

Jesus, The Way



**Presenting Jesus As
The Way To Various Blessings**

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The outlines were developed in the course of my ministry as a preacher of the gospel. Feel free to use them as they are, or adapt them to suit your own personal style. To God be the glory!

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Jesus, The Way

Introducing Jesus As The Way

Introduction

As we begin this series of studies, I would like to start by having you ask yourself several questions:

- ◆ Do you have problems?
- ◆ Are you confused in things pertaining to life itself?
- ◆ Do you feel lost, with a sense of despair?

If you do, don't feel like you are alone. About the time of Abraham, a person who was experiencing a great deal of suffering said:

“Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He comes forth like a flower and fades away; He flees like a shadow and does not continue.”
(Job 14:1-2)

These words, spoken nearly four thousands years ago, express the sentiments of millions today. Now, however, there is a way out: **Jesus Christ!** As He Himself said:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life...” (John 14:6)

Yes, to everything that truly good, both in this life and the one to come, **Jesus Christ is the way!**

In this study, I want to introduce several areas in which Jesus is truly **“The Way”**. Succeeding lessons will expand upon these themes, but in this lesson I simply wish to whet your appetite. For example, Jesus is...

THE WAY TO A BETTER LIFE

On one occasion, Jesus stated His purpose in coming to this earth:

“...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

This “abundant life” Jesus offers is more than simply life in the “hereafter”. Though He does not promise wealth or luxury, He does assure us of:

1. A loving Father in Heaven, Who cares for His children. As Jesus taught in His “Sermon on the Mount”:

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we

drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matthew 6:31-33)

2. More than sufficient provision for those who are willing to follow Him as “**The Way**”. As we read on another occasion:

So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundred fold now in this time; houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.” (Mark 10:29-30)

Therefore, it is not surprising to find that the happiest people in the world are those who have most completely committed themselves to following Jesus as “**The Way**”. As the apostle Paul wrote, even though he was under house arrest at the time:

“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” (Philippians 4:11-13)

And when the apostle Peter wrote to Christians undergoing extreme forms of persecution, he could honestly say:

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,” (1 Peter 1:6-8)

Jesus is also...

THE WAY TO FORGIVENESS OF SINS

He is the **only** solution to a very serious problem...the most serious threat to our well-being that we face: **Sin!** This is because everyone of us is guilty of sin:

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23)

And sin is not without its consequences! Often physical, but always spiritual! Unless the problem of sin is resolved, the **ultimate** consequence is eternity in hell!

But through Jesus Christ, God has made provision for the forgiveness of our sins! Out of love, God offered Jesus as the “propitiation” for our sins:

“In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:9-10)

Through His blood shed on the cross, Jesus provides forgiveness for our sins:

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. (Ephesians 1:7)

After His sacrificial death for us, Jesus explained how those lost in sin could be saved; it involves repentance on our part...

Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:47-48)

It also involves faith and baptism...

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mk 16:16)

But to be truly happy, we need more than just the forgiveness of sins; we need to be restored to the close union with God which we lost by our sins. In this also, Jesus is our answer, for He is...

THE WAY TO GOD

Many religions, claiming to be Christian, are almost totally silent about the new relationship Jesus provides with God, the Father. About all they seem to talk about is “Jesus, Jesus, etc.” or “Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, etc.” Could this indicate a lack of real understanding of Jesus’ purpose?

Jesus came to this world to reconcile man back to God the Father. As Paul told the Corinthians:

“Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)

As we have already noted, Jesus claimed to be the only way to the Father:

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)

Why emphasize this point? Because one does not truly experience what it means to have “eternal life” without having an intimate relationship with the Father, as well as with the Son. And this is exactly what Jesus has to offer us! As He mentioned in His prayer before His trial and crucifixion:

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” (John 17:1-3)

Yes, that “eternal life” Jesus offers to us includes “knowing” the Father as well as the Son!

The way to a better life, the way to forgiveness of sins, the way to God...what wonderful blessings! But there is more. Jesus is also...

THE WAY OUT OF RELIGIOUS CONFUSION

Consider the plight of many who wish to follow Jesus. They are confused and even repelled by the multitude of different churches and conflicting doctrines being offered by those who profess to be His church.

But one does not have to be a part of this confusion! Jesus Himself certainly does not approve it. He taught us that:

“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.” (Matthew 12:25)

Before His betrayal and arrest, we find Jesus praying fervently...

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” (John 17:20-23)

How can we even begin to hope to have this unity of which Jesus spoke? It helps to remember that Jesus promised to build **His** church:

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

Despite the efforts of man and Satan to destroy it, or otherwise change it, they shall not prevail! Even today, when someone obeys the words of Jesus Christ, they are added by the Lord **Himself** to His church:

“...praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:47)

In His church, we can enjoy the unity of which Paul wrote to the Ephesians...

“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. (Ephesians 4:4-6)

But finding His church and enjoying this unity is experienced only as we follow Jesus as the way out of religious confusion.

Finally, let me point out that Jesus is...

THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE

Death is inevitable (unless Jesus returns first), and as the author of the epistle to the Hebrews wrote, it is followed by judgment:

“And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,” (Hebrews 9:27)

In this way, death becomes the door, either to eternal life or to eternal condemnation. In His description of the Judgment scene, Jesus outlines only two alternatives...

“And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matthew 25:46)

To die in Jesus is to die in the way to life eternal! As the apostle John wrote in the book of Revelation:

Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ “ “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.” (Revelation 14:13)

Yet another wonderful blessing in following Jesus as **“The Way”**, to find that He is the way to eternal life!

Conclusion

I hope that I have sparked your interest in wanting to learn more about Jesus as **“The Way”**. As I mentioned at the outset of this study, the other lessons will elaborate upon these great blessings

provided only through Jesus.

My purpose in this series is twofold...

- ♦ For those who are Christians, to increase their appreciation of Jesus as their Lord and Savior, so they will want to serve Him with greater zeal;
- ♦ For those who are not Christians, to encourage them to let Jesus be **their** way to everything that is truly good, both in this life and in the life to come!

Questions To Stimulate Your Thinking...

What does Jesus expect of those who call Him "Lord"? (Luke 6:46)

To do the things which He says.

What does Paul claim about the things that he wrote? (1 Corinthians 14:37)

They were the commandments of the Lord.

To whom did Jesus promise the necessities of life? (Matthew 6:33)

Those who seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

Through what do we have redemption? (Ephesians 1:7)

The blood of Jesus.

What did Jesus say should be preached in His name to all nations? (Luke 24:47)

Repentance and remission of sins.

What did Jesus say one must do to be saved? (Mark 16:16)

Believe and be baptized.

Can Muslims, Buddhists, or any others reach God without Jesus? (John 14:6)

No.

Whom did the Lord add to His church in Jerusalem? (Acts 2:47)

Those who were being saved.

How many baptisms does God now recognize? (Ephesians 4:5)

One.

Who are blessed when they die? (Revelations 14:13)

Those who die in the Lord.

Jesus, The Way

Jesus, The Way To A Better Life

Introduction

In the preceding lesson, we introduced the theme of this study as being “**Jesus, The Way**”. In this lesson, we shall concentrate our attention on the subject “**Jesus, The Way To A Better Life**”.

The popular goal of our generation is “the good life” This dream is not new. It has been the desire of every age and every walk of life -- of teachers and philosophers, of kings and common men.

But to the truly good life, as to every good thing, **Jesus is the way!** To see how this is true, consider first of all that...

JESUS CORRECTS OUR MISCONCEPTIONS

Most people think of “the good life” in terms of material prosperity, pleasure, and popularity. Why do people think this? Nearly everyone would agree that two words sum up what “the good life” is all about: **happiness** and **peace**. Many suppose that material prosperity, pleasure and popularity will bring us these two things. But even a cursory observation reveals that most wealthy, high-living, famous people are extremely unhappy and lacking inner peace.

Jesus, the way to true happiness and peace, corrects the misconception that such things as those mentioned above bring us happiness. He teaches that there is more to life than material possessions:

And He said to them, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” (Luke 12:15)

In addition, He offers a peace which things of the world cannot give, and a joy which is complete and full:

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27)

:These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15:11)

What the world cannot give, Jesus can. How does He do it?

JESUS LEADS THE WAY TO A BETTER LIFE

First, by identifying and rooting out the real problem. What is the cause of so much unhappiness in this world? What deprives so many of inner peace? Is it not things like immorality, thefts, murder? Is it not

things like coveting, deceit, envy and pride? Such things destroy families, friendships, and property. What then is the cause of these things? Jesus declared that the source of all these things to be the sinful hearts of men:

“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.” (Mark 7:21-23)

James, the Lord's half-brother in the flesh, concurred with this diagnosis:

“Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.” (James 4:1-2)

It is one thing to identify the problem; what has Jesus done to provide a solution? The apostle Paul explains in his letter to Titus:

“For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:3-7)

Out of kindness, love, mercy and grace, God through Jesus Christ has saved us and made us righteous in His sight! This took place when we experienced the “washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (a reference to the act of baptism, in which one who believes in Jesus is truly born again of water and Spirit! - **Jn 3:5**).

In other words, Jesus removes the problem of unhappiness and lack of inner peace by first removing the cause: **Sin!** But there is more...

Secondly, Jesus leads the way to true happiness and peace by teaching us to seek new goals in life. He warns us of the folly of seeking after riches:

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;” (Matthew 6:19)

Riches are perishable, and open to theft; therefore, He teaches us to put our treasure in heaven:

“but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” (Matthew 6:20)

But how does one go about laying up treasure in heaven? It involves living for Jesus, even under the most adverse conditions:

“Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.” (Luke 6:22-23)

Of course, living for Jesus means to follow His teachings; for example:

“But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.” (Luke 6:35)

Yes, our reward will be great, and even now we can have great happiness knowing that it can never be stolen, nor will it perish, for it is reserved for us in heaven!

Finally, Jesus leads the way to true happiness by giving us what we do not expect! Once we learn not to make material things, pleasure, and fame our goals in life, but to instead make following Jesus and His teachings our goal, He then provides us an unexpected portion of these very things!

For example, He promises the provision of those material things we need, if we will but put God first...

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matthew 6:31-33)

Then Peter began to say to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You.” So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundred fold now in this time; houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.” (Mark 10:28-30)

In addition to material things, Jesus provides a form of pure pleasure or happiness:

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” (John 15:11)

What kind of joy is Jesus talking about? A joy that is “unspeakable”, unable to describe adequately with words, as Peter tells those Christians who were experiencing terrible persecution:

“whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,” (1 Peter 1:8)

And what about fame? Yes, if we will but follow Jesus and seek to lay up our treasure in heaven by following Him and His words, we will one day experience “fame” that is “out of this world”! Consider these passages which describes what lies ahead for the true disciples of Jesus Christ:

“When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” (Colossians 3:4)

“When He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed. Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 1:10-12)

“To which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 2:14)

We can look forward to sharing in the wonderful glory (fame) that Jesus Himself will have when He comes again! How much “better” could life get?

Conclusion

The world sets before us goals which many people cannot achieve, and even if achieved, often do not satisfy. As one of the richest men who ever lived once wrote:

“He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity.” (Ecclesiastes 5:10)

But Jesus places before us goals which **can** be achieved, and that **do** satisfy:

- ♦ **All** can store up treasure in heaven
- ♦ **All** can live for Jesus

And if there is any doubt that doing this brings lasting happiness and a much better life even now, just look any individual you may know who is **truly** following Jesus. Outwardly they may be suffering persecution, social ostracism, or physical illnesses; but even then they still have that joy that is full, that peace which is unspeakable.

If you are not happy, if you are not at peace in your heart, if you are looking for a better life, why not let Jesus be **“The Way”** for you?

Let Him take care of your problem of sin, which is the true cause of unhappiness in life! Let Him be your guide in giving you new direction in this life! Let Him be your key to “the good life”! As Jesus Himself said:

“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

The following lessons will explain how...

Questions To Stimulate Your Thinking...

From where do things come that defile a man and make him unclean? (Mark 7:21-23)

Out of his heart.

If one would love life and see good days, what must one do? (1 Peter 3:10-11)

Turn away from evil and do good.

When one sins, of what are they guilty? (1 John 3:4)

Lawlessness.

Who committed no sin? (1 Peter 2:21-22)

Christ.

What may be destroyed by moth and rust, or stolen by thieves? What did Jesus teach us to lay up? (Matthew 6:19-20)

Treasures on earth. Treasure in heaven.

What did Jesus say is better than receiving? (Acts 20:35)

Giving.

Jesus said one who desires to be great must be what? (Matthew 20:26)

A servant.

Who worries about what they will eat, drink and wear? What are we told to seek first? (Matthew 6:31-33)

The nations. The kingdom of God and His righteousness.

What happens when we give to others? (Luke 6:38)

Things will be given to us.

Who will be exalted? (Luke 14:11)

Those who humble themselves.

Jesus, The Way

Jesus, The Way To Forgiveness

Introduction

We have seen that Jesus is **The Way** to a better life, even here on earth. But much more importantly, Jesus is the way to forgiveness for our sins!

To understand **why** we need forgiveness and **how** Jesus provides the way to forgiveness is the purpose of this lesson. It is important, then, that we begin by properly defining sin...

THE DEFINITION OF “SIN”

Many people have **the wrong conception** of sin. They think it is nothing more than a violation of human relationships; that an action is sinful only if it is frowned upon by society, violates their own conscience, or is harmful to someone else.

Such a misconception of sin leads people to a misconception of how the problem of sin can be corrected. For example, some believe that correcting sin involves nothing more than making things right with other people. With this misconception, they think they are forgiven of all past actions if they simply change their behavior.

But what is **the Biblical definition** of sin? The Bible actually defines three different types of sin. First, there is the direct violation of God’s Law. The apostle John describes sin in this way:

*“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.”
(1 John 3:4)*

For example, where God’s law tells us not to steal, we sin when we steal something. This is commonly referred to as the **sin of commission** (where we commit something that displeases God). Another kind of sin is found in James’ epistle:

*“Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.”
(James 4:17)*

This is the **sin of omission**, where you fail (omit) to do that which you know to do. For example, when I know Jesus tells me to love my enemies, I sin when I do not display love towards them. The apostle Paul mentions yet another kind of sin:

“But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.” (Romans 14:23)

For lack of better words, this is the **sin of violating your conscience**. In this case, the thing you are doing may be right in and of itself, but if you cannot do it with a clear conscience, you are sinning! The

example found in Romans 14 pertained to someone who because of earlier religious training before becoming a Christian had difficulty eating meat without a guilty conscience. Paul would have the brother whose faith is weak to abstain from eating meats, and even calls upon brethren who are strong in faith to be careful not to put any enticements in the brother's way which might wound his conscience.

So we see that sin is more than simply a violation of human relationships (though it often involves that); sin is a serious matter that involves God and His Will! How serious is sin? By considering the consequences of sin as described in the Bible, we begin to appreciate its terrible nature. As Paul wrote in the book of Romans:

“For the wages of sin is death...” (Romans 6:23)

This “death: of which he speaks is ultimately described as the “second death” which involves eternal torment for those who die in their sins:

“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8)

Why is sin considered so bad that unforgiven sinners must experience such torment? To understand why, we must appreciate...

THE NATURE OF GOD AND THE PROBLEM OF SIN

God's nature is such that it is very difficult for a sinner to be acceptable before Him. First, God is **supremely holy**. His holiness makes any “truce” with sin impossible. The Psalmist understood this aspect of God's nature:

“For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, Nor shall evil dwell with You. The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity. You shall destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.” (Psalms 5:4-6)

Because God's holiness cannot tolerate sin, sin serves to separate man from God:

“But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.” (Isaiah 59:2)

Not only is God supremely holy, He is also **supremely just**. His justice demands that sin be punished accordingly. As examples of the strict justice of God, notice what happened to the sons of Aaron when all they did was offer in sacrifice something God had not commanded:

Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the LORD, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the LORD and devoured them, and

they died before the LORD. And Moses said to Aaron, “This is what the LORD spoke, saying: ‘By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified.’” So Aaron held his peace. (Leviticus 10:1-3)

Even Moses and Aaron, the servants God used to lead the children of Israel, had to learn the hard way that sin must be justly dealt with. When they struck the rock instead of speaking to it as God commanded, they lost the right to enter into the promised land of Canaan:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.” (Numbers 20:12)

And since we have already seen that the ultimate penalty for sin is eternal torment, all this tells us two things:

- ◆ How **holy** God must be!
- ◆ How **terrible** sin must be!

As we begin to realize these things, we should see that **man** is in a terrible predicament. For you see, the Bible has judged that **all** of mankind is guilty of sin:

“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23)

And the very nature of God (holy and just) demands separation of sinners from God and punishment for our sins!

Can man do anything to help himself? There are no “works” that a person can do to make himself innocent of the guilt of his or her sins. For example, a man who commits murder is not made innocent of that crime by living the rest of his life by the law! Yet many people think that they save themselves by balancing their good deeds against their sins.

But sin of any kind is so repulsive to God’s **holiness** that His **justice** requires punishment. Look again at the sins referred to earlier:

“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8)

Whether the sin is fear, lack of faith, lying, or murder, the “second death” is reserved for those who are guilty. Do you think that your sins are few and therefore not worthy of such punishment? Even if you commit just **one** sin, the nature of sin in the sight of a holy God is such that you are as guilty as one who broke every law:

“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is

guilty of all.” (James 2:10)

Since we are all sinners (**Romans 3:23**), it appears that we are all doomed to suffer God’s justice! Is there any way that can be both **holy** and **just** and yet allow sinful man to be “reconciled” to Him? Yes, there is, and Jesus is **The Way!**

JESUS, THE WAY TO FORGIVENESS OF SINS

God has provided the way by offering Jesus as a “propitiation” for our sins:

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” (1 John 4:10)

The word “propitiation” originally referred to an act or sacrifice that a man offered designed to appease a god. As used in the Bible, it refers to that which **God** has done (not man). In other words, what man cannot do for himself, God has done! He has offered His Son Jesus on the cross as a means to appease His **justice**. Such was foretold by Isaiah nearly 700 years earlier:

“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:5-6)

“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.” (Isaiah 53:10-12)

Notice that by the act of Christ’s suffering the punishment due us for our own sins, we are forgiven of them. As Paul would later write:

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” (Ephesians 1:7)

Through Christ’s death on the cross, we can come back to God, having been forgiven of our sins! In this way, God is able to:

- ♦ Preserve **His holiness** when we are in His presence (for our sins have been forgiven by the blood of Christ)

- ♦ Maintain **His justice** (for our sins have been properly punished by the death of Christ)
- ♦ All the while demonstrating **His love, grace and mercy!**

And so, Jesus is **The Way** to forgiveness of sins, for He has been made a “propitiation” for our sins! But how does one receive the wonderful blessing of having Jesus as the propitiation for our sins?

RECEIVING JESUS AS THE WAY TO FORGIVENESS

After His death for our sins, and following His glorious resurrection from the dead, Jesus charged His apostles with the commission to spread the good news:

And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:15-16)

We read in the book of Acts of how the apostles carried out this **Great Commission**. In chapter two, just ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven, we find Peter proclaiming the gospel for the first time. After presenting evidence that Jesus has truly risen from the dead and ascended to the right hand of God, Peter comes to climax of his sermon:

“Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” (Acts 2:36)

Yes, this same Jesus they had crucified only fifty days earlier was the actual Lord and Messiah they had been looking for. Evidently many people believed what Peter said, for we read next:

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37)

“**What shall we do?**”, they cried. What can anyone do, who has realized that they are sinners in need of salvation? What Peter told them is what we should tell anyone today:

Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38)

Peter told these people who evidently believed (as evidenced by their question in verse 37) that they needed to repent and be baptized. In similar fashion, when Saul of Tarsus (later known as the apostle Paul) had seen Jesus on the road to Damascus, and had been praying and fasting for three days afterward, he was told by Ananias whom the Lord had sent to him:

“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16)

Just as Jesus commanded in **Mark 16:16**, when someone wanted to be saved through the blood of Jesus Christ, in the New Testament they were told to be baptized for the remission (forgiveness) of their sins upon their believing in Jesus and repenting of their sins. Faith (which includes confessing Jesus as Lord, **Romans 10:9-10**), repentance and baptism were the conditions by which one could receive Jesus and enjoy the blessings of forgiveness of sins!

Receive Jesus in baptism? Yes, so the apostle stated in his letter to the Galatians:

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:27)

Note: **“as many of you”** (no more and no less) **“as have been baptized into Christ”** (as Jesus, Peter, etc., commanded) **“have put on Christ”** (have received Jesus and all the blessings He offers). Thus, in obedience to the Lord in faith, repentance and baptism we can take advantage of the wonderful grace of God, Who offered Jesus for our sins!

Conclusion

I leave with you the fact that Jesus is **The Way** to forgiveness; indeed, **the only way**, for no other way has by offered by God by which we can be reconciled to Him. As Jesus said:

“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)

And no other way devised by man solves the dilemma between man’s sin and the holiness and justice of God!

Have you accepted Jesus in the way He commanded and His apostles taught? Have you trusted in Him for salvation (**faith**), made the decision to turn from your sins (**repentance**), and been immersed for the forgiveness of your sins (**baptism**)?

If not, why not? Let Jesus be your way to forgiveness today!

Questions To Stimulate Your Thinking...

What is defined as sin? (1 John 5:17)

All unrighteousness.

What is the penalty (wages) of sin? (Romans 6:23)

Death.

What does the Lord love? What does He hate? (Psalms 45:7)

Righteousness. Wickedness.

When we have done all we are commanded to do, we are still what? (Luke 17:10)

Unprofitable servants.

In what is God rich? Why did God save us? How does He save us? (Ephesians 2:4,5)

Mercy. Because of His great love. By His grace.

What is Jesus in regards to our sin? (1 John 2:2)

The propitiation for our sins.

In Christ what do we have? (Ephesians 1:7)

Redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

For whom is Christ the author (source) of salvation? (Hebrews 5:9)

All who obey Him.

What does God command all people everywhere to do? (Acts 17:30)

To repent.

What also must be done to receive salvation in Christ? (Romans 10:9-10)

Confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, believe in the heart that God raised Him from the dead.

What did Jesus say one must do to be saved? (Mark 16:16)

Believe and be baptized.

What actually purifies (cleanses) one from sin? (1 John 1:7)

The blood of Jesus.

Baptism is for what purpose? (Acts 2:38)

To receive the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Why was Paul told to be baptized? (Acts 22:16)

To wash away his sins.

When one is baptized into Christ, what happens? (Galatians 3:27)

They put on Christ.

What is baptism? (Acts 8:36-38; Colossians 2:12)

An immersion in water, in which we are buried and raised with Christ.

Jesus, The Way

Jesus, The Way To God

Introduction

In the last lesson, we saw that by His death on the cross, Jesus made possible the forgiveness of our sins. When our sins are forgiven, we are no longer the objects of God's wrath. As Paul stated in his wonderful epistle to the Romans:

“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.” (Romans 5:9)

As wonderful as being justified by the blood of Jesus may be, we need more than this...we need the kind of close friendship that existed between God and Adam before the “Fall”. But if a close relationship is to exist between God and ourselves, we must understand God and feel comfortable in approaching Him.

When we contemplate the difference between God and man, we can see that this is not easy...

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

Think for a moment on the difference between God and man; when we consider **the nature of God** as revealed in the Bible and nature, we see:

- ♦ One with unlimited **power**, unlimited **wisdom**, unlimited **holiness**
- ♦ One who is the **creator** of all things, the **sustainer** of all things, the **knower** of all things
- ♦ One who is **eternal**, **immortal**, and **invisible**

Indeed, this **Supreme Being** fills the entire universe with His presence:

“Am I a God near at hand,” says the LORD, “And not a God afar off? Can anyone hide himself in secret places, So I shall not see him?” says the LORD; “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” says the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:23-24)

On the other hand, man is mortal, finite in knowledge and understanding. Man is the **created** one, the one who is sustained by the God who supplies all his needs. As Paul proclaimed in his sermon at Athens:

“God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell

on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'" (Acts 17:24-28)

The difference between God and man is so great, it ought to overwhelm man with awe. Notice the reflections of David as expressed in the Book of Psalms:

"O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. You have hedged me behind and before, And laid Your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it. Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, Even there Your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me. If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall fall on me,' Even the night shall be light about me; Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, But the night shines as the day; The darkness and the light are both alike to You." (Psalms 139:1-12)

In the Bible, whenever man came even close to approaching God in His Glory, it was terrifying! For example, notice what happened when God first spoke to Moses:

Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father; the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. (Exodus 3:6)

At Mount Sinai, the Israelites were likewise terrified:

Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood afar off. Then they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." And Moses said to the people, "Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin." So the people stood afar off, but Moses drew near the thick darkness where God was. (Exodus 20:18-21)

How then can man hope to comprehend God and approach Him in a close relationship during this life? This difficulty was experienced and expressed by Job in one of the earliest books of the Bible. Speaking of God, Job said:

"For He is not a man, as I am, That I may answer Him, And that we should go to court together. Nor is there any mediator between us, Who may lay his hand

on us both.” (Job 9:32-33)

But what may have been true in Job’s day (that there is no “daysman”, or “mediator”) is no longer true today! **Jesus** is the means by which man can comprehend God and also approach Him in such a way as to enjoy a loving relationship with Him! Let’s see how...

HOW JESUS IS THE WAY TO GOD

Jesus provides **The Way** to God, first by **helping us to comprehend God**. This Jesus did by coming to this earth. As John wrote in his gospel, Jesus declared or manifested God to us:

“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” (John 1:18)

How was Jesus able to “declare” (manifest) God? For one thing, **He came to this earth from God**, and is the only one who has truly seen Him:

“Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father.” (John 6:46)

But also, Jesus is able to “declare” God because **He is God Himself!** This John clearly states in the prologue to his gospel:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” (John 1:1-2)

Who is this **“Word”** that was with God and was God? The One who came in the flesh! As John says:

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

The **“Word”** was Jesus! Therefore, it is in seeing Jesus that we are able to comprehend the Father. Just as Jesus told His disciples:

“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.” (John 14:7)

In similar fashion, the apostles of Jesus proclaimed that He was the complete manifestation of God:

“For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;” (Colossians 2:9)
“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and

upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” (Hebrews 1:1-3)

Yes, it is in **Jesus** that God is revealed in terms that mortal, finite man can comprehend and personally relate to. Therefore, as we study the gospels, we see Jesus and His attributes (power, wisdom, holiness, love, mercy, divine wrath). As we see Jesus, we see God and His attributes!

But Jesus also provides the way to God by **helping us to approach God**. This we touched upon in our previous lesson, how that by offering Himself as a propitiation for our sins Jesus has made it possible for a sinful man to approach God who is supremely holy and just. But Jesus helps us to approach God in yet another way, as **our High Priest** in heaven. As the author of Hebrews wrote:

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.” (Hebrews 4:14)

Though Jesus was truly God (as stated by John and Paul), by becoming man He fully understands our difficulties:

“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)

With such a wonderful high priest in heaven, One who is both God and has been man, Jesus makes it possible for us to approach God with great confidence:

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (Hebrews 4:16)

Yes, through Jesus we can both **comprehend** God and **approach** God, making it possible to have a close relationship with our Heavenly Father, enjoying all the blessings such a relationship provides!

In order that we might better appreciate the beauty of this relationship available with God through Jesus, let's briefly notice some terms used in the New Testament to describe this relationship...

TERMS USED TO DESCRIBE THOSE WHO ARE IN JESUS

First, there are terms which proclaim a special relationship with our Heavenly Father. For example, we are called **the “children” of God**:

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:26)

Also, we are called **the “house” (family) of God**:

“But if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar

and ground of the truth.” (1 Timothy 3:15)

There are also terms which proclaim a special relationship with a Holy, Supreme Being. One describes us as a special dwelling place of God, i.e., the **“temple” of God**:

“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.’” (2 Corinthians 6:16)

Another descriptive term speaks of our role in service to God, that we are a **“royal priesthood”**:

“You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:5)

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;” (1 Peter 2:9)

Conclusion

Other terms might be considered, but these suffice to show that it is possible for those who were once lost in sin to enjoy a new, personal, intimate and fulfilling relationship with the Majestic God in heaven!

And what a wonderful relationship it is! One that offers promises that overwhelm you; for example, this one where God promises:

“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5)

But let us be clear in our understanding...Jesus is the **“The Way”**, the **only way** to God:

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6)

Only those who are **in** Jesus can have the assurance of enjoying this wonderful relationship with God!

How can we be sure that we are **in** Jesus, and as such the children of God? By taking to heart and life the truth of God’s Word. For example, the apostle Paul spoke of how one can **become** the children of God:

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:26-27)

By faith, when we are baptized into Christ, we “put on” Jesus Christ, and in this way become the children of God. We **remain** the children of God by abiding faithfully in the teachings of Christ:

“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.” (2 John 1:9)

Have you become a child of God by receiving Christ in faith and baptism? If not, why not today? If you have, are you maintaining your relationship with both the Father and the Son by abiding in the doctrine of Christ? If not, why not be restored to God today (through repentance and prayer)?

Only in so doing can you let Jesus be **your way** to God!

Questions To Stimulate Your Thinking...

What did Job wish he had between himself and God? (Job 9:33)

A mediator.

How is Jesus described in John 1:18?

The only begotten Son.

How can Jesus be a sympathetic High Priest? (Hebrews 4:15)

He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

If one does not have the Son, what else do they not have? (1 John 5:12)

Life.

What is the only way to the Father? (John 14:6)

Through Jesus.

What do we have through the blood of Jesus? (Ephesians 1:7)

Redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

How can both Jew and Gentile have access to the Father? (Ephesians 2:18)

Through Jesus.

What has God done through Jesus Christ? (2 Corinthians 5:18)

Reconciled us unto Himself.

What do we become through faith in Christ Jesus? (Galatians 3:26)

Sons of God.

Where is the eternal life that God gives? (1 John 5:11)

In His Son.

What is Jesus called in these passages: 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14; John 14:6; Ephesians 2:14?

Mediator between God and man; a great High Priest; the way, the truth, and the life; our peace.

Jesus, The Way

Jesus, The Way Out Of Religious Confusion

Introduction

Many people who wish to follow Jesus are repelled by the multitude of denominations and conflicting doctrines and practices taught by those professing to be Christians. Such distaste for denominational division is in keeping with the spirit of the New Testament.

For example, the night before His crucifixion, we find Jesus praying:

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” (John 17:21)

Jesus prayed fervently for unity “that the world might believe”. I appreciate this concern of Jesus every time I try to teach Muslims, Jews, Hindus, atheists, etc. The apostle Paul, also, was concerned with the problem of division, and spoke by inspiration against it:

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Corinthians 1:10-13)

Sounds a lot like denominational division today, doesn’t it? But while some denominational leaders like to justify their existence, we know from the Scriptures that such religious confusion does not come from God! Consider:

“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” (1 Corinthians 14:33)

Since God is not the author of such confusion, what is its source? The apostle Paul gives us a strong hint several times in his epistles. To the religiously divided church at Corinth, he said:

“For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal?” (1 Corinthians 3:3-4)

Where religious division exists, “carnality” is at work! And Paul warns us in his letter to the Galatians that it is one of those things that can keep one out of the kingdom of God:

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Galatians 5:19-21)

The words “seditions, heresies” in the original Greek describe exactly the denominational world around us today!

But even so, is it possible for people today to simply be Christians, and not a contributor to the denominational division of today? **Yes!** And Jesus shows us **The Way Out Of Religious Confusion!**

Notice Jesus’ own example in the religious climate of His day...

THE EXAMPLE JESUS HAS SET FOR US

When Jesus came to this earth, the Israelites were living under the Law of God as given by Moses. In that law, God had not made any provision for the division of His people into religious sects or parties. Yet, by the time of Jesus, the Jews had formed several distinct religious parties:

- ◆ Pharisees (somewhat conservative)
- ◆ Sadducees (very liberal, the “modernists” of their day)
- ◆ Essenes (radical isolationists)
- ◆ Herodians, Zealots (political religionists)

It was assumed that all who were serious about religion would be associated with one of these groups. To which of these groups did Jesus belong? He belonged to **none** of these groups! Instead, He maintained a “nonsectarian” relationship with God to the very end. As an Israelite, living at a time when the Law of Moses was still in effect, He was simply an “Israelite”. In addition, He encouraged all to live by the Law while it was still in effect:

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:17-20)

In other words, He encouraged all to simply be what the Law of Moses intended them to be (“Israelites”).

What would Jesus be today, if He were on earth? Would He be a Baptist, or Catholic, or Presbyterian, or Methodist, etc.? If He was simply an Israelite then, would He not simply be a “Christian” today? That was certainly what His disciples came to be called:

“And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” (Acts 11:26)

The word “called” in the Greek suggests that it was a name given by God Himself; perhaps the “new name” foretold by Isaiah in **Isaiah 62:2**?

In any case, the example Jesus has set for us is clear: just be what God originally intended under the Law which is in effect. Since in the New Testament (the “law of Christ” cf. **1 Corinthians 9:21**) the disciples of Christ were called “Christians”, so we should be!

Not only should we be content with being “called” Christians, we should also be concerned with “just being Christians”. **Nothing more, nothing less!** But how can we be sure that we are simply Christians, members of the church we read about in the New Testament?

It helps to see what the Bible tells us about the Lord’s church...

THE LORD’S CHURCH

Jesus promised to build **His church**:

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

The word “church” comes from the Greek word **ekklesia**, which means “a called-out group, an assembly, a congregation”. Therefore, Jesus was promising to create His own group of people who have been “called”.

How does this “calling” take place? According to the apostle Paul, we are “called” by the gospel of Christ:

“To which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 2:14)

On the first day of Pentecost after the ascension of Jesus Christ, we see by preaching the gospel Peter “called out” those who were willing to express their faith in Jesus:

Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of

the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call. And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.” Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. (Acts 2:38-41)

Notice that those who gladly responded in faith, repentance and baptism were “added”. To what and by whom were they “added”? We find the answer in **verse 47**:

“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:47)

The day of Pentecost was the beginning of the Lord’s church (His “ekklesia”). This “called-out” assembly or group was created when the gospel was proclaimed and people responded to it. At first, the church existed only in Jerusalem.

As the gospel spread, and people responded to it, groups of these saved people in various cities met together, and each group became known as a church in a “local” sense (in contrast to the church “universal” which is made up of all those saved throughout the world). For example, during Paul’s first missionary journey, we read:

And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.” So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. (Acts 14:21-23)

By simply teaching the gospel of Christ, a local church was formed when those who obeyed the gospel joined together in their work and worship. Though united in Christ, these local churches were independent of any human association or federation of churches.

Christ directed them through His inspired apostles, as they taught them how to worship and work together.

Sometimes, this teaching by the apostles was done directly, or by appointed emissaries:

“For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” (1 Corinthians 4:17)

Just as often, the teaching was done through the epistles or letters written by the apostles:

“If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 14:37)

“These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” (1 Timothy 3:14-15)

“To which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.” (2 Thessalonians 2:14-15)

“And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.” (2 Thessalonians 3:14)

When we see what the Bible tells us about the Lord’s church, we learn that by responding to the gospel and then paying close heed to the **“apostles’ doctrine”** (cf. **Acts 2:42**), people in the first century were able to be Christians only, without all the confusion prevalent today.

But is it possible for us to do this today? **Yes!**

AVOIDING DIVISION BY FOLLOWING JESUS

First of all, we can begin by obeying the same instructions that Peter gave on the Day of Pentecost:

Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

By repenting of our sins, and being baptized for the remission of our sins, we would then receive the same blessings as did the 3000 on that day: **Salvation!** By being saved in this manner, we **know** that the Lord truly adds us to **His** church just as He added them:

“And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:47)

What then? Since the early Christians (who continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine - **Acts 2:42**) joined no other religious organization, neither should we! By being in Christ, we are automatically united with all others who are in Him!

But as members of the Lord’s church, we should study carefully the New Testament description of that church. This description is found in the Book of Acts and in the Epistles which follow it. It is here that we will find instruction from the Lord’s apostles on **how**:

- ◆ To worship the Lord acceptably
- ◆ To be scripturally organized as local congregations

- ♦ To live and work together as Christians, spreading the gospel of Christ through word and example

Since the apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit, we may be sure their instructions were exactly what Jesus wanted them to be! If we duplicate the early churches by following the apostles' instructions, we will simply be "Christians", and we can be certain the Lord is pleased with us. As Jesus said to His apostles about those who would receive or reject their instructions:

"He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me." (Luke 10:16)

Conclusion

Simply being a Christian, and duplicating a New Testament congregation is not as difficult as one might think. There are literally thousands of such congregations throughout the world. **There is likely one in your area right now!** (Feel free to contact me if you would like to try and locate the nearest one.) If there is no such congregation in your area, it is not difficult to start one in your home (cf. **Ro 16:5; 1 Co 16:19; Co 4:15; Phile 2**).

And so, by following the example and teachings of Jesus, as revealed by His apostles, we can be led out of the religious confusion that dominates the religious world today!

Do you want to be simply a Christian, a member of the Lord's church we read about in the New Testament? If so, then I plead with you to first render obedience to the gospel of Christ as proclaimed by Peter and all the apostles (cf. **Acts 2:38**). You have the assurance of God's Word that you will then be added by the Lord Himself to His church (cf. **Acts 2:47**).

Then, you have the responsibility to learn and follow the apostles' doctrine and you serve the Lord Jesus in your life. As Luke recorded concerning the first Christians:

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42)

If you have not yet responded to the commands of the gospel as put forth by Peter in **Acts 2:38**, why not let the reaction of those who did on the Day of Pentecost describe your actions today:

"Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." (Acts 2:41)

Questions To Stimulate Your Thinking...

What did Peter tell people to do in order to be saved? (Acts 2:38)

Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins.

What did those who gladly received Peter's words do? (Acts 2:41)

They were baptized.

What did the Lord do for those who were being saved? (Acts 2:47)

He added them to His church.

What did those were baptized then do? (Acts 2:42)

They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

When did the disciples come together to break bread? (Acts 20:7)

The first day of the week.

What was this breaking of bread also called? (1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:17-34)

Communion; the Lord's Supper.

What else was done on the first day of the week? (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

They laid by in store as God prospered them.

What else did Christians do when they were together? (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16)

Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with melody in their heart to the Lord.

Who was the head of the church? (Colossians 1:18)

Christ.

When local churches had men who met certain qualifications, what were they appointed to do? (Acts 14:23; Ti 1:5-9)

To serve as elders (they were also called bishops and pastors - cf. Acts 20:17,28; 1 Peter 5:1-2).

The church in Philippi had what two groups of men serving them? (Philippians 1:1)

Bishops (elders) and deacons (cf. 1 Ti 3:1-13).

What is the primary function of the church? (1 Timothy 3:15)

To serve as the pillar and ground of the truth.

As individuals, what were the disciples of Christ called? (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16)

Christians (also saints, brethren).

As congregations, what were the disciples of Christ called? (1 Thessalonians 2:14; Romans 16:16)

Churches of God and churches of Christ.

Jesus, The Way

Jesus, The Way To Eternal Life

Introduction

We have considered how Jesus is truly **The Way** to many good things: He is **The Way**...

- ♦ **To a better life** (by correcting misconceptions and teaching us to seek new goals)
- ♦ **To forgiveness of sins** (by offering Himself as a propitiation, or sacrifice, for our sins)
- ♦ **To God** (by helping us first to comprehend God, then to be able to approach Him in a close, personal relationship)
- ♦ **Out of religious confusion** (through His own example, and by guiding us through His apostles' doctrine)

In this study, we shall see why we can also say Jesus is **The Way To Eternal Life**.

Please Note: In this study we shall be considering those passages which use the expression “eternal life” as a FUTURE HOPE, which will be realized after this life. In the writings of John, the expression “eternal life” is often used differently, referring to that “abundant life” which stresses a new relationship with God and Jesus, and is a PRESENT POSSESSION of those who have come to “know” them (cf. **John 17:3; 1 John 5:13,20**)

WHY JESUS IS THE WAY TO ETERNAL LIFE

There are several reasons why Jesus is the way to eternal life. First, He is the One Who has prepared a place for us. As He told His disciples the night before His crucifixion:

“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” (John 14:2)

Also, He is the One Who will come and receive us to Himself. As Jesus continued to say to His disciples:

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” (John 14:3)

The apostle Paul also spoke of this wonderful event, in which Jesus will come for His disciples:

“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the

voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)

Perhaps a more sobering reason why Jesus is the way to eternal life is this one: He is the One Who will judge as to who will enter in life eternal! In describing the future judgment scene to His disciples, we find Jesus saying:

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:’” (Matthew 25:31-34)

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:’” (Matthew 25:41)

“And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matthew 25:46)

Paul wrote of the role Jesus would perform as the Judge who determines our fate:

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” (2 Corinthians 5:10)

How essential, then, that we be found acceptable in **His** sight!

In a more positive vein, Jesus is the way to eternal life because: Together with God, He is what makes eternal life so wonderful! As the “beloved disciple” (John) wrote in the revelation given to him:

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’” (Revelation 21:1-4)

“But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its

temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. (Revelation 21:22-23)

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 22:1-5)

Did you notice what was said about Jesus in these passages? He is described as:

- ♦ The “bridegroom”
- ♦ The “temple”
- ♦ The “light” (or lamp)
- ♦ The source of “the water of life”

Yes, it is Jesus who will make eternal life what it is! This may help us to appreciate the aspirations of the apostle Paul:

“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:8)

“For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.” (Philippians 1:23)

When we understand all this, would there be eternal life without Jesus? **Not according to the Bible!** Jesus is truly **The Way** to eternal life!

Since Jesus **is** the way to eternal life, should we not also consider what Jesus has to say about it?

WHAT JESUS TEACHES ABOUT ETERNAL LIFE

First, eternal life is “a prepared place for prepared people”. People are not going to stumble into it by “accident”. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus warned His disciples:

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:14)

The way to life is such that few find it, and lack of preparation is the reason! Jesus taught several parables to stress this point, including the parable of “The Wedding Feast”:

And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: “The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son,” (Matthew 22:1-2)

“But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matthew 22:11-14)

Another parable, “The Ten Virgins” (Matthew 25:1-13), teaches the same point: one must be prepared to enter eternal life. In fact, Jesus said later in His Sermon On The Mount that being a religious person in of itself does not assure one of eternal life:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:21-23)

Doing the Father’s will is **how** we make preparation to enter into the wonderful life eternal that Jesus has prepared for us! And this requires “diligence” on our part. As the apostle Peter said in his second epistle:

“Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 1:10-11)

Jesus also taught something else about eternal life: the only alternative is eternal condemnation! In other words, the only alternative is **Hell**, which Jesus describes as “a prepared place for unprepared people”:

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:’” (Matthew 25:41)

“And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matthew 25:46)

This terrible place of everlasting condemnation is vividly described by Jesus in the revelation He gave to His servant John:

“The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” (Revelation 20:10-15)

“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:8)

And note carefully, this is the **only** place that people will stumble into accidentally! As we saw earlier:

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. (Matthew 7:13)

“Many” go in to the way that leads to destruction, because they simply follow the crowd. Making no effort to come to know God and obey the gospel of Christ, they face a terrible fate when Jesus comes again:

“And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)

“Punished with everlasting destruction”, what a terrible alternative to the eternal life Jesus offers!

Conclusion

But though God and Jesus have prepared such a fate for those who “know not God” and “obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”, They certainly do not want people to experience this! As Paul wrote to the young evangelist Timothy:

“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (1 Timothy 2:3-6)

In order that “eternal life”, and not “everlasting destruction”, might be the destiny of all men, God has provided the most precious thing to Him as the **Mediator** between sinful man and Holy God: **Jesus** - His Beloved Son, and **The Way** to all that is good, both in this life and the one to come!

But if what one does not accept Jesus as **The Way**? Then he or she is destined:

- ◆ To life with no real direction here on earth!
- ◆ To die in their sins!
- ◆ To be forever separated from God!
- ◆ To go through life in religious confusion!
- ◆ To go through eternity in eternal condemnation!

How much better to come to Jesus, and let Him be **Your Way**:

- ◆ To a better life!
- ◆ To forgiveness of sins!
- ◆ To a loving and close relationship with God!
- ◆ Out of religious confusion!
- ◆ To eternal life, with all its prepared glory!

If you haven't, obey the Lord Jesus and His gospel, and commit to following Him as **The Way** today!

Questions To Stimulate Your Thinking...

After death, what must one face? (Hebrews 9:27)

The judgment.

For whom is everlasting fire prepared? (Matthew 25:41)

The devil and his angels.

Who will be punished with everlasting destruction? (2 Thessalonians 1:8,9)

Those who do not know God, and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who will go through the wide gate to destruction? Who will find the way to life? (Matthew 7:13,14)

Many. Few.

In the New Jerusalem, with whom shall God dwell? What shall they be? (Revelation 21:3)

Men (mankind). His people.

Who is promised rest from their labors? (Revelation 14:13)

Those who die in the Lord.

Who will enter the kingdom of heaven? (Matthew 7:21)

Those who do the will of the Father in heaven.

Who are those who have put on Christ? (Galatians 3:27)

As many as have been baptized into Christ.

What claim does Jesus make? (John 14:6)

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

What does James say our life is like? (James 4:14)

A vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.

When will the dead be raised? (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:16)

When the trumpet sounds (at the coming of the Lord)

What will those who have done good be raised to? Those who have done evil? (John 5:28,29)

The resurrection of life. The resurrection of condemnation.

Why did God give His only begotten Son? (John 3:16)

Out of love, that whoever believes should not perish but have everlasting life.

What is God's desire concerning all of mankind? (2 Peter 3:9)

That none perish but that all should come to repentance.

What was Saul (later known as the apostle Paul) told by Ananias? (Acts 22:16)

"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Jesus, The Way

Finding Jesus, The Way

Introduction

In this series, I have attempted to present Jesus as **The Way** to many blessings. Indeed, He is the source of **every** spiritual blessing that God has to offer:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, (Ephesians 1:3)

But how can we be sure that we have found the **true** Jesus and are truly His disciples? Jesus made it clear that simply believing in Him does not constitute true discipleship:

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.” (John 8:31)

How can we be sure that we are not actually following some **caricature**, a misrepresentation of Jesus, presented to us in error by others who are sincerely mistaken themselves (such as our parents, preachers, churches)?

To be sure that we have truly found Jesus, The Way, we must begin with the only reliable source of information about Him: **The Bible!**

Surprising as it may be to some, a good place to start is with the Old Testament...

FINDING JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Though completed hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the Old Testament contains many things about Him. Jesus made this point on at least two occasions after His resurrection. First, to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus:

“And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” (Luke 24:27)

Then, later with the apostles themselves:

Then He said to them, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.” And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of

***sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”
(Luke 24:44-47)***

Years later, the apostle Paul reminded the young evangelist Timothy of the value of the Old Testament Scriptures in making one wise concerning the salvation that is in Jesus:

“But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Timothy 3:14-15)

How can this be? From the Old Testament we see Jesus through the eyes of prophecy! For example, from Isaiah we can learn such things as:

- ♦ The Birth of Jesus...

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.” (Isaiah 7:14)

- ♦ The Suffering of Jesus...

“Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:4-6)

- ♦ The Sovereignty of Jesus...

“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.” (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Many more prophecies could be taken just from Isaiah alone (one reason why he is commonly called “The Messianic Prophet”). Other prophets have much to say about Jesus. It has been estimated that there are more than 330 prophetic statements about Jesus found in the Old Testament!

So we should read the Old Testament in our efforts to find the true Jesus! But as important as it is in helping us to find Jesus, its purpose was predictive, to prepare people for Jesus. As Paul reminded the Galatians:

*“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”
(Galatians 3:24-25)*

Therefore, to find Jesus more fully, we must also come to the gospels...

FINDING JESUS IN THE GOSPELS

It is here that we find the most complete record of Jesus’ life and teachings while on earth. By God’s Divine Providence, we are blessed with four different gospels, each with its different emphasis...

- ♦ **Matthew** emphasizes the “teachings” of Jesus (especially in regards to the kingdom of heaven)
- ♦ **Mark** features the “miracles” of Jesus, showing His power
- ♦ **Luke** underscores the “humanity” of Jesus (without detracting from His divinity)
- ♦ **John** stresses the “divinity” of Jesus (without detracting from His humanity)

Though accenting different aspects of Jesus’ life and teachings, they all have the same basic purpose: **to create faith**. As expressed by John in his gospel:

“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” (John 20:30-31)

The gospels help us to see Jesus through the eyes of **fulfillment**, as they carefully document how He fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (this is especially true with Matthew).

They also reveal what Jesus actually taught; therefore, no one can know Jesus without reading these gospels carefully. When we do, we may often be surprised to find out how **different** the real Jesus is and what He actually taught, from the one imagined by many! For example, many feel that they are going to heaven when they die; but Jesus taught that most will not:

*“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”
(Matthew 7:13-14)*

Among those who will be surprised at the Day of Judgment will be many who thought they knew and served Jesus in their lifetime:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that

day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"
(Matthew 7:21-23)

Contrary to the “simple believism” that many people think is what is involved in following Jesus, by reading the gospels we learn what the real Jesus had to say about following Him:

Then He said to them all, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?” (Luke 9:23-25)

And one gospel even ends with a charge that many people who think they know Jesus do not take seriously:

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

The true Jesus left His apostles with the charge to teach would-be disciples to “observe **all** things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Does this sound like the “Jesus” proclaimed by many today? Many people’s concept of Jesus appears to be that He allows a sort of “multiple choice” when it comes to obeying His commandments! That is not the true Jesus!

By reading the gospels, then, we come much closer to finding Jesus and all that He represents. But by reading the gospels we also find out that He **did not** reveal the complete truth while on earth! As recorded by John in his gospel:

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” (John 16:12-14)

Due to the apostles’ inability to receive all the truth at that time, Jesus left it up to the Holy Spirit to complete the work of guiding them into all the truth. Therefore, to truly find Jesus and what His Will is for us today, we must also turn to the rest of the books of the New Testament...

FINDING JESUS IN THE ACTS AND THE EPISTLES

In the book of Acts, we see the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to send the Holy Spirit Who would guide

them into all the truth. Only ten days after His Ascension into heaven, we read concerning the apostles:

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:4)

As one reads through the book of Acts, they see the Holy Spirit guiding the apostles and the early church in its formative stage. Slowly, but surely, the Holy Spirit guides them into all the truth. The Holy Spirit even reveals things taught during Jesus’ ministry but not recorded in any of the four gospels. For example, Paul reminded the elders of the church of Ephesus of one saying of Jesus:

“I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” (Acts 20:35)

Because it was the Holy Spirit who was guiding the apostles into all the truth, we find that the words and writings of the apostles (i.e., the epistles) were to be received as if from Jesus Himself! As Paul wrote to the church at Corinth:

“If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 14:37)

And to the church at Thessalonica:

“For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.” (1 Thessalonians 2:13)

Of course, Jesus Himself had said that those who receive His apostles would in fact be receiving Him:

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.” (John 13:20)

An important point to be made is that the Holy Spirit did in fact guide the apostles into **all** the truth (cf. **John 16:13**)! In other words, with the gospels, the book of Acts and the epistles (including Revelation) we find the teachings of Jesus and about Jesus **completely**, **fully**, and **finally** revealed! No more revelation is needed. As Peter explained, we have **all** that is needed to live godly lives:

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,” (2 Peter 1:2-3)

The apostle Paul also spoke of the completeness which the Scriptures provide:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

As an example of how final the apostles’ revelation of Jesus and His teachings are to be considered, notice what Paul told the Galatians:

“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:8-9)

So with the writing of the New Testament, we are able to see Jesus through the eyes of **completeness!** All we need to know to follow Jesus as **The Way** is there, for us to **learn it**, and **live it!** No other revelations are needed. Our task is to simply remain true to what has been revealed once and for all:

“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3)

But having said all this, let me emphasize finally that we only find Jesus when we truly obey Him!

FINDING JESUS IN OBEDIENCE

As much as we may learn about Jesus and His teachings in the gospels, Acts, and the epistles, we do not truly find Him as **The Way** until we begin obeying Him! Jesus Himself stressed the importance of obedience to those who were simply believers:

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:31-32)

Please notice carefully: “believing on him” did not make these Jews true disciples of Jesus! Only by continuing in His Word (obeying all that He commanded) would they become His disciples and thereby know the truth and the freedom it gives from sin.

On another occasion, Jesus told His apostles of the importance of obedience:

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” (John 14:21)

Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word;

and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” (John 14:23)

When we keep the commandments of Jesus, He and His Father will abide in us, and we will have truly found Jesus! Or to put it another way:

“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. (1 John 2:3-5)

Yes, by keeping His commandments we come to know and experience the true Jesus in our lives! This is especially true when we come to Jesus in faith and repentance, and submit to His command to be baptized:

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:27)

Having received (or “put on”) Christ in baptism, we are now in Christ, where all things are “new”:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Conclusion

Yes, all things are “new”, for in finding Jesus by keeping His commands we find...

- ♦ **A better life**
- ♦ **Forgiveness for our sins**
- ♦ **Reconciliation with God our Father**
- ♦ **The privilege of being in the Lord’s church** (and not some denomination begun and propagated by men)
- ♦ **The assurance of eternal life**

Have you found Jesus? Or are you following some cheap imitation of the real thing, which at the best is a misconception fostered by honestly mistaken people, or at the worst is being marketed in a slick promotion by those seeking numbers rather than disciples?

You have truly found Jesus if you are heeding the implications of His “Great Commission”:

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Those who have truly found Jesus are those who:

- ◆ Accept the authority (power) He has in heaven and on earth
- ◆ Have been baptized (upon faith and repentance) as He commanded
- ◆ Are careful to observe ALL things that He commanded

Such are the only ones who have the assurance: *“I am with you always, [even] unto the end of the world.”* They are ones who have “found” Jesus!

Let **Jesus** be **your way** to everything that is truly good! Trust and obey Him today!

Questions To Stimulate Your Thinking...

What value is the Old Testament for us today? (2 Timothy 3:14,15)

To make us wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

What did Isaiah prophecy 700 years before Christ about His birth? (Isaiah 7:14)

He would be born of a virgin (cf. Matthew 1:21-23).

What did Isaiah prophecy the reason for Christ's suffering? (Isaiah 53:4-6)

He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.

What purpose did the Law of Moses serve? (Galatians 3:24-25)

To guide the Jews until the coming of Christ.

What was the purpose of the gospels? (cf. John 20:30-31)

To produce faith in Christ.

Who will enter the kingdom of heaven according to Jesus? (Matthew 7:21)

Those who do the will of our Father in heaven.

What did Jesus expect of those who would be His disciples? (Luke 9:23-25)

To deny self, take up their cross, and follow Him.

How do people become disciples according to Jesus? (Matthew 28:19-20)

By being baptized, and then observing all things that He commanded.

What did Jesus promise His apostles? (John 16:12-14)

The Holy Spirit, to guide them into all the truth.

How should we view the writings of the apostles? (1 Corinthians 14:37)

As the commandments of the Lord.

What has God given us through the apostles of Christ? (2 Peter 1:3)

All things that pertain to life and godliness.

For what are the Scriptures all sufficient? (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

That the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

What is our duty regarding that which has been revealed? (Jude 3)

To contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

What of anyone (even an apostle or angel) who teaches a different gospel? (Galatians 1:8,9)

Let him be accursed.

How do we know if we are truly the disciples of Jesus? (John 8:31-32)

When we abide in His word.

How do we show our love for Jesus? (John 14:21,23)

By keeping His word.

How do we put on (receive) Jesus? (Galatians 3:27)

When we are baptized into Christ.

What is our responsibility after baptism? (Matthew 28:19-20)

To observe all things that He has commanded.

What happens when one is in Christ? (2 Corinthians 5:17)

He is a new creation; old things have passed away, all things have become new.

Jesus, The Way

Following Jesus, The Way

As mentioned from the very beginning, the purpose of this study has been two-fold:

- ♦ **For those who are Christians**, to increase their appreciation of Jesus as their Lord and Savior, so they will want to serve Him with greater zeal;
- ♦ **For those who are not Christians**, to encourage them to let Jesus be their way to everything that is truly good, both in this life and in the life to come!

If you are not a Christian (or perhaps thought you were, but now wonder if you are a true disciple of Christ), I hope you will want to follow Jesus as Your Way for the rest of your life!

If so, remember that one finds Jesus in obedience. May I suggest that you concern yourself with three things:

- ♦ **Obey the gospel of Christ**, and Jesus will be your way to forgiveness and a closer relationship with God.
- ♦ **Grow in grace and knowledge**, that Jesus may lead you to a better life now, and to the eternal life to come.
- ♦ **Serve Jesus without denominationalism**, by finding a New Testament church, or if necessary, start one in your home.

To assist you in these three things, please feel free to utilize any and all of the outlines at my website (Executableoutlines.com). In particular, you might find the following studies helpful:

To Obey The Gospel Of Christ

- ✓ **Are You Ready For Your Journey Into Eternity?**
- ✓ **Baptism - A Special Study**
- ✓ **Conversions In The Book Of Acts**
- ✓ **The Gospel Of Christ**
- ✓ **Make Your Calling And Election Sure**
- ✓ **Why Are You Waiting?**

To Grow In Grace And Knowledge

- ✓ **After Conversion, What Then?**
- ✓ **A Closer Walk With God**
- ✓ **Growing In the Knowledge Of Jesus Christ**
- ✓ **Shining As Lights In The World**
- ✓ **The Significance Of Being A Christian**

To Serve Jesus Without Denominationism

- ✓ **Following Jesus Without Denominationalism**
- ✓ **The Church Jesus Built**
- ✓ **What Is The Church Of Christ?**
- ✓ **What To Look For In A Church**
- ✓ **Starting The Lord's Church In Your Home**

If you need any assistance in obeying the gospel of Jesus or finding a church, please do not hesitate to write me (<http://executableoutlines.com/email.htm>)

*The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.
(2 Timothy 4:22)*