

The Search for Certainty

Dive into the Bible and emerge spiritually refreshed!

The "Search for Certainty" Bible study series explores the teachings of the Bible in an easy-to-follow format. Each of the 30 studies can be used with nearly any version of the Bible. If you're searching for answers, this is the place to start!

In these self-grading lessons, you will learn: How to understand the Bible, how to make sense of our world, how the days we live in relate to Bible prophecy, what will happen at the Second Coming of Christ, how to find personal peace, how to identify a cult, what happens when a person dies, how to grow as a Christian, and what heaven will be like.

Lesson 1 - How to Understand the Bible

Let's suppose that you are driving to a very important appointment. It's urgent!

The president of one of America's leading corporations has offered you a valuable position. The appointment is a thousand miles from your home in an unfamiliar city. Your appointment is at 2:00 p.m. at a new business address.

Sixty miles from your destination you doubt you will make it on time. You are not even sure whether you are going in the right direction, so you stop to ask for help. Each of the people you ask gives different directions. Totally confused, you become hopelessly lost, and you are now certain that you will miss this crucial appointment.

In your desperate search to find the address, you ask a gas station attendant. Fortunately, he not only knows the way but gives you a map with explicit directions. With new confidence you set out assured of your destination. You make the appointment precisely on time.

God has given us directions for the twenty-first century. The most important directions in life involve getting from earth to heaven. The most important appointment in life is to be ready to meet Christ when He returns. There is no second chance on eternity. To miss an eternity with Christ is to miss life's most important appointment. Yet multitudes have taken wrong "religious directions." They are helplessly lost on the road of life. With no "religious" map to guide them, they are confused. They have searched for truth on their own but have come up empty. They have listened to misguided voices, and their desperate search has led nowhere. They are on the wrong road, and they know it.

Where can we find a reliable map? Are there directions to guide us confidently through the twenty-first century? There are. The Bible provides clear information. It presents understandable answers to the deepest questions of the human heart.

Questions such as:

- How can I be certain of eternal life?
- If God is so good, why is the world such a mess?
- How can I have peace of mind?
- How can I become the person I really want to be?
- What happens five minutes after death?
- What is the ultimate solution to stress?
- Are we living at the end of human history?
- How will the world end?

These lessons are especially designed to answer your questions directly from the Bible. You can place your confidence in God's Word.

If you have never studied the Bible before, you are in for a rich reward. God's Word will give you encouragement and hope as you search for life's deepest meaning. If you are an experienced Bible student, these lessons will lead you deeper into the truths of God's Word.

The first lesson, titled "How to Understand the Bible," unlocks the hidden secrets of understanding the Bible for yourself. The Bible was written over a 1,500-year period. It contains 66 books, written by about 40 different authors. The Bible's authors deal with the most difficult and controversial topics imaginable, yet they agree. They do not contradict one another. These writings give evidence of divine inspiration.

There is one central message throughout the Bible, Christ—the Savior of humankind. The Bible story begins in Eden, God's perfect world, and ends in Eden, God's perfect world restored.

Before sin entered the world, God communicated directly with Adam and Eve. Sin separated our first parents from God. Today face-to-face fellowship with God is no longer possible. Still the heart of a loving God longs to communicate with a planet in rebellion.

Let's discuss how.

1. How does God communicate with a fallen race? (2 Peter 1:21)

Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (Through the Holy Spirit) *God spoke through His Holy Spirit and inspired the prophets to write down His messages. Although they recorded these messages in their own words, the message of the Bible comes directly from God. The Bible is God's Word.*

2. Since the Bible was written by human beings, how much of it is actually inspired by God? (2 Timothy 3:16)

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. *Both the Old and New Testaments are inspired by God. The Old Testament consists of the first 39 books of the Bible from Genesis to Malachi. It reveals God's plan for His people before Jesus' birth. The New Testament, the last 27 books of the Bible (from Matthew to Revelation), reveals the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It especially describes God's instructions to His church today.*

3. Since scribes copied the Bible repeatedly throughout the centuries, is it still reliable today? Can we really trust the Bible? (Psalm 12:6, 7)

Pure words & silver tried in a furnace of earth; purified seven times. Shall preserve them from this generation forever. *The same Holy Spirit who inspired the Bible has preserved it throughout the centuries. Recent archaeological and historical discoveries have further confirmed its accuracy and reliability. God's Word is a safe, reliable guide.*

4. What was God's purpose in giving us the Bible? (Psalm 119:105)

God's word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (To guide us) *God's Word is like a flashlight. When you are in a dark place, the flashlight's beams penetrate the darkness, providing light on the path ahead. The Bible enlightens our understanding.*

5. What is the first principle of understanding the Bible correctly? (2 Peter 1:20)

No prophecy is of any private interpretation. Avoid private interpretation *We avoid private interpretation by letting the Bible explain itself. The Bible is its own interpreter. By allowing one passage of Scripture to explain another we discover God's interpretation.*

6. What is the source of God's truth? (John 17:17)

His Word. Your Word is truth.

7. With so many people interpreting the Bible differently, is it possible to know truth? (John 8:32)

Yes. Know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

8. What attitude is essential in understanding Bible truth? (John 7:17)

If anyone chooses to do His will.

An understanding of the Bible largely depends on a willingness to do whatever God requires. Bible study is not simply a mental exercise. It is a heart experience. If you are willing to do whatever God asks you in His Word, He will guide you to the truth.

9. Why do some people have difficulty understanding Bible truth? (Isaiah 53:6; Proverbs 16:25)

Turned to his own way. A way seems right to a man ... (Unwilling to give up their ideas).

Understanding the Bible is difficult for some people because of their unwillingness to give up their own ideas. God invites us to seek His way, not our own. He invites us to turn from the pride of our own understanding to humble acceptance of His revealed will in His Word.

10. What does the Bible tell us we should do to understand truth? (2 Timothy 2:15)

Study.

It is very important to study the Bible for yourself. We can't rely on what others tell us. God invites you to go on a personal discovery of truth from His Word.

11. If God is guiding us into truth when we study the Scriptures, what method of Bible study will be especially helpful in discovering God's truth? (Isaiah 28:9, 10; 1 Corinthians 2:13)

Comparing spiritual things with spiritual (compare the Bible to itself, use the Bible to interpret the Bible).

Let's suppose you are putting together a jigsaw puzzle. Do you come to a conclusion about what the finished picture will look like without looking at the original picture? Certainly not! It's the same with God's Word. God invites us to study all the texts on a given subject before coming to a conclusion regarding what the Bible teaches on a particular topic.

12. What guarantee has Jesus given to ensure that as we study the Bible with a sincere heart we will be led into His truth? (John 16:13)

The Spirit of truth.

As the Holy Spirit leads us in our Bible study, interpreting line upon line and text after text, we will know the truth of God. God has not left us alone in our pursuit of truth. He has promised the Holy Spirit's guidance.

13. Who is the central theme of the Bible? (John 5:39)

Jesus

14. What will happen in our lives as we study the precious promises of God's Word? (2 Peter 1:3, 4)

We will be able to escape the corruption of the world, participate in divine nature; escape the corruption in the world.

The Scriptures testify or bear witness of Jesus. As we study the Bible, the power of the living Christ will transform us.

Lesson 2 - Our Day in the Light of Bible Prophecy

What does the future hold? Is anyone in charge? Can we look forward to the future with confidence? Is there anything we can count on? Our lesson today is on an ancient prophecy from the book of Daniel. The prophet Daniel's predictions have been amazingly accurate for the past 2,500 years. They speak with relevance to us today. They promise certainty for the twenty-first century. They reveal that God is really in control of history.

Throughout history the Bible has proven its accuracy in predicting the future. This study is an outline of world history from Daniel's time to our time today. Before we turn to the book of Daniel, let's discover a few things about Bible prophecy.

1. How far-reaching is God's ability to reveal the future? Isaiah 46:9, 10

I will make known the end from the beginning

In contrast to all false gods, God knows "the end from the beginning." He alone has the ability to consistently reveal the future.

2. How does God reveal the future to His people? Amos 3:7

By His servants the prophets

God has the ability to look into the future and foretell what is going to take place centuries before the events come to pass. He revealed the mysteries of the future to the Bible prophets. These Bible prophets share God's messages of the future with us. As we see these prophecies fulfilled, our faith in God increases. One of the Bible's most significant prophecies regarding the future is found in Daniel 2.

3. What unusual thing happened to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon? Daniel 2:1, 3

He had dreams.

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of great significance, but when he woke up the next morning he couldn't remember it. He was greatly troubled.

4. Whom did the king ask to tell him his dream and the interpretation? Daniel 2:2, 3

The magicians, sorcerers, enchanters and astrologers.

Miraculously, God hid the dream from Nebuchadnezzar's mind. If the king could have remembered the dream, the psychics would have been able to make up a plausible interpretation. The wise men of Babylon utterly failed.

5. When these men could not reveal the king's dream, what did Nebuchadnezzar do? Daniel 2:12, 13

Decree was issued to put the wise men to death.

The angry king condemned all the wise men of Babylon to death when they could not tell him what he had dreamed. Daniel was a Hebrew captive in the king's court and educated in the University of Babylon. He too was considered one of Babylon's wise men.

6. When they sought to kill him, what did Daniel do? Daniel 2:16-18

Went into the king and asked for time.

Daniel asked the king for time so he could pray to the God of heaven who reveals all secrets. He had confidence that God would solve the problem.

7. After Daniel and his fellows sought God earnestly, how was the dream and its interpretation revealed to Daniel? Daniel 2:19

In a vision.

8. Who did Daniel say was the only one who could make known the dream and its meaning? Daniel 2:28

A God in heaven who reveals mysteries.

Remember, the prophet Isaiah said that God is the only one who knows all things. The God of the universe is the only one who can reveal the future (Isaiah 46:9, 10)

9. To what time period does the dream apply? Daniel 2:28

The last days, in days to come, in latter days.

The book of Daniel especially reveals events in the last days of earth's history. The king's dream focuses on the end-times. It foretells events that occur at the close of this earth's history.

10. What did Daniel say King Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream? Daniel 2:31-35

A large statue made of different metals

o **What do the different metals represent? Daniel 2:38-40**

Different kingdoms, You are this head of pure gold—another kingdom

According to Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, each corresponding metal represents a kingdom that would rule the world. Beginning with Babylon, the prophet traces the destiny of the nations through the centuries.

o **List the corresponding metals that make up the image. Daniel 2:32, 33**

Image Metals

Head _____
Head—Pure gold

Breast and Arms _____
Breast and arms—Silver

Belly and Thighs _____
Belly and thighs—Bronze

Legs _____
Legs—Iron

Feet _____
Feet—Part iron, part clay

Identifying the Kingdoms

Whom does the Bible identify as the head of gold? What kingdom does this head of gold represent? Daniel 2:38 (last part)

Different kingdoms, You are this head of pure gold—another kingdom. *According to Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, each corresponding metal represents a kingdom that would rule the world. Beginning with Babylon, the prophet traces the destiny of the nations through the centuries.*

What metal follows gold? What kingdom would arise next? What nation conquered Babylon? Daniel 2:39; Daniel 5:28

Medes and Persians, Inferior to yours—*The Medes and Persians overthrew the Babylonians in 539 B.C. Under the leadership of the Persian king, Cyrus, they ruled from 539 B.C. to 331 B.C. Each of these empires were dominant world powers which aggressively oppressed God's ancient people.*

What metal follows silver? What kingdom would overthrow the Medes and Persians? Daniel 2:39; Daniel 8:20, 21

Greece, rule over the whole world, Bronze—*The nation of Greece overthrew the Medes and the Persians in 331 B.C. The prophet Daniel describes the Greeks in two ways. First, as bronze in the image of Daniel 2. The Greeks were known for their bronze-plated armor. Second, the prophet describes a fierce battle between a ram and a he-goat in chapter 8. He clearly identifies Greece as the goat that tramples down Medo-Persia, the ram.*

How is the fourth world dominant power described? Daniel 2:40

Rome, strong as iron; it will crush and break all the others—*The Roman Empire conquered the Greeks in 168 B.C. The Romans ruled the world during the time of Christ. The ancient historian Edward Gibbon, in his Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, referred to "the iron monarchy of Rome" using the exact expression from the Bible.*

11. What significant events would occur next? Would a fifth world-ruling empire arise to overthrow Rome? Daniel 2:41

Kingdom will be divided.

The prophet Daniel predicted that the Roman Empire would be divided. The breakup of the empire occurred from A.D. 351 to A.D. 476. Daniel continued, "But they will not adhere to one another" (verse 43, NKJV). History has followed this prophecy like a blueprint. Dictators and rulers have attempted to unite Europe through the centuries, but have absolutely failed. The Roman Empire was divided. The divisions of the empire into the eastern and western sections formed the foundation of the nations located in Europe today.

12. Would the nations of Europe ever be united into one cohesive, lasting, political nation again? Daniel 2:42, 43

Will not remain united, anymore than iron mixes clay.

Oppression of God's people does not last forever. Although the Roman Empire lasted longer than any prior empire—no small feat in and of itself—God saw that ultimately oppressive regimes would collapse. God's Word is clear. These seven prophetic words, "They shall not cleave one to another," have stopped every would-be conqueror of Europe through the centuries. Throughout history, political leaders such as Charlemagne, Charles V, Louis XIV, Napoleon, Hitler and Stalin have attempted to dominate by uniting Europe. Each has desperately failed. Communism stretched its tentacles across Europe. One nation after another fell into its grasp. But Communism failed. The Berlin Wall came down. Freedom triumphed! Bible prophecy is accurate. The future is in God's hands. He can be safely trusted. He will safely guide us into the twenty-first century.

13. What will be the next event in history? Is there hope for the twenty-first century? Daniel 2:44, 45

The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed.

The rock represents the coming kingdom of God. Soon all wickedness, evil and rebellion will be gone forever. The forces of evil will be crushed, destroyed, broken in pieces. God will establish His everlasting kingdom forever. You can face the future with confidence. The twenty-first century is bright with the promises of God. The future is in the hands of God. Hope is on the way.

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Lesson 3 - A World in Turmoil

World conditions are alarming. World leaders are seeking answers to some of the greatest problems society has ever faced. An uncertain future looms on the horizon.

The countries of the former Soviet Union face an uncertain future. The interdependent world economy is on shaky ground. Moral conditions are rapidly deteriorating. School violence is rampant. Weather patterns seem out of control. World hunger is increasing. Tens of thousands of refugees cross international borders seeking a safe sanctuary. People everywhere are asking, "What do these things mean?" The Bible presents an answer.

The second coming of Christ is one of the Bible's most important truths. It is mentioned 250 times in the New Testament alone—once in every 25 verses. The second coming of Christ has encouraged Christians through the centuries.

In Matthew's gospel, Christ clearly indicated the signs that would precede His return. Looking at the Temple in Jerusalem, He declared, "See! Your house is left to you desolate" (Matthew 23:38, NKJV*). Jesus then predicted in Matthew 24:2, "Not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (NKJV). The disciples thought that an event as cataclysmic as the destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem must be the end of the world. In a magnificent prophecy Jesus answered their questions about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world.

1. What question did the disciples ask Jesus regarding His coming? Matthew 24:3

When will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the world? *The disciples actually asked two questions. When will these things be (or when will Jerusalem be destroyed) and what will be the sign of Your coming and the end of the world? Jesus blended these two events. Events that led up to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70 were miniature events that would occur on a larger, grander scale just before the return of our Lord.*

2. Does the Bible reveal the exact date and time for Christ's coming? Matthew 24:36

But of that day and hour no one knows...but my Father only
In His mercy God has not revealed the exact time of His second coming. Think of the despair of early Christians if they had thought Christ's coming was hundreds of years in the future. Anyone who claims to know just when Christ will return is teaching falsehood.

3. How can we be ready for an event if we don't know when it will happen? Luke 21:36

Watch and pray
*Our Lord advises us to "watch" and "pray," or be ready at all times. The great evangelist Dwight L. Moody, in his book *The Second Coming of Christ*, page 9, stated, "The proper attitude of a Christian is to be always looking for his Lord's return." Christ's counsel is to live in a state of expectation. Live your life with a sense of the nearness of the Second Coming.*

4. Since we don't know the exact time of Christ's coming, is it possible to know when the end is near? Matthew 24:32, 33

The fig tree...when you see all these things, know that it is near
Jesus' signs do not reveal He is here. They tell us He is near. A good farmer knows that summer will produce a harvest. He watches the crop carefully. Growing plants, opening buds, ripening fruit all indicate harvest time is near. Jesus' end-time signs in Matthew 24 clearly reveal a ripening harvest.

SIGNS IN THE RELIGIOUS WORLD

5. What signs in the religious world indicate Jesus' coming is near? Matthew 24:5, 11, 24

False christs and false prophets...deceive many

As the end approaches, the devil will double his efforts to deceive. Millions will turn to counterfeit sources of truth. Falsehood will abound. Lies will be accepted as truth. False religious leaders will deceive. The occult and astrology will capture the imagination of gullible people who are looking for answers to life's deepest questions.

6. What prediction did Jesus make regarding the international conflict? Matthew 24:6, 7

There will be wars and rumors of wars, nation will arise against nation

Wars have occurred throughout history. There is nothing special about a single war. Jesus does not envision a war, He envisions wars—nation rising against nation and kingdom against kingdom. The twentieth century has witnessed the horrors of World War I and World War II. The Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Indochina War, the Iran-Iraq War, Kuwait, the Balkans and tribal conflicts and civil wars too numerous to mention speak eloquently of the fulfillment of Christ's words.

7. How does the book of Revelation describe the dangerous situation among the nations of the world prior to the advent of Christ? Revelation 11:18

The nations were angry, and your wrath has come...destroy those who destroy the earth

Jesus will come at a time when the human race has the ability to destroy all life on Planet Earth. With nuclear weapons we now have the capacity for self-destruction. This is certainly one of the greatest signs of the return of Jesus. Broadcasting from Hiroshima in 1945 after the atomic bomb was dropped, William Ripley stated, "I am standing on the place where the end of the world began."

8. In spite of the buildup of thermonuclear weaponry, what will the nations be saying in the last days? 1 Thessalonians 5:3

For what they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them...

SIGNS IN THE NATURAL WORLD

9. What signs will occur in the natural world before the coming of Christ? Matthew 24:7

Famines, pestilences and earthquakes in various places

Due to crop failure the politics of greed, growing population, and food distribution problems, world famine is still a major problem. Ten thousand people a day, or more than 3.5 million per year, die of starvation. In the past 100 years we have had 1.5 million fatalities from earthquakes alone. There are thousands of earthquakes each year. Jesus' words are certainly being fulfilled.

10. What does the Bible predict regarding the world economy at the time of the end? James 5:1-7

The coming of the Lord is at hand. Economical problems and differences

The Bible predicts there will be a sudden economic collapse. We are admonished to place our priorities on eternal values.

SIGNS IN THE SOCIAL WORLD

11. What does the Bible say the social conditions of the world will be like in the last days? 2 Timothy 3:1-4

Man will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money...unloving...lovers of pleasure
Read the morning newspaper of any major city, and you will note the sordid catalog of sins mentioned in this Bible passage. The Bible predicts waning moral values just before the coming of Christ. Perilous or dangerous times, the disintegration of the family unit, "lovers of money," "lovers of pleasure," "without self-control" (NKJV) are word pictures describing life in the twenty-first century.

12. How does the Bible liken the society of Noah's day to our day? Luke 17:26, 27

They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage
There is certainly nothing wrong with eating and drinking. Jesus is speaking of overindulgence, an obsession with eating and drinking. Eating, drinking, and marrying are all part of life's routine. Here Jesus describes people swallowed up in life's routine, oblivious to the fact His return is near.

13. What is one of the clearest indications that Christ is coming soon? Matthew 24:14 (see also Revelation 14:6, 7)

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world
One of the greatest signs of the nearness of Christ's return is the rapid spread of the gospel throughout the world. In the twenty-first century our world has become a "global village." The gospel is now going to all the world with a speed that would have left the apostle Paul amazed. Sophisticated satellite communication systems such as the Internet, satellite technology, interlinking computers, the World Wide Web, and mass media television and radio communications are, in reality, a gift that God is using to communicate the gospel with incredible speed to the world. The twentieth-century technological revolution has provided a setting to rapidly spread the gospel.

14. How did Jesus tell us we should react to all the signs of His return? Luke 21:28

Look up and lift your heads, because your redemption draws near
For those who are unprepared, the second coming of Christ may be very frightening. The experience of those who love Him and long for His return is dramatically different. Their hearts are filled with eager anticipation. They joyfully await His coming. Their Savior, Lord, and King already rules in their hearts. Now they eagerly welcome Him as King and Ruler of this world.

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Lesson 4 - The Manner of Christ's Coming

As the world races into this new millennium, have you ever considered what our greatest need is? What do men and women living in the twenty-first century need most? If you were starving to death, it might be food. If you were homeless, it might be a place to live. If disease ravaged your body, it might be medicine. If you were lonely and discouraged, it might be love. Is there one thing that, if you had it, could take you through any difficulty you might face in life? Is there one thing that can make the human spirit soar? All over the world people are desperately looking for hope. Someone has well said, "What oxygen is to the lungs, hope is to the human spirit." Hope buoys up our spirits. It lifts our vision from what is to what will be. It is a candle in the darkness. It provides encouragement for the future. The Bible is filled with the best hope of all—the hope of our Lord's return.

1. What hopeful promise did Jesus give in John 14:1-3?

I will come again.

Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, He assured His followers, "I will come again." The fact that Jesus is coming to the world a second time is as certain as the reality that He lived on this earth 2,000 years ago. There is hope on the way.

2. What does the apostle Paul call the second coming of Christ? Titus 2:13

The blessed hope and glorious appearing.

3. Have Bible prophets predicted the coming of Christ throughout the centuries? Psalm 50:3; Jude 14

Yes. Now Enoch...behold the Lord comes with thousands of His saints Our God shall come and shall not keep silent.

Bible writers down through the ages have predicted the coming of the Lord. For every prophecy in the Old Testament predicting the first coming of Jesus as a baby in Bethlehem's manger, there are eight on the second coming of Christ. His coming is mentioned in every book of the New Testament except the small book of Philemon.

4. How will Christ return when He comes to this earth? Will His coming be a real, literal event or simply a spiritual coming into our hearts? Acts 1:9-11

This same Jesus, will come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.

Jesus' ascension to heaven was a real, literal event. His return will again be a very real, literal event.

VISIBLE

5. How many will see Jesus when He comes? Revelation 1:7

Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him.

Both the righteous and the wicked will see Jesus coming in the clouds of the sky when He returns again the second time. Every living inhabitant of our globe will witness the Second Advent. Christ's return will overshadow every other event on Planet Earth. No one will need to tell you when Jesus returns. You will see His coming!

6. What does the Bible compare Jesus' coming to? Matthew 24:27

For as lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west

AUDIBLE

7. Will Christ's return be a secret, silent coming? 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17

Descend with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God—
Jesus' coming will be like a mighty blast of a trumpet. Everyone everywhere will hear it.

8. Who will return with Jesus when He comes? Matthew 16:27

Come in the glory of His Father with His angels
Jesus' second coming will be the mighty climax of all the ages. He will be surrounded by all His holy angels. Try to imagine what that glorious scene will be like.

9. How does the Bible describe the awesome majesty of our Lord's return? Matthew 24:30; Matthew 16:27

Coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory
Jesus came silently once. Although angels sang "Glory to God in the highest" in shepherds' fields outside of Bethlehem, only a few had any idea the baby born in Bethlehem was the eternal Son of God. When He comes the second time, He will come in "power and great glory" in spectacular splendor visible to the entire world.

10. If someone tells you Christ's coming will be in secret, should you believe it? Matthew 24:23

Do not believe it.

11. What thrilling climactic event will take place when Christ returns? 1 Corinthians 15:51-53

The dead will be raised incorruptible; we will be changed.

12. Everyone on earth will have one of two reactions when Jesus comes:

A. What will be the reaction of the lost? Revelation 6:14-16

Hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks
Filled with guilt and fear, the unsaved run from the Christ who loves them and longs to save them. They have rejected His mercy and turned their backs on His love. Now frightened, they flee to shield themselves from His glory. What a tragic ending.

B. What will the reaction of the righteous be? Isaiah 25:9

We have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.
The saved long for His return. Their hearts are filled with joy. He is their Friend, their Savior, their Lord and their King. They delight in His presence here and will delight in it through all eternity

13. When is the time to prepare for the coming of the Lord? 2 Corinthians 6:2

Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation

14. What event does Jesus liken His coming to? Why? Matthew 24:42, 43

He will come swiftly, quickly, at a time when we least expect Him, the thief would come—not allowed his house to be broken into.

Jesus likened His coming to a thief breaking into a house. This does not mean Christ will come secretly. It means He will come swiftly, quickly, at a time we least expect Him.

15. Since Jesus is coming unexpectedly, what counsel does He give us? Matthew 24:44

Be ready—

To be ready for the coming of Jesus means to eagerly anticipate His coming. It means a heart-longing for His return. It involves a life committed to doing His will. Love for Him leads us to long to be with Him throughout eternity.

Lesson 5 - How to Find Personal Peace

Have you ever felt as though something was missing in your life? Have you ever asked, "How can I find deeper meaning? How can I find peace of mind?" Have you ever wondered, "Is there anything more to life than getting up in the morning and going to work every day and coming home and eating supper and watching television and going to bed, getting up and doing the same thing the next day and the next? Is there anything more to life than the humdrum of the daily routine?"

Suppose someone discovered a pill that would guarantee permanent peace of mind. Its producer would probably become a multimillionaire overnight. Everywhere people are looking for personal peace. Multitudes are burdened with guilt. Feeling insecure, emotionally troubled, and unaccepted produces an inner void. Mind-related diseases such as stomach ulcers, heart attacks, and nervous breakdowns are the scourge of our society. One root cause of these diseases is an inner sense of restlessness.

Our lesson today focuses on God's solution to the problem of guilt. It presents the only real answer to the problem of how to find peace of mind.

1. What is our status with God as the result of sin? Romans 3:19

All the world may become guilty before God
The reason we lack inner peace is a sense of guilt. Whether we always realize it or not, there is something eating away at us inside. Unless we deal with the problem of guilt, we will never have real peace.

2. How universal is the problem of sin, which produces guilt? Romans 3:23

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

3. What are the wages or consequences of sin? Romans 6:23 (first part)

Death—
Left to ourselves, we are caught in a vicious cycle. We are separated from God. Our hearts are filled with guilt. We are restless and lack inner peace. We feel guilty, unaccepted and unloved.

4. Why is death the natural result of sin? Isaiah 59:2

Your iniquities have separated you from your God—
God is the source of life. Sin separates us from God. It has separated us from the only source of life. The plan of salvation is God's process to bridge the gap caused by sin. Through Christ we are reunited with God.

5. What is God's solution to the problem of sin? John 3:16

For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will have everlasting life.

6. Why did Jesus have to come to this world and die for our sins? Was His death necessary? Hebrews 2:9, 14

Might taste death for everyone...through death He might destroy the devil—
Because God's nature is love, He would not leave us to perish without hope. He took the penalty of sin upon Himself. In His death on the cross He broke the stronghold of death.

7. How can Christ's life take the place of my imperfect life? What does His death have to do with my eternal death? Isaiah 53:4-6, 12

He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, wounded for our transgressions—
The Old Testament prophet Isaiah uses these expressions declaring Christ was "wounded for our transgressions," "bruised for our iniquities [sins]," "numbered with the transgressors," and He "bore the sins of many." In the plan of salvation, Jesus bears the guilt of our sins. He credits His perfect righteousness to our account. We owe a sin debt that we can never pay. Jesus paid the enormous debt through the shedding of His blood. He died the death we deserve so we might live the life He deserves.

8. How does the apostle Paul describe Jesus bearing our sin? 2 Corinthians 5:21

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us
Jesus never sinned. He became sin or accepted the guilt of our sin voluntarily. When Christ died on Calvary's cross, He willingly assumed all the guilt of our sins. As the divine Son of God He became a human being, lived the perfect life we should have lived, and died the death we should have died. He is our loving Savior

9. What does the Bible say Jesus became for us? Galatians 3:13

A curse
Jesus became a curse for us. All of the guilt of sin rested upon Him when He died on the cross. He bore sins' curse of condemnation. Everything I deserved, He received.

10. How does God save us? Is salvation something we earn by our good works? Eph. 2:8

By grace you have been saved through faith.

11. What question did a heathen jailer ask Paul and Silas 2,000 years ago that speaks for all of us? Acts 16:30

Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

12. What answer did Paul give the Philippian jailer regarding his salvation? Acts 16:31

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved
Believing is simply receiving the grace God so freely offers. God's plan for saving us is simple. It is so simple that anyone can understand it. Often it has been made so complicated that few can understand it. There are four basic steps in receiving Christ. Let's look at each one of them.

13. What promise does Jesus give to those who open their hearts to believe in Jesus and accept Him as their personal Saviour? 1 John 5:11-13

He who has the Son has life; you have eternal life
To receive Jesus is to receive His gift of eternal life. If we have accepted Jesus and by faith believe He is our personal Savior, we can have the assurance of eternal life. Guilt is gone. According to God's Word, we are "accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6). We have redemption through His blood (Ephesians 1:7). We are adopted into the family of God and are now part of the royal family of heaven. Would you like to open your heart right now and receive the gift of eternal life Christ so freely offers?

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Lesson 6 - The Secret of a New Life

Have you ever wondered how you can become the person you really want to be? Why is it that when we try so hard we fail so often? At times we seem to be prisoners of our habits—chained in the dungeon of evil desires.

Unaided by the grace of God, we are all helpless prisoners. We are captives of our fallen sinful nature. We may desire to change, but we don't have the power to change. Separated from God, we are subject to death. The death of Jesus paid the penalty of sin for every person. However, this gift must be accepted individually. It becomes effective when a person chooses to acknowledge Jesus as Saviour. God's grace provides pardon from the penalty of sin. It also provides a new power for living. In our lesson today we will discover the real secret of power for living in the twenty-first century.

1. What promise does the Scripture give for those who surrender their lives to Christ? 2 Corinthians 5:17

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; all things have become new.

2. Can human beings accomplish this change themselves? Job 14:4; Jeremiah 13:23

Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots?

3. How did Jesus describe this change to respectable, God-fearing Nicodemus? John 3:1-8

Unless one is born again; of the water and of the spirit.

4. How does this miraculous change take place? Galatians 2:20

Crucified with Christ

When an individual surrenders totally to God, the Holy Spirit takes possession of the life. The result is a mysterious union with God. The person becomes a new individual. They are now under the control of a completely new nature (Romans 6:6-11). By receiving Christ, they receive power for victorious living (John 1:12) and, day by day, as they abide in Christ, the Holy Spirit writes the principles of the law upon their heart (John 15:4; Hebrews 8:10).

5. Does this mean our good works are the basis of our salvation? What is the basis of our salvation? Romans 3:27, 28

A man justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law

Salvation is totally of grace, never of works. By faith we receive God's grace. Even when the born-again Christian obeys God, it is Christ who empowers them to work. We only cooperate with Christ and let Christ work in us. Our responsibility is to be willing to do anything Christ asks us to do. Love is the motive for obedience. Christ will never ask us to do anything that He will not provide us the power to do.

6. How can I have this power to overcome in my life? John 1:12

As many as received Him to them He gave the power to become sons of God

To receive Christ is to receive this power. As He enters our lives, He is the power for victory. In our natural state we are incapable of doing good. When we want to do what is right, another power seems to take possession of us. Through Jesus we have the power to overcome. We no longer need to fail again and again, fixed in the rut of perpetual discouragement. Now we can be victorious.

7. When Jesus enters our heart through the Holy Spirit, what does He give us? Rom. 8:11

Life to our mortal bodies.

8. What is the evidence that Christ does in reality dwell in our hearts? Galatians 5:24, 25

Crucified the flesh with its passions and desires...live and walk in the Spirit
The greatest evidence that Christ dwells in our hearts is a transformed life. To "crucify the flesh" is to voluntarily go through the pain of surrendering our will to Christ.

9. What was the one guiding principle of Jesus' life? John 8:29

I always do those things that please Him.

**10. When Jesus breaks the bondage of sin, what wonderful privilege does He offer us?
Romans 8:15-17**

We are children of God; heirs with God; joint heirs with Christ
What a wonderful privilege to know we are an adopted son or daughter of God through Christ. We are part of God's royal family with all the rights and privileges of a family member. We never need feel lonely, insecure, or uncertain again. Jesus is our Elder Brother; God our wonderful, loving heavenly Father; the Holy Spirit our Counselor and Guide; and the angels our protectors.

11. What does Christ promise He will do deep within us? Hebrews 8:10

I will put my laws in their mind and write them in their hearts
God promises to change us from within. He will place His law in our mind so we know it. He will also write it in our hearts so we love it. When God changes us inside, we will love to do His will.

12. What was Jesus' heart hunger? Hebrews 10:7

To do your will, oh God
Jesus' longing was to do the Father's will. His heart's desire was to please God (John 8:29). The heart desire of every Christian who has been transformed by God's grace is to do God's will.

13. When will this miraculous new birth take place? Revelation 3:20

When we open the heart's door. I stand at the door and knock...if anyone opens...I will come in and dine with Him.
Jesus delights in giving us new power for living. As we consciously choose to invite Him to become the Lord of our lives, His dynamic, life-transforming power changes us. He lifts us from our human weakness and gives us His divine strength. No longer must we battle the desires of our human nature alone. We are now conquerors through Jesus Christ our Lord. In Christ we are free to become the people we were born to be.

Lesson 7 - Good God! Bad World! Why?

God has left His fingerprints across our world. The dazzling splendor of a sunset, the majesty of snowcapped mountain peaks, the glory of a starlit night, the beauty of an opening rosebud, and the carefree laughter of children playing speak to us of a loving God who delights in making His people happy.

Another's fingerprints give evidence that someone else stalks our planet. Ours is a world in trouble—a world consumed with war, famine, and poverty; a world writhing in sickness, disease, and sorrow.

Rising from this troubled planet like an incense of doom is the persistent question Why? Why war and suffering and heartache and death?

Doesn't God care? Are we only a forgotten cinder out on the edge of an unimportant galaxy? A world that doesn't matter? If God is a God of love, why is there so much suffering in our world? Why do the good suffer as well as the bad?

The Bible draws aside the curtain on one of life's greatest dramas allowing us to look behind the scenes in the great controversy between good and evil. Today's lesson will provide a clear answer to who is responsible for this world's suffering. It will also reveal God's ultimate solution to the problem of why innocent people suffer.

1. Is God the author of human suffering? Jeremiah 31:3; 1 John 4:8

With loving kindness have I drawn you For God is Love
The essence of God's nature is love. He desires only what is best for us. All of His actions toward us are loving. They are designed to produce lasting happiness. God would never do anything that is not ultimately for our best good. For God to act any other way than loving would be to act contrary to His very nature.

2. If God is not responsible for human suffering, where did it originate? Matthew 13:24-28

The enemy, an enemy has done this...

3. Who is the enemy? Matthew 13:39

The enemy who sowed them is the devil

4. Since God is not the author of sin and suffering, whom did sin originate with? 1 John 3:8

For the devil has sinned from the beginning

5. Where did this diabolical being come from? Luke 10:18

I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven
It is shocking but true. The devil originated in heaven. Oh, he was not a devil when God created him! Many people imagine the devil as dwelling in some hot spot of burning flames deep within the bowels of the earth. On the contrary, the devil fell from heaven.

6. Did God create a devil? Ezekiel 28:12-15

You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering...on the day you were created God created Lucifer a beautiful, glorious angel. He was perfect in his ways. God gave this magnificent angel the capacity to choose. To remove the power of choice is to remove the power to love. Genuine love is not forced or coerced. It springs from divine love. To take away the power of choice is to destroy the ability to love. To destroy the ability to love is to deny the opportunity to be fully happy and completely free. Since God longs for all His creatures to be fully happy and free, He has given them the power of choice.

7. What occurred in Satan's mind to lead to open rebellion? Isaiah 14:12-14

Selfishness. I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne, I will be like the Most High Lucifer means "light bearer." God created a beautiful light-bearing angel who used his position to challenge God's authority. He wanted God's power, not His loving character. Lucifer defiantly declared, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne...I will ascend above...the clouds, I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14: 12-14, NKJV). Notice, Lucifer uses the word "I" four times. Pride gradually developed in his heart. Lucifer came to believe God was arbitrary, unfair and unjust. He concluded that he could run the heavenly government better than God.

8. What did this open rebellion lead to and what ultimately happened to Satan as a result? Revelation 12:7-9

War broke out in heaven...the dragon was cast out and his angels cast out with him Every angel chose either the path of loyalty or rebellion. The same option is available to every human being. There are only two ways: the way of loyalty to God or the way of rebellion against God.

9. How did our world become involved in the conflict between good and evil? Romans 5:12

Through one man sin entered the world Through deliberate disobedience Adam, the head of the human family, opened a door God desired forever shut. His conscious choice to disobey separated him from God and resulted in death. Our world was not created as a "dumping-off" place for Satan. It was created perfect (Genesis 1:31). Through sin, Adam's dominion was forfeited. But we must not lay all the responsibility for sin upon our first parents. The apostle Paul writes, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23, NKJV). We are sinners by birth. We inherited a sinful nature from Adam. We are also sinners by choice. Through our own deliberate disobedience we have participated in Adam's sin of rebellion against God.

10. As a result of our fall, what does Satan now claim as his? Luke 4:5, 6

All the kingdoms of the world

11. What has God done to redeem this planet in rebellion? John 3:16; 1 Peter 1:18, 19

His gave His only begotten Son...we are redeemed with the precious blood of Jesus With a heart of inexhaustible, infinite love, God decided to pay the price of sin Himself. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, came to this sin-cursed world. He entered into the arena of human affairs to redeem us from the curse of sin.

12. What promises does God give His children, who are caught in the grip of suffering and injustice? 1 Corinthians 10:13; Isaiah 41:13

God is faithful...no temptation beyond what we are able...I will hold your right hand
In the midst of our personal suffering, God promises to be with us. He promises never to allow any temptation of the evil one to overwhelm us. He promises to provide strength to meet the temptations of each day. In tones of most tender love, He encourages us with these simple words, "Fear not, I will help you."

13. What is Satan's ultimate fate? Ezekiel 28:16-19

I destroyed you...I brought fire from your midst; it devoured you...turned to ashes [He] shall be no more—
Satan is soon to be defeated and destroyed. Through Calvary's cross he has been proven a liar. God is love. The principles of His government will ensure the happiness of His creatures throughout all eternity. You can be on the winning side. Why not tell Jesus, "Lord, I choose to stand with You. I accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior. I invite You to enter my life as my King"?

14. What will God eventually do with this planet? 2 Peter 3:10, 13

The earth and the works that are in it will be burned up & look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

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Lesson 8 - Revelation's Most Thrilling Message

The book of Revelation is one of the most important books in the entire Bible. Its main theme, or central focus, is the return of Jesus Christ.

Revelation unmasks the deceptive plans of Satan. And it unfolds the plans of God for these last days.

In Revelation 14 Jesus Christ is clearly pictured as the Son of man coming on a cloud to reap the harvest of the earth (verses 14-16). Before He returns He sends a special message to prepare a people for His coming. We find this message in verses 6-12.

1. In Revelation 14:6-12 Jesus reveals His special message to prepare His people for earth's last hour. Who bears this message to earth? Revelation 14:6

An angel flying—

Throughout the book of Revelation, angelic messengers are pictured as bearing a message to earth. The fact that angels are pictured as bearing this message reveals its urgent heavenly importance. Jesus commissioned His angelic messengers to impress the mind of His prophet John with heavenly visions of end-time events. John wrote these messages down in the Bible's last book, Revelation

2. How universal is this message? Whom is it for? Revelation 14:6

To every nation, tribe, tongue and people—

The apostle John saw an angel flying swiftly in the heavens quickly carrying God's last-day message to the entire world. Noah preached a message of urgent importance for men and women soon to face a universal flood, and God sent a message through Joseph warning of an Egyptian famine. The messages of Noah and Joseph were sent by a loving God to prepare His people for overwhelming events that would profoundly affect millions. Once again in our day God has a special message for His people. It is a message of urgent importance.

3. What is the central feature of God's final loving appeal before He returns? What is this universal message that is to go to "every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (NKJV)?* Revelation 14:6

Having the everlasting gospel—

The heart of God's last-day message is the "everlasting gospel." The gospel is the good news about Jesus. It is the story of the cross. It is the story of Jesus' love, His forgiveness, His grace, and His mercy. The gospel is "the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). It speaks of a love that transforms our lives and makes us into new persons in Christ.

4. What particular time period does this message draw our attention to? Revelation 14:7

For the Hour of his judgment has come

Notice the tense of the verb describing the judgment. The text clearly says, "The hour of [God's] judgment HAS come!" (NKJV). Some translations declare, "The hour of [God's] judgment is come." In other words, it is here. It has arrived.

5. What did Jesus and the apostle Paul declare regarding the timing of the judgment?

In Matthew 12:36 Jesus says, _____

For every idle word...will give account—future tense

In Acts 24:25 the apostle Paul says, _____

The judgment to come Future tense

Jesus speaks of the day of judgment in the future. Paul describes “judgment to come” (NKJV). In the days of both Jesus and Paul the judgment was certainly a future event. Revelation’s urgent message for us today is “the hour of [God’s] judgment is come.” It is here.

6. What two classes are developed before Jesus comes? Revelation 22:11, 12

Just and unjust, filthy and un-filthy, righteous and unrighteous

Jesus is coming to give rewards. A judgment must precede His coming to determine who receives what rewards when He comes. The destiny of all men and women must be decided before He returns. The reason for this judgment is not because God does not know who is saved or lost. He certainly knows. Remember, a rebel angel has challenged God’s character. Lucifer has claimed God is unfair and unjust. He has charged God before the whole universe. The judgment reveals God’s character of love before the whole universe. It shows that anyone who is lost is lost because of their own choices. God has done everything He could to save them. When did this judgment begin? What is the nature of the judgment? How can you and I have assurance in the judgment? These and many other questions will be answered in the next two studies. However, there is more to the message in Revelation 14 to survey in this study.

7. Whom is this message a call to worship? Revelation 14:7

Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water

In an age when the evolutionary hypothesis has captured the scientific world, God invites us to worship Him as the Creator. We did not evolve. We were fashioned by a loving God. We are His. The reason we worship God is precisely because He made us. The basis of all worship is simply this. He is our life-giver. Revelation gives an urgent, last-day call to worship Christ as Creator. In a future lesson we will discover God’s end-time sign of last-day allegiance, the symbol of His creative power.

8. What important announcement does the second angel make? Revelation 14:8

Babylon is fallen, fallen

9. What call does God give to people in Babylon? Why? Revelation 18:4

Come out of her, my people; share I her sins and partake of her plagues—

Who composes Babylon? What does Babylon stand for? The city of Babylon was built on the site of the former tower of Babel where God confused the languages. In Revelation’s prophecies, it is a symbol of religious confusion. Revelation’s spiritual Babylon represents false religion. It symbolizes a departure from Bible truth. In a future lesson we will discover just how error has slipped into the Christian church and God’s call back to truth.

10. What issue does the third angel deal with? Revelation 14:9-11

Worships the beast and its image and receive his mark

11. How does Revelation describe God's people just before the return of our Lord? Revelation 14:12

Saints—keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus

As a result of proclaiming the message of Revelation 14, two classes are developed. One receives the mark of the beast. They persecute and oppress the true people of God. Ultimately they receive the seven last plagues. The other group, sensing it is the judgment hour, loyally stand for their Creator. Through faith in Jesus they keep the commandments of God. They flee from the falsehoods of spiritual Babylon and are protected from the plagues.

12. What promise does God give to those who study the prophecies of Revelation? Revelation 1:3

Blessed is he who reads

In each of our future lessons we will especially study God's urgent last-day messages for today. Each study in the series is a vital link in a connected chain to prepare us for the coming of Jesus. Why not open your heart to God right now and tell Him that you hunger after the truth of His Word? John the Revelator promises that we will receive a triple blessing from reading, understanding and following Revelation's teachings. God has a special blessing in store for us in the next few lessons.

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Lesson 9 - The Bible's Longest and Most Amazing Prophecy

A party of Arctic explorers were hopelessly lost in the freezing snow. Their supplies were running low. They had a few meager rations left. They lost all radio contact with their home base. Now they were frantic. In the midst of their despair someone spotted a puff of smoke on the horizon. That one puff of smoke buoyed their spirits. Help was on the way. Someone knew they were lost and was coming to take them home.

Our world is frantically searching for some message of hope. The book of Revelation reveals a "puff of smoke" on the distant horizon. Jesus is on the way. He is coming to take us home. Our lesson today unfolds one of the Bible's most amazing prophecies. In our last lesson we discovered God's special message in Revelation, chapter 14—a message to prepare a people for the coming of Jesus. Jesus' final, last-day message announces, "The hour of [God's] judgment has come" (Revelation 14:7, NKJV).*

In this lesson we will study where this judgment takes place and when it began. If we are living at the time of the end in God's judgment hour, it makes all the difference in how we live our lives.

Although Revelation reveals that the hour of God's judgment has come, it does not tell us when. To discover when the judgment began we must turn to the prophetic book of Daniel. The prophecies of Daniel unlock the mysteries of Revelation. These two Bible books are designed by God to be studied together.

1. According to the prophet Daniel, where does the judgment take place? Daniel 7:9, 10

Beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit...books were opened and court seated.

The angel directed Daniel's attention to the throne room of the universe. There the prophet saw the setting up of the supreme court of the universe in heaven's sanctuary.

2. When does this heavenly judgment take place? Daniel 8:14

After 2,300 days

3. What does the prophet Daniel say would happen to the sanctuary at the end of the 2300 prophetic days? Daniel 8:14

Will be cleansed

4. What did the cleansing or restoring of the sanctuary mean to each Israelite? Was it a form of judgment? Leviticus 16:29, 30; 23:27-29

Afflict your souls...make an atonement for you; holy convocation

Each day during the earthly sanctuary service the Israelites confessed their sins. They came to the sanctuary with their sacrificial animals. Each sacrificial animal represented Jesus. Day by day, sin was transferred from the sinner to the substitute and through the blood of the sacrificial victim carried into the sanctuary by the Jewish priest. Each priest represented Jesus, our priest, who represents us in heaven's sanctuary. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the sanctuary was cleansed of all the guilt transferred in by the confessed sins of the Israelites. It was a day of judgment! At the end of the day the sins of the repentant Israelites were either confessed, forgiven and renounced, or unconfessed, unforgiven and cherished. All Israelites who refused to confess their sins were banished from the camp. They were judged. The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary takes place at the end of time. It is God's final judgment on sin.

5. When does the vision of the 2300 days especially apply to? Daniel 8:16, 17, 19

The time of the end

6. Who was Daniel's guide to explain the vision? Daniel 8:16

Gabriel

When the angel attempted to explain the vision, Daniel fainted. (Daniel 8:27)

7. Does Gabriel return to continue the explanation of the vision which was interrupted by Daniel's fainting? Daniel 9:21-23

Yes. Touch me...Gabriel

8. What portion of the prophecy applies directly to Daniel's people, the Jews? Daniel 9:25

Seventy weeks

Gabriel begins his explanation by stating that 70 weeks (490 days) are determined (cut off from the 2,300 days) especially for the Jews (Daniel 9:22-24).

9. In Bible prophecy what does one prophetic day equal? Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6

One year

The entire 2,300 days leads us to the time of the end and the opening of the judgment

10. When does this entire prophetic period begin? Daniel 9:25

From the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem

The entire prophetic period begins with the command to restore and build Jerusalem. Jerusalem was attacked in 605 B.C. by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. In 587/586 B.C. it was largely destroyed. The Medes and Persians overthrew the Babylonians in 539 B.C. In 457 B.C. the Persian king, Artaxerxes, passed a decree allowing the Jews to return to their homeland to rebuild Jerusalem. You can read about this decree in Ezra 7, verses 12 and 13.

11. How long would it be from the decree to restore Jerusalem to the anointing of Jesus as the Messiah? Daniel 9:25

7 weeks and threescore and two weeks

The prophecies of Daniel predict that from the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem in 457 B.C. until the coming of the Messiah would be 69 prophetic weeks, or 483 prophetic days (7 x 69 = 483). Since one prophetic day equals one literal year, 483 years from the going forth of the command to rebuild Jerusalem the Messiah would appear. The chart below will clarify this prophecy.

12. What happened when Jesus was baptized? Luke 3:21, 22; Acts 10:38

The Holy Ghost descended; God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power.

**13. When would Jesus bring all sacrificial offerings to an end with His death on the cross?
Daniel 9:27**

In the midst of the week

The first 69 weeks of the 70-week prophecy ran out in A.D. 27 at Christ's baptism. One week, or seven years, remained. In the middle of this last prophetic week all animal sacrifices would cease. The Messiah would be cut off or crucified. According to the prophecy, Jesus would be crucified three and one-half years from His baptism in A.D. 27. This leads us to the spring of A.D. 31. Jesus was crucified in the spring exactly on the Passover as the prophecy predicted.

14. What event occurred in the Jewish Temple when Christ was crucified? Matthew 27:51

The veil of the temple was rent in twain.

The tearing of the veil in the Jewish Temple signified the end of the sacrificial system. On Passover of A.D. 31, Jesus Christ, our Passover, was crucified for us. The sacrificial system lost its significance. Christ, our substitute, was sacrificed in our behalf. Historically the whole sacrificial system came to an end with the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70. In A.D. 34, as the prophecy predicted, the Jews finally sealed their doom as a nation. The Jewish high priest speaking on behalf of the Sanhedrin, the high Jewish Council, officially rejected Jesus. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was stoned, and the gospel was preached to the Gentiles. The 490-year period is a smaller section of the 2,300 days. The 490 years applies especially to the Jews and the coming of the Messiah. The longer prophecy of the 2,300 days leads us to the end of time, the cleansing of the sanctuary and earth's final judgment. Adding 1,810 years to our last date, A.D. 34, brings us to 1844. Just as surely as Christ was baptized in A.D. 27 and crucified in A.D. 31, the judgment began in A.D. 1844.

Adding 1810 years to our last date, A.D. 34, brings us to 1844. Just as surely as Christ was baptized in A.D. 27 and crucified in A.D. 31, the judgment began in A.D. 1844.

**15. Does it make any difference in the way we live knowing we are living in the judgment hour?
Romans 13:11-14**

It is high time to awaken out of sleep; put on the armor of light; walk honestly; put on the Lord Jesus Christ

16. What assurance does God give us in the judgment? Hebrews 7:27

He sacrificed for their sins once for all when He offered up himself

If any of us had to stand alone, we would have no hope. Jesus will stand in our behalf in the judgment. What assurance! We can rejoice in the hope of the Christ who is our best friend representing us before the throne of God.

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Lesson 10 - A Date With Destiny: The Judgment

We have discovered an amazing truth. We are living in judgment hour. The Bible refers to the judgment more than 1,000 times. In 1844 God's prophetic time clock struck the hour. Revelation's angelic messenger announced, "The hour of [God's] judgment has come" (Revelation 14:7, NKJV).* In the judgment, Christ is revealed as fully just and loving in His handling of the sin problem. Each case is decided for life or death. The entire universe recognizes that God has done everything possible to save every single person.

In the judgment God's heart of infinite love asks, "Is there anything more I could have done?" There is nothing more. Love has done all it could. The entire universe sings with one accord, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" (Revelation 5:12, NKJV).

God's matchless love is revealed in the judgment. All of heaven pauses to consider the choices each individual has made in the light of God's incredible desire to save them. Today's lesson unfolds the importance of our choices in the twenty-first century.

1. How does the Bible describe the awesome scene of God's judgment in the heavenly courts? Daniel 7:9, 10

Complete each expression below:

a. Thrones were _____
a. put in place

b. The Ancient of Days was _____
b. seated

c. Thousands upon thousands _____
c. stood before Him

d. The court was _____
d. seated

e. The books were _____
e. opened

All heaven is interested in this judgment. The destiny of the entire human race will be settled forever. The honor of God's throne is at stake.

2. How universal is God's judgment? 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:12

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ

3. What records are kept that will provide an accurate description of our lives in the judgment? Revelation 20:12

The book of life

Millions of pieces of information can be stored in the memory of sophisticated computers. God can easily preserve our character decisions.

4. Whose names are in the book of life? Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5

Names of committed Christians—rest of the fellow workers he who overcomes.
When we accept Jesus we pass from spiritual death to spiritual life. Without Christ we are dead in sin. Since the "wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), we have no possibility of living eternally without Christ. When we come to Jesus we receive the gift of eternal life from Him, and our names are placed in the book of life.

5. What does God record in His "book of remembrance"? Malachi 3:16

Good deeds—feared the Lord and honored His name
God clearly records a faithful record of our characters. His record books reveal what we actually are. There is no pretense or make-believe with God.

6. Are our sins actually recorded before God? Jeremiah 2:22

Yes. The stain of your guilt is still before me Thine iniquity is marked before me.

7. How detailed is the judgment? How deeply does it probe into individual lives? Matthew 12:36, 37; Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14

Men will give account...for every careless word God will bring every deed into judgment

8. Will anything remain hidden from God? 1 Corinthians 4:5

He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness

9. Does God consider the circumstances of our lives in the judgment? Psalm 87:5, 6; John 9:41; Luke 12:48

Yes. The Lord will write in the register...this was born in Zion...this one was born here this one there.
God clearly records a faithful record of our characters. His record books reveal what we actually are. There is no pretense or make-believe with God.

10. Who will preside during these proceedings? John 5:22

The Son—The Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son

11. Who is our defense lawyer? 1 John 2:1

Jesus Christ, the righteous One
Jesus is both our lawyer and our judge. He stands in our behalf in the judgment. Jesus longs for us to be saved. In the judgment He is for us, not against us. He created us. He redeemed us, and now He lives for us. Hebrews 7:25 says, "Therefore He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them" (NKJV).

12. When Satan condemns us in the judgment, what does Jesus say to him? Zechariah 3:1, 2

The Lord rebuke you, Satan!

**13. What type of clothing is Joshua wearing and what new clothing does our Lord give him?
Zechariah 3:3, 4**

Filthy clothes, rich garments or change of raiment

As we commit our lives to Christ, Satan condemns us. He accuses us of all the sins we have ever committed. Jesus stands in our behalf rebuking Satan. Our Savior takes away our filthy garments of sin and clothes us with the garments of His own righteousness.

14. What is God's standard in the judgment? James 2:12

The law of liberty or the law that gives freedom

We are not saved by God's law. We are saved by God's grace. In the judgment, God does not weigh our good deeds against our bad deeds. We are accepted on the basis of Christ's righteousness, not ours. When Christ accepts us, He leads us to obedience. Obedience is the evidence of a changed life. Obedience is the evidence that our faith is genuine. The basic question asked in the judgment is: "Has this person accepted the saving grace of Christ? Is this acceptance evidenced by a changed relationship to the law? Is the attitude one of obedience or rebellion?" Those saved by grace can say with the psalmist, "I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8, NKJV). It hurts them if they hurt Jesus by breaking His law. Deep within their heart they have chosen the way of obedience, not the way of rebellion. Jesus and His law are inseparable. To willfully disobey it is to wound Him. Will you not say in your heart, "Lord, I love You. Cover my sins with Your righteousness. Forgive me of my rebellion. Take away my desire to disobey. I choose now to be Your obedient child."

Jesus and His law are inseparable. To willfully disobey it is to wound Him. Will you not say in your heart, "Lord, I love You. Cover my sins with Your righteousness. Forgive me of my rebellion. Take away my desire to disobey. I choose now to be Your obedient child."

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Lesson 11 - What's Behind Rising Crime, Violence, and Immorality?

What's behind the dramatic upsurge in violent crime in our society? A major U.S. magazine described our nation as "America the Violent." Another article tragically stated that 23,700 people were murdered in our country in a recent year. The average 18-year-old has witnessed 200,000 violent acts on television, including 40,000 murders.

Murder, robbery, rape, school violence, drugs, terrorism—what's gone wrong? Why is the moral fabric of society disintegrating? Is there an answer? Our society appears to be drifting on an uncharted sea without a moral compass. We seem to be wandering in confusion, desperately looking for some "North Star" to guide us. In our lesson today we will discover the truth about what's gone wrong with our society and God's solution to crime and violence in the twenty-first century.

1. What urgent call does God give to a society living on the verge of social collapse and moral decay? Revelation 14:7

Fear God

To "fear God" means to respect or reverence God. It is a call to obedience. God's call to judgment implies accountability and moral choices. It is a call to a higher standard—a standard outside of ourselves.

2. Is our own heart or mind an adequate judge of what is right or wrong? Jeremiah 17:9

No—The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure

Since our natures are fallen, our hearts deceive us at times. It is easy to justify our behavior based on our own personal desires. We need a higher standard outside of ourselves.

3. How does the Bible describe those who trust in their own minds to guide them in making moral decisions? Proverbs 28:26

He who trusts in himself is a fool

4. In Revelation, the Bible's last book, what did John see up in heaven? Revelation 11:19

God's temple in heaven—within...the ark of His covenant

When God commanded the Israelites in the Old Testament to build a sanctuary, He commanded them to make the ark of the covenant to contain the tables of stone or the ten-commandment law. The temple in heaven containing the ark of the covenant contains God's law, the foundation of His character. Revelation's answer to lawlessness is found in heaven at God's throne in His eternal standard of righteousness—His law. The law of God is a transcript of His character, a description of His will. Without the law there is no sin. The apostle Paul states, "For where there is no law there is no transgression" (Romans 4:15, NKJV).*

5. What is the function of God's law? Romans 3:20

We become conscious of sin [or KJV] by the law is the knowledge of sin.

6. What is the eternal, unchangeable standard of God's government? Psalm 111:7, 8; 89:34

His commandments are sure

God's law is the basis of His government. It was established to ensure the peace, order, harmony and unity of the universe. A broken law brings sorrow, suffering, bondage and death (Proverbs 5:22; Romans 6:16, 23).

7. To what does the Bible compare God's law? James 1:23-25

To a man who looks at his face in a mirror

The law is a mirror that enables us to see ourselves and recognize our need of saving grace. The law reveals what sin is. It provides a moral standard outside of ourselves.

8. What is the role of grace? Ephesians 2:8

It is by grace you have been saved

Grace is God's unmerited favor to bring us back into harmony with Him. The sole basis of our salvation is grace. Grace has always existed. It means pardon, mercy, love and kindness (Genesis 6:8; Romans 4:1-4; Ephesians 2:4-8). Grace frees us from the condemnation of the law. By grace we pass from death to life (Romans 5:8-10; 8:1, 2). By faith we accept the grace of God (Romans 3:28).

9. How are we justified or made right with God? Does keeping the law form the basis of our salvation? Romans 3:28

Justified by faith, No.

Apart from observing the law.

10. Does faith give us freedom to break God's law? Romans 3:31; Romans 6:15

The Son—The Father has entrusted all judgment to the Son

11. What is the converted person's relationship to God's law? Romans 7:22

In my inner being I delight in God's law.

Billy Graham:

"Question: Some religious people I know tell me that the Ten Commandments are part of the 'law' and do not apply to us today. They say that as Christians we are 'free from the law.' Is that right?"

"Answer: No, it is not right, and I hope you will not be misled by these false opinions. It is very important to understand what the New Testament means when it says that Christians are 'free from the law.' It certainly does not mean that they are free from the obligations of the moral law of God and are at liberty to sin." Conversion always leads us to "delight" to do God's will. When Christ changes our hearts or converts us, we have one supreme desire—to obey Him. He has done so much for us that we gladly serve Him. Obedience is not a legalistic requirement. It is part of a loving heart's response to God.

12. What did Jesus teach His disciples about keeping His law? John 14:15

If you love me, you will keep My commandments.

13. Did Jesus teach that His law was done away with at the cross? Matthew 5:17, 18

I have not come to destroy them [the law and the prophets] but to fulfill them.

14. What is the genuine test of knowing God? 1 John 2:3-5

We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commandments

The evidence of the internal change called conversion is a changed life. Grace always leads to obedience. The more we love God, the more we desire to obey Him.

15. In Revelation's final call to a planet rapidly disintegrating into lawlessness, how does God describe His people? Revelation 14:12

The patience of the saints...that keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus
A genuine commitment to God leads to loving obedience. At end-time God will have a group of people who reveal to the whole universe the joy of living obediently. They have been saved by grace. They love God so much that they enthusiastically obey Him. They accept His standards of conduct. They are convinced His way is best.

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Lesson 12 - Christ's Special Sign

The book of Revelation presents God's final message for a world in deep trouble. It is a message especially designed for a people living during the final, climactic hours of earth's history. It is a universal message that leaps across geographical boundaries. It is a message for all nations, tribes, languages, and peoples. It is an urgent, compelling message of good news. It is an urgent appeal for men and women everywhere to prepare for the soon return of Christ.

As we have studied in our previous lessons, only in Christ are men and women capable of meeting the claims of God's law in earth's final judgment hour. God's last-day message is a message of surrender and commitment.

In this secular, materialistic age of humanistic thinking, many have dismissed the idea of a God who created the heavens and the earth. The theory of evolution has replaced the Bible teaching of creation. It is not surprising to find God sounding a clarion call to worship Christ as our Creator in the Bible's last book, Revelation.

1. Who is Revelation 14:6, 7 calling us to worship?

Him who made heaven, and earth, and sea and the fountains of water
Revelation's final appeal to mankind is a call to worship the one who made heaven and earth and the fountains of waters (verse 7). It is a call to worship our Maker or Creator.

2. What is the basis of all worship? Revelation 4:11

Receive glory, and honor and power

3. Who was the active agent in Creation? Ephesians 3:8, 9; Colossians 1:15, 16

Jesus Christ

4. How do we worship Christ as the Creator? Has He left a memorial of His creative activity? Exodus 20:8-11

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy

5. Wasn't the Sabbath given only for the Jews? Mark 2:27, 28

The Sabbath was made for man

6. What three things did God do to set aside and distinguish the seventh day from all other days of the week? Genesis 2:1-3

a. _____

a. rested

b. _____

b. blessed

c. _____

c. sanctified

7. What is the Sabbath called in the Old Testament? Ezekiel 20:12, 20

A sign

8. What was Jesus' practice or custom on the Sabbath? Luke 4:16

He went into the synagogues on the Sabbath day

If Jesus was going to establish another day, He would have done it while He was still alive. He left a positive example of Sabbath-keeping in His life.

9. What counsel did Jesus give His disciples regarding the Sabbath after His death? Matthew 24:20

Pray that your flight be not in winter, neither on the Sabbath.

The Roman general Titus attacked Jerusalem and destroyed it in A.D. 70. Jesus urged His disciples to pray their flight from Jerusalem during the Roman attack would not be in the winter or on the Sabbath day. Jesus specifically gave the instructions "Pray that your flight be not in the winter or on the Sabbath day" because He knew His closest followers would be keeping the Sabbath 35 years after the crucifixion.

10. What groups did Paul preach to on the Bible Sabbath? Acts 13:27, 42, 44

The Bible answer:

a. _____

a. rulers/dwell in Jerusalem

b. _____

b. the Jews

c. _____

c. the Gentiles

Paul preached to the Jews on the Sabbath, convincing them Jesus was the Messiah. He also preached to the Gentiles on Sabbath not Sunday. Eventually the whole city listened to Paul's Sabbath preaching.

11. What is the Lord's special day called? Revelation 1:10

The Lord's day

12. According to the following texts, what is another name for the Lord's day? Luke 6:5; Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:27, 28

Sabbath

13. Does the Bible actually reveal which day is the seventh day? What three days does the Bible mention in succession? Luke 23:54-56; Luke 24:1

Preparation day, Sabbath, first day

PREPARATION DAY—SIXTH DAY—FRIDAY
SABBATH—SEVENTH DAY—SATURDAY
RESURRECTION—FIRST DAY—SUNDAY

What other ways can we tell which day is the seventh day?

Webster's Dictionary: "Seventh day, Saturday, the seventh day of the week" (*Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, unabridged 2nd ed. [1973]*).

Astronomy: "We have had occasion to investigate the results of the works of specialists in Chronology and we have never found one of them that has had the slightest doubt about the continuity of the weekly cycle since long before the Christian Era" (*U.S. Naval Observatory, James Robertson, director, quoted in March 12, 1932, letter to F. D. Nichol*).

Language: In more than 106 languages of the world, the seventh day on our calendar called Saturday is translated Sabbath. There is no word for Saturday in these languages. The seventh day is simply called Sabbath

14. What does God offer those who lovingly keep His Sabbath? Isaiah 56:2

Blessed is the man

God offers those who obey Him His richest blessings. The Sabbath is Christ's great sign of loyalty. It is a sign of His creative and redemptive power. On this day in a special sense Christians have an invitation to enter into a closer union with the Master.

15. What promise does God make regarding Sabbath worship in heaven? Isaiah 66:22, 23

From one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me.

What a promise! Through the ceaseless ages of eternity all flesh, the entire creation, will worship God in harmony each Sabbath. If we are going to worship Him through all eternity, why not start worshipping Him on the Sabbath now? Jesus invites us to love Him with all our hearts and follow truth regardless of what others do. The book of Revelation calls us to worship Him as our Creator. The Sabbath message is part of God's urgent effort to prepare a people for earth's last hour. Pray that Jesus will fill your heart with love. Follow His example in worshipping Him on the Bible Sabbath.

Lesson 13 - Tampering With Heaven's Constitution

The prophecies of Daniel and Revelation unmask a titanic struggle between good and evil just before Jesus comes. This last battle in the great controversy centers in the law of God (Revelation 12:17). Satan hates the eternal principles that are the basis of heaven's government. He desires to lead all to violate God's law and disregard the very foundation of happiness. The enemy's special attack is upon the fourth commandment, which exalts Jesus as the Creator. As we discovered in our last lesson, the seventh-day Sabbath is a memorial to Christ's creative authority. It is an eternal symbol of both our "rest in Christ" for salvation and our absolute loyalty to Him. The Sabbath is an eternal link to our Creator. Many sincere Christians are asking, "How was the Sabbath changed from Saturday to the first day? How was the Sabbath changed from Saturday and why? Is there information in the Bible predicting an attempt to change God's law?" The answer to these questions is found in a symbolic vision given to the prophet Daniel.

1. What did Daniel see in prophetic vision? Daniel 7:2, 3

Four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other.

2. What is represented by the symbols of wind, sea, and beasts?

Winds represent _____ **Jeremiah 49:36, 37**
Winds—Sword

Seas represent _____ **Revelation 17:15**
Seas—People, multitudes, nations and tongues

Beasts represent _____ **Daniel 7:17, 24**
Beasts—Four kings

3. How many beasts did Daniel see? Name these beasts. Daniel 7:3-7

Lion, bear, leopard and a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible

In Daniel 7 the prophet pictures four great beasts rising out of the sea (verse 3). These beasts represent four great kingdoms that arise (verse 17). As we studied in Daniel 2, the four great nations that ruled in succession from Daniel's time are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. The four beasts of Daniel 7 are a fitting description of these four great ruling powers. A lion with eagle's wings has been found on Babylonian coins and on the brickwork of ancient Babylonian buildings. The king of beasts is a fitting symbol for the king of empires. The prophet Jeremiah describes Babylon as a lion (Jeremiah 4: 7). Medo-Persia, as a dual empire, came into prominence by destroying Lydia, Babylon and Egypt. Soon the Persians rose to ascendancy over the Medes. The Bible aptly describes this empire as a bear raising itself on one side with three ribs in its mouth. A leopard with wings clearly describes the third empire, Greece. Alexander the Great swiftly conquered the nations of his day. The dragon-like beast, dreadful, terrible and exceedingly strong, aptly describes the fierceness of Rome.

4. How was the fourth beast, Rome, different from all the beasts before it? Daniel 7:7 (last part)

It had ten horns

The Roman Empire was not overcome by a fifth world-ruling empire. It fell from within. It was divided. The nations of both western and eastern Europe are the remains of the old Roman Empire.

The Roman Empire was not overcome by a fifth world-ruling empire. It fell from within. It was divided. The nations of both western and eastern Europe are the remains of the old Roman Empire.

5. How does the prophet Daniel describe the power that arose after the 10 divisions of the Roman Empire? Daniel 7:8

A little horn

In Daniel's prophecies, a horn is a symbol of power. This power begins small at first and subtly grows unsuspectingly into a dominant world force.

6. Where did this little horn arise? Daniel 7:8

Between the others—Coming up among them

Whoever this little horn is, it arises among the 10 horns, the divisions of the Roman Empire. Arising out of Rome, it dominates the world.

7. When did this little horn arise? Daniel 7:23, 24

After the fourth kingdom

The little horn arises after the fall of the Roman Empire. It was rising to prominence in the latter part of the fourth and throughout the fifth century (A.D. 351-476), when Rome was in the process of being invaded by the barbarian tribes from the north.

8. What special identifying characteristics does this little horn have? Daniel 7:8

Eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words

Eyes in the Bible represent wisdom or understanding (Ephesians 1:18). Ancient prophets were called seers. They saw with divine wisdom into the future. This power does not have the eyes of God's wisdom. It substitutes human wisdom for divine truth. The little horn substitutes human authority for the eternal claims of God's law. It replaces God's law with human traditions.

9. What does the little horn do to the people of God? Daniel 7:25 (first part)

Shall persecute the saints of the Most High

The little horn oppresses those who do not accept its authority. It defends its traditions and persecutes those who do not conform.

10. How long would the little horn reign? Daniel 7:25

For a time and times and half a time

The prophet Daniel uses the expression "time, times, and half a time." Revelation 12:14 uses this same expression "time, times, and half a time." Revelation 12:6 explains this period as 1,260 days. In Bible prophecy one prophetic day equals one literal year (Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34). Since one prophetic day equals a prophetic year, 1,260 days equal 1,260 years. In A.D. 538 the Roman Church became the single dominant religious power in Europe. The pagan Roman emperor Justinian gave to the pope of Rome civil as well as religious authority. Eventually this resulted in severe persecution. The Dark Ages followed on the heels of this union. God's people were imprisoned, tortured and martyred. From A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798 this union of church and state continued throughout Europe.

11. What would this power, based upon human wisdom, do to the truth of God? Daniel 8:12

He cast truth down to the ground.

12. How did the apostle Paul describe this apostasy in early Christianity? Acts 20:30, 31

Men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves

The apostle Paul predicted false religious teachers would arise. In Daniel 7:24 the little horn is described as being different from the other 10 horns. The 10 kingdoms of Rome were political. The little horn is clearly an apostate religious power.

13. What would this little horn power attempt to do with the law of God? Daniel 7:25

And shall intend to change times and laws

*Let us ask ourselves, what power arose by destroying three of the 10 tribes into which pagan Rome was divided (Daniel 7:8)? Which power arose out of Rome after the division of the Roman Empire from A.D. 351 to A.D. 476 as a religious, not a political, power (Daniel 7:8)? Which religious power arose from Rome in these early centuries and had a man as its visible head or leader (Daniel 7:8, 24)? Which one made boastful, presumptuous claims about its authority (Daniel 7:25)? Which has persecuted the people of God, has reigned for 1,260 years, and attempted to change God's law (Daniel 7:25)? There is only one power in history that could possibly fit into this clear delineation—papal Rome. Let us note how it fits Daniel's description: history reveals that Rome's power base expanded gradually as it uprooted that which stood in its way. It is part of human nature to want to crush opposition in an attempt to solidify one's power base. It became dominant by bringing about the destruction of three of the tribes (Heruli, A.D. 493; Vandals, A.D. 534; and Ostrogoths, A.D. 538. See Gibbons' *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 4, chapters 39, 40.)*

It was different from its predecessors. It claimed dominion over the souls as well as the bodies of men. Historians of the period confirm more than 50 million people died for their faith in God's Word. The Papacy reigned supreme for 1,260 years. In A.D. 533 the Roman emperor Justinian declared the bishop of Rome supreme bishop of all the churches. In A.D. 538 the Roman general Belisarius drove the Ostrogoths out of Rome. The Papacy was the supreme religio-political power in Europe from A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798. The French general Berthier, Napoleon's supreme commander, imprisoned the pope in 1798. People living at that time might have thought the Papacy came to an end. Revelation's prophecy, though, predicts "the deadly wound would be healed" (Revelation 13:3). Daniel's prediction regarding the little horn met its fulfillment in the pope's captivity in 1798.

Does the Papacy Claim It Changed the Sabbath?

The Papacy clearly acknowledges changing the Sabbath from Saturday, the seventh day of the week, to Sunday, the first day of the week. It declares the change to be an act of her ecclesiastical authority. The statements listed below cover the last 100 years and clearly demonstrate the consensus of the church's thinking on the change of the Sabbath.

"The Catholic Church for more than one thousand years before the existence of a Protestant, by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday" (The Catholic Mirror, September 1893).

"Question: Which day is the Sabbath day? Answer: Saturday is the Sabbath day. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday? Because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday" (The Convert's Catechism, Peter Giereman, 1948, p. 50).

"The Church...after changing the day of rest from the Jewish Sabbath, or seventh day of the week, to the first, made the third commandment refer to Sunday as the day to be kept holy as the Lord's Day" (Catholic Encyclopedia, vol. 4, p. 153).

Human tradition can never be a substitute for divine truth. The commandments of men are no substitute for the commandments of God. No human power has the authority to change the law of God written with His own finger on tables of stone. Jesus invites us to listen to His voice alone. He says, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15, NKJV).

14. When we are faced with a decision between truth and tradition, what counsel does Jesus give us? John 17:17; Matthew 6:33

Sanctify them by Your truth; God's Word is truth...seek first the kingdom of God...
God lovingly appeals to His true followers to obey Him willingly. Our obedience is a sign of our deep love. He invites us to turn from the commandments of men to the law of God. No human being has the authority to change God's law. It is much more than a matter of days. It is a matter of master. Jesus invites us to acknowledge Him as the supreme Lord and Master.

Additional Statements on the Change of the Sabbath

"You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify" (J. Gibbons, Faith of Our Fathers, p. 111).

"The observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the Catholic Church" (Plain Talk About Protestantism, p. 213).

"... fundamentalists meet for worship on Sunday, yet there is no evidence in the Bible that corporate worship was to be made on Sundays. The Jewish Sabbath, or day of rest, was, of course, Saturday. It was the Catholic Church that decided Sunday should be the day of worship for Christians, in honor of the resurrection" (Catholicism and Fundamentalism, Karl Keating, 1988, p. 38).

"The sun was a foremost god with heathendom...The sun has worshippers at this hour in Persia and other lands...There is, in truth, something royal, kingly about the sun, making it a fit emblem of Jesus, the Sun of Justice. Hence the church in these countries would seem to have said, 'Keep that old pagan name. It shall remain consecrated, sanctified.' And thus the pagan Sunday, dedicated to Balder, became the Christian Sunday, sacred to Jesus" (The Catholic World, March 1994, p. 809).

"But since Saturday, not Sunday, is specified in the Bible, isn't it curious that non-Catholics who profess to take their religion directly from the Bible and not from the Church observe Sunday instead of Saturday? It is inconsistent, but the change was made about fifteen centuries before Protestantism was born...They have continued to observe the custom even though it rests upon the authority of the Catholic Church, and not upon an explicit text in the Bible. That observance remains the reminder of the Mother Church from which non-Catholic sects broke away—like a boy running away from his mother but still carrying in his pocket a picture of his mother or a lock of her hair" (The Faith of Millions, Rev. John O'Brian, pp. 421, 422).

"Protestantism, in discarding the authority of the church, has no good reason for its Sunday theory, and ought, logically, to keep Saturday with the Jews" (American Catholic Quarterly Review, January 1883).

"Now, every child in school knows that the Sabbath day is Saturday the seventh day of the week; and yet, with the exception of the Seventh-day Adventists, all Protestants keep Sunday instead of the Sabbath day, because the Catholic Church made this change in the first ages of Christianity" (Winnipeg [Manitoba] Free Press, Apr. 21, 1884).

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Lesson 14 - Modern Cults Identified Five Ways!

Cults are on the rise. False religious teachers continue to attract multitudes. Sincere people are being deceived. The stakes are high. It makes all the difference who you follow. More than 900 members of the Peoples Temple followed their leader, Jim Jones, on a path of death into the jungles of Guyana in the late 1970s. David Koresh's followers died a fiery death in Waco, Texas. Members of Heaven's Gate evidently listened to their leader, Marshall Applewhite, and committed mass suicide in an affluent southern California suburb.

Why were these people deceived? Are there some clear ways to identify false religious teachers? This lesson will present five clear identifying features of a cult to help you keep from being deceived.

1. What did Jesus say regarding false religious leaders at the time of the end? Matthew 24:5, 11, 24

Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.

2. How can we be kept from the powerful delusions of the enemy? John 8:32

Shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

3. What do the Scriptures say regarding placing implicit confidence in a human being for salvation? Psalm 146:3

Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help.

4. Who is the sole source of our salvation? Isaiah 45:22

Look to Me, and be saved, all your ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.
Jesus is the only source of our salvation. Cult leaders focus attention upon themselves rather than Jesus. They manipulate the minds of their followers. They become substitute saviors or counterfeit messiahs.

5. What does Jesus say about placing the teachings of any human being above the Word of God? Mark 7:7, 8; Luke 11:52

It is not wise. Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered. In vain, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men...

6. What counsel does the apostle Paul give us to help us avoid being deceived? 1 Thessalonians 5:21

Test all things; hold fast what is good.

7. What is the only standard by which we can evaluate truth? John 17:17

Sanctify them by your truth; your Word is truth
There is only one source of truth. God's Word is a reliable guide. The old poem states it correctly when it asks, "What says the Bible, the blessed Bible to me? The teachings of men so often mislead me. What says the Bible, the blessed Bible to me? This my only questions be."

8. How does the Bible emphasize the necessity of freedom of choice? Joshua 24:15; Revelation 22:17

'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

The devil uses deception and force. He uses lies and pressure. He uses falsehoods and coercion as his weapons. God uses the freedom of choice, the power of truth, and the attraction of love.

9. How does the ultimate false religious teacher, the "beast power" of Revelation, deceive a majority of the earth? Revelation 13:13

Makes fire come down from heaven in the sight of men

10. Can the devil perform supernatural signs? Revelation 16:13; 19:20

Saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out...the false prophet who worked signs in his presence.

11. Why will so many be deceived by the false signs and miracles? 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12

Did not receive the love of the truth

The only safeguard against deception is a love for the truth. Truth is more important than so-called supernatural signs. Satan can counterfeit signs. God's truth provides a solid foundation for our faith.

12. When we are united to Christ, what does He offer us? Ephesians 1:6; 2:19

Fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God

In Christ we are accepted. We are forgiven. We are children of God. We become members of the royal family of heaven. Jesus is a leader worthy of our allegiance. His Word is a safe guide. The greatest miracle is the miracle of a changed life. In Christ we have the greatest sense of belonging.

13. Whom is God's last-day message a call to worship supremely? Revelation 14:7

Accepted in the Beloved, worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water

God's last-day message is a call to give our undivided allegiance to our loving Creator. It is a call to give our total allegiance to Him. God is looking for men and women:

- *Who will be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's pleading.*
- *Who will listen to His voice and follow Him in spite of the obstacles.*
- *Who will not devotedly adhere to the voice of an earthly religious leader, rather than His voice.*
- *Who will not deny the voice of the Spirit to listen to a human voice.*
- *Who will be true to conscience at any cost. "The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall" (Education, p. 57).*

Will you be God's man, God's woman? Will you say, "Lord, I choose to listen to Your voice, and Your voice alone. I cannot, I must not, I will not allow another's voice to drown out the voice of Your Spirit. I will be loyal to You at all cost"?

Lesson 15 - Our Greatest Need—New Lifestyle!

Some time ago the president of the American Medical Association was addressing a large group of heart specialists in New York City. He began his speech with these words: "America's greatest need is for a new lifestyle." Even a casual look at the health habits of a majority of Americans indicates these words are indeed true. Degenerative diseases directly related to faulty habit patterns are on the rise. Heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes have soared to epidemic proportions in the United States.

There is a close relationship between our physical well-being and our spiritual well-being. God is deeply interested in our physical health. The apostle John states it succinctly, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 2, NKJV).*

The book of Revelation clearly teaches that God's message of physical health is a significant part of His last-day message for the world.

1. What specific instruction does God give in Revelation 14:7 that includes our total lifestyle?

Give glory to Him

Giving glory to God includes a complete commitment of our physical, mental and spiritual natures to God. It involves a commitment of our entire being.

2. How do we give glory to God? Does giving glory to God have anything to do with our physical health habits? 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 10:31

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit; whatsoever you eat or drink...

The Christian life involves the whole person. It includes the entire surrender of our bodies to God. Holiness is wholeness for God.

3. What earnest appeal does the apostle Paul make regarding our bodies? Romans 12:1

Present your bodies as living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God

4. Will the group awaiting Jesus surrender all their physical habits to Him? 1 Thessalonians 5:23

Your whole spirit and soul and body be reserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ

5. What does the Bible teach about the use of intoxicating drinks and alcoholic beverages? Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-33

Wine is a mocker; look not upon wine when it is red.

Some Christians drink moderately and see little harm in it. But the Bible clearly teaches that "wine is a mocker." It deceives you. Two out of every five people who begin drinking (40 percent) end up having serious problems with alcohol. Are people who drink moderately capable of discerning when they have drunk too much? Dr. Melvin Knisley of the University of South Carolina clearly demonstrated that even moderate drinking destroys thousands of brain cells. It affects conscience, reason and judgment. In this crisis hour of history, God's people need the clearest minds to make the wisest decisions. Think of the social benefits of abstinence from alcohol. Quitting alcohol would dramatically reduce absenteeism in the workplace, fatal car accidents and multiple marriage problems. Alcohol is often the "port of entry" for the use of mind-altering drugs and other illegal substances. Dr. Knisley's advice is sound. He unashamedly says, "The only way to deal with alcohol is to quit it cold."

6. What clear warning does God give that applies to those who defile their bodies by alcohol, drugs, or tobacco? 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.

7. What was the original diet given to human beings by God? Genesis 1:29; 2:16

Every herb bearing seed, every tree that has fruit with seed in it—shall be for meat [food].
The original diet that God gave to Adam and Eve was fruits, nuts, grains and vegetables. Our first parents and their children ate the healthful, life-giving natural products of the earth.

8. How many classes of animals did Noah bring into the ark? Genesis 7:2, 3

Seven clean and two not clean.

9. How can you tell if an animal is clean or unclean? Leviticus 11:1-4

Cloven-footed and chews the cud.

10. What does God say regarding the swine or pigs? Leviticus 11:7, 8

He is unclean to you...on their flesh shall you not eat
God's counsel applies to all pork products, including bacon, ham and pork-based sandwich meats. Pork is extremely high in fat, contributing to coronary artery disease. Trichinosis is a well-established fact from the eating of contaminated pork products. Bacon and ham cured with nitrates are seriously suspect as a contributing factor to cancer. The scientific evidence in favor of God's diet is continually growing in the twenty-first century.

11. What general principles does God give regarding seafood? Leviticus 11:9-11

Has fins and scales in the waters, in the seas...you shall eat.
God's Word declares that any living creature in the sea without fins and scales is unclean. All shellfish, such as crabs, clams, oysters, shrimp and lobsters, are scavengers. They are unclean. Since the God who made our bodies desires us to be in health, He has given us these instructions to preserve our health.

12. What amazing promise did God make to Israel if they followed His principles of health? Exodus 15:26

I will put none of these diseases upon you.
There is credible evidence that the Egyptians were dying of heart disease, cancer, diabetes, overweight and sexually transmitted diseases. Following God's principle of health would make a dramatic difference for Israel, and following them will make a difference for us as well.

13. What does the Bible say will happen to those who continue to rebel against God by defiling their bodies in certain respects, although they know better? Isaiah 66:17

Shall be consumed together, says the Lord

14. What Bible promise does God give to those who desire victory over physical habits that have defeated them for years? Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

15. Where does all power for victory come from? How do I receive it? John 1:12

As many as received him to them gave He power to become the sons of God.

Although we may feel weak, in Christ we are strong. God's promise is sure. The power of Christ is stronger than our physical desires or cravings. In Jesus we can be overcomers. Whatever your physical craving or habit, however great your desire or inclination, there is victory for you in Christ. Heaven's power is available for you today. Our Lord may not take your craving or "taste" away immediately, but if you trust Him, relying on His promises, He will give you the victory.

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Lesson 16 - The Real Truth About Death

What happens five minutes after death? Heaven, hell, nothingness? The subject of death has intrigued men and women down through the centuries. Books on "near-death" experiences have catapulted into best-seller status. There has been an amazing upsurge of interest in spiritualism and communication with the dead. Can the dead communicate with the living? Does an immortal soul survive the body at physical death?

How can the mystery of death be solved? There are rock-solid answers to the question "What happens when you die?" The Bible provides sane, sensible information. It reveals not only what happens when you die but also how to face death with new hope and confidence. To answer the question What happens when we die? it is necessary first to answer, What happened when we were created?

1. How were we created? Genesis 2:7

From the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life

The Bible does not teach that God placed a soul in human beings at Creation. It specifically states that God formed our bodies out of the dust of the ground and breathed into them the breath of life. We then became a living being. Some Bible translations call us "living souls." To state it in equation form, body + breath = living soul.

2. Can the soul die? Ezekiel 18:4

The soul who sins is the one who will die.

3. Who only has immortality? 1 Timothy 6:15, 16

God, who alone is immortal

"Mortal" means subject to death. "Immortal" means not subject to death, imperishable. The Bible never uses the term immortal to describe who we are. It only uses it to describe who God is. Immortality is a gift that God will give to us.

4. What does the apostle Paul say we are seeking for? Romans 2:7

Seek honor, and immortality

5. How does Job describe our current condition? Job 4:17

Mortal—Can a mortal be more righteous than God?

6. When will God's people receive immortality? 1 Corinthians 15:51-54

At the last trumpet...the dead will be raised imperishable.

7. How does Solomon describe what happens at death? Ecclesiastes 12:7

The dust returns to the ground it came from and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

The Bible does not teach that the soul returns to God. The Bible mentions the word "soul" approximately 1,800 times. It never once uses the expression "immortal soul." For Bible-believing Christians, the great hope is the resurrection at the second coming of Christ.

8. Are human beings conscious at death? How much do they know? Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6

The dead know nothing...even the memory of them is forgotten.

9. What about the thought processes? Do they continue after death? Psalm 146:4

Their plans come to nothing.

10. What is the spirit that returns to God? James 2:26

The body without the spirit is dead.

The spirit and the breath are the same throughout Scripture. When a person dies, it is God's life-giving power, His breath, that returns. The psalmist David states it this way: "His breath (spirit) goeth forth" (Psalm 146:4). It is not some conscious entity. It is not some immortal soul. The Hebrew word for breath throughout Old Testament Scripture is 'ruach.' This Hebrew word means air, wind or spirit. Job 27:3 talks about God's spirit, or breath, in our nostrils. At death this spirit, or breath, returns to God.

11. Can the dead worship God? Psalm 115:17; 6:5

It is not the dead who praise the Lord. No one remembers you when he is dead. Who praises You from the grave?

God mercifully shuts our eyes at death to all of the sorrow, heartache and disappointment on earth. Since the "dead know not anything" (Ecclesiastes 9:5) and "in the grave there is not remembrance of you" (Psalm 6:5), it is only logical that "the dead praise not the Lord" (Psalm 115:17).

12. What does the Bible compare death to? John 11:11-14

Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep...Lazarus is dead.

The Bible compares death to a sleep more than 50 times. To the Bible-believing Christian, death is no more to be feared than a sound sleep. When we are sleeping soundly, we are not aware of time passing at all. We are at rest—complete rest.

13. How does Revelation's last message to the world describe death? Revelation 14:13

Rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them

14. Who has the keys to the grave? Revelation 1:18

Jesus I am the Living One...I am alive forever and ever.

15. What events will take place when Jesus comes? 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17

The dead in Christ will rise first...those who are still alive will be caught up together in the clouds.

16. Since Jesus has immortality and will grant it to us when He returns at the Second Advent, how can we be sure to receive it? 1 John 5:11, 12

He who has the Son has life.

Death is a peaceful sleep until the return of Jesus. There is no consciousness of the passage of time in the grave. For the righteous, the next event after death is the resurrection. Death for the believer is no more to be feared than a rest in the arms of a loving Savior. When we accept Jesus we receive the gift of eternal life and the promise of immortality.

Lesson 17 - God's Love in the Fires of Hell

If you were God, would you delight in tormenting sinners in hell for millions and millions of years? Could you be truly happy in heaven if you knew an unsaved relative or friend was intensely suffering in the fires of hell at that very moment? How could a loving God burn sinners in hell for eternity? If God knows everything, wouldn't these suffering sinners be continually on His mind? Most of us would not want to torment our worst enemy that way. Is it logical that a loving God would keep His enemies in a continual state of suffering for eternity? Is hell a hot spot in the center of the earth, some burning, fiery chasm with millions crying out for deliverance right now? This is no small matter. The concept of an eternally burning hell has led many to reject God altogether. The Bible presents a clear answer for the question of God's love in the fires of hell.

1. What does the prophet Isaiah call the destruction of the wicked? Isaiah 28:21

His work, His strange work, and perform His task, His alien task.

2. Where do the fires of hell originate? Hebrews 12:29

Our God is a consuming fire

3. Where are both the righteous and the wicked rewarded? Matthew 5:5; Proverbs 11:31

The earth. If the righteous receive their due on earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner!

4. When do the wicked and the righteous receive their final rewards? Is hell a hot spot burning in the center of the earth now with the devil in charge? 2 Peter 2:4, 9

The day of judgment

5. How completely will the fires of hell destroy the wicked? Will they burn through millions of years? (Summarize the Bible passages listed below.)

a. Malachi 4:1-3:

a. Not a root or a branch will be left of them

b. Psalm 37:10:

b. The wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found.

c. Job 20:5-9:

c. He flies away, no more to be found, will not see him again, his place will look on him no more.

d. Proverbs 10:25:

d. The wicked are gone.

e. Isaiah 47:14:

e. Surely they are like stubble; the fire will burn them up.

6. What does God call the destruction of the wicked? Matthew 25:46

Then they will go away to eternal punishment.

7. According to the Bible, how long does an “eternal fire” burn? What example does God give of two cities burned with eternal fire? Jude 7

An everlasting punishment completely destroys. Fire that destroys completely that it fully consumes! Sodom and Gomorrah.

8. How completely did the eternal fire that came from heaven destroy Sodom and Gomorrah? 2 Peter 2:6

Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes

9. How does the prophet Jeremiah describe the fire which consumed Jerusalem? Jeremiah 17:19-27

Kindle an unquenchable fire...consume her fortress

10. What happens to the wicked who are consumed in the fires of hell? Revelation 20:9

Fire came down from heaven and devoured them

11. What is the ultimate fate of the earth? 2 Peter 3:13

His promise...looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth

12. Will the flames of hell consume this planet forever? What will God finally do with sorrow, suffering, and pain? Revelation 21:4, 5

No more death, or mourning, or crying or pain. I am making everything new

13. Will sin ever rise up again? Nahum 1:9

Trouble will not come a second time

14. What is the fate of Satan and his followers? Obadiah 16; Isaiah 47:14; Ezekiel 28:17, 18

Be as if they had never been. The fire will burn them up. Fire consumed...reduced you to ashes on the ground

15. Does God desire to destroy wicked men and women? Ezekiel 18:32

Take no pleasure in the death of anyone

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Lesson 18 - How to Successfully Bury the Past

Final words are extremely important. Parting words are usually significant. Picture a family gathered around a hospital bed eagerly trying to catch every word of a dying loved one. Last words make a difference.

Christ's last words were some of the most significant He ever uttered. His final command to His disciples was, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19, 20, NKJV).*

Christ commissioned His disciples to instruct people in the principles of the Christian life. When they accepted the claims of His love and became disciples, the sign of their allegiance to a new life was baptism.

The subject of baptism does raise many questions. How important is Bible baptism? Is baptism essential to our salvation? Does it make any difference how a person is baptized? How many kinds of baptism are there? Are sprinkling, pouring, and immersion all the same? Our lesson today answers these questions directly from the Bible.

1. How important is baptism? Mark 16:16

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

2. What did Jesus say to Nicodemus regarding the significance of baptism? John 3:5

No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and of the Spirit
Baptism is much more than a lifeless ritual. It is a deeply spiritual symbol of complete, total commitment to Christ the burial of the old life and resurrection to new life in Christ.

3. How many methods of baptism does the Bible recognize? Ephesians 4:5

One baptism

There is one Lord, the Savior Jesus Christ. There is one faith, true Bible religion. There is one true method of Bible baptism.

4. How was Jesus baptized? Mark 1:9, 10

Baptized by John in the Jordan, coming out of the water

It is clear that Jesus was fully immersed by John in the Jordan River. John's gospel states that John was baptizing in the Jordan River because there was much water there (John 3:23). Full immersion is the only method of baptism described in the Bible.

5. How did Philip baptize the Ethiopian eunuch? Acts 8:38

Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water

Both Philip and the Ethiopian entered the water. Philip then placed the Ethiopian completely under the water. To symbolize death to the old man of sin, burial with Christ, and resurrection in Christ to a new life, the candidate must enter into the water, be completely covered by the water, and rise from the water. Baptism by immersion is the only biblical method.

6. When Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan River, what two significant things happened? Matthew 3:16, 17

Heaven was opened: the Spirit of God descending: voice from heaven: This is my beloved Son. *When Jesus was baptized, the Spirit of God descended upon Him, giving Him strength for the temptations to come. His Father spoke these words from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). When people are baptized today, God gives them new power for living and the assurance they are pleasing Him.*

7. Does God give us a greater indwelling of His Holy Spirit to strengthen us at our baptism? Acts 2:38, 39

And you will receive the Holy Spirit

8. What assurance regarding our past does Jesus give us at our baptism? Colossians 2:12; Acts 22:16

Having been buried with Him in baptism. Wash your sins away. *Baptism is a symbol of spiritual cleansing. The water of baptism itself does not save us, but it does signify we accept the blood of Christ, which does save us.*

9. What are the conditions God desires us to meet before baptism?

a. Acts 2:38:

a. Repent and be baptized

Repentance is a deep sorrow for sin. It means a conscious desire to turn from those things that violate God's will and sadden His heart.

b. Acts 8:36, 37:

b. If you believe with all your heart

This belief is more than simply an intellectual assent to a particular creed. It is a heart commitment to Jesus and His Word. It is a turning to Him with all the heart, a belief that He is the Savior, who alone can forgive sin and give victory in my life.

c. Matthew 28:20:

c. Teaching them to observe (obey) everything I have commanded you

Although learning is a lifelong process and one should never wait until they feel they have grasped all truth before baptism, it is necessary to understand basic scriptural truths before making such a significant decision.

10. What is the spiritual significance of baptism? Romans 6:3, 4

Baptized into death...Christ was raised from the dead may live a new life, death to sin and a resurrection to a new life

Baptism symbolizes a death to sin and a resurrection to a new life in Jesus Christ. Living for Jesus we are fully alive. Baptism by full immersion is the true symbol that we accept the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord. Through baptism we now acknowledge we are walking in the newness of life.

11. Baptism is a symbol of commitment to Christ. Does it also signify commitment to Christ's church? Acts 2:41, 42, 47; 1 Corinthians 12:13, 27, 28 (first part)

3,000 were added to their number that day--Baptized by one Spirit into one body --The body of Christ
In the church

Baptism in the New Testament was into the body of Christ, or the church.

12. If a person has been baptized once, should they ever be baptized again? Acts 19:1-5

John's baptism; on hearing this (having never heard of the Holy Spirit), they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.

In this instance Paul re-baptized believers who had been baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River, but who had never heard of the Holy Spirit. As the truth about New Testament Christianity dawned upon their minds, they were re-baptized as a symbol of following all of this new truth. There are some Christians who have a new deep experience with Jesus as they discover new truths in the plan of salvation. They desire to become part of Christ's church and choose to be re-baptized.

13. What gracious, loving invitation does Jesus give us to accept the salvation He so freely offers? Revelation 22:17

The Spirit and the bride say, Come! Let him take the free gift of the water of life

Jesus invites us to come to Him. Baptism is a symbol we are accepting without reservation. We are accepting completely. We are accepting in total surrender to His will. As we come to Him, He promises to cleanse us from our past and give us a new life. We become part of His family, the church. Have you been baptized by immersion? Do you have the assurance your guilt is completely gone? Is your past buried? Are you new in Christ? Why not make this decision now?

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Lesson 19 - A Financial Secret

There is one thing certain about our economy—it is uncertain. There are periods when “consumer confidence” is high. The United States government presents glowing reports of a reduced national debt. Interest rates are low, and unemployment is down. The flip side of the coin is our trade deficit is enormous. The stock market is extremely volatile, and the world economy is shaky. Norman Cousins, editor of the *Saturday Review*, made a very perceptive statement 40 years ago. It was true then, but it is even truer now. “We are so busy extending ourselves and increasing the size and ornamentation of our personal kingdom that we have hardly considered that no age in history has had so many loose props under it as our own.” We are so busy buying that we have failed to realize there are some moral screws loose in our society. The foundation is cracking. We might be just investing our money in the wrong places.

The Bible presents eternal financial principles that make sense. It reveals financial secrets that most of the world does not know. It encourages us to reevaluate our priorities—to seek the eternal rather than the earthly. God’s Word leads us to make investments that will pay off in the long run.

1. What does the Bible say regarding God’s ownership of the world? Psalm 50:10-12; Haggai 2:8

For the world is mine The silver and the gold is mine, declares the Lord Almighty
God is the owner of this world. Everything in it rightfully belongs to Him.

2. What right does God have to claim the world as His? Psalm 24:1; Isaiah 43:1 (first part)

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it.
He who created you
The Bible teaches that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit participated in the process of creation together (Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:15, 16). The earth is His. He made it.

3. What other reason does the Bible give that this world belongs to God? Isaiah 43:1 (last part); 1 Peter 1:18

I have redeemed you
When our Lord created this world, He entrusted it to Adam. God gave Adam dominion over the entire creation (Genesis 1:26). At the Fall, Adam surrendered his right of dominion. Lucifer, the fallen angel, usurped the dominion and claimed the lordship of the earth. Bible writers often refer to Lucifer as the prince of this world or the prince of the power of the air (John 12:31; 14:30; Ephesians 2:2). Christ's sinless life and substitutionary death fully paid the ransom for our sin. At the cross Satan's fate was sealed, and complete restoration pledged for this planet (Ephesians 1:14; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; John 12:31, 32). God is the true owner of this world, both by creation and redemption. Everything we have is a gift of His grace. We are stewards of goods entrusted to us by God.

4. Since God is the owner of the entire world and everything in it, what does the Bible state regarding our responsibility with the goods God has entrusted to us? 1 Corinthians 4:2; Luke 16:10

It is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful
God entrusts each of us with a portion of His goods to manage. Everything we have is a trust from the King of the universe. God is testing us with earthly possessions to see if we can be entrusted with heavenly riches.

5. Where do our earthly possessions come from? Who gives the ability and power to get wealth? Deuteronomy 8:17, 18

Remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the ability to produce wealth

6. How do we acknowledge that God is the owner of all we have? Malachi 3:8-10

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse

7. What is tithe? How does the Bible describe the tithe? Leviticus 27:30, 32

Every tenth...holy unto the Lord

Although all our money belongs to God, the tithe is holy. It is an acknowledgment of God's ownership. It reveals that we really believe He owns all we have.

8. What promise did God give the Israelites who made Him "first" in their giving? Does this promise apply to us today? Proverbs 3:9, 10

Yes. Your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.

9. What man is an outstanding example of faithfulness to God in tithe-paying? Genesis 28:20, 22

Jacob

10. What did Jesus say about tithing? Matthew 23:23

Give a tenth of your spices

In discussing tithe, Jesus said, This ye ought to have done, but He condemned the Pharisees for neglecting mercy, justice, and compassion. The tithe is sacred. It is set apart to accomplish God's goal of spreading the gospel message to the ends of the earth. In addition to this, the local congregation as well as the church at large has expenses not provided for in the tithe.

11. Although the tithe (the first 10 percent of our income) is set apart as holy, how are other church expenses met? Deuteronomy 16:17; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 8:12

Set aside a sum Gift according to what one has

12. What is the most important thing to God—the amount given or the attitude with which it is given? 2 Corinthians 9:7; Luke 21:1-4

The poor widow - God loves a cheerful giver - She out of her poverty put in all she had
*God has promised to supply the needs of all who are faithful in returning His tithes and offerings. In Philippians 4: 19 we have an eternal pledge: And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (NKJV). *To all who are faithful stewards, God gives the assurance of supplying their needs. The needs of God's children are already underwritten by the bank of heaven. Jesus stated, Therefore do not worry, saying, What shall we eat? ...or What shall we wear? ...but seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you (Matthew 6: 31-33, NKJV).*

13. What assurance does God give His people who are faithful in their giving? Proverbs 11:24, 25

A generous man will prosper. He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed
*Our heavenly Father owns the world and takes the responsibility of providing for His children.
Thank God, the promise to the faithful steward is certain!*

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Lesson 20 - Growing as a Christian

The more we know Jesus, the more we long to be like Him. As we understand Jesus' kindness, His tender compassion, His gracious forgiveness, and His steadfast loyalty to the Father's will, our own hearts are drawn to the one we most admire. The Christian life involves both coming to Jesus and growing in Jesus. It involves forgiveness and restoration. Jesus longs to forgive our sins, removing the guilt and condemnation of the past. His acceptance, forgiveness, and love help us to grow in Him. He desires to rebuild our lives. In this lesson we will learn God's way of making us whole again.

1. What promise does God give to His people? Ezekiel 11:19, 20; Hebrews 8:10

I will give them one heart...put a heart of flesh; I will put my laws in their minds
God promises to do something for us that we cannot do for ourselves. He says, I will give you a heart of flesh. God promises to work miracles inside of us.

2. How can our faith increase? Romans 10:17; 2 Peter 1:3, 4

By the word of God

3. Why are some people not benefited when they study the Bible? Hebrews 4:2

Not being mixed with faith
To receive benefit from reading the Bible, it must be personally applied by faith. Place yourself in every story. Believe that God will accomplish miraculous changes in your life as you read His Word.

4. What is the essence of eternal life? John 17:3

That they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ

5. When we know Jesus, what is the longing of our hearts? Matthew 26:39; John 8:29

Not as I will, but as You will; do those things that please Him
We long to do His will. Faith is not believing that God will do whatever we want; it is seeking what the Father wants, as Jesus in Gethsemane.

6. What hinders our growth in Christ and a close relationship with Him? Isaiah 59:1, 2; Psalm 66:18

Our iniquities Regard iniquity
Known sin is an obstacle in a full relationship with Jesus. When we continually turn our backs on Him, we cannot fully see His face.

7. Who is the originator of all our temptations? John 8:44

The devil; he is a liar and the father of it

8. What assurance does Jesus give us when we face temptation? 1 Corinthians 10:13

Not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able

9. Since Jesus met all the temptations of Satan on our behalf, what does He invite us to do? Hebrews 4:14-16

Come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need

10. Why can we have confidence that we will grow in Christ? 1 John 5:14, 15

He promises - If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us
Our Lord promises to provide us with the power for Christian living. We can have absolute confidence that when we ask for His power and His Spirit to do His will, He will gladly give us what we long for (Luke 11:13).

11. Where do we find strength for Christian living? Mark 1:35; Matthew 7:7; Jeremiah 29:13

Solitary place to pray; Ask...seek Me and you will find Me
We discover strength for Christian living by seeking God in prayer. Prayer opens our hearts to God to receive His strength.

12. What reassurance does Jesus give each of us? Philippians 4:19

My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus

13. When we feel we are too weak or the struggle is too great, what encouraging promise is ours? Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me

14. What will God's love accomplish in us before Jesus comes? 1 John 3:1-3

We shall be like Him...purifies himself, just as He is pure

15. Who does Jesus declare Himself to be? Hebrews 12:1, 2

The author and finisher of our faith
Jesus declares that He is the author and finisher of our faith. What a promise. We may stumble, but He will never let us go. We may falter, but He will remain steadfast. As we continue trusting, believing, praying, and fellowshiping with God in His Word, we will continue to grow in Christ. As we share His love with others and witness to our family and friends, our own faith will increase.

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Lesson 21 - God's Church Identified

According to a recent handbook of American churches, there are more than 250 major religious groups in the United States. In addition, there are hundreds of smaller independent churches, sects, and religious groups. Each one professes to represent God. Each one claims to be teaching truth. At the same time, each group is different from the others. Teachings of one church or group often vary significantly from another. Obviously all these churches with their conflicting teachings cannot be right.

The average person is confused by this bewildering array of churches. Some people have even concluded that the discovery of truth is extremely personal. They argue that truth is a matter of opinion. "You have your truth and I have mine," they say. "You look at it your way and I will look at it mine." This leads us to some important questions.

Is finding truth a matter of chance? Does God have a true church today? Does it make any difference which church I attend? If God has a true church, how can I find it?

This lesson will help you answer these important questions directly from the Bible itself. Throughout the history of the world God has always had a people who followed Him. This group of loyal and committed followers have composed His church in every age.

1. How does God identify His genuine followers in the early beginnings of Old Testament history? Genesis 26:4, 5

Obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws
Because Abraham was faithful to Him, God desired to acquaint the nations of this world with a knowledge of the true God through the family (or church) of Abraham. Abraham's son, Isaac, passed God's blessing to his son Jacob. Jacob's 12 sons became the founders of the nation of Israel. Israel was the church of the Old Testament. God desired to reveal a knowledge of His glory to the world through His church, Israel.

2. How does God describe His special relationship with Israel? Deuteronomy 7:6, 9

A people holy to the Lord your God and His treasured possession
Although at times they were unfaithful, Israel remained God's chosen people (or church) throughout the Old Testament. God's people or church are described as those who love Him and keep His commandments (Deuteronomy 7:9, NKJV).

3. What instructions did Jesus give to His New Testament followers? John 14:15

If you love Me, you will obey what I command
In both the Old and New Testaments, God identifies His followers as those who love Him and keep His commandments. Love always leads to obedience.

4. What clear identifying characteristics of the true church does God give? Revelation 12:17; 14:12

Those who obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus
The King James version of the Bible uses the word "remnant" in Revelation 12:17 to picture God's true church. Some translations, such as the Revised Standard Version, say rest of her offspring. The word remnant literally means those who are left. In the setting of Revelation the remnant are those who are left or remain faithful to God. In both the Old and New Testaments, from the beginning of time to the end of time, God has a group of people who lovingly obey Him by keeping His commandments. They are the faithful ones, the ones left. Like the New Testament church their allegiance to God's truth is uncompromising.

5. What does the apostle Paul call the New Testament church? 1 Timothy 3:15

The church of the living God, the pillar and the foundation of the truth

The New Testament church is based on the word or truth "of God". In Matthew 16, verse 18, Jesus promised, I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (NKJV). Christ has a church, an organized group of faithful, obedient believers.

6. How universal is Christ's last-day church? How widespread will His end-time message be preached? Revelation 14:6

To every nation, tribe, language and people

God's last-day church, preaching His final message, must be an international movement proclaiming His truth to the world.

7. What is the central message of Christ's church today? Revelation 14:6

The eternal gospel

The gospel is the good news that Jesus has forgiven our sins, that through His death we can become the children of God, and that through His power we can live transformed, obedient lives.

8. What time period does God's last-day church announce we are living in? Revelation 14:7

The hour of his judgment

The true church teaches we are living in the judgment hour preliminary to the coming of Christ. It has an urgent message for the world. It is an Adventist Church. It teaches that Christ came once and that He is coming again.

9. In the light of the urgent end-time message of the judgment hour, what are the three things God's true church urges God's people to do? Revelation 14:7

a. Fear God

Fear God means to respect, reverence, or obey God.

b. Give Him glory

To give glory to God is to honor Him in all that we do, including eating and drinking. It is a message of obedience to God's physical and moral laws.

c. Worship Him who made the heavens

The true church calls men and women to worship on the Bible Sabbath as a memorial of Creation (Revelation 4:11; Exodus 20:8-11). It is an invitation to return to the Bible Sabbath of the seventh day, Saturday.

10. What significant or important announcement is made in Revelation 14:8?

Babylon is fallen

Babylon is a symbol of religious confusion. Wine is a symbol of false doctrine that confuses the judgment. God's last-day message calls us from falsehood to truth.

11. Whom is Revelation's message a warning against worshiping? Revelation 14:9

The beast and its image

12. How can we avoid worshipping the beast? Revelation 14:12

Have the faith of Jesus Obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus

The true church warns men and women not to accept the counterfeit worship of the beast. In a future lesson we will study the subject of the mark of the beast. The final crisis will be over worship. God calls us from the false to the true. He graciously invites us to worship the Creator on the seventh-day Sabbath as a sign of our allegiance to Him.

13. According to Revelation's end-time message, what does the true church teach about death? Revelation 14:13

They will rest from their labor

The true church teaches the truth about death. It clearly reveals that death is a peaceful rest until Jesus returns (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54).

Characteristics of God's True Church

- *It is a worldwide movement.*
- *It proclaims the everlasting gospel.*
- *It teaches that we are living in the judgment hour and emphasizes that Jesus is coming soon.*
- *It leads men and women to obey God's commandments.*
- *It teaches men and women to "give glory" to God in what they eat or drink. It helps them to understand the necessity of refraining from alcohol, tobacco, and unclean foods.*
- *It explains the significance of worshipping our loving Creator on the seventh-day Sabbath.*
- *It leads men and women out of religious confusion to God's truths.*
- *It warns against accepting any sign of human authority (the mark of the beast) in the place of God's Word.*
- *It teaches that death is a peaceful rest until the resurrection.*

There is only one religious movement in the world that is preaching these heaven-sent messages of Revelation 14. There is only one church in the world that is urgently proclaiming the truths of the three angels of Revelation 14 the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not merely another denomination. It is not merely another religious body littering the landscape of churches. It is a divine movement of destiny raised up by God. It is a prophetic movement proclaiming God's last-day truth.

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Lesson 22 - Prophets and Prophecy/Visions and Dreams

There is a dramatic upsurge of interest in supernatural phenomena in our world. People are looking for authoritative answers to the challenges and problems of life. They have turned to astrologers, psychics, and so-called prophets.

Satan's goal is to counterfeit the genuine gift of prophecy. Jesus clearly warned that Satan would do this. In Matthew 24:24 He declares, "For false Christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect" (NKJV). * Have you ever seen a counterfeit \$11 bill? Certainly not! Every counterfeiter in the world attempts to make the imitation as close to the genuine as possible.

It is only by carefully studying the biblical gift of prophecy that we can detect the counterfeit and receive the genuine.

1. Whom did Christ send as His representative after His ascension? John 14:16, 26

Another Counselor; the Holy Spirit

2. What gifts did the Holy Spirit bring to assist the church in carrying the gospel to the world? Ephesians 4:11

Some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers

3. How long would the gift of prophecy continue in the church? Ephesians 4:12, 13

Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature

4. What promise does God give to His church awaiting the Advent? 1 Corinthians 1:7

You lack no spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ

5. What two specific characteristics does God list in Revelation to describe His last-day church? Revelation 12:17

Obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus

6. How does the Bible define the "testimony of Jesus"? Revelation 19:10

The spirit of prophecy

When one of heaven's messengers descended to bring John the gift of prophecy, the aged apostle knelt to worship the angel. The angel stopped him, explaining that he was testifying for Jesus in giving to John the spirit, or gift, of prophecy. (See also Revelation 22:8, 9.) Revelation 12:17 reveals that the gift of prophecy, or the testimony of Jesus, would be revealed again in God's last-day church.

Scripture gives several biblical tests of a true prophet.

TEST 1 - Prophetic Accuracy

7. What does the Bible teach regarding the accuracy of a true prophet? Jeremiah 28:9

As one truly sent by the Lord only if his prediction comes true
In prophecies that are not conditional, that is, that depend on a personal response to determine their fulfillment, the prophet is 100 percent accurate. The so-called prophets of our day miss the mark completely on this test. A few of their predictions may come to pass, but most are never fulfilled.

TEST 2 - The Prophet's Relationship to the Bible

8. What if a prophet is apparently accurate, but leads away from the truths of Scripture? Deuteronomy 13:1-4

You must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer.
The true gift of prophecy does not lead away from, but back to, the Bible. The Bible is always supreme. It is the sole criterion for the establishment of doctrine.

TEST 3 - The True Gift of Prophecy Exalts Jesus and His Law

9. According to the Bible, how does the prophet relate to Jesus? 1 John 4:2

Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God

10. What relationship does the genuine gift of prophecy have to the law of God? Isaiah 8:20

To the law and to the testimony. If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.
All Bible prophets exalt God's law. Elijah called Israel from idolatry to the true God. Nehemiah preached for a reform in Sabbath-keeping. John the Baptist condemned Herod's adultery.

TEST 4 - Physical Phenomena Surrounding the Gift

11. How does the Bible describe the prophet while in vision? Daniel 10:17

My strength is gone and I can hardly breathe.
Bible prophets often experienced certain supernatural physical phenomena that accompanied their visions. Often they did not breathe in vision. God sustained them.

TEST 5—Spiritual Fruit

12. How did Jesus Himself tell us to distinguish between the true and counterfeit gifts of prophecy? Matthew 7:15-17, 20

By their fruits you will recognize them.

13. Where should we look to find the genuine gift of prophecy today? 1 Corinthians 12:28

"In the church God..."

*When we discover God's faithful commandment-keeping church, we should also look within the church for the gift of prophecy. Because prophecy is one of God's last-day gifts to His church, we should expect to find it within the church. The gift of prophecy is not a doctrine contrary to the Bible, but rather one of the gifts God says will remain in the church. What a joy it is to know that God has a commandment-keeping church on earth today. It has been raised up to prepare a people for the coming of the Lord. God promised to place the gift of prophecy within His true church. It is one of the identifying characteristics of the true church (Revelation 12: 17; 19: 10). Seventh-day Adventists believe that God has again raised up the genuine gift of prophecy in the life and teachings of Ellen G. White, who was born in a humble home in Gorham, Maine. When she was only a child, she had a tragic accident, so she completed only a few grades of education. She thought of herself as "the weakest of the weak." When she was a young woman, God revealed Himself to her in visions and dreams. She wrote down God's messages as counsel to His church. Her books on health and education are world-renowned. Her thousands of pages about Jesus are spiritual masterpieces. Books such as *Steps to Christ*, *The Desire of Ages*, and *The Great Controversy* have run through millions of copies. Ellen G. White was a humble woman who exalted Jesus and always led her readers back to the Bible. She claimed her writings were "a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light [the Bible]."*

14. Why did God give us the gift of prophecy? What is the result of following the prophets' counsels? 2 Chronicles 20:20

You will be upheld; have faith in His prophets and you will be successful.

God has given His church the gift of prophecy for our benefit. Following God's counsel brings greater joy to our lives. Accepting heaven's wisdom saves us from a great deal of heartache and sorrow. The prophets' messages are heaven's blessings on our lives.

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Lesson 23 - The Mystery of Spiritual Babylon Revealed

The book of Revelation portrays a great conflict between truth and error. It graphically describes two systems of worship in collision. Truth, opposed by error, triumphs. In Revelation's prophecies, a pure, chaste woman represents the true church (see Revelation 12:1, 2). A harlot woman represents the fallen church. The bride of Christ, the true church, radiates the glory of God, revealing His truth to the world. The apostate church, pictured as a harlot, offers her wine of false doctrines, confusing the mind and leading multitudes to destruction.

In this lesson we will especially notice the characteristics of this false system of worship so we can keep from being deceived. We will also discover the characteristics of true worship so we can embrace it.

SPIRITUAL BABYLON REVEALED

1. How does God describe the true church? Revelation 12:1

A woman clothed with the sun...a crown with twelve stars.

In each of the following texts God describes His people as His bride: Isaiah 54:5, 6; Hosea 2:19; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:22-26. The woman clothed with the sun represents the bride of Christ.

2. What does the Lord call His church? 1 Timothy 3:15

The pillar and ground of the truth.

3. How is the false church pictured? Revelation 17:1-5

A woman...full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.

Wine affects the forebrain, where conscience, reason, and judgment are located. It signifies the confusion of false doctrine. Psalm 116:13 speaks of the cup of salvation. ? Babylon's wine cup full of lies may be called the cup of death. Revelation ?s Babylon represents a false religious system, which brings the principles of Old Testament Babylon into religious worship in the Christian era. An understanding of Old Testament Babylon lets us positively identify New Testament Babylon and flee its errors.

4. Who is the author of all false doctrine? John 8:44

The devil...is a liar and the father of it.

Satan, the father of lies, counterfeits truth. He attempts to deceive us. Through religious deceit he desires to capture the minds of thousands.

CHARACTERISTIC 1—Rebellion

5. What is the origin of Old Testament Babylon? Genesis 11:5-9

Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord confused the language of the whole world. *The Tower of Babel was built shortly after God destroyed the earth with a flood. Filled with rebellion, proud people determined to build a monument to their own egos. If the world was ever destroyed again by a flood, they would survive. God demonstrated their folly by confusing the languages of the workers. The Tower of Babel is a monument to their confusion. It demonstrates the foolishness of human wisdom. It reveals the folly of substituting human ideas for divine truth. Old Testament Babylon was built on the site of the Tower of Babel. It represents confusion or humanity's way in opposition to God's way.*

6. Was Old Testament Babylon centered on God's way or humanity's way? Daniel 4:30

Babylon...I have built...for the honor of my majesty.
Old Testament Babylon was established in direct opposition to the plain commands of God. It was a system of religion based on the traditions and authority of human beings rather than God. It was human-centered rather than God-centered. Any system of worship that places the word of human leaders above God's word is part of the Babylonian system. Any system that substitutes religious leaders for Christ is a false system.

7. According to the Bible, who is our only Saviour? Acts 4:12

There is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

8. What counsel does the prophet Isaiah give us? Isaiah 45:21

There is no God beside Me; a just God and Savior; there is none beside Me.
Salvation is not in the rites and ceremonies of the church. It comes from looking to Jesus. Salvation is a gift received by faith. It is based in Jesus' death on the cross, not our good works. The false Babylonian system is based on human teachings, human works, and human accomplishments.

CHARACTERISTIC 2—Idolatry

9. How was Babylon's rebellion against the true God revealed? Ezekiel 6:4

And I will cast down your slain men before your idols.
Modern Babylon is a system of religion that uses idols in its worship. Its statues, images, and religious icons revive the idolatry of ancient Babylon. Any system that incorporates images into its worship service is part of spiritual Babylon.

10. What clear, obvious command had God given His people? Exodus 20:4, 5

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...thou shalt not bow down thyself to them

CHARACTERISTIC 3—Immortality/Ancestor Worship

11. What was the ancient Babylonian concept of death? In Ezekiel 8:14 whom were the Jewish women weeping for?

There sat women weeping for Tamuz.

Tamuz, the god of vegetation, was one of the many deities of Babylon. The Babylonians believed that in the winter, Tammuz died. In the season of abundant crops, they believed, he lived again. This worship of the dead was common in Babylon. The concept of the immortal soul was at the heart of Babylonian worship. The thought that the soul leaves the body at death comes directly from paganism.

12. What does the Bible teach regarding death? Summarize the following texts.

a. Ecclesiastes 9:5:

a. The living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything.

b. Psalm 115:17:

b. the dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.

c. Psalm 146:4:

c. His breath goes forth...in that very day his thoughts perish.

Any system of religion that teaches the doctrine of the immortal soul is part of Old Testament Babylon.

CHARACTERISTIC 4—Pagan Sun Worship

13. What Babylonian worship practice mingled with the worship of Israel for a time? Ezekiel 8:16

They worshipped the sun toward the east.

Sun worship was a part of pagan worship for centuries. The Edomites, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Persians, and the Romans all revered or worshiped the sun.

14. What sign had God given His people? Ezekiel 20:12, 20

I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them.

The following historical quotations enable us to discover how the pagan day of worship gradually slipped into the Christian church: In Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church, Arthur B. Stanley says: "[Constantine's] coins bore on the one side the letters of the name of Christ; on the other the figure of the Sun-god, ...as if he could not bear to relinquish the patronage of the bright luminary" (p. 184). Absolutely amazing. On Constantine's coins were Christ on one side, and the Sun-god on the other side. A wedding took place, a wedding between Christianity and paganism. A wedding between the church of Rome and the pagan emperors of Rome. Stanley also says: "The retention of the old pagan name of 'Dies Solis,' or 'Sunday,' for the weekly is, in great measure, owing to the union of pagan and Christian sentiment with which the first day of the week was recommended by Constantine to his subjects, pagan and Christian alike, as the 'venerable day of the Sun'" (ibid.).

**15. How did many religious leaders relate to this union of true and false religion in Bible times?
Ezekiel 22:26**

Profaned holy things...have hid their eyes from my Sabbaths.

CHARACTERISTIC 5—Self-indulgence

16. Does the false religion of Babylon sense the significance that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? Daniel 5:4

They drank wine

This drunken feast is a typical example of Babylon's desire to gratify the physical senses.

17. What earnest appeal does the apostle Paul give? Romans 12:1

I beseech you...that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice.

Spiritual Babylon's principles run through many religious organizations today. They include:

- *Looking to a visible, earthly head rather than Christ.*
- *Any form of idol/image worship.*
- *A misunderstanding of what happens to people when they die; prayers to saints, veneration of dead loved ones, etc.*
- *Worship on Sunday.*
- *A misunderstanding of the body as God's temple; use of alcohol, tobacco, and unclean foods.*

18. What appeal does God give to those still in Babylon? Revelation 18:4

Come out of her, my people, that you will not partake of the plagues.

God's call is not to stay in Babylon and reform it, but to come out of Babylon. Soon the plagues will fall on all inhabitants of Babylon. In love God has sent you a message to come completely out. Will you respond?

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Lesson 24 - Holy Spirit and Unpardonable Sin

A pastor was approached by a young man who nervously asked, "May I talk with you privately?" The pastor learned that this young man feared he had committed the unpardonable sin. He wondered whether forgiveness was possible. Could he have gone beyond God's mercy? This young man is not an isolated case. Many people are perplexed regarding this vital subject. What is the unpardonable sin? Will an individual know if and when they commit it? Why is it unforgivable? Is there a sin so great that even God Himself cannot forgive it?

If the unpardonable sin is the sin against the Holy Spirit, it is extremely important to understand how the Holy Spirit works on our hearts. This lesson will clearly reveal what the unpardonable sin is and how to avoid rejecting the claims of the Holy Spirit upon our lives.

1. How does Jesus describe the unpardonable sin? Matthew 12:31

The blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven.

This is a fascinating Bible passage. The Pharisees attributed Jesus' miracle working power to Beelzebul (another name for Satan) rather than God. Why did they do this? For one simple reason. If they accepted Christ's miracles they must accept Him as divine. This would mean a dramatic change in their lives. The unpardonable sin is not a specific sin like adultery, murder, stealing, or cursing. Jesus clearly states "every sin" will be forgiven. The unpardonable sin is the refusal to accept Jesus for who He is, our loving, forgiving, life-changing Savior. As we shall discover in today's lesson, it has to do with a hardened, unrepentant heart.

2. What conditions does God list for forgiveness? Acts 2:38; 1 John 1:9

Repent, and be baptized.

All sins that are repented of and confessed will be forgiven. The unpardonable sin is not a kind of sin. It is a degree of sin. The person refuses to repent. They close their mind to the influence of the Holy Spirit. The unpardonable sin is a state of open rebellion in which the promptings of the Holy Spirit are at first ignored, then resisted, and finally rejected totally until they are no longer perceived.

3. How does the Bible describe the personality of the Holy Spirit? John 16:7, 8

When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin.

The Bible calls the Holy Spirit our "Helper" (NKJV). In three places in this passage Scripture refers to the Holy Spirit as "Him" or "He" with the third-person pronoun. The Holy Spirit is not an "it." The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead.

4. How does Jesus describe the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Godhead? Matthew 28:19

Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

5. What is the prime function of the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit? John 16:8

When He is come, He will reprove the world of sin.

6. If sin is cherished and the prompting of the Spirit rejected, what ultimately occurs? Ephesians 4:30

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are saved.

7. When had virtually a whole generation committed the unpardonable sin? Genesis 6:3-8

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great...and every imagination of the thoughts was only evil continually.

During the time of the Flood a whole generation rejected the pleading of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, there was nothing more God could do. After He appealed through Noah for 120 years and sent His Spirit in mighty power, men and women made their final, irrevocable decision. The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin. The Holy Spirit leads us to repentance and confession. Whenever we resist the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, we are hardening our hearts. Whenever we refuse to surrender sin the Holy Spirit points out that we are hardening our hearts.

8. How was the Bible written? 2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16

Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

9. What person of the Godhead leads us into the truths of God's Word? John 16:13

When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth.

The Holy Spirit revealed the truth of the Scriptures to the Bible writers. The Holy Spirit leads us to understand these truths. It is extremely dangerous to reject any truth in God's Word. To do so is to resist the Holy Spirit, who leads us into truth. Since the Bible was written by men and women under the influence of the Holy Spirit, to resist any clear teaching of the Bible is to harden the heart against the influence of God's Spirit.

10. What attitude does God desire us to have as He reveals "new" light and truth to us? John 12:35

Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you.

The Holy Spirit has revealed many truths that are new to you in these lessons. He has led you to an understanding of the truth about salvation, the second coming of Christ, the Sabbath, the state of human beings in death, healthful living, baptism by immersion, God's true church, and much, much more. It is no accident that you have studied these lessons. The Holy Spirit has drawn you. He has revealed truth to you. He has convicted you of these scriptural truths.

11. Whom is the fullness of the Holy Spirit promised to? Acts 5:32; John 14:15, 16

...to them that obey Him.

The fullness of the Holy Spirit is given especially to those who lovingly obey God.

12. What difference does the Holy Spirit make in our lives? Galatians 5:16, 22-26

...in the Spirit...ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh; produce the fruits of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit makes a dramatic difference in our lives. Through the Spirit we are convicted of sin and led into truth. The Spirit transforms our hearts, giving us a new desire to serve God. New power flows into our lives through the Spirit, and we are resurrected from spiritual death to spiritual life.

13. What does the Holy Spirit write in our hearts and minds? Hebrews 10:16

I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.

14. What gracious invitation does the Holy Spirit give us? Revelation 22:17

And the spirit and the Bride say, come...whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.
The Holy Spirit invites us to give ourselves totally to God. He invites us to come with all of our guilt, our weakness, and our doubts. When we come, He promises to give us a fresh new start in a new life.

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Lesson 25 - From Disappointment to Triumph

Can we really be sure of truth? Does God have a true church on earth today? Is it possible to know which church is His true church?

The book of Revelation is designed to give us certainty. It is designed to provide definite, concrete answers to these questions. Revelation's chapter 10 is one of the most thrilling chapters in all of the Bible. It vividly and accurately describes the miraculous rise of God's last-day church. It reveals that God's last-day movement is a direct fulfillment of Bible prophecy. It distinguishes God's true church from all counterfeit movements by clearly showing just how God's church would come into existence.

CERTAINTY OF THE ADVENT MOVEMENT

1. Can an individual really know what is truth? John 8:32

And ye shall know the truth.

2. Some feel we can never be certain about anything, yet what counsel does Luke give Theophilus regarding the purpose of the Gospel? Luke 1:3, 4

That you might know the certainty of those things.

The book of Revelation contains three specific chapters designed to give certainty regarding the identity of the true church. Revelation 14 clearly reveals the true church will proclaim the message of the three angels. Revelation 12 describes the true church as leading men and women back to obedience to the commandments of God. Revelation 12 also describes the true church as having the gift of prophecy. Revelation 10 describes the historical rise of the true church. As each of these chapters is carefully studied, God's identity of His true church is clear.

3. In Revelation an angel descending from the presence of God represents a heavenly message of utmost importance for all inhabitants of Planet Earth. What does this angel have in his hand? Revelation 10:2

A little book.

4. Which is the only Bible book ever said to be closed or sealed until the time of the end? Daniel 12:4

O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book.

5. What particular portion of Daniel's message does the angel of Revelation emphasize? Revelation 10:6

There should be time no longer.

The little book opened reveals that "there should be delay no longer." It clearly focuses on the time prophecies of Daniel. Since no one knows the day or hour of Christ's coming (Matthew 24:36), the expression "delay no longer" cannot relate to a literal date for Christ's return.

6. What time prophecy in Daniel points to the time of the end? Daniel 8:14,17

At the time of the end shall be the vision.

As we have studied in a previous lesson, the 2,300 prophetic days of Daniel 8:14 equal 2,300 literal years. The expression "then the sanctuary shall be cleansed" refers to the opening of the judgment in the year 1844.

7. When the little book (Daniel) was eaten (studied, particularly the 2300-year prophecy pointing to 1844) what experience would occur for those who studied these prophecies? Revelation 10:10, 11

It was in my mouth as sweet as honey...my belly was bitter.

When did this bittersweet experience occur? In the late 1700s and early 1800s, independent of one another, scores of religious leaders around the world began a renewed study of the prophecies of Daniel. This interest in prophecy led honest-hearted men and women of God to abandon the popular belief that the world would soon enter a 1,000-year period of peace known as the millennium. They saw that prophecy clearly taught that the destinies of all were decided before Christ's return. Consequently, they understood there is no second chance for salvation when Jesus comes.

Overjoyed with prophecies that seemed to indicate the coming of Jesus, they went forth to warn the world. Among them were people such as Edward Irving and 700 preachers of the church of England; Joseph Wolff, missionary to India; Manuel Lacunza, a serious Bible student from South America; Johann Bengel of Germany, and many others.

Foremost in the United States was William Miller. In a period of personal despair he began to study the Scriptures. There Miller found new hope and courage as an uplifted Saviour was presented before him. Accepting Jesus as his personal Saviour, he began carefully to study the Scriptures.

Dispensing with all Bible commentaries and using only his Bible and a concordance, Miller began at Genesis and studied the Scriptures verse by verse, comparing scripture with scripture. As he studied the prophetic portions of Daniel he arrived at the same conclusion as did a host of other serious Bible students. Independent of each other, they arrived at the conclusion that Jesus was coming, and coming soon.

As Miller studied the 2300-year prophecy of Daniel, chapter 8, he saw that it was explained in Daniel 9. Amazed at the precision of Daniel 9:24-27, he concluded that Daniel 8:14 was just as accurate. When he discovered, according to Daniel 9:24-27, that Jesus was to be baptized in A.D. 27, crucified in A.D. 31, and the gospel was to go to the Gentiles in A.D. 34, and that these events had been fulfilled exactly on time, he marveled. He reasoned that since these events had been fulfilled, and since Daniel 9 is an explanation of Daniel 8, both prophecies start at the same time.

Since Daniel 8 begins at the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem in 457 B.C., Daniel 9 begins there also. Figuring 2300 years from 457 B.C., Miller arrived at the date of A.D. 1844. Misunderstanding the subject of the sanctuary, he understood the words "then the sanctuary shall be cleansed" to refer to the cleansing of the earth by fire. He thought Christ would return in 1844.

The preaching of a specific date for Christ's return sparked one of the greatest religious revivals in American history. Thousands were converted. Church bells throughout America tolled for noon prayer meetings. In anticipation of the coming of the Lord, debts were paid, family differences settled, and saloons closed. The moving of the Spirit of God led to deep repentance for sin, earnest prayer, and serious Bible study.

*As multitudes anticipated the arrival of Jesus, they settled on the date October 22, 1844. As Revelation 10 predicted, a study of Daniel's prophecy was "sweet...in my mouth," yet when Jesus did not return, it was "bitter" (verse 10, NKJV). * Their bitter disappointment of 1844 left them downhearted and discouraged. As they rechecked the prophetic evidence, they realized that the date was right. The hour of their disappointment was the hour of God's appointment. The sanctuary to be cleansed was not the earth, but rather the heavenly sanctuary. The prediction "then the sanctuary shall be cleansed" refers to Christ's work of judgment preliminary to His return to earth.*

8. In what work does the prophet Daniel describe the Father and Son participating before Jesus' return? Daniel 7:9-11

Thrones were set in place; the court was seated, and the books were opened—the heavenly judgment.

The heavenly judgment deals with the final solution to the sin problem. As the heavenly record books are opened, God's mercy and justice, His love and law, are seen in His dealing with every human being.

Just as the early disciples anticipated Christ's setting up an earthly kingdom in A.D. 31 and were bitterly disappointed at His crucifixion, His last-day followers anticipated His coming to earth in 1844 and were bitterly disappointed. Notice these striking similar parallels:

New Testament Church

1. Students of prophecy

2. Believed Christ would set up an earthly kingdom

3. Bitterly disappointed

4. Directed attention to ministry of Christ in sanctuary

5. Preached message of Christ's ministry to world

Last-Day Church

1. Students of prophecy

2. Believed Christ would set up an earthly kingdom

3. Bitterly disappointed

4. Directed attention to ministry of Christ in sanctuary

5. Preached message of Christ's ministry to world

According to Scripture this disappointed group would be molded into Christ's last-day church to carry His message to the world.

9. What was the key that unlocked their disappointment? Revelation 11:18, 19 (first part)

And the temple of God was opened in heaven.

These disappointed followers sensed that the temple of God was opened in heaven. Jesus had begun a special work in the heavenly sanctuary preliminary to His return to earth.

10. What did they see when the temple of heaven was opened? Revelation 11:19 (last part)

The ark of his testament.

11. What is contained in the ark of the covenant? Deuteronomy 10:2; Exodus 3:16-18

The tables...thou shalt put them in the ark.

These Advent believers understood for the first time that we are living in the judgment hour. They sensed God's call for obedience. The ark of the covenant in heaven's sanctuary revealed God's law. Love leads to obedience. The law which Jesus died to preserve would be enshrined in the hearts of His followers through grace.

12. What command did Jesus give the disappointed group of Advent believers? Revelation 10:11; Revelation 14:6

Thou must prophesy again before many people.

Following the disappointment in 1844, Jesus raised up a dynamic, divine movement on earth, a movement that ultimately would span the globe. It would proclaim that Jesus is coming again and urge men and women to surrender their lives to Him and respond in loving obedience. It is indeed thrilling to sense that God has such a divine movement of destiny in the last days of earth's history. This unique prophetic movement has been especially raised up by God to prepare a world for His soon return. Today in over 200 nations of the world, in every major language, the message of God's love and truth is being proclaimed in the Advent movement. God has especially raised up the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a powerful last-day prophetic movement to impact the world. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not just another denomination—it is a God-ordained—divinely called—prophetic movement for these last days.

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Lesson 26 - The Mark of the Beast and the Mystery Number 666

The heart of God is filled with love for this planet. A loving God sent His Son to redeem us. A loving, compassionate God reaches out to us in daily concern. A loving God is coming again for us. He will put an end to sickness, disease, sorrow, hunger, pain, and death.

God's love is revealed in gentle pleading to our heart. It is also revealed in solemn warnings.

The most solemn warning ever given to humanity is found in Revelation 13. A crucial test is coming. The conflict will revolve around true and false worship. The central issue is the law of God.

The book of Revelation reveals the plans of God and unmasks the delusions of the enemy. Every person has a choice. Our eternal destiny hinges upon the choice we make. Today's lesson will focus upon the final issue in the great controversy between good and evil.

1. What message of urgent warning does the angel of Revelation give? Revelation 14:9-11

If any man worship the beast...the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.

2. As the crisis approaches, what penalties will eventually be issued upon those who do not receive the mark of the beast? Revelation 13:15-17

As many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

A great crisis is approaching in which everyone will be coerced, through an economic boycott or under threat of death, to receive the mark of the beast. Those who yield to these pressures, both religious and economic, will do so with the clear understanding that they are violating the commandments of God.

3. What will eventually happen to those who receive the mark of the beast? Revelation 15:1; 16:1, 2

There fell...a sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast.

4. What is God's sign called that stands in opposition to Satan's mark? Revelation 7:1-3

Hurt not the earth...til we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

The seal relates to God's law (Isaiah 8:16, 20). As an ancient king's seal contained his title and dominion, giving authority and making official his letters, so God's seal contains His name, title, and area of authority.

We find God's seal in the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:8-11). "For in six days the LORD [His name], MADE [Maker or Creator] the HEAVENS AND THE EARTH [His dominion]" (verse 11, NKJV).

** The Sabbath is a special sign, or seal, between God and His people (Ezekiel 20:12, 20).*

These signs represent two systems of religion—one initiated by God, one initiated by human beings. One the way of truth! One the way of error! To every soul will come the crucial test: shall I obey God, or shall I obey humanity?

WHO IS THE BEAST?

5. What three things did the dragon, or the devil, working through pagan Rome, bestow upon papal Rome, its eventual successor? Revelation 13:1, 2

- a. his power
- b. his seat
- c. and great authority

*It was the dragon, or the devil, working through pagan Rome, who tried to destroy Christ. And it was that same power that gave the beast its seat, or capital city, power and authority. Nations don't do that very often! To whom did pagan Rome give its seat of government? How did it take place? History is clear. "By retiring to the East he [Constantine] left the field clear for the Bishops of Rome." ". . . the Papacy is but 'the ghost' of the deceased Roman Empire, sitting crowned upon the 'grave thereof'" (Arthur P. Stanley, *Lectures on the History of the Eastern Church* [1884], p. 197). The papal system of religion is the one mentioned in Revelation 13. We must remember here that we are talking about a system, not about individual members of that system.*

6. How else is this beast's power identified? Revelation 13:3, 5

- a. All the world:**
 - a. All the world wondered after the beast
- b. This power speaks:**
 - b. This power speaks 'great things and blasphemies.'

7. According to the Bible, what is blasphemy? John 10:33; Luke 5:21

Thou being a man makest thyself to God; who can forgive sins, but God alone?
*Here we find that if anyone "claims" to be God, that person has committed an act of blasphemy. We also find that an earthly religious leader who claims the ability to forgive our sins has committed blasphemy. Such a leader usurps the authority that belongs to God alone! The Papacy makes these claims:
Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) declared, "We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty."
"Priests are called Vicars of Jesus because they hold His place on earth..."
"Let the priest approach the altar as another Christ."
"The priest holds the place of the Savior Himself, when, by saying 'Ego te absolvo,' he absolves from sin"(Alphonsus de Liguori, *Dignities and Duties of the Priest*, p. 34).*

8. What will this power do to God's people? Revelation 13:7

Make war with the saints.
It is a well-known fact that millions of martyrs have paid with their blood the price for faithfulness to God. Church history is filled with examples of such persecution.

9. How long was this persecuting power to continue? Revelation 13:5

Power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.
In Bible prophecy one prophetic day equals one literal year (Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34). The 1260 days are actually 1260 years. In A.D. 538 Justinian, the pagan Roman emperor, officially granted the Roman bishop the role of defender of the emperor's empire, the definer of heretics, and defender of the faith. The Papacy exercised great influence from A.D. 538 to A.D. 1798.

10. What does God say the number of the beast's name is? Revelation 13:17, 18

666.

*One of the official titles of the pope is Vicarius Filii Dei. These three words are Latin for "Vicar of the Son of God." Webster defines "vicar" as a substitute, a person who acts in the place of another. Since this is a Roman power, it is only logical that the method of computation would be in Roman numerals. Taken numerically, the papal title is seen to be 666. Pope's Title: Vicarius Filii Dei
Putting all the evidence together, it becomes clear that the papal power is the beast power of Revelation 13.*

11. What does Revelation 14:9-11 warn us against?

If any man worship the beast...and receive his mark...the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God.

12. What does the Roman Catholic Church itself say is the sign of its authority?

On January 18, 1563, "the Archbishop of Reggio made a speech in which he openly declared that tradition stood above the Scriptures because the church had changed the Sabbath into Sunday—not by a command of Christ, but by its own authority" (Canon and Tradition, p. 263).

The basis of papal authority, he declared, was founded upon the right to change the Sabbath from Saturday, the seventh day, to Sunday, the first day. "The church," says the Catholic Record, "is above the Bible and this transference of Sabbath to Sunday is proof of that fact" (Sept. 1, 1923).

In a letter written in November 1895, H. F. Thomas, chancellor to Cardinal James Gibbons, replying to an inquiry as to whether the Catholic Church claims to have changed the Sabbath, said: "Of course, the Catholic Church claims that the change was her act...and the act is a mark of her ecclesiastical authority."

Rome claims that the change of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday is a mark of its authority. In the future church and state will unite once again in an attempt to enforce this mark. It is only at this point in the future when the issues are clear that the mark of the beast will be enforced. No one has the mark of the beast now.

13. What call does God give His people now? Revelation 14:12

Keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

14. What is the basic issue involved in the crisis at the close of this earth's history? Romans 6:16

You are slaves (servants-KJV) to the one whom you obey.

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Lesson 27 - The United States in Prophecy

Throughout the centuries the Bible has revealed the rise and fall of nations with amazing accuracy. Their destinies were predicted in advance, but the Bible is not primarily a history book! Not every world power is mentioned.

Nations are brought into the biblical picture, not as independent political powers, but in the light of their role in God's overall plan. The Bible reveals the role of nations in the longstanding controversy between Christ and Satan. In the last days of earth's history the final conflict will center upon the question of loyalty to God as manifested by obedience to His law.

Working through both religious and state powers, Satan will attempt to coerce God's people—with economic boycotts, fines, threats of imprisonment and death—to ignore God's law by accepting a substitute Sabbath.

Will the United States play a significant role in this final conflict? Will America continue to champion principles of religious liberty and freedom of choice, or will it one day repudiate its heritage, unite with the beast, and become a persecuting power? What is America's destiny?

In this fascinating lesson we will discover the answers to these questions.

1. Fill in the blanks below showing the location from which each beast arrives according to the following verses (Revelation 13:1, 11):

a. The first beast arises from the:

a. The first beast arises from the sea

b. The second beast arises from the:

b. The second beast arises from the 'earth.'

In lesson 26 we clearly identified the first beast as the Papacy.

As Revelation 13 describes, this beast received its seat of government from pagan Rome, became a universal system of worship, persecuted the people of God, claimed the power to forgive sins, and reigned supreme for 1,260 years during the Middle Ages.

In Bible prophecy the sea represents a populated area of the earth (Revelation 17:15). The beast rising out of the sea represents a power arising out of the populated areas of the world. The earth, on the other hand, represents the opposite—an unpopulated or sparsely populated area. The second beast rises out of the sparsely populated area of the New World.

2. How does this second beast of Revelation 13 (the lamblike beast) cooperate with the first beast (the Papacy)? Revelation 13:12

And he...causes the earth to worship the first beast.

3. List four identifying characteristics of this second beast:

a. When does this second beast arise? Revelation 13:11, 12

a. After the first beast

This lamblike beast with two horns arose precisely when the first beast was going into captivity. The Papacy received its deadly wound in 1798 when the French general Berthier took the pope captive. Ultimately the pope died in captivity. The second beast was to arise after the first went into captivity.

b. Where does the second beast arise? Revelation 13:11

b. Coming up out of the earth

*The first beast arose out of or from the sea, "peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues" (Revelation 17:15, NKJV). * It arose out of Rome from the populated masses of Europe. The second beast arose from an unpopulated area of the world. The Greek word for "coming up" is *anabainō*, meaning "springing up." It arises like a silent seed growing from the quiet earth. It arises rapidly from obscurity to become a world superpower.*

c. What animal was chosen to describe this second beast? Revelation 13:11

c. He had two horns as a lamb

Throughout the book of Revelation Jesus is described as a Lamb. Lamblike qualities indicate gentleness, innocence, and freedom. Jesus gives each of His followers the freedom of choice. This lamblike power grants its citizens the opportunity to worship freely in harmony with the dictates of their consciences.

We should also notice that a lamb is a young animal. The lion, the bear, the leopard, and the dragon described earlier in the chapter are full-grown animals, indicating older, established nations. The youthful lamb represents a nation just born.

d. The first beast has crowns on its horns (Revelation 13:1). Does the lamblike beast have crowns? Revelation 13:11 Yes or No:

d. No

Crowns indicate kingly authority. This new power has no crown or king! Horns are symbols of power. Here the power comes from another source—from the people—the two horns represent a democratic, republican form of government.

4. What new nation was arising in 1798 in an unpopulated area of the earth with the features of youthfulness and liberty for all the people?

a. The Pilgrims landed in the early 1600s. The Colonies grew rapidly. In 1776 the Declaration of Independence was drawn up. In 1787 the Constitution was written, and in 1789 the Bill of Rights was formulated. In 1791 the Bill of Rights was adopted.

In 1798 the pope was taken prisoner by General Berthier. The United States was recognized as a nation by France, the same power that inflicted the deadly wound on the first beast. The United States arose exactly as prophecy had indicated, at the time prophecy indicated.

b. The United States was established by courageous Europeans filled with an adventurous spirit, attempting to flee the religious and political tyranny of the Old World. It was not established by conquering another nation, but by the establishment of a new one!

"The oppressed and downtrodden throughout Christendom have turned to this land with interest and hope. Millions have sought its shores, and the United States has arisen to a place among the most powerful nations of the earth" (The Great Controversy, p. 441).

c. The United States established two separate authorities—political and religious. The principle of complete separation between church and state was represented by the "two horns like a lamb."

5. What surprising change does the prophecy indicate? Revelation 13:11, 12

He spake as a dragon

6. What will the lamblike beast try to do to coerce everyone to worship the image of the beast and receive the mark of the beast? Revelation 13:17

- a. No man might buy
- b. or sell

When the early church was corrupted by departing from the simplicity of the gospel, it lost the Spirit and power of God. In order to control the consciences of the people, the church sought the support of the secular power. In order for the United States to form an image of the beast, a religious power must control the civil government. The church will use the authority of the state to coerce conscience once again. An image is a "likeness to," something that resembles. The Papacy claims, as the sign of its authority, a substitute day of worship. Sunday is a "likeness" to the Sabbath, but it is not the Sabbath. It is a substitute or counterfeit day of worship. In this astounding prophecy, the United States of America establishes a likeness to the Papacy by using the power of government to enforce a religious day of worship. In a time of great crisis, the people and their religious leaders put enormous pressure on their legislators to enforce a common day of religious worship.

7. How does Satan deceive thousands to put pressure on their legislator to form an image to the beast? Revelation 13:13, 14

And deceives them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles.
In a period of social upheaval, economic difficulty, natural disasters, and international tension, church and state will unite in an attempt to establish peace. Satan will use false miracles to establish his claims.

8. Upon whom does God pour out the genuine Holy Spirit? Acts 5:32; John 14:15, 16

The Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey Him.

9. How does Revelation describe those who have gained the victory over the beast and are ready for the coming of Christ and eternity?

- a. Revelation 12:17:**
 - a. keep the commandments of God
- b. Revelation 14:12:**
 - b. faith of Jesus
- c. Revelation 22:11-14:**
 - c. He that is righteous

The conflict will soon intensify beyond our imagination. Through the power of Jesus Christ you can remain loyal through these last days. John saw in vision the triumphal celebration given in heaven for those who had been victorious over the beast and his image: "I saw...those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. They sing the song of Moses...and the song of the Lamb, saying: Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints" (Revelation 15:2, 3, NKJV). Friend, don't you want to be a part of that great celebration?

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Lesson 28 - Armageddon and the Seven Last Plagues

In 1945 William Ripley of Believe It or Not fame stood amid the ruins of Hiroshima, Japan. From that city devastated by the atom bomb, Ripley announced to his radio audience, "I am standing on the spot where the end of the world began."

Numerous wars during this century have gripped world leaders with the possibility that the end is near. Among today's prophets of doom are legislators, educators, sociologists, scientists, and environmentalists.

Thousands are stunned with bewilderment regarding the future. They wander in a maze of confusion. God reveals through prophecy an outline of coming events for the informed Christian. According to Bible prophecy the crisis at the close is not merely a military struggle. It is the last battle in the long-standing conflict between Christ and Satan.

The seven last plagues and the Battle of Armageddon focus on the end of human history and the coming of Christ. It is with this background that we enter into this Bible lesson.

ARMAGEDDON AND THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

1. What great crisis will this world soon face? Revelation 13:16, 17

Forced to receive a mark.

2. If any individual worships the beast, what will he receive? Revelation 14:9, 10

His mark on his forehead or on the hand.

3. What is the "wrath of God . . . poured out full strength"? Revelation 15:1

Seven angels with the seven last plagues.

Because Satan hates God, he desires all men and women to receive his mark rather than God's seal. When every human being has chosen between the mark of the beast and the seal of God, the plagues will fall. All who knowingly accept the allegiance of the beast, substituting a human decree for the divinely inspired commandments of God, will be recipients of the seven last plagues.

Revelation 16:2-15 lists the first six plagues:

1. Grievous sore
2. Sea of blood
3. Rivers and springs of waters as blood
4. Sun scorching people
5. Darkness on seat of the beast
6. Battle of great day of God Almighty

4. After these six plagues are described, what announcement comes from heaven? Revelation 16:15

Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him. *This text is Christ's encouragement to His followers, urging them to persevere in light of His soon return. These plagues are called the seven last plagues. Ten plagues fell on Egypt in Old Testament times. The first three fell on both the Egyptians and the Israelites; the last seven fell only on the Egyptians. At end-time, the seven last plagues fall only on the wicked while the righteous, still on earth, are protected. Jesus comes as a thief after, not before, the plagues.*

5. Does God promise to protect His people during the plagues? Psalm 91:2-10

He is our refuge and my fortress, he will save you; he will not fear the terror or terror, no harm will befall you.

6. What assurance does God give that He will feed us during this time? Isaiah 33:16

His bread will be supplied, and water will not fail him.

7. Where do we find our refuge or security in the time of trouble? Psalm 46:1, 2

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.

8. How will Satan attempt to unite all nations to destroy God's people in earth's last war? Revelation 16:14

They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs.

9. What is this battle called? Revelation 16:16

To gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. *The word "Armageddon" comes from the Hebrew "Har Megiddo," meaning mountain of assembly. During one of Israel's greatest crises, when it appeared that doom was certain, God intervened and sent reinforcements at precisely the right moment (Judges 5:19). During the last days of earth's history, infuriated by the plagues, the whole world will be turned into a vast battlefield as the wicked attempt to destroy God's people. It will appear as if their doom is certain.*

10. As the whole world is mobilized to destroy the people of God, what divine act takes place? Revelation 16:17-21

Seventh angel; earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. *Once again God will intervene. When the enemy is ready to pounce on God's people, like a lion stalking her prey to destroy it, God will powerfully manifest His hand to deliver them.*

11. What marvelous announcement does the seventh angel make? Revelation 16:17

It is done!
It is done! Life's trials and heartaches are over. It is time for God to deliver His people.

12. How is this mighty deliverance described? Revelation 16:18-21

Then there came flashes of lightning, rumbling, peals of thunder.

In the last moments of time Jesus returns as King of kings and Lord of lords and finally and completely destroys Satan and his work. Christ's followers triumph; right conquers.

13. What is the glorious climax of the seven last plagues? Revelation 19:11-16

There before me was a white horse, whose rider is called faithful and true.

Friend, the outcome of the battle is certain. No matter how discouraging the future appears, Jesus and His people will triumph. If you have not yet decided to place your confidence in Jesus by inviting Him into your life, why not do it right now before it is forever too late?

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Lesson 29 - Revelation Predicts 1,000-Year World Blackout

One of the most fascinating of all Bible subjects is "1,000-Year World Blackout Predicted," or the millennium. The word "millennium" is simply Latin for 1,000 years. There are many different ideas taught concerning the future of our world. Some Christians believe that the second coming of Christ will initiate a Golden Age for humankind on earth—a time during which everyone will be converted and peace will prevail. Others believe that the 1,000-year period will be a time of distress and hardship, of conflict and chaos.

A third view is that the millennium immediately follows the return of Christ. A time when all the righteous are in heaven. Satan and his angels are left on earth, and the wicked are dead. At the end of this 1,000 years, God creates a new heaven and new earth.

With this subject, as with all others, we will discover what the Bible really teaches. In this lesson we will discover the answers to the following questions: 1. What events occur at the return of Jesus? 2. What events occur during the 1,000 years? 3. What events occur at the end of the 1,000 years?

1. When Jesus returns, what happens to all the righteous (both the righteous dead and the righteous living)? 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17

And the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we which are alive... shall be caught up together.

2. What happens to the wicked or the unsaved? 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2 Thessalonians 2:8

The Lord shall consume...and shall destroy.

3. Where will the wicked remain during this period? Jeremiah 25:33

From one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth.

The Old Testament prophets often described conditions which would occur as the result of Israel's rebellion against God. As the result of disobedience God would allow heathen armies to destroy thousands of Israelites. Jeremiah's prophecy goes far beyond ancient Israel. It reaches into the future. It describes a universal destruction from one end of the earth to the other of those who rebel against God.

4. How does the Bible describe the devastation of the earth at the second coming of Christ? Revelation 16:17-20; Jeremiah 4:23-27

There was a great earthquake...every island fled away, all the cities thereof were broken down. *Jeremiah's prediction fitly describes Israel's destruction at the hand of the Babylonians. As the language of the passage clearly portrays, it also describes the complete devastation of earth at the second coming of Christ.*

5. Will there be any human being alive on earth during this time? Revelation 19:17, 18 (Compare with Jeremiah 4:25.)

An angel...cried...to all the fowls...eat the flesh of the kings...and the flesh of all men.

6. Where will Satan be during the 1,000 years? Revelation 20:1-3

An angel...bound him...and cast him into the bottomless pit...til the thousand years should be fulfilled.

The term "bottomless pit" has an identical meaning to the description "without form, and void" of Jeremiah 4:23. They also parallel the description of the world at Creation—a place of desolation and darkness. These parallels clearly show that Satan is bound to the earth, unable to tempt anyone. The Bible uses the term chains not as literal chains but chains of darkness. (See 2 Peter 2:4)

7. Where did Jesus promise to take His followers at His return? John 14:1-3

In my Father's house...I go to prepare a place for you...I will come again, and receive you unto myself.

8. How does Revelation 20:4 describe the righteous? What are they doing? (See also 1 Corinthians 6:1-3.)

They lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

During the millennium the righteous have an opportunity to observe firsthand the justice and love of God in dealing with the sin problem. In a new way, more forcefully than ever before, they grasp His powerful attempts to save all people. They realize anew that all who are lost are lost because of their own personal rejection of the appeals of Christ.

9. How many general resurrections does the Bible describe? John 5:28, 29

Resurrection of life and resurrection of damnation.

10. Are the wicked resurrected at the same time as the righteous? When do they receive their final reward? Revelation 20:5 (first part)

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.

Some people are confused by the last part of this text "this is the first resurrection" (verse 5, last part). According to the Bible "the dead in Christ rise first" (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). Revelation 20 is discussing the fate of the saved who have been resurrected in the first resurrection. "They live and reign with Christ for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4). This would lead logically to the question "What about the rest of the dead (the unsaved)? In one brief sentence John answers that question: "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years are finished" (Revelation 20:5, first part). The apostle then continues with the main theme of his discussion—the first resurrection, the resurrection of the righteous—by declaring, "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection" (Revelation 20:6).

11. What is Satan's strategy at the end of the 1,000 years? Revelation 20:7-9

Satan...shall deceive the nations...to battle...the beloved city.

12. Where does the Holy City—New Jerusalem—come from? Revelation 21:2

The new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven.

13. How does God prevent Satan's overthrow of the Holy City? Revelation 20:9

Fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

14. What happens after the destruction of the wicked? 2 Peter 3:13

New heavens and a new earth.

*The great challenge of the millennium is that men and women must choose today where they will spend eternity. There is no second chance after Jesus comes. The Bible clearly states, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is that day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2, NKJV). * Thousands will be lost because they are looking forward to a future time to make a decision for Jesus Christ. Jesus invites you to give Him your whole life today. If you have not done so, why not do it now?*

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Lesson 30 - Revelation's Glorious Climax

God's plans for us are more amazing than we can possibly imagine. His ultimate goal for this planet in rebellion is beyond our comprehension. His dream for us is far beyond our wildest imagination. Whatever you imagine heaven to be like, it is more magnificent, more beautiful, more glorious.

In this lesson we will discover the destiny of the redeemed in the earth made new. In 2 Peter 3:13 we read, "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (NKJV). * Jesus said, "The meek . . . shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5, NKJV).

When the earth came forth from the hand of the Creator it was beautiful beyond description. God will eventually destroy sin and sinners and restore earth to its Edenic splendor.

In His Word God has given us a preview of the glories of the new earth as an appetizer to create within us the desire to be there, but He has not answered every question we might have on the subject. We do well to remember Paul's words: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9, NKJV).

Although we cannot understand everything about heaven, we can find answers to some of our most fundamental questions directly from the Bible.

1. Whose control will all earthly kingdoms pass into? Revelation 11:15

The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ.

2. What title does the Bible give Jesus—the ruler of this new heaven and earth? Revelation 17:14

Lord of lords, and kings and kings.

3. When Jesus reigns as the king of Planet Earth, where will His capital city, New Jerusalem, be located? Where will the seat of His government be? Revelation 21:2, 3

He will dwell with them; is with men.

4. How does the Bible describe this city? Revelation 21:16-21

a. The city is laid out as a square that measured:

a. 1,200 furlongs

b. The wall measured:

b. 144 cubits

c. The foundations of the wall were:

c. garnished with all manner of precious stones

d. The twelve gates were:

d. 12 pearls

e. The street of the city was:

e. pure gold, as it were transparent glass

A furlong is about one eighth of a mile. The city is about 1,400 miles, or 345 miles on each side. A cubit is approximately 18 inches. This would make the walls of the New Jerusalem approximately 210 feet high. This fantastic city, the capital of the universe, will descend on earth. The redeemed planet, once fallen in sin, will become the master control center of the entire universe.

5. Since the New Jerusalem is a real city, upon a real planet, will the redeemed have real, immortal bodies? Philippians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54

This mortal must put on immortality; unto his glorious body.

The word "mortal" means subject to disease, decay, and death. The word "immortal" means not subject to death. It means imperishable or eternal. Just as Jesus received a glorious, immortal body at His resurrection, we too will receive a glorious, immortal body when Jesus comes again. Just as Jesus was recognized by His voice, His unique mannerisms, and physical features, so we will recognize our loved ones in heaven.

6. Will these glorious new bodies be subject to sickness, pain, or death? Revelation 21:4; Isaiah 35:5, 6

No more death, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.

7. Will we ever experience sorrow again? Revelation 21:4, 5

No more death, neither sorrow.

8. What practical activities will the redeemed pursue in the new earth? Isaiah 65:21, 22

Build houses, and inhabit them; plant vineyard, and eat the fruit of them.

9. How does the Bible describe our closeness to Jesus in eternity? Revelation 14:4; Revelation 21:2

They which follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

Jesus is the "King of kings." As He travels throughout His vast heavenly kingdom the redeemed will travel with Him as exhibits of His love and grace. As we follow Him now, we are preparing to follow Him throughout all eternity.

10. Will we actually see God in the new earth? Revelation 22:3, 4

They shall see His face.

11. How does the Bible describe the rich fellowship with the redeemed of all ages we shall enjoy in heaven? Matthew 8:11

Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

Revelation's Glorious Climax

One of life's great joys is fellowship—the relationship we share with friends and those we love. The ability to share freely and openly with the people closest to us provides some of our happiest moments. Heaven's friendships will be the richest we have ever experienced. Everyone worth knowing will be there. We will have the opportunity to fellowship with Bible greats such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Daniel, Peter, and Paul. Through the ceaseless ages of eternity we will experience friendship on a level we never imagined possible. We will feel love, concern, understanding, and acceptance in heaven's caring community.

12. How open will our fellowship with Jesus be throughout eternity? Revelation 21:3, 7; Revelation 22:3, 4

I will be his God, and he shall be my son; They shall see his face.

The deepest fellowship in eternity will be our fellowship with Christ. He shall be "our God." We shall be His "sons and daughters." The curse of sin will be gone. The barrier that separated us for millenniums will be torn down. The chains will be severed. Sin will be destroyed. We shall "see His face" and rejoice in His love forever.

13. Will the redeemed continue to worship and praise God throughout all eternity? Isaiah 66:22, 23

From one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me.

The Sabbath is a marvelous symbol of praise and thanksgiving to the God who created us. Each Sabbath the entire universe will meet in a grand celebration of praise. The redeemed of all ages, the saved from every nation, will worship together each Sabbath.

14. What are the citizenship requirements for this new world? Mark 16:16; Revelation 22:14

He who believes and is baptized will be saved. Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they might have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.

Human words can never picture what God has prepared for those who love and obey Him. The wonders of the new world defy imagination. The main thought we must concern ourselves with is: Will I be there? God has made provision for you to be there. You have a personal invitation from Christ Himself. Will you surrender your life to Him and allow Him to fit you for heaven?

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