were seeking Jesus. He said that they were looking for him because of the loaves. His response showed once again the spiritual nature of Christ and his kingdom. He said in chapter 6, verse 27, "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." The true food is spiritual food, nurturing eternal not physical life.

They then asked, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

In verse 30 they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? 31 Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

Their response is completely material. Jesus' answer forever separates him from the materialism sought by the Jews. He established the spiritual nature of the bread of life. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." John 6:32-33. Jesus is the bread of life and that life is eternal.

Their next response shows their desire for the bread of life, but a lack of understanding still. "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread."

In John 6:35-40, Jesus declared with certainty the spiritual meaning of the "bread of life:"

I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. . . . 38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

The response of the Jews. Upon hearing about the bread of life and eternal life, the Jews began to grumble about him, forcing a material meaning on his nature and his work.

At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?" John 6:41-42.

In John 6:44-47, Jesus answers their grumbling in a statement of such certainty and clarity that one can

hardly miss the point:

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets: "They will all be taught by God." Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. 46 No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. 47 I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.

Jesus Reiterates His Teaching

Jesus explains his spiritual nature and the eternal life he gives once again to the Jews in verses 47-51:

He who believes has everlasting life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. 50 But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

Once again, the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

Jesus answered by forecasting our need to partake fully of him to be saved. Both the symbolic eating his body and drinking his blood in the emblems of bread and fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper and our becoming in him in our daily lives fulfill this meaning. We partake of him, we become him, and he becomes us: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" 2 Cor 5: 17.

With the eating and drinking figure, Jesus once again repeats his teaching in John 6:53-58:

I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. 56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. 57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.

On hearing it, many of his disciples responded, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" Later the record shows that from this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. Yet, Peter and the twelve stood firm with the Lord:

67 "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve.

68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

Conclusion

We sing the song Break Thou the Bread of Life:

Break Thou the bread of life, dear Lord, to me,
As Thou didst break the loaves beside the sea;
Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord;
My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word!

Study Questions

1. Compare Moses, manna and the Israelites with Christ, the bread of life, and his disciples. _____

2. What will happen to those who feed on the bread of life? _____
3. What happens when people are taught of God? _____
4. What kind of food were the Jews looking for? What happened when Christ did not offer it to them?

Christ, the Sacrifice for the Sins of Mankind

You may find this lesson at WWW.GOSPELLESSONS.INFO .

A sacrifice, according to Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, primarily denotes "the act of offering"; then, objectively, "that which is offered." The act of offering as it relates to the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of mankind is two-fold: God gave his one and only son for mankind, and the son gave his life for mankind. That two divine beings should have such mercy and love challenges human comprehension. The subject of Christ, the sacrifice for the sins of mankind, is central to understanding God's grace.

God, Giver of His One and Only Son

In John's gospel, the preaching of Christ began with this declaration in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Perhaps the most memorized passage in the Bible, John 3:16 reflects all of God's mercy, love, and sacrifice for those who believe in his one and only son. The requirement to believe includes all of man's confidence and trust, and not mere credence. The fullness of God's love and the fullness of man's faith go together, hand in hand.

In Eph 2:8-9, Paul combined these two aspects—God's sacrifice and man's faith—to illustrate how they work together, complementing each other: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast." Again in Rom 6:23, Paul wrote, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God was the giver of the gift and that gift was his one and only son. The sinful nature for man created the need for an atoning sacrifice. Rom 3:23 declares that all men are depraved, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Unto man in this sinful condition came the grace of God, who freely justified man and redeemed him by the gift of Christ Jesus: "And are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." Rom 3:24. Thus, "God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood," according to Rom 3:25. God is the presenter of Christ, the sacrifice.

Christ, an Offering and Sacrifice to God

Just as God gave his one and only son, Christ gave himself for a sacrifice to God. Eph 5:1-2 teaches, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." It is important to understand that Christ sacrifice was for our sins, but to God. He came at the end of the ages to do away with sin. In Heb 9:26, overcoming sins and sacrifice go together: "Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself."

The superiority of the sacrifice of Christ stands above the previous sacrifices of the Old Testament and set those sacrifices and the law that required them aside. Christ's sacrifice is once for all, and it is through that sacrifice that we are made holy:

8 First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them" (although the law required them to be made). 9 Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. 10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Heb 10:8-10

Heb 10:11-13 that the one sacrifice of Christ was for all time; and that by one sacrifice, he made perfect forever those who are being made holy: "12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. 13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, 14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy."

In Heb 10:17, the Hebrew writer describes those whom Christ makes perfect and holy by his one sacrifice as those whose "sins and lawless acts, I will remember no more." He concludes in verse 18, "18 And where

these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. 1

In addition to the Hebrew's passages, John confirmed the atoning nature of Christ's sacrifice in 1 John 2:2, "He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." The sacrifice not only atones for our sins but also for the sins of the whole world. In 1 John 4:10, John relates the sacrifice of the Son to God's love as the providing source, and to forgiveness of our sins as resulting from the sacrifice: "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." Other major translations use the word propitiation in place of atoning in these passages. W. E. Vines explains accurately the meaning here:

PROPTIATION

2. hilasmos NT:2434, akin to hileos ("merciful, propitious"), signifies "an expiation, a means whereby sin is covered and remitted." It is used in the NT of Christ Himself as "the propitiation," in 1 John 2:2 and 4:10, signifying that He Himself, through the expiatory sacrifice of His death, is the personal means by whom God shows mercy to the sinner who believes on Christ as the One thus provided. In the former passage He is described as "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." The italicized addition in the KJV, "the sins of," gives a wrong interpretation. What is indicated is that provision is made for the whole world, so that no one is, by divine predetermination, excluded from the scope of God's mercy; the efficacy of the "propitiation," however, is made actual for those who believe. In 4:10, the fact that God "sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins," is shown to be the great expression of God's love toward man, and the reason why Christians should love one another. (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

Conclusion

Heb 10:26-31 explains clearly what will happen to us if we deliberately keep on sinning:

26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." 31 It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The benefits of the sacrifice of Christ are available to all. But all men must believe firmly and fully in him and obey his covenant. If you have obeyed and fallen away, do not keep on deliberately sinning. Follow the teaching of John and be restored to the only Lord and Master: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9-10

Study Questions

1. Why did God send his one and only son to die? _____
2. To whom was Jesus a sacrifice? _____
3. In what way did God do away with sins? _____
4. For what group did Christ sacrifice? _____
5. How does one receive the grace and mercy of God? _____
6. What did God do with the Old Covenant and the sacrifices commanded there? _____
7. What is man's condition, before believing in and obeying Christ, the sacrifice? _____
8. What does the word propitiation mean? _____
9. What is man's condition when, after receiving the knowledge of truth, he deliberately keeps on sinning? _____

Christ, the Word of God

You may find this lesson at WWW.GOSPELLESSONS.INFO .

Christ as the Word of God is, perhaps, the most difficult concept for humans, bound to this earth, to comprehend. Yet it is the concept that helps us transcend the earthly and physical world in which we live. John 1:1 begins John's gospel stating omnipresence of the Word with God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning." Not only was this Word present with God and was himself God, but also all things were made through him. John 1:3-4 reads, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men." This very same word sanctifies and saves us. Jesus said in John 17:17, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

Christ, the Word Who Became Flesh and Lived on the Earth

Christ was the Word who became flesh and lived on the earth, before dying for the sins of mankind. John 1:14 affirms, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." When we look at Christ we see in him the glory of the Father – grace and truth. It is the word that is called the One and Only. How can it be that an abstract and spiritual notion can be real upon the earth? Paul explained the Lord's journey from the beginning, where God made all things through him, to the worldly path to the cross of Calvary:

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name. Phil 2:5-11.

John and the rest of the apostles offered empirical proof of the Word of life as flesh and the Word as eternal life in 1 John 1:1-2, "1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life . 2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us." That life is the living example left for all men to see and know.

Christ, the Word of God in the New Testament

Christ is the Word of God in the New Testament. In the entire Bible, the phrase, word of God, appears only 38 times in the NIV. The phrase, word of the Lord, appears 233 times, but only 10 of these uses appear in the New Testament. Why is this? The New Testament is the Word of the Lord and the final revelation of God. The Word that said, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." also said, through Paul in Eph 1:13, "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth [emphasis added], the gospel of your salvation." Through Paul in Rom 1:16 this same Word said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." Paul explained fully how he got the revelation of the Word of God in Eph 3:2-5: " Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation , as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets."

In 2 Peter 3:15-16, Peter described the teaching of Paul as "the wisdom that God gave him," and included Paul's writings as scriptures. Thus, Paul's revelation and that of the apostles and prophets were the God-breathed word of God. That is Christ in the New Testament. Therefore, the Word of God in the New Testament describes its own indomitable power. It is the sword of the Spirit, in Eph 6:17: "Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God [emphasis added]." This sword, the word of God, enables us to conquer "the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Eph 6:12-13. This word of God, the sword of the Spirit, cuts to the very heart, spirit, and soul of man:

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword , it penetrates even to

dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Heb 4:12-13

In Rev 1:16 and in Rev 2:12, the sharp and double-edged sword comes out of the mouth of the Lord. It is an instrument of vengeance against the adversary, and support and reward to the righteous: "In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword," and "These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword." This is the sword with which the KING OF KINGS and LORD OF LORDS wages his war. He is so described in Rev 19:11-16:

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God [Emphasis added]. 14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Christ, the Word of God Living in Us

In addition to Christ, the Word of God, living a life on this earth through which we know God; and in addition to his being the living and active word recorded in the New Testament, he is the very Word of God living in the children of God. In Phil 2:14-16, Paul described Christians as "blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe 16 as you hold out the word of life." It is the word of life, living in us that makes us shine like stars. This word of God, living in us and overcoming the evil one, goes hand in hand with our using the written word of God against the adversary. John poetically wrote in 1 John 2:14:

I write to you, young men,
because you are strong,
and the word of God lives in you,
and you have overcome the evil one.

Through the Word of God living in their lives, Christians perfect their lives and teach others by word and deed. The living word is in our thoughts, our actions, our prayers, our songs, and our lives. Paul said: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." Col 3:16-17.

Conclusion

Look to the life of Christ to see God in Jesus Christ, the Word. Look to the New Testament to seize the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Learn living word and teach the living word; teach and learn: "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ . 18 But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did." Rom 10:17-18

Study Questions

1. Where was Christ before he came to the earth? _____
2. What form did he take before coming to the earth? _____
3. What form does he now have? _____
4. What is the power in having the Word of God live in us? _____
5. In what three ways is Christ represented to the word? _____

Christ the Bridegroom to the Church

You may find this lesson at WWW.GOSPELLESSONS.INFO .

Christ the bridegroom to the church metaphorically parallels the human experience. The analogy is to the bridegroom and the bride and to the husband and the wife. The metaphor equates the Lord and his church to the love, compassion, and mercy of marriage, humankind's most revered and inspiring institution. Paul describes this relationship of Christ to the church in Eph 5:23-30:

23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Christ, the Bridegroom to the Church in John the Baptist's Teaching

From the beginning of Christ's ministry, John the Baptist understood that he was subordinate to Christ. John used the analogy of bridegroom and bride to show the preeminence of the Lord:

28 You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.' 29 The bride belongs to the bridegroom . The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. 30 He must become greater; I must become less. John 3:28-30:

John established that he was the friend of the bridegroom, Christ was the bridegroom, and the bride, the church, belongs to the bridegroom, Christ. The church is the bride of Christ in name and in purpose. The true church cannot wear another's name, nor can she submit to another's will. There logically can be no place for a church named Baptist, Lutheran, Calvinist, or any other name than that of the bridegroom, Christ. Nor can the bride submit to the teaching of any but the true husband, Christ. The principles that establish the marital relationship between Christ and the church are eternal and irrevocable. The New Testament begins and ends with this fundamental principle. Those who believe that John, the Baptist, could have founded the church, even though he, himself, denied it need to consider that John's death by beheading occurred in Mat 14. In Mat 16:18, Jesus Christ said, "Upon this rock I will build [future tense] my church."

Christ, the Bridegroom to the Church in God's Final Revelation

Just as the New Testament begins with the concept of Christ and the Church as bridegroom and bride, it ends with the very same principle in teaching and imagery. In what "sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting, "Rev 19:6-8 records:

"Hallelujah!

For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

7 Let us rejoice and be glad

and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,

and his bride has made herself ready.

8 Fine linen, bright and clean,

was given her to wear."

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)

In Rev 21:1-2, the holy city, the New Jerusalem, is described as the bride: "I saw the Holy City, the new

Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband." In Rev 21:9-11, one of the seven angels shows John the bride after carrying him away to a mountain: "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." These passages are clear in teaching that the bride is the wife of the Lamb, the Holy City, and the New Jerusalem.

This mountain to which John was carried away is the same mountain to which all Christians come. Heb 12:22-23 describes the church with the very same terms used by the Revelation: "22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven." From these passages, the bride, the wife of the Lamb, the Holy City, the New Jerusalem are clearly the church of the firstborn.

Christ, the Bridegroom to the Church in Paul's Writing

The apostle Paul also taught that the church was the bride of Christ, espoused to him and wife to him. In 2 Cor 11:2-3, Paul wrote:

2 I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him. 3 But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

This passage, combined with Eph 5:23-27, teaches that the church, the body of Christ is his bride and wife. In Paul's teaching, the husband, Christ, loved the church and gave himself up for her. In turn, we, the church, love Christ and espouse ourselves to be a pure virgin to him. The church and its members must be faithful to her husband.

Conclusion

Because Christ is the bridegroom and husband to the church, some facts are evident: The church must wear the name of her husband and not the name of any other—the church of Christ. There is only one bride and wife of the bridegroom—the church of Christ. The bride and wife of the bridegroom exists now in the church and eternally with Christ the bridegroom and husband. The bridegroom, the husband, saves his bride, the wife. The bride, the church, must be faithful and true to her husband.

The entire Bible, God's complete mystery revealed in Christ and the word, concludes with the most beautiful proposal of any marriage:

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."

17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. Rev 22:16:17.

Study Questions

1. Why cannot the church be named after John the Baptist? _____
2. List all the synonyms in this lesson for the bride of Christ. _____

3. Why must the church keep the commands of Christ? _____
4. Explain why the church is the first, last, and only bride of Christ? _____
5. Describe how the bride is adorned? _____

Christ, the Victor over Death

You may find this lesson at WWW.GOSPELLESSONS.INFO .

The New Testament begins and ends with a promise that Christ shall be a victor over death. When Zachariah prayed for his son, John the Baptist, in Luke 1:78-79, he spoke of the coming Christ as, "The rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide our feet into the path of peace." The shadow of death, spoken of also in Matthew 4:16, had been with man from the Fall: "But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." Gen 2:17. Of course, the serpent said in Gen 3:4-5, "You will not surely die." However, God's final word in this discourse placed all mankind under the shadow of eminent death:

19 By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return." Gen 3:19
Man, the Captive of Sin and Death

Through Adam sin and death came to capture all mankind. In Rom 5:12, Paul explained, "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned." Death cast its certain shadow over all who live. Paul spoke of this condition in Romans 3, saying first in Rom 3:10, "There is no one righteous, not even one," and saying again in Rom 3:23, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Into this context of sin and death for all men, God sent his son. Heb 2:14-15 brings the Savior from death and the saved from death together in sharing both humanity and death: "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil– 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."

Death and Hades

Death and Hades go hand in hand. Death is the separation of the body from the soul. Even Jesus faced the eminence of this physical death. Heb 5:7 says, "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Everyone who ever lives will face this same death. Heb 9:27 teaches, "Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment." Death is also a spiritual death—a separation of man from God. Jesus taught in John 5:24, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." John extended the concept of spiritual death and spiritual life to our daily lives in 1 John 3:14-15: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. 15 Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him."

Hades is not so easily understood; primarily because of misdirected translations. W. E. Vine sorts these out:

HADES, "The region of departed spirits of the lost" (but including the blessed dead in periods preceding the ascension of Christ). . . . It corresponds to "Sheol" in the OT. In the KJV of the OT and NT; it has been unhappily rendered "hell," e. g., Ps 16:10; or "the grave," e. g., Gen 37:35; or "the pit," Num 16:30,33; in the NT the revisers have always used the rendering "hades"; in the OT, they have not been uniform in the translation, e. g. in Isa 14:15 "hell" (marg., "Sheol"); usually they have "Sheol" in the text and "the grave" in the margin. It never denotes the grave, nor is it the permanent region of the lost; in point of time it is, for such, intermediate between decease and the doom of Gehenna. For the condition, see Luke 16:23-31.

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Christ, the Victor over Sin, Death, and Hades

Christ declared that his church would withstand Hades, and by implication, sin and death in Matt 16:18-20: "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." To accomplish our freedom from Hades, Christ offered himself. 1 Peter 2:24 says, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." This victory over death was first accomplished by Christ himself, as Peter explained in Acts 2:23-24: "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. 24 But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

Although Hades could not hold the Christ, it remained for him to accomplish the resurrection for the faithful of mankind. Paul explained that the Lord's last enemy to be conquered was death in 1 Cor 15:23-27:

23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For he "has put everything under his feet."

1 Cor 15:54-57 explains the complete disarmament of sin and death:

54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

55 "Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The End of Death and Hades

And so it was that Christ could say in Rev 1:18: "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades." He truly is the one with power over death and Hades: "Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. Rev 20:14-21:1.

Conclusion

The question is that since Christ is the victor over death, where will we be in that last day? "The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done." Rev 20:13. Christ gave us victory over Sin and death, but we must all take advantage of his gift to us by the grace of God.

Study Question

1. What is death? _____
2. What is Hades? _____
3. Who has the keys to Hades? _____
4. What will be the end of Hades? _____
5. Who else will end up in the lake of fire? _____
6. What is man's state without the Blood of Christ? _____
7. What is the sting of death? _____
8. What has been swallowed up in victory? _____

Christ, the One Returning at the Last Day

You may find this lesson at WWW.GOSPELLESSONS.INFO

When will Christ return and what will be the manner of his coming? Perhaps man speculates on this more than any other question. The answers given are as varied as the men who ask. Yet, the disciples asked the Lord this very same question. He answered them directly in Matt 24:3-6:

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately on the Mount of Olives. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" Then Jesus began his answer by saying there would be many deceivers: Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come."

Three general positions about the second coming oppose the teaching of Christ:

- That Christ has already come.
- That Christ when he comes will establish an earthly kingdom.
- That Christ will come at a predictable date in the future.

Christ Could Not Have Already Come

The people who believe that the Lord has already come have their own non-Biblical language to describe their false teaching. They describe their doctrine as Preterism, post-millennialism, and realized eschatology. These doctrines have in common that they are not in the Bible by thought or word. They hold that all or some of the prophecies about the last days (or end times) were fulfilled in the first century. Realized eschatology stands apart as a doctrine that holds that the teachings of the New Testament do not refer to the future but to the life of Jesus. In their minds, the end of time teachings of the Bible are irrelevant, and the end of the world was the end of the Jewish economy with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. They have no expectation of a future return of the Lord. Their views are essentially humanistic, looking for inward growth from man himself, and excluding any expectation of influence and events from a higher power. They regard the prophecies of the coming of Christ, the judgment of man, and the destruction of the world either as irrelevant or give them contorted symbolic meanings. These methods violate all rules of Biblical and literary interpretation. For example, they say that the prophecies of the resurrection of the living and the dead are the resurrection of the church from Jewish persecution in A. D. 70. And the judgment where we shall all be manifest before the judgment seat of Christ to give account of the things we have done while in the body is God's judgment against the Jews at the destruction of Jerusalem. The teachings of the Lord and the apostles and prophets clearly exclude any possibility that Christ could have come already, and especially could not have come at the destruction of Jerusalem.

In Matt 24:15-21, the disciples question, "When will these things be and what will be the sign of your coming?" The Lord answered, "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel – let the reader understand – 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains." He was clearly speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, and they were to see it. He gave them instruction on how to respond in verses 17-20.

In Matt 24:23-24, the Lord said, "At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it." The question is what is the antecedent of that time? At the destruction of Jerusalem, the abomination of desolation is the antecedent to that time. Today when people point to A.D. 70 and say that the Lord came, do not believe it. It was not so then and it is not so now. In the context of at that time, the Lord continued in Matt 24:26-28: "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. 27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." The second reason the coming of the Lord could not have been in A. D. 70 is that his coming will be seen from the east to the west. This did not happen at the destruction of Jerusalem. Later in this study, the actual facts of the Lord's second coming, as he and the apostles and prophets clearly taught, could in no case be construed to be at the destruction of Jerusalem. Remember, if someone says, he is here or he is there, it is just not so.

Christ, When He Comes, Will Not Establish an Earthly Kingdom

Those who believe that Christ will come and establish a future earthly kingdom believe in a 1,000-year reign of the Lord on the earth, following a period of rapture. These folks believe in a doctrine described by words not found in the Bible; such as, rapture and premillennialism.

One aspect of this theory is “the rapture”. The theory states that immediately prior to the return of Christ to begin his 1,000-year reign, he will immediately take his saints out of the world for a period of seven years. According to the theory, this seven-year period is “the rapture.” While the saints are in heaven for these seven years, a great tribulation will fall upon the people left on earth. At the end of the seven-year period, Christ will return to the earth, establish his kingdom, and rule over this earthly kingdom. The word of God does not teach a single element of “the rapture” theory.

Proponents of this theory use 1 Thess 4:14-18 as proof that the saints will “be caught away.” But there is no mention of a seven-year period. Nor is there a mention of “the rapture.” People add this meaning to the word of God. The saints will be “caught up in the clouds,” not for seven years but “And so we will be with the Lord forever.” When Paul wrote, “Even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him,” (1 Thess 4:14) he was teaching the same thing that he taught in 1 Cor. 15:52. He wrote, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” God will raise the dead in Christ and change the living, and all will ascend to meet the Lord when he comes. This passage speaks of the same final resurrection spoken of in 2 Thess 1:5-10 and in 1 Cor. 15. After this coming of Christ, Paul writes, “Then comes the end (1 Cor. 15:24).” There will be no other resurrection.

Neither in 1 Thess 4 nor elsewhere, does the Bible teach that there will be either a secret or public rapture for seven years. 1 Thess 4 shows that Christ will never actually put his feet upon the earth again. Paul says that the Lord will come in the clouds and we will be caught up to ever be with the Lord. There will be no earth from the time of the catching away of the saints because it will be burning up (2 Peter 3:12). When Christ returns, instead of beginning his reign and establishing an earthly kingdom, he will end his reign and deliver up his Kingdom to the Father (1 Cor 23:26).

The proponents of the 1,000-year reign go to Rev 20:4-10 for their justification. Once again, they must add their own words to scripture to justify their doctrine. In Revelation, there is no mention of the reign of the righteous with the Lord being on the earth. Not only do the scriptures not mention a reign on earth, but also when the Lord comes, the earth will be destroyed (1 Peter 3:12). When then is his reign? The Bible states clearly when his reign shall begin in Eph 1:19-23:

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

The Bible is equally clear when the Lord will end his reign in 1 Cor 15:22-26:

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Christ Will Not Come at a Predictable Time in the Future

A teaching central to the second coming of the Lord is that no one except the Father, not even Christ himself, knows when it will be. Just as it could not have been at the destruction of Jerusalem (Christ knew exactly when that was coming and gave detailed instructions so that the early Christians could escape), it cannot be at any time known to man. Jesus taught plainly in Matt 24:36, “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” The Lord continued in Matt 24:42: “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.” Again in Matt 24:44: “So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

Finally and emphatically the Lord concluded in Matt 24:50-51: "The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. 51 He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Peter also taught this very same principle in 2 Peter 3:10: "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare." People of today can know assuredly that if a man says that Jesus is coming on date or time certain, they are wrong.

What Will Be the Manner of the Lord's Coming in the Last Day

From this teaching of Christ and Peter, one may see that the manner of the coming of the Lord will be at a time when he is least expected. If someone says that he is here or he is there, do not listen. When he does come, all will see him. Matt 24: 27 taught, "For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man." The apostles learned that the Lord would return in the same manner that he left in Acts 1:10-11: "They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

The coming will be sudden and visual with the dispensation of judgment. Any less dramatic view is to deny 2 Thess 1:6-10:

6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

The earth even the elements will be destroyed, according to 2 Peter 3:10, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare." We will hear the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call of God: "16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever." 1 Thess 4:16-18. The dead in Christ shall rise and the living will be changed in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye. 1 Cor 15:50-53 teaches:

50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

Conclusion

One cannot avoid the facts. The coming of the Lord is certain, visible, and loud, appearing to all mankind. With his coming will be the resurrection of the dead and the transformation of the living. He will punish the wicked, destroy the heavens and earth, and reward the righteous with life eternal. This is the true and complete word of God. Any other interpretation—raptures, millennial reigns, post-millennialism, pre-millennialism, realized eschatology, earthly wars, the salvation of the Jews—are inventions which have no scriptural supports and which directly violate the direct and emphatic teaching of the Word of God. Who is our Christ and exalted savior? Philippians 2:6-11, our title scripture presents the final word:

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.