



First Steps

By Marni Shideler McKenzie

Lessons 1-5

Explorer's Bible Study
2652 Hwy. 46 South
P.O. Box 425
Dickson, TN 37056-0425
615-446-7316
www.explorerbiblestudy.org

About the Author

Marni Shideler McKenzie attended the University of Mississippi as a Carrier Scholar and received B.A. and M.A. degrees in English. Marni accepted Jesus Christ as her Savior while in college and immediately began to study the Bible carefully. In 1974, Marni married William H. McKenzie III. She taught high school English before the birth of their first child and has used her time ever since to organize, write, and teach Bible study classes for adults and children. Marni has been a teaching-leader for Explorer's Bible Study since 1979, teaching three classes weekly and producing videos for classes without a teacher.

Marni began writing curriculum for Explorer's when the idea for providing materials for children and youth was introduced by then executive director Thomas Constance Jr. At his urging, she started writing youth material for the *Quest* courses. These included *Early History of Israel*, *Words of Wisdom*, *Promises Fulfilled*. Several of her adult studies, including *Faith at Work*, *God's Perfect Plan*, *The Only True God*, and *The Gospel of John* have been adapted into Quest courses. She has written the following courses for the adult curriculum: *Judges and Kings of Israel*; *Prophets of Israel*; *Romans, Galatians, and James: Faith at Work*; *Hebrews and First Peter*; *God's Perfect Plan*, which is a course on Bible prophecy; *The Only True God: Knowing the God of the Bible*; *The Gospel of Mark*; and *Making Sure of the Truth: A Study of Philemon, Colossians, Jude, 2 Peter, and 1,2,3 John*. Marni also has revised two of Mrs. Constance's original courses, *Early History of Israel* and *The Gospel of John*.

Marni and Bill make their home in Batesville, Mississippi, where Bill is an attorney in private practice. His continual help, encouragement, and provision have freed Marni to teach and write for Explorer's all these years. Their children are Melanie, who is married to Lent Ervin Thomas IV of Batesville, MS; William H. McKenzie IV, who is married to Marilyn Callahan McKenzie of Birmingham, AL; and Joanna McKenzie of Oxford, MS. They have six grandchildren: Jackson, Ruthie, and Rhett Thomas and Henry, Abigail, and Caroline McKenzie.

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We believe the Bible is God's Word, a divine revelation, in the original language verbally inspired in its entirety, and that it is the supreme infallible authority in all matters of faith and conduct. (2 Peter 1:21; 2 Timothy 3:16)

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MAKING SENSE OF THE BIBLE

So, you want to know more about God and the Bible? We won't debate the existence of God in these few lessons. We will assume that if you have picked up this study book to participate in a "first steps" course, you already believe there is a God and that He is worth knowing. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews explains how necessary these basic beliefs are for anyone wanting to get closer to God:

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6, emphasis added)

After all, no major religion of the world denies that there is a God. Those believing in just one are called monotheistic (*monos* meaning "single" and *theos* meaning "god"). However, some religions, ancient and modern, believe in several gods and are described as polytheistic (*poly* meaning "many").

We make another assumption in this course—that you believe in the existence of Jesus. The historical life of Jesus is not debated. He is widely accepted as having been a superior teacher and prophet with power to work miracles that can only be categorized as supernatural. For proof of this high regard, you only have to remember that the whole world splits time with His birth: BC, before Christ, and AD, *anno domini*, Latin for "year of the Lord," for the period after His birth. Yes, we know that some writers and publishers are trying to camouflage that distinction by changing those initials to BCE ("before common era") and CE ("common era"), but that still does not erase the fact that the accepted dividing point of centuries and centuries of timekeeping is still traced to Jesus' birth on earth and the continuing impact of His life, death, and resurrection on the world at large.

There is something else about Jesus Christ that we will explore. He is accepted by those called Christians (literally "little christs" or "little anointed

ones") as not only having existed historically but having also always existed eternally: fully human yet fully divine. We will look into this together.

What questions can you expect to have addressed in these lessons about God and Jesus and the Bible?

Who is God and how can we know Him?
What's the big deal about the Bible?
Where did we come from and
where are we going?
Does God care about me?

1. How can we know the true God? He has told us about Himself. He gave us a book which He superintended and inspired and protected. We *can* know what He is like and what He thinks of us and what He requires of us! So, in the first lesson we will begin by examining how the Bible is structured, what it contains, and how it is organized. The goal is to get you comfortable negotiating its pages.

2. What different kinds of writings are found in the Bible? The first lesson will also explain how *genre* or literary types used throughout the Bible affect how passages are to be interpreted. Context is critical to understanding Scripture.

3. Beyond the mechanics of structure and differences in *genre*, what big ideas can you expect to find within the Bible's pages? What vital questions about human existence are answered? There are several important threads of truth woven into the fabric of the entire Bible. We will trace the biggest ones:

The Creation: Evidence for an omnipotent and benevolent God.

The Curse: Explanation of sin and the corruption of creation.

The Covenant: God's plan for repair and redemption of His creation.

The Christ: The promise and provision of the Champion provided to undo the curse.

The Community: The power of God's Holy Spirit at work in believers because of the sacrifice of Christ and the covenant that He made possible.

So, jump right in. Read the instructions, do the homework, join in the discussion, listen to the teaching, and let your understanding begin!

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. (Colossians 1:9-10)



Study Procedure: Read the Scripture references before answering questions. Unless otherwise instructed, use the Bible only in answering questions and note supporting verses. Some questions may be more difficult than others but try to answer as many as you can. Pray for God's wisdom and understanding as you study and don't be discouraged if some answers are not obvious at first.

FIRST DAY: Category and Chronology of the Old Testament

How in the world can we get to know God? You'll like this answer: He gave us His authorized biography! It is called the Bible, which is an interesting title in itself, since it literally means "library." It should not surprise you that it takes a library to contain the basic information about God.

The Bible is the most popular book of all the ages, the number one best seller of all time, year after year. However, if you are new to its pages, you are going to need some help negotiating its twists and turns. So, before we try to answer your big spiritual questions, we want to show you how to use this wonderful book which holds those answers.

1. Locate the table of contents or the list of all the books contained in your Bible. The list of books is divided into two divisions. Name those divisions below.
(a) _____ (b) _____
2. How many books are listed in each of the two divisions and what is the total number?
(a) _____ (b) _____ (c) total books: _____
3. Most people don't realize it, but there is an interesting organization of all the books within these two divisions. To discover the pattern, write out the names of the books of the Old Testament as they appear in your list under these headings below. Some are done for you to keep you on track.

OLD TESTAMENT

(a) History	(b) Poetry	(c) Prophecy
1. Genesis	1. Job	1. Isaiah
2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____	4. Ezekiel
5. _____	5. Song of Solomon	5. _____
6. Joshua		6. Hosea
7. _____		7. _____
8. _____		8. _____
9. _____		9. _____
10. _____		10. Jonah
11. 1 Kings		11. _____
12. 2 Kings		12. _____
13. _____		13. _____
14. _____		14. Zephaniah
15. Ezra		15. _____
16. _____		16. _____
17. Esther		17. Malachi

4. Within these categories of the Old Testament, the books are placed in a chronological pattern. To help you see this, do the following:
 - (a) Circle the first five books in the **history** category.
 - (b) Beside these books write: "The Pentateuch/The Law/The Books of Moses." These are the common names for the first five books of the Bible which are credited to Moses as their editor and compiler. *Pentateuch* is Greek for "five scrolls."
 - (c) Next, circle the first five books in the **prophecy** category.
 - (d) Beside these books write: "Major Prophets." These are in chronological order within this group. They are called "major" because they are the longest books of prophecy.
 - (e) Circle the **prophecy** books numbered 6-17. Label these "Minor Prophets." They are not "minor" in message but just shorter in length. These are also listed chronologically within this section.

SECOND DAY: Category and Chronology of the New Testament

5. Now let's look at the New Testament, which was written in the last half of the first century AD but compiled into one volume about fifty years later. The categories are chronologically ordered, but the books within the categories are not necessarily presented in the precise order of their composition. They were all written within about a forty-year span, but subject matter took precedence in establishing their placement within the categories. From your Bible's table of contents, place the New Testament books in their categories. Again, some are done for you.

NEW TESTAMENT

(a) History	(b) Epistles	(c) Prophecy
1. Matthew		
2. _____	1. Romans	14. Hebrews
3. _____	2. 1 _____	15. _____
4. _____	3. 2 _____	16. _____
5. _____	4. _____	17. _____
	5. Ephesians	18. _____
	6. _____	19. _____
	7. _____	20. _____
	8. 1 _____	21. Jude
	9. 2 _____	
	10. 1 _____	
	11. 2 _____	
	12. Titus	
	13. _____	

- (d) Circle the first four books of **history** and label them "Gospels." These record the details of Jesus' earthly life and ministry from specific viewpoints. The fifth book, called Acts, documents the "acts" or actions of the Holy Spirit in the lives of first-century Christian believers.
- (e) On the lines below the heading **epistles** (literally, "letters"), write "Paul's" over numbers 1-13, to identify their common author, and then write "General" over 14-21, to denote various authors.
- (f) Above the one book listed under **prophecy**, write "John, the apostle." He received and recorded this series of end-time prophetic visions.

THIRD DAY: Genre

6. Another important element for understanding God's message to us through the Bible, besides identifying category or chronology, is the recognition of *genre*. Genre denotes the particular content, style, or form of a passage. For example, a poem or a song must be interpreted differently than an accounting report. For a preview of the variety found in the Bible, match each Scripture excerpt with its genre from the choices below:

poetry (psalm or song) **genealogy** **historical narrative** (information about an event) **accounting report** **vision/dream** **prophetic message** **sermon**
parable (fictional illustration) **proverb** (wise saying)

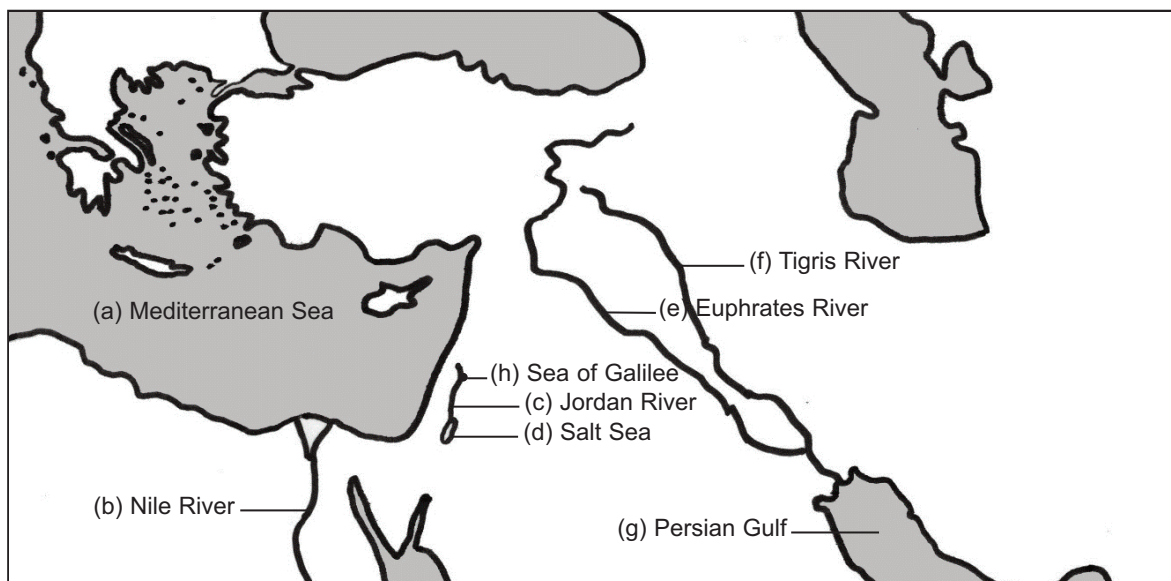
- (a) _____ *So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place from afar. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey; I and the boy will go over there and worship and come again to you."*
- (b) _____ *His offering was one silver plate whose weight was 130 shekels, one silver basin of 70 shekels, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, both of them full of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering; one golden dish of 10 shekels, full of incense; one bull from the herd, one ram, one male lamb a year old, for a burnt offering....*
- (c) _____ *These are the sons of Aaron: Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son, Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerahiah his son, Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son, Zadok his son, Ahimaaz his son.*
- (d) _____ *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.*
- (e) _____ *Train up a child in the way he should go;
even when he is old he will not depart from it.
The rich rules over the poor,
and the borrower is the slave of the lender.*
- (f) _____ *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.*
- (g) _____ *"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."*
- (h) _____ *[He] saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. In it were all kinds of*

animals and reptiles and birds of the air. And there came a voice to him: "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean." And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has made clean, do not call common." This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

- (i) _____ "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.' Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

FOURTH DAY: Geography

The writings contained in the Bible can be tied to a specific time frame, context, or situation. Correct interpretation of Scripture must take into consideration not only what was said but when, where, why, and to whom it was said. Context is always key for finding true meaning. Scripture cannot be made to mean what it never meant. One part of context that can be easily mastered is geography. By learning the names and locations of just a few bodies of water and names of countries or regions, you will be able to place any passage of the Bible in its original geographical setting.

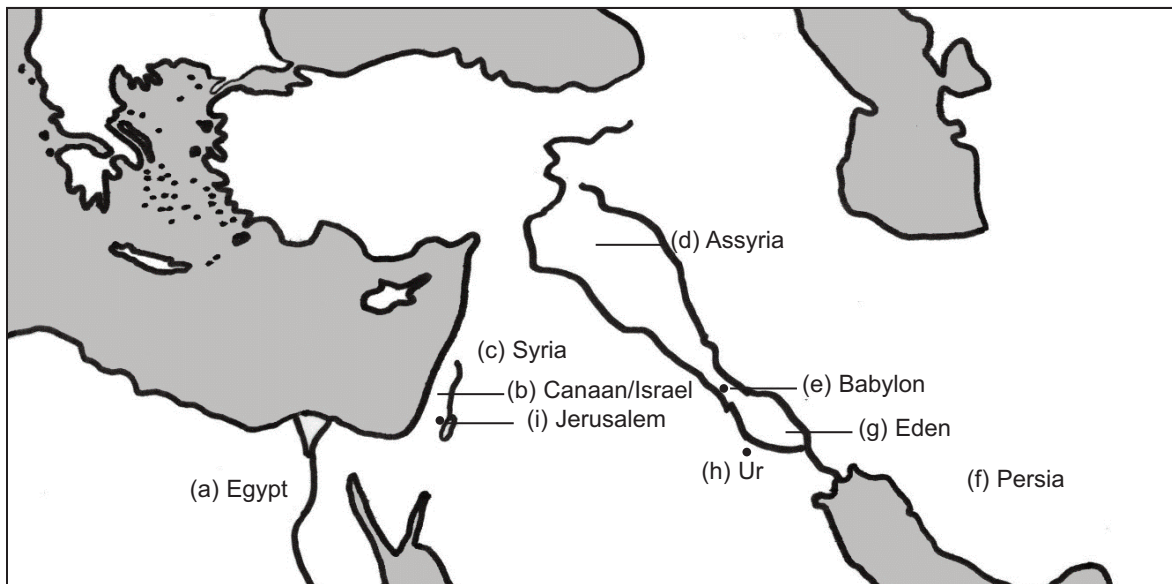


7. Take time to study the name and placement of each of these bodies of water most mentioned in the Bible:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| (a) Mediterranean Sea | (e) Euphrates River |
| (b) Nile River | (f) Tigris River |
| (c) Jordan River | (g) Persian Gulf |
| (d) Salt Sea (also called Dead Sea) | (h) Sea of Galilee (also called Sea of Tiberias or Lake of Gennesaret) |

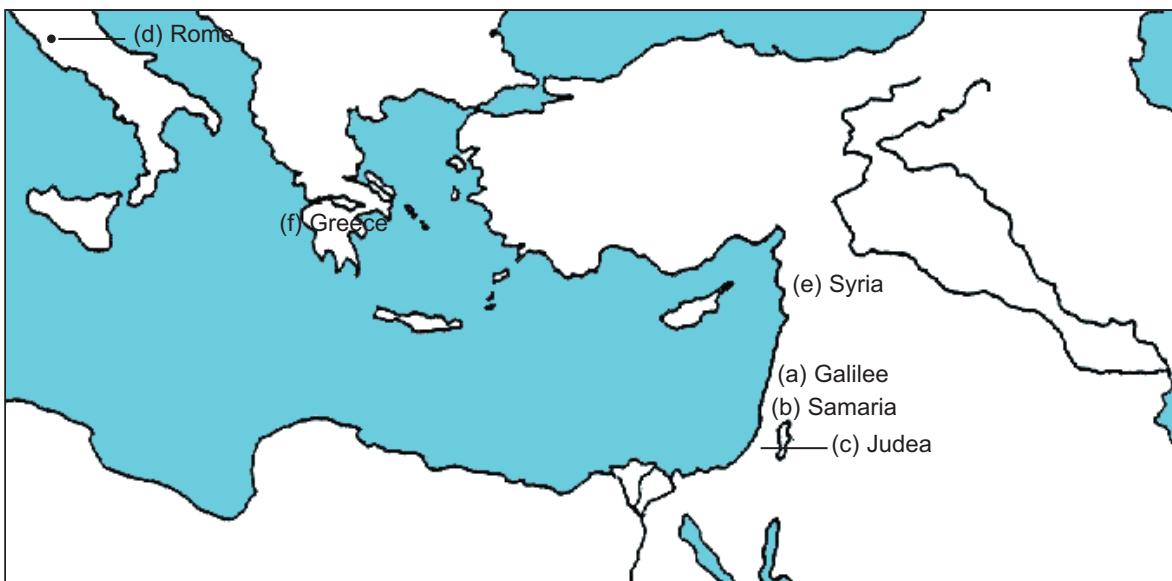
8. Take time to study these countries/cities/regions featured in the Old Testament:

- | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|----------|---------------|
| (a) Egypt | (c) Syria | (e) Babylon | (g) Eden | (i) Jerusalem |
| (b) Canaan/Israel | (d) Assyria | (f) Persia | (h) Ur | |



9. Take time to study these countries/cities/regions featured in the New Testament:

- | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------|------------|
| (a) Galilee | (b) Samaria | (c) Judea | (d) Rome | (e) Syria | (f) Greece |
|-------------|-------------|-----------|----------|-----------|------------|

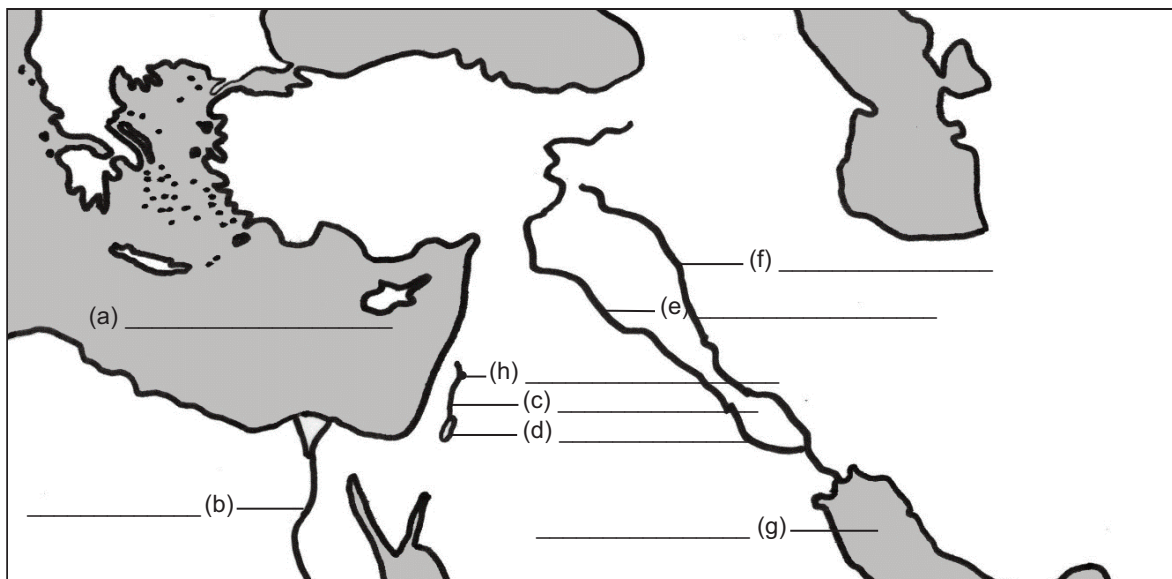


FIFTH DAY: Review

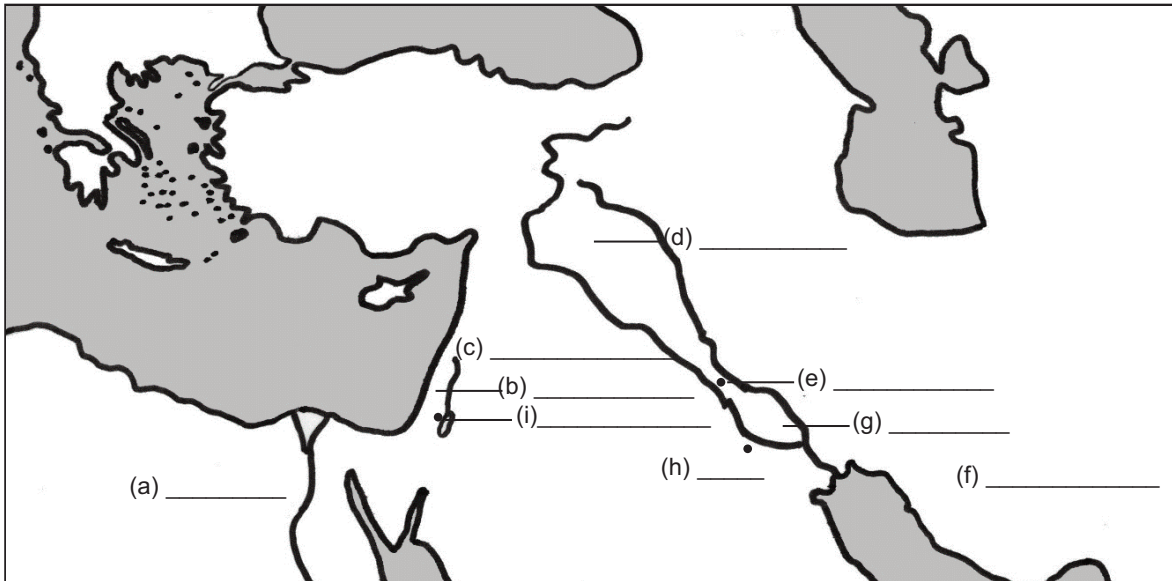
You have taken in a lot of information this week. Take time now to review.

10. Matching: Books of the Bible

- | | |
|--|--|
| _____ (a) the two divisions of the Bible | _____ (j) This is the book of New Testament prophecy. |
| _____ (b) number of Old Testament Books | _____ (k) These are two factors in the organization of the books of the Bible. |
| _____ (c) number of New Testament Books | _____ (l) writer of the majority of the New Testament epistles or letters |
| _____ (d) categories of books in the Old Testament | _____ (m) span of time in which the New Testament books were written |
| _____ (e) categories of books in the New Testament | _____ (n) total number of books in the Bible |
| _____ (f) traditional group names for the first five Old Testament books | _____ (o) These are important considerations in interpretation of Scripture. |
| _____ (g) the five books of Old Testament poetry | |
| _____ (h) the five major Old Testament books of prophecy | |
| _____ (i) These contain details of Jesus' life and ministry. | |
-
- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel | 10. 66 |
| 2. history, epistles, prophecy | 11. Revelation |
| 3. history, poetry, prophecy | 12. chronology and category |
| 4. Old Testament and New Testament | 13. genre and context |
| 5. 40 years | 14. Pentateuch, the Law, Books of Moses |
| 6. Paul | 15. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon |
| 7. the four gospels | |
| 8. 27 | |
| 9. 39 | |

Fill in the Blanks: Geography**11. Prominent Bodies of Water in the Bible**

12. Important Geographical Locations of the Old Testament



13. Important Geographical Locations of the New Testament.



14. Now that you have some basic ideas about the organization and makeup of the Bible, write below what you hope to learn in this study from a spiritual or informational standpoint as we prepare to take a few more “first steps” to faith.

Notes



A BOOK LIKE NO OTHER

When you take the driver's seat in an unfamiliar car, you probably pause for a few minutes to get familiar with important features like the ignition, gear shift, gas and brake pedals, lights, blinkers, wipers, charging sites for electronics, and controls for temperature and radio. You might also adjust the seat and mirrors. We can assume, since you chose a course called *First Steps*, that you probably also needed to pause and locate the important features of your Bible. Hopefully, the first week's assignments helped you do this. In these notes, you will be shown a bit more.

Dated

The two divisions of the Bible are the Old Testament and the New Testament. The first one explains humanity's need for and God's promise to give a coming Savior, while the second testament documents the arrival of that Savior. The word *testament* is defined as the proof or evidence that something is true. Since the Bible is the book that describes God and His plans for the world, we can expect that the two testaments will deliver much evidence supporting God's truth.

The Bible is a book like no other. It was compiled and composed by about forty authors over approximately 1,500 years. Moses is credited as the author/editor/compiler of the first five books of the Old Testament (John 5:46). Moses most likely did his recording and compiling during the forty years in the wilderness, following the Exodus from Egypt, which is dated at about 1440 BC. While the selection (canonizing) and compilation of the New Testament were not completed until about AD 150, all the documents used in the New Testament were themselves put down in writing by AD 90.

Witnessed

Moses evidently accessed oral and written records of the eras preceding his own. The Bible makes reference to some of these documents by

name. Some of the passages, as in the creation account of Genesis, which had to be revealed to Adam from God, are poetical in their wording, certainly helpful for accurate memorization and transmission to succeeding generations.

Adding to the reliability of Moses' record were the extraordinary life spans of the people he introduces in Genesis. These provided eyewitness testimony about historical events to several succeeding generations. For example, Adam's grandson Enosh was still alive during Noah's early years. Noah's son Shem lived during the days of Abraham. That overlapping of witnesses helped ensure the accuracy of transmitted information in the Bible's foundational book of Genesis.

Not only that, but all the material later authorized for inclusion in the New Testament was written and circulated while those who had known Jesus personally were still alive and available to confirm or, if necessary, protest the accuracy of any record or commentary. We have reliable witnesses for the truths of the Bible.

Inspired

Not only is the value of the Bible measured by historical dating or reliability of eyewitnesses, but it is also a book that has been supernaturally inspired, preserved, and empowered by God. These claims can be found within its library of 66 books:

Psalm 19:7-11:

*The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure,
making wise the simple;
the precepts of the LORD are right,
rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is pure,
enlightening the eyes;
the fear of the LORD is clean,
enduring forever;*

*the rules of the LORD are true,
and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold,
even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey
and drippings of the honeycomb.
Moreover, by them is your servant warned;
in keeping them there is great reward.*

2 Timothy 3:14-17: [Paul to his protégé Timothy] *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

Hebrews 4:12: *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

Unified

Another amazing feature of the Bible is its unity. Although its authors wrote their words centuries apart, sometimes in countries far apart, while experiencing vastly different circumstances, the Bible sustains a unity of message despite the plurality of its authors. *E pluribus unum* could be the motto for the Bible too: “out of many, one.” This unity can be confirmed through the repetition of major ideas about God and His relationship with His created beings which thread themselves throughout the categories of history, poetry, prophecy, and epistles as well as the various genres in which these ideas are expressed. These recurring thematic threads unifying both testaments—such as creation, covenant, and the Christ—will be traced for you in the next lessons.

Contextual

There is something unique about the Bible that is not found in the books associated with other major religions. In many of those, various quotations are collected for the reader without information describing the context in which the statements were made. Sometimes these compilations were made centuries after the deaths of the leaders as well as all the followers who knew them personally. The collected oral transmissions passed down through generations of followers often differed from sect to sect. Written fragments which disagreed with the official collections were in some cases destroyed to prevent later scrutiny.

However, without the facts of specific context in which statements were made—the setting, timing, occasion, and audience—no quotation can be properly interpreted and, as a result, might easily be manipulated to mean what it never meant. For example, something perfectly acceptable when said to a spouse in the privacy of the home may be absolutely unacceptable if spoken to another person in public. Context is key to interpretation and understanding of a quotation or historical event. We are aware in our media-driven culture of the potential danger of a detached “sound bite” from its surrounding spoken context. To prevent such misunderstanding, the Bible’s authors commonly provide the details that establish the setting for what was spoken or recorded.

Biblical context is established through the biographical details of people involved as well as historical data pertaining to the situations in which a specific quotation is made. In addition, there are numerous copies still in existence of ancient portions of the Bible, and these corroborate the authenticity of the accepted documents. Copyist errors are amazingly few, and accuracy of transmission is superior to any other known written work.

Circulated

Since the printing press was invented in 1455, over six **billion** copies of the Bible have been printed in over 2,000 languages! It remains the best seller of

all time. The Wycliffe Bible Translators—taking full advantage of computer technologies—are in reach of their goal of having a translation of some portion of the Bible in progress for every known language by 2025. There are over 7,000 documented languages, with about 1,900 still in need of translators who will make the Bible available to them in their “heart” language.

The Bible is truly a book like no other in its corroboration by eyewitnesses, inspiration by God, unity of ideas through multiple authors, contextual details to establish accurate interpretation, and worldwide circulation. You can trust it for answers to your most difficult questions. After all, it is a book like no other given to us by a God like no other, and He is the subject of our next lesson.

Read More About It:

How To Read the Bible for All Its Worth, Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart

Knowing the Bible 101: A Guide to God’s Word in Plain Language, Bruce Bickel and Stan Jantz

The Finish Line: Stories of Hope Through Bible Translation, Bob Creson

30 Days to Understanding the Bible, Max Anders

Bibliographical Historical Reliability Table New Testament versus Other Ancient Works

Author and/or Work	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	No. of Copies
Caesar	100-44 BC	900 AD	1,000 years	10
Livy	59 BC -17 AD			20
Plato (Tetralogies)	427-347 BC	900 AD	1,200 years	7
Tacitus (Annals)	100 AD	1100 AD	1,000 years	20
Pliny the Younger (History)	61-113 AD	850 AD	750 years	7
Thucydides (History)	460-400 BC	900 AD	1,300 years	8
Suetonius (De Vita Caesarum)	75-160 AD	950 AD	800 years	8
Herodotus (History)	480-425 BC	900 AD	1,300 years	8
Sophocles	496-406 BC	1000 AD	1,400 years	193
Catullus	54 BC	1550 AD	1,600 years	3
Euripides	480-406 BC	1100 AD	1,500 years	9
Demosthenes	383-322 BC	1100 AD	1,300 years	200*
Aristotle	384-322 BC	1100 AD	1400 years	49**
Aristophanes	450-385 BC	900 AD	1,200 years	10
Homer (Iliad)	900 BC	400 BC	500 years	643
New Testament	40-100 AD	125 AD	25 years	Over 24,000

*All from one copy

**Of any one work

This is included to show how close to the time of Christ the New Testament was written and compiled and how many corroborating ancient copies exist of it as compared to other commonly accepted ancient writings with far less reliability because of time gaps between the author's original words and the published record of them. For example, we willingly accept quotes from Plato or Aristotle, where there is a gap of 1,200 years between the original and the first known copy, yet we debate quotations and activities of the New Testament that occurred and were printed while eyewitnesses to the events were still living and able to challenge or correct them. Also, there are over 24,000 manuscripts of the New Testament in existence today by which the content can be checked for authenticity and similarity.

Study Procedure: Read the Scripture references before answering questions. Unless otherwise instructed, use the Bible only in answering questions and note supporting verses. Some questions may be more difficult than others but try to answer as many as you can. Pray for God’s wisdom and understanding as you study and don’t be discouraged if some answers are not obvious at first.

FIRST DAY: God Creates (Read Genesis 1)

Note: Genesis means “beginning” and is our starting place for finding out what God has told us about Himself.

1. From Genesis 1:1, *who* did *what* and *when*?
2. (a) Think about this opening verse carefully. The Bible could have had any number of beginning statements, but this one was selected. So, what is the first thing God wants us to know about Himself?

(b) What meaning does that have for you?
3. Genesis 1:2 begins with this: “*The earth was without form and void....*” The descriptive words underlined are the Hebrew words *tohu* (unformed) and *bohu* (unfilled). The rest of Genesis 1 through the first three verses of Genesis 2 describes how God remedied that condition.
(a) What action did God repeatedly take to form and fill His creation? Comment on this.

(b) Give a few examples of what was formed and what was filled in that week of creation.

4. God not only identifies Himself as Creator in the first verse of the Bible, but He repeats this claim over and over, in almost every book, so it won't be missed! Pick two or three of the examples below to read, summarizing or paraphrasing the main point of each.
- Deuteronomy 4:32 Nehemiah 9:6 Job 26:7 Psalm 8:5 Psalm 102:25
Acts 14:15 Hebrews 11:3

SECOND DAY: God Cares and Commands (Read Genesis 2)

Note: Accepting God as Creator is the first layer in the foundation of our faith. There is no concept of power bigger than the One who created everything. When this idea is believed, a person may next ask: *"Does such an all-powerful Being care personally about me?"* This will be today's study.

5. Enjoy reading Genesis 2, beginning with verse 4, and list several examples of God's special interest in and care for human beings. Make sure you give the verse numbers which inspired your answers.
6. Skip for a moment to Genesis 3:8-9. From just these two verses, how personal was God's relationship with Adam and Eve?
7. Now go back to Chapter 2 and find the one command God issued to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. Write it below:
8. (a) If God restricted the first couple from the source in Eden which provided that, where else do you think He intended for them to get such information when they needed it? **(Hint:** See question 7.)
- (b) How would this have been even better? Explain your answer.

THIRD DAY: God's Command Gets Challenged (Read Genesis 3)

9. The fact that God gave Adam and Eve a command shows that He had created them with the capacity to think, decide, and choose what they would do. Why do you think God created human beings with this ability? (After all, He didn't equip plants or planets with this!)
10. In Genesis 3, another personality is introduced who has power to influence Adam and Eve's ability to choose. Name him and describe him:
11. Since Genesis 1 repeatedly states that (1) God created everything and (2) everything that was created was good, we need to find out how something good became bad. Read these passages that have widely been accepted as referring to the ancient origins of this evil personality and summarize what you find about what evidently happened before Genesis 3.
 - (a) Isaiah 14:12-15 (**Note:** In many Bible versions "Lucifer" is given in verse 12 as a proper name instead of the translation of it, "Day Star.")

(b) Revelation 12:7-9

FOURTH DAY: God Confronts (Continue in Genesis 3)

12. Use these references to answer the questions that follow: Matthew 25:41
Ephesians 2:1-3 Ephesians 6:11-12 1 Peter 5:8-9 Revelation 20:2-3
 - (a) What influence does this fallen creature still hold over humans?
 - (b) What is his ultimate destination?
13. Satan did the tempting, but Adam and Eve did the disobeying. Was God's command not to eat from that one tree unreasonable or impossible to obey? Consider their living situation and explain your answer.

14. While certainly a caring Friend, Creator God still holds the right to command and correct those disobeying. From Chapter 3, list God's judgments on Adam and Eve.

15. Go back and review Genesis 2:16-17. What was the penalty for disobedience?

FIFTH DAY: God Shows Mercy (Continue in Genesis 3)

16. God did not suddenly execute Adam and Eve for their disobedience, but, in banishing them from the garden which contained the tree of life, He sentenced them to eventual physical death. There *was* an execution that day, however. A substitute was killed to provide a covering for their shame. Find and write that verse here. (This will be important in next week's lesson.)

17. When God pronounced judgment on the serpent in Genesis 3:15, He gave the first hint of what would develop to be the most important plot line of creation's story: a plan for undoing the curse Adam and Eve's sin brought on creation. Many have called this the first "good news" or gospel. Using the phrases from Genesis 3:15, who, in the future, would ultimately do the worse damage to whom?

18. God gave us the Bible so that we can know what He is truly like, but He put knowledge about Himself as Creator in other places, too, since such information is important for anyone wanting to understand Him. Read the passages below and give some specific examples of what you observed that indicate there must be a Creator.

(a) Psalm 19:1

(b) Romans 1:18-20

19. However, even though we should recognize that there must be a Creator, an intelligent designer, behind this amazing and intricate universe, without the specific details provided in the Bible, we could not be sure of God's other characteristics—particularly His amazing desire to have a relationship with human beings. From your investigation this week, choose *one* or *two* of the statements below and comment on what each means to you now.
- (a) God is Creator of all.
 - (b) God cares about His creation, especially human beings.
 - (c) God has a right to command His creation.
 - (d) God will judge those who refuse to obey Him.
 - (e) God is merciful, providing a substitute to take the judgment we deserve.

Notes



A GOD LIKE NO OTHER

God Is Great

In any kind of research, it is important to get as close as possible to a primary source, especially to any available eyewitnesses to the event. Since no human witness was present before or during the creation of the world, the Bible presents God's testimony, His revelation of what happened. The Bible does not offer a geophysical explanation of the process of creation. (Could any of us comprehend it if it did?) It is not a scientific document, yet, whenever it speaks of science, detailing facts, it can be trusted.

Some want to discount the Bible record right at the beginning because of the seven-day format God described for creation. Others just soften its meaning by explaining the word for *day* (Hebrew *yom*) can be interpreted in different ways—anything from a twenty-four-hour period to a long epoch of time, which is true. However, the correct meaning of the word *day* in the Bible is always interpreted from its context. In Genesis 1, where the phrase “*there was evening and there was morning*” precedes the numbering of each section of the creative process, the context clearly points to a normal twenty-four-hour time frame.

So, the main issue in these first steps to faith in God is this: Can you accept that there is a God who is powerful enough to create everything from nothing by merely speaking the command, as He tells us in Genesis? If you can believe in such a God, then whatever time frame He chose to use to create the world should not be a problem. After all, we creatures are bound by time; He is not. Nothing is too difficult for the One who made everything.

Every ancient culture of the world has had explanations for creation. These often share common elements with the Genesis account. Some like to think that Moses pulled his account from the best of these others, but another explanation rings truer: there was originally a single account revealed by God to His first people which was altered through careless transmissions over time. God saw that His

original revelation was preserved carefully and ultimately entrusted to Moses for written publication and on to the Jews for careful transmission and preservation.

God Is Good

Remember from Lesson 1 that the first step towards knowing God is believing that He exists. Well, the second step is believing that He is good:

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

Rewards. Who doesn't like rewards? A God who gives rewards for those seeking to know Him can certainly be defined as benevolent! From the mathematical precision of the orbits of stars and planets to the ability of living things to grow, reproduce, and heal themselves, we recognize a goodness in the design that points to a goodness in the Designer. Such a God deserves praise: “*Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!*” (Psalm 95:6).

But besides God's gracious creation of the universe, He also had personal interaction with the first man and woman. God wasn't like an absentee landlord, positioning Adam and Eve on some prime real estate and then going back to His headquarters; He is described as being personally involved with them. First, He did not just speak them into existence as He did the other creatures, but actually formed them personally: Adam from the ground and Eve from Adam's side. In Genesis 2, God talked to Adam and involved him in the naming of the animals. Adam and Eve had intelligence and speech from the beginning. God gave them meaningful work to do (Genesis 1:28 and 2:15-16). He prepared a beautiful and bountiful place to be their home. The place was a garden, with all of the positive connotations of that word. It was called Eden.

Let Us Thank Him for Our Food

From the geography maps in your first lesson, you may recall that Eden was located in the fertile area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, an area called Mesopotamia (“land between two rivers”). Even ancient non-biblical sources point to that area as having been the cradle of human existence. God gave Adam and Eve plenty to eat from the lush garden.

However, God also gave them one restriction regarding the abundant contents of Eden: they were not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If they did, they would die.

Pause to consider how much Adam and Eve had in the way of provision, purpose, comfort, fellowship, and beauty. They had all they needed for their physical needs in a peaceful place. They had a daily purpose in keeping the garden in good order. They had each other for comfort and pleasure. God Himself walked and talked with them in Eden. They could ask Him directly whenever they needed directions for daily issues or help in discerning good from evil. They didn’t *need* to eat of that restricted tree’s fruit!

Yet, God’s issuing that commandment revealed that God had created them with the freedom to make choices; they were not His puppets. He wanted a personal and loving relationship with them, but is love really love if it is not offered freely? We have all experienced the difference between “I have to” and “I want to.” God created human beings with the capacity to think and choose, which is essential for expressing sincere love.

His first command was their first test. Like the rest of the commands of Scripture, it not only set up a healthy boundary around what would be harmful for them, but it also awakened an awareness that their desires would sometimes clash with God’s. Many centuries later, the apostle Paul remarked that he didn’t realize his tendency toward a particular sin until a commandment showed him what that sin was (Romans 7:7).

Is it unreasonable to accept the fact that the One who made everything would know best how

everything should function? Is it unreasonable that the Manufacturer would produce the best handbook for all users? Should not the God of creation have the right to rule that creation?

By His Hand We All Are Fed

If you continue studying the Bible, sooner or later you will discover how every single word in it is significant. Take for example the word *God* used in Genesis 1. This word *God*, with its first letter capitalized, indicates a translation of the Hebrew word *Elohim*, which refers to the God introduced as Creator in the first chapter. Interestingly, *Elohim* is actually a plural noun being used as a singular noun to represent the divine being. This is called a unity in plurality (as in a *cluster* of grapes). *Elohim* is then very appropriate for capturing the complexity of who the one true God is. This unity in plurality is first expressed in Genesis 1:26 where God says, “*Let us make man in our image...*” (emphasis added). The God (*Elohim*) of Genesis 1 is an incomparably complex being.

You might now ask, what does this have to do with anything? Well, in Genesis 2, which offers the close-up details of what happened in Genesis 1, there is a change in how God is depicted. In this chapter, God is called *LORD God*. In most Bibles, when you see *LORD* (small caps), it denotes a translation of the Hebrew word *Jehovah* or *Jahweh*, which means “self-existent or eternal one.” *LORD* is used as God’s name or part of His name when He is described as being in relationship with people. In Exodus 3, when God explains His name to Moses so Moses could tell the people of Israel who was making promises to deliver them, God said He was *Jehovah*, translating it as “*I AM*,” the eternally present God.

When we consider that God is not only all-powerful Creator but also always-present Caregiver, we begin to fulfill the prerequisites for coming near Him (Hebrews 11:6). His capabilities and responsibilities are beyond our comprehension. We could never get to Him, so He came to us. Deuteronomy 6 powerfully connects both of these names for God: Creator (unity in plurality) and Caregiver (the self-existent One who desires relationships):

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD [Jehovah] our God [Elohim], the LORD [Jehovah] is one.”
(Deuteronomy 6:4, emphasis added)

Give Us, Lord, Our Daily Bread

God pronounced everything good, and after the creation of male and female human beings, He even added a “*very good*” (Genesis 1:31). Yet, in Genesis 3, something not very good is present in the garden—a talking serpent who dares to plant doubts about God’s good character, directly contradicting God’s clear word to Adam and Eve about not eating the fruit of the forbidden tree.

Throughout the Bible there are references to other kinds of beings besides the human kind—these are called angels. The word *angel* means “messenger.” They are ministering spirits, personalities belonging to the supernatural world, created to worship and serve God.

At some point before Genesis 3, one angel became proud in his exalted position and jealous of God’s place. Scripture calls him “*the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan*” (Revelation 20:2). As a result, he and his followers were permanently demoted but still allowed access to earth and its inhabitants. As an enemy of God, his desire was to tempt Adam and Eve to turn away from God’s will. He spoke lies to plant doubts in them about God’s good character. Evil had entered the garden.

Adam and Eve failed to hold on to the truth that Creator God is totally good and that His word is

always true and trustworthy. They failed to call on the God who made them for help in this crisis of faith. By His hand they had been fed and not by anyone else’s. He deserved their obedience and trust; the serpent did not.

From these early chapters of Genesis, we can see that Creator God has the right to rule, and because of His goodness, He can be trusted to rule well. When we go against His will, there are always consequences. Satan said, “*You will not surely die,*” further promising, “*you will be like God...*” (Genesis 3:4-5). Yet Satan already knew the fatal mistake of trying to be like God. Satan will never be restored to his former glory, but that does not stop him from trying to get others to rebel against their Creator too.

God judged Adam and Eve for their sin, right along with the serpent. He banished them from the garden and the tree of life. While this started the countdown to death for their human bodies, the Lord did not execute them on the spot. An animal was killed instead, and its skin used to cover their newly recognized nakedness: In wrath, God remembered mercy (Habakkuk 3:2).

How can Creator God allow His creatures to live after refusing to obey His command? How can an innocent substitute be allowed to bear the death penalty for the guilty? That is a question for our next lesson. As we explore the answer, get ready for another “first step” in faith: meeting a Savior like no other!

Read More About It:

www.answersingenesis.org Answers in Genesis has an excellent website (featuring founder Ken Ham) for research about God as Creator and creation science. Their **CREATION magazine** is a powerful ongoing, up-to-date resource.

The Genesis Record and *The Remarkable Record of Job*, Henry M. Morris



Study Procedure: Read the Scripture references before answering questions. Unless otherwise instructed, use the Bible only in answering questions and note supporting verses. Some questions may be more difficult than others but try to answer as many as you can. Pray for God's wisdom and understanding as you study and don't be discouraged if some answers are not obvious at first.

FIRST DAY: Jesus, the Last Adam

1. Select at least one of these concepts about God discussed in last week's lesson, which you accept as true. Give a brief explanation for how this concept affects your life right now.
(a) God as Creator (b) God as Friend (c) God as Lawgiver (d) God as Judge
(e) God as Mercy-giver

Note: When Adam and Eve deliberately disobeyed God's clear command, they unleashed terrible consequences upon themselves and the world: sin, shame, death, pain, struggle, isolation, and fear. If they had been immediately executed, nothing would have been repaired; they would have died to satisfy the judgment against them, but all the damage would have remained. However, God already had a plan for someone to come in the future, not only to accept the death penalty Adam and Eve deserved but also to rise up from death to break the power of sin and the serpent who inspired it. The Old Testament, with its promises and prophecies, prepared the world for the coming of this Champion, fully human so as to be capable of dying but also fully divine to be capable of living again to right the wrongs. The New Testament describes His coming into this world to do just that. Christians know His name as Jesus.

2. Paul, a first-century believer in Christ, wrote many epistles (letters) included in the New Testament explaining God's plans to remedy through Jesus what Adam had caused through sin. Read 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 and 45-50. Summarize below what Paul explains about each man below:
(a) Adam, the first man (b) Jesus, the last Adam

3. Comment on what you learned above: Does Paul's explanation answer any questions you may have had about God's plan for the world He created? Does this seem reasonable? Explain.

SECOND DAY: Jesus, the One Foretold (Matthew's Gospel)

Note: The entire Old Testament anticipates the coming of this “*last Adam*” while the New Testament testifies to His having already come. So that there would be no mistake in His identity and no imposter could succeed, God gave very particular credentials which this new Champion would be required to present. The gospel of Matthew does an excellent job of matching Old Testament prophecies about the coming One, with their fulfillment in the life of Jesus.

4. In the first column below are facts about this Champion or Savior written in Old Testament prophecy hundreds of years before His birth. (References are given for you to read). In the second column, explain from the New Testament reference(s) how the prophecies proved true.

Prophetic Details**Fulfillment**

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| (a) He was to be genetically descended from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David, as the “seed” who would bless all the earth (Genesis 22:16-18; Genesis 26:1-4; Genesis 28:10-14; 2 Samuel 7:12-13). | Matthew 1:1-6 |
| (b) He was to have a unique conception (Isaiah 7:14; Genesis 3:15). | Matthew 1:18-23; Luke 1:26-35 |
| (c) He was to be born in the southern part of Israel, called Judah or Judea, in a town called Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). | Matthew 2:1-6 |
| (d) He was to live for a time in another country besides Israel (Hosea 11:1). | Matthew 2:13-15 |
| (e) He was to have divine abilities (Psalm 146; Isaiah 61). | Matthew 11:1-6 |
| (f) He was to enter Jerusalem as a king (Zechariah 9:9). | Matthew 21:1-11 |

THIRD DAY: Jesus, the One Foretold, cont.

5. Many descriptive details surrounding Jesus’ death and burial were given centuries before they happened. Continue your investigation below by summarizing the fulfillments in column 2:

Prophetic Details**Fulfillment**

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| (a) betrayal by a friend (Psalm 41:9; Psalm 55:12-14) | Matthew 26:14-16 |
|---|------------------|

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| (b) being silent before accusers (Isaiah 53:7) | Matthew 27:12-14 |
| (c) experiencing mockery, abuse, thirst,
piercing of hands and feet, seeing lots cast
for clothing (Psalm 22) | Matthew 27:26-35 |
| (d) having no bones broken (Psalm 34:20) | John 19:33 |
| (e) dying with lawbreakers; praying for his
persecutors; being buried with the rich
(Isaiah 53:9, 12) | Matthew 27:38 and 57-60; Luke 23:34 |

6. What do you think of what you just read in the preceding reference work? For example, could these fulfillments have been staged? Do they help you understand the uniqueness of Jesus Christ?

FOURTH DAY: Jesus, the God/Man (John's Gospel)

7. What normal human experience(s) did Jesus have in each passage below? The first one is done for you.
- | | |
|--|----------------|
| (a) Matthew 8:24
<i>He took naps!</i> | (d) Luke 5:16 |
| (b) Matthew 21:18 | (e) John 4:7-8 |
| (c) Mark 3:20-21 | (f) John 7:5 |
8. What does it mean to your relationship with God that Jesus was fully human?

Note: The longest living of Jesus' twelve disciples was John, who gave in his account of Jesus' life several specific miracles, explaining at his conclusion: "*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name*" (John 20:30-31, emphasis added). We will use John's examples to examine the evidence for Jesus' being fully divine as well as fully human.

9. Read about each miracle and briefly summarize what God-like power had to be at work in Jesus to accomplish each one. An idea is given on the first one to help you get started.

- (a) miracle at wedding in Cana (John 2:1-11)
creative power at the molecular level!
- (b) healing of nobleman's son (John 4:46-54)
- (c) healing of man ill for thirty-eight years (John 5:1-15)
- (d) feeding the 5,000 (John 6:1-14)
- (e) walking on water; calming the sea (John 6:15-21)
- (f) healing the man born blind (John 9:1-41)
- (g) raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-46)

FIFTH DAY: Jesus, the God/Man, cont.

10. If your study this week has not given you enough evidence to believe that Jesus is the One foretold as coming to be the last Adam, fully human as well as equal to God, what other confirmation do you desire or require?
11. How has anything you have explored so far affected your "first steps" toward God? Be specific.

Notes



A SAVIOR LIKE NO OTHER

The First Adam

God is righteous: what He says is what He does, every single time, and what He does is always consistent with what He says. He always plays fair. When Adam—created in God's image without sin—of his own free will took the forbidden fruit, he broke fellowship with his Creator.

There is no fellowship with a superior apart from obedience. You could give examples of this from your own life. When there is a willful rejection of authority and blatant disregard for the clear commands of a superior—even in the home or workplace—there is an immediate change in the air. Though parties are still connected by the child-parent or employee-employer relationship, the bond of trust that once permitted harmony and productivity in that union is broken. Disobedience has to be addressed if the unity is to be restored.

God addressed it right away, approaching Adam and Eve in the cool of the evening (Genesis 3:8). This was not the first time, since the passage noted they recognized the sound of His footsteps. However, there was no confession of sin—just blame for each other and the serpent. Without confession, how can forgiveness be received? (1 John 1:9). We cannot receive what we will not admit we need. So, right at the beginning of life as we know it, there was a stubborn refusal by the first pair to be honest with God. Paradise was lost.

However, God was not taken by surprise. He knew before it happened what it would cost Him to make humans in His own image. When He made them capable of fellowship with Himself, He knowingly risked their using that freedom of choice to choose against Him, just as Satan did. However, God still had the capability of restoring Paradise, winning back what was lost, but it would be costly. Anything of value usually is.

The Last Adam

Since a sinless “first Adam” succumbed to Satan to lose the title deed to God's good creation and incur the death penalty for that sin, a sinless “last Adam” would have to be found to face Satan and pay the penalty to win it back. Since the contamination of sin was passed through Adam like a spiritual blood poisoning to every human descendant (Romans 3:23), there never could be a sinless Champion or Savior to face Satan. That's where Jesus comes in.

The Bible introduces Jesus as the Son of God, as equal to God. You may have noticed in the first lesson that God and the Spirit are introduced in the opening verses of Genesis. However, in the New Testament, it is also revealed that the Son was present and involved in creation too. The apostle John calls Jesus “*the Word*”:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1:1-3)

To avoid any misunderstanding of that poetic phrasing, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews adds another testimony to the equality of Father and Son:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on

high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. (Hebrews 1:1-4)

Since no direct descendant of Adam could ever have the sinless credentials to be worthy of dying for more than just his own sin, God Himself humbled Himself and became a man, born of a virgin, conceived by the Holy Spirit, presenting the credentials of humanity with the power of divinity to pay forever the debt we owed.

This is summarized beautifully by Paul in Philippians 2:5-11. Christ came down in humility to ascend again into glory:

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Notice that Jesus has already died in our place and has returned to His rightful place. However, we do not yet see every knee bowing to Him or every tongue confessing who He really is. That's because while there is certainly present victory and restoration for the Christian now, there is more to come. The restoration of Paradise will have its full visibility in the future. The tree of life will be accessible, and full fellowship with our Creator-Father-Friend-Savior will be uninterrupted, finally lifting the curse:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit

each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. (Revelation 22:1-3)

The Great Exchange

When God made the first Adam, He already knew He would send the Last Adam. God's holiness demanded payment for sin, but His love provided that payment. It is an amazing exchange: *"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"* (2 Corinthians 5:21). And this comes from the Old Testament:

*But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement
that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
(Isaiah 53:5)*

How Can We Be Sure?

If the righteousness of God required there be another Adam to die so sinners might live to be forgiven, how do we know that Jesus was God's choice to do this? How do we know He could do this?

Prophecy: Only God can tell us what will happen before it happens and make it happen as He said it would happen 100% of the time! In Isaiah 48:3-5, God explains that He tells His people ahead what He is going to do so they will give Him the glory when He does it instead of the idols of their own making. The prophet Amos even made this claim: *"For the Lord GOD does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets"* (Amos 3:7).

There are many prophecies about a coming Messiah (Hebrew word) or Christ (the Greek word). These terms translate "anointed one," referring to the Jewish custom of pouring oil on the head of a leader as a sign of God's empowerment for service. This lesson surveys just a sampling of the specific credentials which the correct Christ had to present.

While it might be possible with the help of powerful friends to stage a parade through Jerusalem on a donkey during the busiest holiday of the year and hire folks to proclaim someone king, how can a person get himself born at a certain time, from a certain lineage, and in a certain place while arranging for unrelated strangers to come and tell his parents about the supernatural nature of their infant son? How or even why would someone plan his own betrayal, abusive treatment, and horrific execution, or all the other minute details prophesied for the Christ? Answer: God was at work in the prophetic fulfillments.

Josh McDowell wrote in his classic book *More Than a Carpenter* that the mathematical odds of one person's fulfilling even 8 of the 60 major Old Testament prophecies about Messiah was just 1 in 10^{17} or 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000!

The eyewitness accounts of the fulfillment of every prophecy—from the mouths of foes as well as friends—provide credible proof that Jesus was the one the prophets had described. There are several other books currently available by determined researchers who came to believe in Christ after working tirelessly to prove He couldn't possibly have risen, much less be divine. Yet, each found that the record of Scripture could not be ignored.

Resurrection: While Jesus Himself was credited with healing and raising others from the dead—no one around Him ever thought it possible that He could have power to do anything on earth after He Himself was dead! His resurrection revealed His power to do everything He had claimed: *“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die”* (John 11:25-26).

His resurrection also proved God the Father can fulfill every promise He has made to Israel: *“And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus...”* (Acts 13:32-33).

In addition, Jesus' resurrection was also God's public approval of His Son's perfect sacrifice. In fact,

without the resurrection, Christianity would be just another philosophical system, no more valid than another introduced before or after. The resurrection proved Jesus is God.

You may be thinking, “That was 2,000 years ago!” Yes, but there were many, many eyewitnesses to it, people who knew Him well and could spot an imposter. After a thorough investigation, Luke, the only non-Jewish writer of Scripture, reported in Acts 1:3: *“[Jesus] presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.”* The apostle Paul later added this report about the proofs Jesus offered:

...that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. (1 Corinthians 15:4-7)

Miracles: “A miracle is a less common kind of God's activity in which He arouses people's awe and wonder and bears witness to Himself” (Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*). God is at work all the time, but sometimes He really likes to get our attention! All four gospels record many miracles performed by Jesus in front of eyewitnesses. John referred to the miracles he included in his gospel as *signs*. He noted that he could have included many more but had selected specific ones to provide ample reason to believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30-31).

Jesus lived a humble life as a Nazarene contractor for thirty years. He had four brothers and more than one sister (Matthew 13:55-56). Though He never sinned, He might merely have been mistaken for an exceptionally good man were it not for the working of miracles (Hebrews 4:14-15).

In the three years of public ministry, Jesus gave people ample proof that He was the Messiah and Prophet the Jewish people had been expecting for centuries. The miracles set Him apart from all other

contenders: He healed people with lifelong illnesses, commanded wind and sea, revealed the secrets of people's hearts, fed thousands with a handful of food, and even raised the dead to life! Some eyewitnesses commented on the obvious: *"When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?"* (John 7:31). What more could He have done, indeed!

When someone is determined to ignore the word of God and the evidence it provides, neither prophecy, miracles, nor the resurrection will affect them. In a parable Jesus told about life after death, there is a chilling exchange made between Abraham in Paradise and a suffering rich man he can see across a chasm in Hades. The anguished rich man wants Abraham to send a witness back to the living to warn his brothers of the reality of judgment:

"But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'" (Luke 16:29-31)

Who Do You Say That I Am?

You have read. You have listened. You have pondered and discussed the subject of Jesus Christ. The record of His life and teachings, miracles and

signs, suffering, death, and resurrection have withstood exhaustive scrutiny. What more do you need to believe? God said He would send Jesus, and He did. God says He will send Him back again, and He will!

The words of Isaiah mournfully describe the still common failure of so many to recognize Him:

*Who has believed what he has heard from us?
And to whom has the arm
of the LORD been revealed?
For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty
that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by men;
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
(Isaiah 53:1-3)*

God has not left you without a modern witness. In this study group with you, are there not some who show by their words and loving actions that they have bowed the knee to Jesus and confessed openly that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God? Ask them to tell you what they have seen and heard about Jesus, what He means to them. Then, ask God in prayer to help you personally understand and believe.

Read More About It:

Evidence That Demands a Verdict, Josh McDowell
More Than a Carpenter, Josh McDowell
Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus, Nabeel Qureshi
The Case for Christ, Lee Strobel



Study Procedure: Read the Scripture references before answering questions. Unless otherwise instructed, use the Bible only in answering questions and note supporting verses. Some questions may be more difficult than others but try to answer as many as you can. Pray for God's wisdom and understanding as you study and don't be discouraged if some answers are not obvious at first.

FIRST DAY: Jesus and You

Note: There are two extremes in the study of Jesus Christ: one holds that He is not *really* human but only appeared to be human (having divine power, something like an angel), so He did not actually experience suffering and a shameful death as a human being. Some religions even teach, contrary to the eyewitnesses at the time, that another man took His place on the cross. The other extreme view is that He was *only* human—albeit a remarkable example of humanity, because of His wisdom, love, moral teachings, and obvious favor with God.

1. After your time in the Bible last week, what do you think about Jesus? Who do you say that He is, and why do you think so?

Note: To have someone pay all your debts is wonderful! To have someone volunteer to be executed for something you did and then come back to life again is shocking! Yet, if you did not have the means to stay out of debt or out of legal trouble afterward, you would soon be right back in the same predicament, despite the great sacrifice. So, we not only need saving from the judgment of death, but we also need empowering to live without sinning!

The good news is that the gospel does not stop with Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus promised to give power for godliness to all those coming to Him in faith. He says He wants to give us His Spirit to come and live inside us— helping, counseling, and empowering us to think and act like He does.

2. Read the Scriptures below and summarize what Jesus teaches about who the Holy Spirit is, what He does, what He is called, and who sends Him.
 - (a) John 14:25-26
 - (b) John 15:26-27
 - (c) John 16:5-15
 - (d) Acts 1:8

SECOND DAY: The Holy Spirit: Divine Person with Power

3. The Holy Spirit is more than a force like electricity or an information storage system like a computer chip, He is a Person who can give and receive information, feel and express emotions, and act and react in situations. Read the references below noting anything that illustrates His personhood. The first one is done for you.

(a) Acts 5:1-3 *He can be lied to.* _____

(b) Acts 7:51 _____

(c) Acts 9:31 _____

(d) Acts 13:2 _____

(e) Acts 16:6-7 _____

4. In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is presented as equal to God, just as Jesus is. What activities or characteristics does the Holy Spirit share with God? The first one is done for you.

(a) Genesis 1:1-2

The Spirit was also present at creation. He is eternal.

(b) Job 33:4

(c) Psalm 139:7-8

(d) 1 Corinthians 2:10-11

5. How do we receive the Holy Spirit?

(a) Luke 11:13

(b) Acts 2:36-39

6. Read Romans 8:9. Is receiving of the Holy Spirit optional for a Christian? Explain.

THIRD DAY: Fruit of the Holy Spirit (Read Galatians 5:16-26)

7. After we receive the Holy Spirit, we still have to choose to obey His directions. We retain our free wills, so even Christians can choose to indulge their old physical desires instead of their new spiritual ones. Read Galatians 5:16-26 and place what belongs to the flesh and what belongs to the Spirit under the proper heading:

(a) **Works of the Flesh**

(b) **Fruit of the Spirit**

8. What work of the flesh is actively present in your life?
9. (a) Which fruit of the Spirit above do you lack most?

(b) How would more of this impact your life? Be specific.

FOURTH DAY: The Gifts of the Holy Spirit (Read 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:3-8)

10. The fruit of the Holy Spirit affects the believer's attitude, while the gifts of the Spirit influence his actions. Read 1 Corinthians 12 to discover the gifts or offices available to the believer; then answer the questions, citing the verses used to answer.
 - (a) In what three areas is variety to be expected?
 - (b) Who can expect to receive something from the Holy Spirit?
 - (c) Why do we need what the Spirit gives?
 - (d) Who decides who gets what?
 - (e) What are the possible spiritual gifts and jobs listed in this chapter?
 - (f) Does everyone get the same ones? Explain.
11. In Romans 12:3-8 there is more information about gifts of the Spirit. List the gifts and note any special instructions given for their use.

12. If you are already a Christian, do you recognize in yourself any of these gifts? If you are not a Christian, do you recognize any that would be helpful to your life right now?

FIFTH DAY: Becoming a Christian

Note: If you read the Gospels, you probably noticed that Jesus made Himself available to those already seeking the promised Champion or Savior, particularly to Jews first. This was because they had been entrusted as a people group to obey God's laws and preserve His prophecies and had been looking for Him to appear as their Messiah or Christ for centuries. However, Jesus also went to extra trouble to meet others who didn't even know they should be interested in spiritual things. "*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost*" (Luke 19:10). Now as then, Jesus does not bully or beg anyone to believe in Him, but, through the Holy Spirit, He knocks on the door of our heart and mind, waiting for us to open up and invite Him in.

13. If you want what you have read about in these lessons—a relationship with the true God, forgiveness of your sins, and the power of the Holy Spirit to help you to live as God directs, why don't you ask Him now? Here is a sample prayer, with the supporting Bible verses footnoted below:

Dear God, I believe that You exist and that You are good.¹ I believe that You created every thing good,² but that I, like all humans before me, have chosen my way instead of Yours.³ I am captive to evil and separated from You.⁴ I thank You that You have always had a plan for my return.⁵ I recognize that Jesus, God in the flesh,⁶ came to earth to testify to Your truth,⁷ to model perfect obedience,⁸ and to die the death I deserved⁹ for sinning against Your holy, good, and perfect commands.¹⁰ I praise You for raising Him to life again, showing Your acceptance of His sacrifice for all sin.¹¹ I thank You that because I believe this, I can ask You to forgive me, to accept me into Your family, and to give me Your Holy Spirit to assure me that I am Yours forever;¹² to speak to me, direct me, bless me, and empower me with gifts and fruit to please and serve You.¹³ Please, Lord, let me have all You said in Your Word I can have. I want to be adopted into your family.¹⁴ I want to be born again as a child of Yours forever.¹⁵ I want to be free from sin and bound only to You.¹⁶ Because of the blood of Jesus¹⁷ and in His name, I ask You this. Amen.

¹Hebrews 11:6 ²Genesis 1:31 ³Romans 3:23; Isaiah 53:6 ⁴2 Thessalonians 1:7-9

⁵Genesis 3:15; 1 Peter 1:18-20 ⁶John 1:14 ⁷John 18:37 ⁸John 15:10; Hebrews 4:15

⁹Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 3:18 ¹⁰Romans 3:10-12; Romans 7:12; Daniel 9:9-11 ¹¹Acts 2:24, 32-33

¹²John 14:6; Galatians 3:2, 5 ¹³John 14:26 ¹⁴Romans 8:15 ¹⁵1 Peter 1:3 ¹⁶Romans 6:11

¹⁷Ephesians 1:6-7

Notes

Notes



A SPIRIT LIKE NO OTHER

Many in the older generation remember the Holy Spirit more commonly spoken of in churches as the Holy Ghost. The connotations of the word *ghost* are not currently positive ones, so most Bible translators substitute the word *spirit*. *Spirit* is a translation of the Hebrew *ruach* or the Greek *pneuma*, which means “current of air,” “breath” (“blast”), or “wind.” Figuratively, it is translated *spirit*. The Holy Spirit is most often associated with the power of God at work in people. Note some of these examples of the power of the Holy Spirit given for specific purposes:

Exodus 31:1-5: *The LORD said to Moses, “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri...and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft.”*

Judges 14:5-6: *Then Samson went down with his father and mother to Timnah, and they came to the vineyards of Timnah. And behold, a young lion came toward him roaring. Then the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, and although he had nothing in his hand, he tore the lion in pieces as one tears a young goat....*

Micah 3:8: *But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.*

Luke 1:41-42: *And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, and she exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”*

Acts 1:8: *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

Acts 10:37-38: *[Y]ou yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.*

His Personality

Although the Holy Spirit is most often identified with the power of God, the Holy Spirit is not an *It*: He is a Person, and He has a personality. In this week’s questions you found out that He can be grieved, resisted, obeyed, and trusted. He has a mind and a voice; He makes decisions and gives directions.

His Purpose

It has been said that the Holy Spirit is a Gentleman. Much like God the Son, who is said to “stand at the door and knock” (Revelation 3:20), the Holy Spirit does not show off to glorify Himself or bully people into obedience. He draws and nudges. His role is to put the spotlight on Jesus:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:13-15)

His Position

Another common reference among Christians to the Holy Spirit is as the third Person of the Trinity. *Trinity* is a compound of *tri* (for three) and *unity*—a unity of three. A line from the classic hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy” says, “God in three Persons, blessed Trinity.” (Note: The word *Trinity* does not appear in the Bible, but the concept does. Remember the unity in plurality evident in the name *Elohim* [God] we saw in Lesson 1, like a *cluster* of grapes?)

We have already noticed that besides God the Creator, who in the New Testament is most often called God the Father, the Bible speaks of God the Son, Jesus. In this course we have already looked at passages that claim Jesus’ equality with God while emphasizing His active submission to the Father’s will. In the same way, the Holy Spirit is frequently spoken of as equal to God, often synonymous with some divine aspect of the Father. He is frequently presented as submissive to the Father and the Son.

There is only one God (Deuteronomy 6:4), yet He manifests Himself in three distinct Persons. A children’s chant gives this simple summary: “Three in One, One in Three, and the One in the middle died for me!” Or here is a more serious one:

The Father is God invisible (John 1:18).
 The Son is God revealed (John 1:14-18).
 The Holy Spirit is God active in believers
 (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

We have nothing exactly like this triunity in our world. However, to give an imperfect but helpful illustration, people sometimes point to water and the way it is still H₂O, even when in its steam, ice, or liquid form. But more profoundly, God can be all three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—in the same place at the same time, as seen in the examples that follow. It is really a mind-stretching concept, but do we really expect to understand fully the mysteries of God?

Here are some examples of this mysterious truth of God’s triunity expressed in Scripture. In each passage, two or all three Persons of the Trinity are presented distinctly at the same time:

Matthew 3:16-17: *And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”*

John 5:17-18: *But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*

Acts 2:32-33: *“This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.”*

Romans 15:30: *I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf.*

2 Corinthians 13:14: *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

Ephesians 1:16-17: *I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him....*

His Place in Us

When Jesus, God incarnate (in the flesh) warned the disciples that He was leaving them to return to the Father, He comforted them by telling them that it would actually be better for them if He went away, because then He would send them the Holy Spirit to be with them and in them forever (John 16:5-7).

When He lived on earth, Jesus was physically limited to being in one place at a time. God through the Holy Spirit can be everywhere at once and live in every believer without diminishing His power to any one believer. Since He is God, the Holy Spirit is omnipotent and omnipresent. The Holy Spirit was given in the Old Testament to specific people for specific purposes, but, as seen in the lives of Samson and Saul, He was also sometimes removed (Judges 16:20; 1 Samuel 16:14). Jesus said the Holy Spirit would be given to those who believe in Him and never leave them (John 14:16).

The physical Jesus could not “fit” into the body of a believer, but His Spirit can. Paul described our bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). The Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Christ—is our constant connection to the Father, our seal or guarantee that we belong to God (2 Corinthians 1:22; Romans 8:11).

His Practical Help

The fruit and gifts of the Holy Spirit were surveyed in this lesson. They are the practical and observable results of being filled with the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit in us demonstrates that we are really adopted into the family of God and that we have experienced a supernatural new birth. His fruit and gifts produce a family resemblance to Jesus. Through Christ’s death on the cross, we died to our old lives of sin; through the indwelling Holy Spirit, we are empowered to live in a way that pleases God and benefits the whole body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12). The Holy Spirit helps us live like Christ.

Jesus made an amazing promise about what would happen after He returned to His place in glory and sent the Holy Spirit: *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father”* (John 14:12). The gifts and fruit of the Spirit will transform your life which in turn will impact those around you. Are you prepared to do your part?

The Holy Spirit and You

If you prayed the prayer at the end of your lesson with sincerity, God answered with a divine “Yes!” You *are* forgiven. You *are* adopted into His family. You have received the Holy Spirit who will lead you into all truth!

Just like a woman who becomes pregnant, sooner or later the new life within you will become obvious! Expect the changes to show in your life. Watch for the pruning away of the bad fruit of the flesh as you learn to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Expect others to notice the development of the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your attitudes and emotions: more love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.

Don’t forget about His gifts either! He chooses gifts that will be suited to His plans for us as part of the body of Christ. On the local level, this is the grouping of the other Christians with whom you will regularly interact. However, you have full permission to ask for more gifts! The Holy Spirit does not give us discernment that we might criticize or despair, but that we might recognize what’s needed and speak up through prayer to ask God about providing it for us and others.

Power to Witness

When Jesus addressed His disciples in the appointed place in Galilee after His resurrection, He had this to say:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
(Matthew 28:18-20)

Forty days later, right before His ascension, Jesus promised them the power necessary to make those disciples: *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1:8).

We live on this side of that promise. He did ascend to God the Father, and He did release God the Spirit. We no longer have to be condemned, orphaned, or powerless. He has set the table, opened the door, and sent us an invitation. Will you come in?

Read More About It:

Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire, Jim Cymbala

Foundations for Faith, Navpress

The Holy Spirit, Billy Graham

They Found the Secret, V. Raymond Edman