

If You Are New to the Bible

Most everyone has moved into a new city or neighborhood and had to find their way around. It's confusing at first. But in just a little while we find our way to the grocery store, gas station, and wherever else is important to us. Even with a map, the first few times out of the house are often trips down dead end streets. Who hasn't stopped and asked for directions after having been around the same block umpteen times? Beginners often have a similar experience with Bible study.

You can begin at Genesis and try to read and understand every word of the Bible---but you probably will fail. Without a strong Bible background you'll soon be mired down in foreign names you can't pronounce, geography of which you're not familiar and customs that seem odd and strange to us today. These get acquainted studies will zero in on one topic at a time. This method enables the Bible writers to speak for themselves. It also allows us to get as many points of view as possible about a specific subject---in both the Old and New Testaments. This gives a more well rounded knowledge of Bible subjects. In this study, you will be asked to look up texts in your own Bible and read them for yourself. However, we won't leave you with just a map and compass. We'll even get in and ride along like a tour guide, pointing out important things and places along the way.

The Basics

Lesson 1

What is the Bible?

The Bible is a small collection of 66 holy books. It was written over 1600 years by some 36 authors. The Bible is not a text book, a history book, or a set of lessons laid out in a simple easy to read fashion. Instead, the Bible contains "Salvation History" or records of God working through His people to do His will---for their best good. In short, the Bible is about Jesus the coming Messiah of the Old Testament and Jesus the Savior in the New Testament. The Old Testament people looked forward by faith to His day. Today, using the Bible, we study the long ages of history to find guidance and hope in our daily struggles. In these times, from our Bibles, we learn from the teachings of Jesus and the ancient writings so that, by faith, we can look forward with confidence to the future.

The Old Testament

The 39 books of the Old Testament are the earlier ones and the 27 books of the New Testament are the later ones. The Old Testament books are divided into three basic divisions. Jesus referred to them as, "...the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." Luke 24:44. "The law of Moses" was a common Jewish expression for the first five books of the Old Testament. The books of the Old Testament included in "the prophets," and are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, and the twelve smaller prophetic books. "The psalms" included all the remaining books. The book Genesis is thought to have been written about 1500 B.C. and Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, about 425 B.C.

Jesus made a very clear statement about the value of the Old Testament when He said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." Matthew 5:17 NIV.

Today we arrange the books of the Old Testament into four groups: The five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, and Numbers). The 12 Historical books from Joshua to Ester. The five books written in the form of poetry; from Job to the Song of Solomon. The five Major Prophets from Isaiah to Daniel and the 12 Minor Prophets (smaller books) from Hosea to Malachi.

The So Called "Secret Books"

There is a period of about 400 years between the Old Testament and the New Testament that is called the inter-testamental period. Most Protestants and Jews see it as rich in history but empty of inspired writing. During this time many books were written, but all books that call themselves religious are not necessarily equal. Such is the case with the group of books called "The Apocrypha" pronounced (a pock ra fa). The term apocrypha comes from a Greek word which means hidden or secret. Originally the word was used to suggest that these books contained hidden truth that only privileged people could know. Over the years some of these books were included into an ancient Egyptian Greek version of the Old Testament called the Septuagint (pronounced sep too a gint) and eventually found their way into later versions of the Bible as we know it today.

As history the books and writings from this period have importance because they fill in the time gap between Malachi of the Old Testament and John the Baptist of the New Testament. However, their doctrinal content, as compared to the universally accepted books of the Bible has long been questioned. Originally it was the Roman Catholic scholar, Jerome (died 420 A.D.), who challenged the use of these books for church doctrine and made up the title "Apocrypha" to describe these types of writings.

Later, in the 1500's, the founder of the Lutheran Church, Martin Luther, also doubted the content of the apocryphal books and had them placed in a group at the end of the German Old Testament. He objected to the teachings that were not in harmony with the Bible. In the Apocrypha can be found the idea of purgatory and the supposed benefit of prayers for the dead (2 Maccabees 12:43-45). Also Dr. Luther took exception to the teachings promoting the merit of good works for salvation. (Tobit 12:9; Ecclesiasticus 3:33; 2 Esdras 8:33; etcetera).

In 1546 the Roman Catholic church at the Council of Trent, officially overruled the earlier objections of their own scholar, Jerome, and declared the Apocrypha part of their Holy Scriptures. The official Roman Catholic Bible, the Douay-Rheims (1609) includes the Apocrypha scattered throughout.

Today, Protestants choose not to accept the books of the Apocrypha as inspired. The printing of the Apocrypha as part of the Bible was discontinued in 1827 by the British and Foreign Bible Society and later on by the American Bible Society. However, it can be found as supplemental material in The New English Bible published in 1970.

The New Testament

The New Testament is a collection of books about the life and times of Jesus and the events that happened to His early followers. The time of the writing of the New Testament books dates from after the crucifixion of Jesus to around the end of the first century, perhaps 45 to 95 A.D. The first four books are called the Gospels. The four authors take entirely different approaches in telling their story but share much overlapping information. The book written by Matthew begins with something very important to the Jews, that is establishing that Jesus, the Messiah, had the proper family blood line through the tribe of Judah. The book of Mark begins his Gospel when Jesus is already a grown man and just beginning His public ministry. Doctor Luke, a physician, writes with the careful detail of a man whose occupation trained him to be a careful observer. The doctor opens with the angel Gabriel visiting the yet-to-be father of John the Baptist. The Gospel of John takes us far back in time and informs us that the Word (Jesus Christ) was with God in the beginning.

The book, Acts of the Apostles, also written by Dr. Luke, records the events in the daily lives of the Apostles after Jesus rose from the dead. His account of the history of the early Christian church ends in about 60 A.D. with Paul's imprisonment in Rome. Most of the rest of the New Testament books are letters from the early church leaders to various congregations and groups. Please make a mental note, we only have half of the story when we read these letters. In a way, it is like reading some else's mail. The exact meaning of some of the comments still escapes us today. These letters show that the early church congregations had many problems which prompted much Christian counseling and some stern correction. For instance, to the Corinthian church members, St. Paul wrote, "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you..." 1 Corinthians 5:1 Another time Paul writes to Timothy advising, "Let no man despise thy youth..." 1 Timothy 4:12

The bulk of the letters of the New Testament are letters of advice to specific churches or groups of people. While the letters were not written directly to us, we can and do apply the principles to life today. Good advice is timeless. The New Testament closes with the Book of Revelation, a book of prophecy, thought to have been written by John, the author of the Gospel of John.

Why Only These 66 Books?

The answer is simple. People read them, passed them around and accepted them as inspired. The world has always had books that claimed to be holy, but few have survived the test of time. After a book became accepted and used by God's people it was eventually added to the collection that we call the Holy Bible. Scholars made lists and church councils met to decide on how the list should be made up, but the guiding principles were plain. Did the book agree with the rest of the holy books?

The Jewish Bible has 24 books, most of the Protestant Bibles have 66 and the Catholic Bible includes 73 books. There seems to be a disagreement, but it is really a difference of definition. Of course, the Jews do not accept the New Testament because they do not believe Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah. The Protestants and Catholics only have differences over part the

Old Testament. The difference is over the canon or the list of the books of the Holy Scriptures accepted.

It is said that at the end of the first century, the Jewish rabbis in the councils of Jamnia (90 and 118 A.D) agreed on which of the Hebrew books they felt measured up to be considered authoritative. In reality, they were only confirming what had already been accepted by public opinion of the faithful. We do know that after the councils of Jamnia the questions of which books should be officially included in the Old Testament were no longer considered to be of any consequence. Four criteria were thought to be considered in their deliberations about books to include: (1) the book must come within the period to be considered inspired since prophetic inspiration was thought to have started with Moses and ended with Ezra; (2) what was presented in the books must be in harmony with the Law (the first five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy); (3) the language of the original book should be Hebrew; (4) and generally written within the geographical limits of Palestine. On this basis the books of the Old Testament were chosen for the Palestinian Canon of Scriptures.

In the Christian church during its early years, twenty-seven more books were counted as measuring up to the canon or standard. They also had four basic tests they used to determine whether to include a writing. The criteria were: (1) the book should be written by an apostle or by a person with such a close relationship with the early church leaders that the book would be of an apostolic caliber; (2) the book was to give clear evidence that it was divinely inspired; (3) the book was to be universally accepted by the church; (4) the contents of the book were to be in harmony with other scripture and of a high spiritual nature. The Third Council of Carthage in 397 A.D. seems to have agreed that the 27 books of the New Testament we have today measured up for use in the Church. "It is a remarkable fact that no early Church Council selected the books that should constitute the New Testament Canon. The books that we now have crushed out all rivals, not by any adventitious authority, but by their own weight and worth," so says Henry Thiessen Ph.D in his book Introduction to the New Testament.

Why the message of the Bible is the same from cover to cover.

The Apostle Peter said, "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1:21 NKJV (New King James Version). The Bible writers had an overseer---the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit "carried along" the writers so that they had an accurate recall of events they witnessed and recorded. This is called thought inspiration. The Bible writers were not mere robots writing down the words as if taking dictation. The idea of dictation (verbal inspiration) falls apart as soon as the Bible is translated from one language to another. Exact copying from one language to another is impossible. We can only translate the thoughts from one language to another, not exact words.

You Can Trust the Bible's Accuracy

There is yet another reason why you can trust the Bible's accuracy, it was the devotion of the Hebrew copyists. Accuracy in communicating in ancient times was also not an easy task. The writer's life in Jesus's time was a genuine ordeal without computers, laser printers, fax and copy machines. Early manuscripts were written out entirely in longhand with a crude ink pen on rough paper roll. The Bible tells that the Apostle Paul often dictated his thoughts to a male secretary, called a scribe, who would write them on a scroll which could be as long as 35 feet. Romans 16:22 reads, "I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord." Of course Paul's purpose was that his thoughts should be shared in a number of churches and therefore copies would have to be made.

People wishing to have copies made would take the original to a scriptorium. This equivalent of a modern day publishing house employed professional copyists called scribes. For quick jobs where many copies were needed, a foreman would stand before a number of scribes and read the manuscript out loud. This was the fastest, but least accurate method of copying---kind of a Hebrew speedy print shop. For more serious matters, such as the sacred Word of God, one single scribe would copy from the original manuscript word for word. This process would be repeated time and time again, from the original manuscript, to insure that the copy was as accurate as humanly possible. After completion, the copy would be carefully checked by a proofreader, perhaps even by the author himself. The original copy was called the autograph; today, no autographs of the Holy Scriptures are known.

The Jewish copyists of ancient times followed the strictest rules. Making of copies by dictation was not allowed. Up until 70 A.D. they used a master copy of the Old Testament that was kept in the Temple. Later on, the copyists called the Massorettes, were so careful to avoid an error that they counted the number of words and even the number of letters in an entire book. Thus they determined what would be the middle word, letter or verse and used it as a reference point. If the count was incorrect, the whole manuscript was destroyed...not corrected! It is said that it took a scribe one whole year to make a copy of the Bible.

Those Dead Sea Scrolls

A testimony to the accuracy and the dedication of the people who hand-copied the Holy Scriptures over the years is one that was confirmed with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1948. These very ancient scrolls were discovered by three herdsman who were tending their sheep near a place in Israel called Wadi Qumran. They discovered the scrolls after one playfully tossed a rock into an opening in a nearby cliff. The young man called Mamud the Wolf heard the stone strike something that sounded like pottery. They lowered him into the opening and he discovered what would become one of the greatest archeological discoveries of all time. Hidden in the cave were ancient earthen jars which contained manuscripts and copies of the Bible. Eventually eleven caves were explored which yielded some 600 old manuscripts, 200 of which are Bible related. Of the 50,000 to 60,000 fragments discovered, manuscript fragments of every book of the Old Testament except Esther have been found in the caves.

The importance of this discovery is that some of the materials date back as far as 250 B.C. In comparing the ancient Dead Sea Scrolls to the Old Testament as we know it, we find our present Old Testament Scriptures to have only a few minor differences. Indeed, you can trust the accuracy of the Bible because God has inspired men of all ages to carefully preserve the Holy Scriptures.

The acceptance of the Holy Bible by people all around the planet, its long long history and its powerful positive effect on people's lives causes millions to humbly conclude that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

Letting The Bible Writers Speak for Themselves

1. How much of the Bible is Inspired? II Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (This passage is part of a note from the Apostle Paul to a young pastor named Timothy).

2. Why were the things Jesus did written down? John 20:30,31, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these were written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

3. Jesus spoke highly of the Scriptures (the Old Testament). John 5:39, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

4. Why were both good and bad people's examples recorded? 1 Corinthians 10:6 NIV "Now these things occurred as example, to keep us from setting out hearts on evil things as they did."

In order to live a truly meaningful life, you must have guidance from an outside source. You cannot do it on your own. Remember how hard it can be to travel, even when you have a road map? We all need to ask advice from someone who has wisdom and experience that exceeds our own. The world's finest life guiding directions are found in the Bible and come complete with a listing of detours and dead end streets. The Holy Bible is a collection of thousands of years of

wisdom inspired by God. You begin your journey by asking God for directions. By accepting His Holy Bible as your source of instruction, wisdom and guidance you will find yourself on the highway to having a wonderful life.

Will you accept God's Holy Word as your guide book today?

The following definitions that will help you to better understand this study.

Apostle---one of the original followers that were personally taught by Jesus.

Disciple---a follower of the teachings of Jesus.

Doctrine---the beliefs taught by a religion. In Matthew 7:28,9 we read, "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority..."

Gospel---an English translation of a Greek word that means good tidings. Also the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles is called the gospel.

Lutheran---a member of the church founded in the early 1500's by Dr. Martin Luther, a German, Roman Catholic priest.

Messiah---any expected liberator of a country or people. In Matthew 1:21 we read, "And she [Mary] shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins."

New King James Version (NKJV)---an updated version of the King James Version of the Bible using more modern language.

Protestant---a person who protests. Any Christian not belonging to the Roman Catholic or Orthodox Eastern Church.

Purgatory---In the Roman Catholic teachings, a place of temporary punishment that people undergo before going to heaven.

Testament---The Old and the New Testaments contain the terms of the agreement between God and man on how man can be saved.

The Most Important Miracle of All Time

Lesson 2

National television audiences are held spellbound as they watch people lie trembling on the stage after an encounter with a faith healer. The holy man rushes around shouting Bible verses and casting bolts of healing lightning, all in the name of Jesus.

Drawing crowds as large as rock concerts, these religious superstars hold huge public spectacles in our cities. People shout and cheer as the healer performs his spectacular acts. But sometimes the healer fails.

In California several years ago a couple made what they called a "tragic error." They withheld insulin from their diabetic son because they believed he had been healed through prayer. Their 11-year old son died three days after a traveling evangelist had prayed for their boy's healing. The parents even held a resurrection service after their boy had been buried, still hoping for a miracle. None happened, the child remains in the grave and the sad parents still grieve over their tragic error.

However, hope always springs back. Today there are religious groups that teach healing through prayer as a major part of their religion. However, when their healing methods fail, they face civil responsibility for their actions. Recently several couples have been convicted of the wrongful deaths of their children.

More often than not, human healers fail. Perhaps that's why they don't visit children's hospitals and heal every child there. Maybe that's why they don't go to nursing homes and make everyone well and able to return home. The fact is, human healers fail.

Jesus the Miracle Worker Who Never Fails

Jesus was a healer and miracle worker like no other before or after. He made the blind to see, the deaf to hear and the lame to walk. He healed the sick, cured diseases, fed the hungry, cast out devils and raised the dead to life. St. John says, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." John 21:25.

In the 35 recorded miracles Jesus performed, 23 were physical healings; in three the dead were raised; in another three, food and drink were provided; two were large catches of fish, and the four remaining ones included: calming a storm, walking on the water, withering a fig tree, and providing tax money in a fishes' mouth. Each of Jesus' miracles met a specific material or physical necessity. There is no record of Jesus exercising divine power merely to satisfy idle curiosity.

Not Everyone was Impressed

Miracles didn't always impress people in the same way. John 12:37, "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:" But others were convinced, John 2:23, "Many believed on his name, beholding the signs which he did."

The Golden Thread

In describing the miracles of Jesus there is a common theme, like a golden thread, that comes up time after time. It is the word compassion. Notice when Jesus raised the widow's son to life (Luke 7:11-17) that verse 13 states, "...he had compassion on her..." Likewise in Matthew 14:14, "And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick." When two blind men cried out so loudly that the multitude told them to hold their peace,(Matthew 20:29-34), Jesus had compassion on them.

Whether healing leprosy, raising the dead to life or even healing Peter's mother-in-law, it was all done out of a compassion for the needs of the common man. Large public rallies to show off healing powers are unheard of in the ministry of Jesus. Often to avoid a public spectacle, Jesus said, "...See thou tell no man; but go thy way," Matthew 8:4.

Jesus not only did miracles, Jesus is the miracle of miracles. The Christian church is founded on the basis of the belief in a stupendous miracle, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. But, at first, even his disciples didn't, wouldn't or couldn't believe that Jesus was actually alive again after being dead.

His Disciples Didn't Believe It

Even though the disciples had been eyewitnesses to the wonders Jesus had done, they obviously didn't believe he had actually risen from the dead. For a time, the words of John were also appropriate in describing Christ's followers, John 12:37, "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:"

Jesus prophesied in John 2:19-22, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Today, we know that He meant that the temple would be his physical body, but his followers missed the point. Because of this, following his death, gloom set in as his followers mourned. We read in Mark 16:9-14 that when told of Jesus' resurrection they simply didn't believe it. John's description of them paints the group as a cowardly company hiding out in a little room, John 20:19, "...when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews," John 20:19.

Evidences That a Miracle Happened

It took another miracle to awaken the disciples to what had really happened. Jesus personally came into the disciples hide-out and spoke to the cowering men. Even then, the one named Thomas said, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Mark 20:25. It was after

this that we see a radical change in the attitude of the disciples. They become bold and begin to preach without fear and with power of conviction.

The convincing evidence that Jesus Christ was actually resurrected from the dead is heard in their public speeches, " Acts 3:12-18, "And killed the prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses." vs 15. In Acts 5:29-32 we find a man full of courage saying, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

A miracle had taken place and the public speaking of the disciples showed they finally believed it. Because of the miracle of the resurrection of Christ, these men went on to become miracle workers in their own right. The Book of Acts is a partial record of what they did.

Concluding Thought

Ordinary human faith healers come and ordinary faith healers go. They grow old and die just like the rest of us. Whether or not these people are lightning rods for God or modern day electronic con-artists, at best, any healing is only a temporary fix. Eventually, everyone dies. However, because of the greatest miracle of all time, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, there is hope for all of us to live again, and be permanently healed. "Jesus then said, 'I am the one who raises the dead to life! Everyone who has faith in me will live, even if they die.'" John 11:25. CEV.

The second step to having a wonderful life is accepting the life changing miracle offered to you by Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "If you are tired of carrying heavy burdens, come to me and I will give you rest. Take the yoke I give you. Put it on your shoulders and learn from me. I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest. This yoke is easy to bear, and this burden is light." Matthew 11:28 CEV.

[Will you accept the miracle of a new life that Jesus offers you today?](#)

Lesson term definition:

Miracle---an event that is not explained by scientific laws or something that could be expected in the natural course of events. It is therefore considered a miracle or a special act of God.

An Old Testament Mystery

Lesson 3

One of the least understood parts of the Old Testament begins in the 25th chapter of Exodus and continues through the entire book of Leviticus. Called the Hebrew Sanctuary Service, at first glance, most of its rituals seem very strange to us today.

The Gospel: acted out in the desert sands

It is said that God gave Moses the Law on Mount Sinai and then demonstrated the Gospel in the desert below---through the object lessons in the sanctuary service. In Exodus 25:8,9, Moses is told, "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it."

God instructed them to build a tent made of wooden walls with a roof covering of animal hides and linen. The building was about 15 x 45 feet. It was placed within a fence called the court, which was about 75 feet wide and 50 feet long. It would become their national religious center.

The tabernacle was made to be taken apart and moved. The furniture was built with handles so that it would be easily transported from place to place as the Israelites journeyed in the wilderness. It seems that the tabernacle was intended to serve only until such time as Israel should settle in the Promised Land and a more permanent building could be erected.

The building, or tent, was divided into two parts by a curtain. The front two-thirds is referred to as the holy place and the back one-third as the most holy place. There were no windows. In the first apartment was a seven-branched candlestick, and altar for burning incense, and a small table where symbolic loaves of bread were displayed. In the second apartment, the most holy, there was only one piece of furniture---the ark. The ark was a wooden chest, about 45 inches long and 27 inches wide that contained the Ten Commandments.

Outside in the court, immediately in front of the door of the tabernacle, was a large basin containing water. The priests were to bathe their hands and feet before entering the tabernacle or beginning the service. In the court was also the altar of burnt offering. This altar was 5 feet high and 7-1/2 feet square, hollow inside and overlaid with brass. Twice a day, every morning and evening a lamb was offered on this altar for the nation.

The Sanctuary was an object lesson for a nation of former slaves, most of whom probably could neither read or write. The lessons were taught through a series of sacrifices, both animal and vegetable. All of the rituals were done by priests, a layman could not directly approach God or enter the Sanctuary, the priest was always the go-between or mediator.

One of the lessons taught was that forgiveness of sin can be obtained only through confession and ministration of blood. The lesson was that it costs something to forgive, and that cost was the life of an innocent one. This was taught in many ways, but the most impressive must have been

when a man brought his own animal, confessed his sins over its head and personally cut its throat. The priest ministered the blood, but the man killed the animal with his own hand.

Living Pictures

The Hebrew Sanctuary Service has been compared to a spiritual object lesson to help a nation of people who were just coming out of Egyptian slavery. The object lessons or rituals performed by the priests were live picture illustrations of things that could be especially helpful to persons who had no Bible. However, the rituals were only types or examples of the real thing. In "stained-glass language" we would say that the imaginary is the type and the real is the anti-type. The lamb was the type, Jesus Christ was the anti-type. When John the Baptist proclaimed Jesus the Messiah to the world he said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29. Even though the term "Lamb of God" does not appear in the Old Testament, it is obvious that the New Testament writers clearly understood Jesus Christ to be the Lamb of God.

For a clearer explanation we read in Exodus 29:38, "This is what you are to offer on the altar regularly each day: two lambs a year old. Offer one in the morning and the other at twilight." NIV. It is clear that the Apostles understood the type (a spotless lamb) to represent Jesus Christ the Messiah. Peter refers to Christ as "a lamb without blemish or without spot" in 1 Peter 1:19. St. Paul clearly refers to Jesus Christ in an Old Testament connection as he writes, "...For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." 1 Corinthians 5:7. In the Book of Revelation, John mentions Jesus Christ as the "Lamb" some 28 times.

The New Testament Explains the Old Testament

The sacrificed lamb of the Old Testament (the type) represented Jesus the crucified Messiah of the New Testament (the anti-type). With this basic understanding we can better understand some of the symbolism found in the Hebrew Sanctuary Service. It seems reasonable to assume that the people were taught the meanings of the rituals by the priests. Many things done in the Sanctuary had obvious lessons, but others remain unexplained until this day. Were it not for the insights of the New Testament much of the meaning of the sanctuary furnishings and rituals would be unclear. The book of Hebrews is especially helpful.

The New Testament book of Hebrews is thought to have been written as a general letter to those who were Hebrews by birth and Christians by rebirth. The writer refers to Christ in Old Testament Sanctuary terms, "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God..." Here, in the book of Hebrews, the writer repeatedly refers to Jesus Christ as performing duties of a "high priest"---the highest ranking member of the priesthood in ancient Israel. Indeed there were numerous priests, in fact by the time of Jesus there were so many that they could only serve part-time so that everyone could have a turn. However, there was only one High Priest. Only he could enter into the place where the Ten Commandments were kept---and that was only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

God and Man At Peace with Each Other

Every year, in the early fall, Israel's high priest conducted a special service that is often referred to as the Day of Atonement. It was the day of "At-One-Ment" or the day when God and His people were "at-one." In the Contemporary English Version of the Bible (copyright the American Bible Society, 1995) this day is referred to as "The Great Day of Forgiveness." The sanctuary services all year long built up to this special day. As we see it now, this was the final part of the object lesson that demonstrated God's plan of salvation.

The people were told: "No one is to work on that day---it is the Great Day of Forgiveness, when sacrifices will be offered to me, so that I will forgive your sins." Leviticus 23:28 CEV. The 16th chapter of Leviticus contains very detailed instructions for the priests and people. In brief, the high priest represented the people and stood before God on their behalf. Through the rituals and animal sacrifices the people were shown that one time, once and for all, sin would be forgiven and the record wiped clean. God instructed: "Aaron, you must next sacrifice the goat for the sins of the people, and you must sprinkle its blood inside the most holy place..... By doing this, you will take away the sins that make both the most holy place and the people of Israel unclean." Leviticus 16:15,16 CEV.

The New Testament writer of the book of Hebrews says of Jesus, "We have a great high priest, who has gone into heaven, and he is Jesus the Son of God." This statement brings us back to the Old Testament object lesson that pointed forward to Jesus Christ our high priest in heaven, who, for real--takes away the sins that make us unclean. Or as we read in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The ritual of the high priest going yearly into the most holy place and acting out his special role continued down until the time of Christ's death on the cross. It was at the cross where the object lesson ended. A true sacrifice for sins was made. The death of Jesus is described as, "Around noon the sky turned dark and stayed that way until the middle of the afternoon. The sun stopped shining, and the curtain in the temple split down the middle. Jesus shouted, 'Father I put myself in your hands!' Then he died." CEV.

The curtain splitting down the middle marked the departure of the presence of God from the most holy place. When Jesus died, the whole purpose of the object lesson of the Hebrew Sanctuary ended. It ceased to have a purpose. The type had met the anti-type. The real replaced the imaginary. The rituals of the priests were no longer necessary because the true Lamb of God had been slain. Recalling the words of John the Baptist we read, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29.

Letting the New Testament Writers Explain Salvation:

1. Who needs what Jesus Christ has to offer? _____ "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23.

2. What can you do? _____
Acts 16:30,31, "...Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.'"

3. Can I really know I'm saved? _____
John 5:11-13, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. There things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life..."

4. And Jesus assures us: _____
John 6:47, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." John 6:47.

5. Jesus Christ is our High Priest: _____ 1
Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all,"

Concluding Thoughts

We can get out of this world alive, but just like the Hebrews of old, we must look by faith to the Lamb of God. It is the way out, then and now. The conditions are still the same. By faith we look back to the cross and the Lamb that was slain, just as those of old looked forward in faith to the Lamb that would be slain. Step Three to having a wonderful life is to accept the free gift.

[Will you accept this gift today?](#)

Definitions that will help you better understand this study.

Exodus--the book that can be considered in two parts. The first describes the life of the Israelites as slaves in Egypt and introduces Moses. The second part is about their escape from Egypt and their journey to Mt. Sinai where God gave them the Ten Commandments.

Hebrew---another name for an Israelite

Leviticus---the book containing the laws that were to be used to govern the Israelite nation.

Mediator---one who stands between two parties for the purpose of reaching an agreement suitable to both of them.

Sanctuary---a building set aside for the worship of God. In this Bible study the word refers to a tent.

Tabernacle---a place to worship

The Great Mystery of You

Lesson 4

A Bible writer wondered and said, "I often think of the heavens your hands have made, and the moon and stars you put in place. Then I ask, "Why do you care about us humans?" Psalm 8:3-4 CEV*. Part of the answer to the Bible writer's question is found in one of the greatest wonders on this planet---which is, how unique you are. You are absolutely one-of-a-kind, there are no doubles, no clones. The rule of excess production that produces many extras in the animal kingdom so that a few can survive does not apply to humans. Of the seventy-five billion people who have been born on this planet, we can safely say no duplicates were made because what has been discovered about the laws of genetics.

Scientists say that there is only one chance in seventy-trillion of another person being physically exactly like you, excluding identical twins. An enormous amount of dried beans will help illustrate this point.

First, imagine you are standing in front of a huge sack of dried navy beans. The sack is four feet across and seven miles high. Suppose that each bean contained a complete set of blueprints to make one person like you. These plans would include your sex, whether you would be big boned or small, the size of your brain, your race, eye and hair color plus everything else that together makes you a human being. Each bean in the giant bag would represent a different set of plans---and all seventy trillion of them are in the bag.

Now, imagine the beans spilled into a giant pile. A bean pile three miles square and six feet deep containing seventy trillion beans. Next, go stand in the middle of the pile and survey the sea of beans all around you. Six feet deep and over a mile and a half in every direction. These beans represent the different genetic combinations possible from the gene pool of the human family. Every bean represents a unique person. Every bean is different from the one beside it. No two are alike.

It is estimated that only one thousandth of the genetic combinations have been used up since the beginning of life on this planet. This means there are blueprints in this giant bean pile for every person who has ever lived and enough left over to populate one thousand more planets like earth!

You are one-of-a-kind. This great mystery of your individuality is a clear cut evidence of a Creator God at work making people one person at a time. In wonder the Psalmist wrote, "...I praise you because of the wonderful way you created me. Everything you do is marvelous! Of this I have no doubt." Psalm 139:14 CEV.

Two Thumbs Up for Special Gifts

When compared to the rest of the living inhabitants of this planet, humans have one striking difference and advantage. Your brain sets you apart. Nearly half of all species of animals have no brain at all. Those that do have some sort of brain are no match for the superior ability of people to think, memorize and use the imagination.

Scientists have developed a method for predicting intelligence by comparing the weight of the spinal cord to the brain. They have found that lower animals have brains weighing two to four times as much as their spinal cords. In more complex animals, such as apes, the brain weighed nearly fifteen times as much as the spinal cord. However, the astounding fact is that a man's brain is fifty-five times heavier than his spinal cord! I would say more, but you can figure it out.

Another gift that humans have are thumbs---they're special. Opposable thumbs and highly developed hands connected to superior brain power are advantages humans do not share with animals. The ability to delicately oppose every finger with the thumb makes it possible to develop the highly specialized hands of a surgeon or just be an ordinary person turning the pages of a book.

Study for Yourself:

We see Jesus at the Creation _____

John 1:3, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."

The Apostle Paul speaks of Jesus and Creation: _____

_____ Colossians 1:16, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that in earth, visible and invisible..."

The writer of Hebrews speaks of Jesus as Creator _____

_____ Hebrews 1:2, "He hath in these last day spoken unto us by his Son, who he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;"

Concluding Thought

The Holy Bible makes it clear that Jesus made you special. Jesus said, "Aren't two sparrows sold for only a penny? But your Father knows when any one of them falls to the ground. Even the hairs on your head are counted. So don't be afraid! You are worth much more than many sparrows. Matthew 10:29-31 CEV.

You are a step of Creation higher than the animal kingdom. There are not 10,000 clones of you, made with the hope that one might survive. Considering all these things, will you trust your Creator to take control of your life and re-create you with a new attitude, a new outlook and a new life? The choice is yours because you were created with the power to make it.

[Having a wonderful life is making the choice? Will you do it today?](#)

*note: CEV is an abbreviation for "The Contemporary English Version" and is copyrighted by the American Bible Society