

**Jesus of Nazareth: The True and Living Way**  
**A Study Guide for the 8 session video series**

by Dr. John Woodward



JESUS ANSWERED,  
"I AM THE WAY  
AND THE TRUTH  
AND THE LIFE.  
NO ONE COMES  
TO THE FATHER  
EXCEPT THROUGH ME."

## Session 1

### Introduction: The True Identity of Jesus

We need to be diligent, teachable and prayerful: "And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

[Scripture quotations (unless indicated otherwise) are from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version* (copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson). Any italicized words and phrases in biblical quotations in this book indicate *emphasis added*.]

Please read the context of John 14:1-11.

This eight part series uses John 14:6 as the central affirmation and outline.

- Sessions 1,2 - "I am..."
- Sessions 3,4 - "...the way"
- Sessions 5,6 - "...the truth"
- Session 7 - "...the life"
- Session 8 - "no one comes to the father except by Me."

The videos are online at [www.gracefellowshipinternational.com/media/jesus-of-nazareth-the-true-and-living-way/](http://www.gracefellowshipinternational.com/media/jesus-of-nazareth-the-true-and-living-way/)

Other passages contain emphatic "I Am" affirmations.

#### 1. "I AM" statements of Jesus: His deity

"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.' Then the Jews said to Him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM'" (John 8:56-58; see verses 23,24).

This is an allusion to Exodus 3:13,14: "Then Moses said to God, 'Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What *is* His name?' what shall I say to them?' And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, "I AM has sent me to you.'"

#### 2. "I AM" statements of Jesus: His humanity

The usual self-designation of Jesus was "Son of Man." This, however, was more than a statement of His full humanity. It was also a messianic title. The prophet Daniel recorded a vision of the coming of the Messiah at the close of history: "I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him" (Daniel 7:13).

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made....And the Word became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-3,14).

### 3. "I AM" statements of Jesus: The Messiah

One of the reasons Jesus rarely used the title "messiah" for Himself was that it would have been misinterpreted. The Jews in the first century A.D. were hoping for a messiah who would be a political and military deliverer. But, the first Coming was a mission of redemption (Luke 4:18,19).

"Messiah" is Hebrew (Old Testament) for "The Anointed One." "Christ" is the Greek term (New Testament) with the same meaning. In the Old Testament people were anointed with oil in a special way to recognize their appointment to a particular ministry. Prophets, priests, and kings were anointed this way. Jesus is the only person who has ever been all three in one, perfectly.

In private, Jesus did refer to His identity as Messiah: "The woman said to Him, 'I know that Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When He comes, He will tell us all things.' Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am *He*'" (John 4:25,26).

One of the primary purposes of the New Testament is to help us recognize the true identity of Jesus and come to personal, saving faith in Him: "but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

### Issues arising

**Question:** Then, did God physically marry Mary to have a Son?

**Answer:** No, the Bible teaches that God's Spirit created the seed that conceived the human body of Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary. In the beginning, God created the first man, Adam, by a direct supernatural act (Genesis 2:7).

**Illustration:** An inspired Holy Book is simultaneously physical/material (paper and ink) and supernatural (with a message inspired by God). Likewise, Jesus is both divine and human. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. 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 1:1,2,14).

## Session 2

### The "I AM" Declarations of Jesus in the Gospel of John

This lesson considers some of the other "I am" affirmations of Jesus.

These declarations show that Jesus' special identity was not just a product of wishful thinking or exaggeration arising many years later. These claims do not in themselves prove their truthfulness by themselves. The "I am"s are validated by other lines of evidence including His miracles, fulfilled prophecy, His resurrection, and the experiential confirmation in the hearts and lives of believers.

In this lesson we examine these declarations of Jesus:

**"I AM the bread of life" (John 6:35,46)**

**"I AM the light of the world" (John 8:12)**

**"I AM the Good Shepherd" (John 10:11; verses 10-18)**

**"I AM the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25)**

**"I AM the true vine" (John 15:1)**

Before salvation everyone is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1).

The "fruit" that the True Vine produces includes these character qualities: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control..." (Galatians 5:22,23).

Additional "I am" statements in the Gospel of John include 4:26; 8:58; 14:6 (see lesson 1); 10:36; 13:13; 18:5,6; 18:33-37.

A correct response to this revelation is a matter of life and death: Jesus warned, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that *I am* He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24 ).

The disciples were not naive; they were convinced through the Resurrection.

"Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, 'We have seen the Lord.' So he said to them, 'Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.' And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, 'Peace to you!' Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.' And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed'" (John 20:24-29).

"Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6).

## Issues Arising

**Question:** Then, do Bible-believing Christians assert that there is more than one God?

**Answer:** No, the New Testament teaches that God is one (as in Deuteronomy 6:4; James 2:19). Yet, this God has revealed Himself as Father, Son, and Spirit. This is a conclusion based on an inductive process of accepting what the whole Bible says about God's three-in-one nature.

An introductory analogy would be how *water* can be liquid (as water), solid (as ice) or gas (as steam)--three forms yet the same chemical *nature*. But this falls short of the biblical description of the distinctions in God. A closer analogy would be the mysterious nature of *light* (John 8:12; Psalm 27:1). Scientists explore the properties of light simultaneously as energy, as particles, and as waves. Since God is infinite, we should humbly accept doctrine that we can we can *apprehend* (know it truly), even if we cannot fully *comprehend* it (understand it exhaustively).

## Notes

For further study, see this free PDF booklet:

<http://discoveryseries.org/discovery-series/do-christians-believe-in-three-gods/>

Confirming testimonies cited in the video:

(Professional athlete) Pete Maravich and

(Jewish businessman) Stan Telchin. See [www.Lifestory.org](http://www.Lifestory.org)

## Session 3

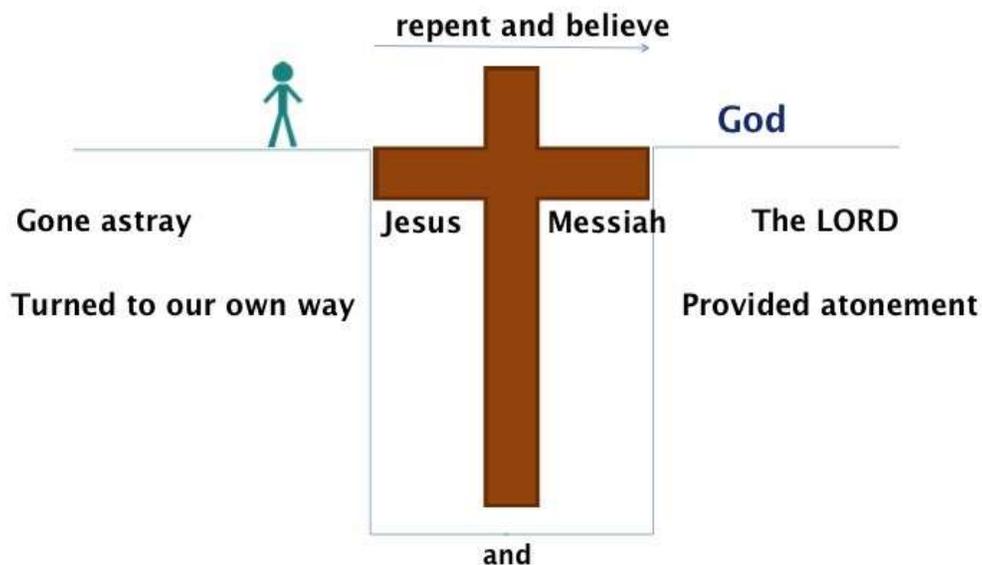
### Jesus: The Way of Redemption

The mission of the Messiah (prophesied in Isaiah 61:1,2) is summarized here:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,  
Because He has anointed Me  
To preach the gospel to the poor;  
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind  
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;  
To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD” (Luke 4:18,19).

The prophet John (usually known as John the Baptist) saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

“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 53:6



This diagram is adapted from one based on Romans 6:23: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Everyone needs salvation due to their sin and condemnation. "Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:20-23).

No amount of religious works can merit or help one earn eternal salvation. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9)

To receive salvation, we need to exercise personal faith: "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9,10).

*Other Biblical quotations and allusions in the video lesson include:*

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

"But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6).

"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were *previously committed* [from the beginning of history until the Crucifixion], to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus [all who live *since* the atonement was made]" (Romans 3:24-26).

"It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

"[Jesus] He came to His own, and His own [the Jewish leaders] did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:11-13).

## Issues arising

**Question:** Are we certain that Jesus was actually crucified?

**Answer:** Yes, there is indisputable evidence of His crucifixion.

Biblically it was predicted throughout the Old Testament (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 53; Psalm 22). All four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) give the definitive, historical record of the crucifixion of Jesus, the divine purpose for it, and Christ's intention to experience it. Jesus declared: "As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold [Gentiles]; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd. Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father" (John 10:15-18). "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.' This He said, signifying by what death He would die" (John 12:32,33).

The crucifixion was recorded also by historians outside the Bible who were not Christian.

"Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man,... for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher ... He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles... And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; ... And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day. (Josephus, Antiquities 18:3). Another early, independent historical confirmation of the crucifixion of Jesus comes from Tacitus, in his *Annals* (written ca. AD 116), book 15, chapter 44. See also Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10:96,97, and a Jewish source—*Babylonian Talmud*, Sanhedrin 43a.

**Question:** Who caused the death of Jesus?

**Answer:** This is a multifaceted issue. Although this plot was initiated by Jewish leaders and executed by Romans soldiers on a human level, it was under the providential plan and permission of God. When believers faced persecution, they declared: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ.' For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done" (Acts 4:24-28; quoting from Psalm 2:1,2).

## Notes

For a further study on the multifaceted causes of the Crucifixion, see my two-part article [www.gracernotebook.com/pub/328.html](http://www.gracernotebook.com/pub/328.html),  
[www.gracernotebook.com/pub/329.html](http://www.gracernotebook.com/pub/329.html)

The testimony of Tony Nolan can be found online at [www.tonymolan.org](http://www.tonymolan.org)

The Romans 6:23 Bridge diagram is here:

<http://www.navigators.org/Tools/Evangelism%20Resources/Tools/The%20Bridge%20to%20Life>

For further study on the way of salvation, see our web site:

[www.GoodNews4you.ca](http://www.GoodNews4you.ca)

## Session 4

### Jesus is the Way: Confirmation by Miracles

The New Testament authors document many miracles of Christ, but there were others that were unrecorded (John 20:30). The miracles were obviously supernatural; they were not fanciful, a case of trickery, or mythological. Even the enemies of Jesus did not dispute that the miracles were real and supernatural.

The miracles Jesus accomplished were designated as "signs" because they also had the purpose of illustrating spiritual truth (John 4:54;6:14;12:18). They were "miracles with a message." The most obvious message was to verify that Jesus is the Messiah and Savior.

#### 1. **Jesus turned water into wine.** John 2:1-11

At **the** wedding in Cana, Mary approached Jesus with an implicit plea for help: "They have no wine." Christ demonstrated compassion for this couple's extended family. As water is inorganic and wine is organic, even so God can take spiritually dead people and give them new life (Ephesians 2:1-7).

"This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him... Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did" (John 2:11,23).

#### 2. **Jesus healed the blind man.** John 9:1-34

Sight was miraculously given to the man who had been born blind.

The man's parents were brought in to verify that he had been blind from birth. However, the religious leaders hardened their heart and tried to convince the man to disbelieve Jesus: "[The healed man] answered and said, 'Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.'...The man answered and said to them, 'Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes! Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing'" (John 9:25,30-33). "Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of God?'

He answered and said, 'Who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?' And Jesus said to him, 'You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.' Then he said, 'Lord, I believe!' And he worshiped Him" (John 9:35-38).

Jesus used clay He made from His own saliva; the man needed to exercise a response to be cleansed in the pool. Even so, what comes through Christ's mouth (His teaching) can bring light to darkened hearts and blinded minds (John 9:39-41). Our response of faith is essential.

### **3. Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus** John 3:1-18

Nicodemus was a biblical scholar, a member of the strict Jewish sect, the Pharisees, and a member of the ruling council (Sanhedrin). He came to Jesus at night (probably so as not to draw attention to his meeting with Jesus). Nicodemus confessed that Jesus' miracles prove that He is sent from God. "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; *for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him*" (John 3:2 ). Jesus replied by declaring that everyone--no matter how religious and devout—needs a spiritual rebirth (John 3:3). The passage alludes to the account of Numbers 21:5-9 where healing was granted as afflicted, disobedient people looked in faith to the designated symbol of deliverance. The bronze serpent was a type of Christ, who was judged on behalf of sinful humanity (Galatians 3:13,14; John 12:32; 2 Corinthians 5:21). We, likewise, can look to Jesus and gain spiritual healing and eternal life (1 Peter 2:24).

### **4. Jesus' own resurrection** John 2:19-21; 20:1-29

In spite of the many undeniable miracles, some refused to believe. God gives people the freedom and responsibility to believe. When the skeptics asked for another miracle, Jesus pointed them to the "sign of Jonah" (Matthew 12:39-41). The unbelieving leaders knew of His prophecy of His own resurrection, so they secured a band of Roman soldiers to seal and guard the tomb for a few days. When Christ was raised again, an angel rolled the stone away from the entrance of the tomb and the soldiers become reluctant witnesses. Tragically, they settled for a monetary bribe to become false witnesses. Note: The disciples had scattered and were hiding in fear. The soldiers knew they would face dreadful punishment if they really had fallen asleep and allowed others to open the tomb, roll away the stone, and remove the body. Therefore, the Jewish leaders promised to protect them from Governor Pilate's retribution for failing to prevent the empty tomb (Matthew 28:11-14).

After the dramatic miracle of the raising Lazarus from the grave (after Lazarus had been dead for four days) the public recognition was overwhelming: "Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, 'What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.' And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, 'You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish'" (John 11:45-50).

*Other Biblical quotations and allusions in the video lesson:*

"to whom [the Disciples] He [Jesus] also presented Himself alive after His suffering by *many infallible proofs*, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting" (Micah 5:2, 700 B.C.).

"[unbelievers] suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1:19,20).

"All Scripture [the Holy Bible] 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).

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" John 3:14-18).

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

### Issues arising

**Question:** Does modern science render miracles impossible?

**Answer:** No, miracles do not contradict natural laws; rather, miracles supersede them. The Creator acts directly upon the natural realm by His power.

### Notes

Robert Jastrow: "At this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries" (*God and the Astronomers*, 1978, p. 116).

Michael Behe, a professor of biochemistry at Lehigh University, argues convincingly that *irreducible complexity* makes evolution purely through natural selection of random mutations impossible. (Behe, Michael (1996). *Darwin's Black Box*. New York: The Free Press; see also Michael Denton,(1986). *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*. Bethesda, Md: Adler & Adler.

For more on the comparison of the bronze serpent and the sacrificial death of Jesus, see my article, "Look and Live." [www.gracenotebook.com/pub/183.html](http://www.gracenotebook.com/pub/183.html)

For a more detailed list and study on the miracles of Jesus see <https://bible.org/series/miracles-jesus>

For a defense of the historicity and genuineness of Christ's miracles, see Probe.org articles, such as <https://www.probe.org/did-jesus-really-perform-miracles/>

For more on the Resurrection, see the research of Dr. William Lane Craig  
[www.reasonablefaith.org/the-resurrection-of-jesus](http://www.reasonablefaith.org/the-resurrection-of-jesus)  
and his corresponding video on YouTube.com

## Session 5

### Jesus is the Truth: The Ultimate Prophet

Prophets of God speak His revelation. Revelation can be defined as "that act of God whereby He makes known what in no other way could be made known." The only way we can have true knowledge about creation, the identity and nature of God, and the conditions and potential of forgiveness and life after death is by revelation. Many settle for philosophical opinions about the spiritual realm. The Bible warns against such humanistic futility (Colossians 2:8).

Prophets would address *current issues* ("forthtell") and sometimes predict what would happen in *the future* ("foretell").

Many people around the world believe false prophets (as in 1 Kings ch. 18; Jeremiah ch. 28). Jesus warned, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15).

But how can we discern who is/has been a true prophet of God? The Bible gives two crucial tests in the book of Deuteronomy that were recorded through the prophet Moses.

#### *Tests of a True prophet*

#### **1. Deuteronomy ch.18 - fulfillment**

When a prophet gives predictive prophecy it must be 100% accurate. If all of their prophecies do not come to pass, or if contrary events happen, then they are to be judged as false prophets. Under the Old Testament law, speaking as a false prophet was a crime of apostasy punishable by death.

One way a false prophet could avoid this test is simply to *not* give predictive prophecy.

#### **2. Deuteronomy ch.13 - fidelity**

The other test was *faithfulness to previous revelation*. If the prophet's teachings about God (such as His character, identity, redemption and will) are contrary to previous revelation, this "prophet" is a counterfeit.

*What evidence points to Jesus as the ultimate prophet?*

## 1. Jesus' sinless life

This was confirmed by Jesus Himself (not just the opinion of others). "Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?" (John 8:46). The writer of Hebrews confirmed this: "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; see 2 Corinthians 5:21).

What other prophet has been without sin?

## 2. Jesus' supernatural identity

God wanted to reveal Himself, not only in words, but in and through a perfect human being. The Bible shows the qualitative superiority of Jesus as revealer: "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).

How can any merely mortal prophet improve on this?

The prophet John [the baptizer] had a special role as herald of the Messiah (Mark 1:1-11). No one before John had a more important ministry (Luke 7:28). Yet John had testified, "I baptize with water, but there stands One among you [Jesus] whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose" (John 1:26,27).

His divinity was further demonstrated in that Jesus forgave sins, sovereignly dismissed demons, and received worship (Matthew 9:5,6; Mark 5:9-15; Matthew 2:11; 8:2; 28:9).

## Prophecies that Jesus gave

1. Some prophecies were fulfilled *during His ministry*.

For convenience, consider examples from the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus accurately gave these predictions.

\*A man carrying a water pot would lead disciples (sent to prepare the Passover meal) to a chosen upper room (Matthew 26:18; Luke 22:10).

\*Judas would betray Him ( Matthew 26:21-23).

\*The disciples would desert Him and scatter (Matthew 26:31; predicted earlier in Zechariah 13:7).

\*Peter would deny Him (due to cowardice) three times before the rooster would crow the next morning (Matthew 26:34,35).

\*He would be condemned, abused and crucified (Matthew 20:18).

\*He would be raised the third day (Matthew 16:21;17:23;26:32).

"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' Then the Jews said, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?' But He was speaking of the temple of His body" (John 2:19-21).

## 2. Some prophecies were fulfilled *after His ministry*.

Matthew 24 and Luke 21 give the discourse Jesus gave on the Mount of Olives. Here Jesus gave many prophecies about the years and centuries following His earthly ministry. The prediction that Jerusalem would be destroyed seemed highly unlikely, and that the massive stones of the temple court would be torn apart seemed almost impossible. But both aspects were tragically fulfilled when the Romans conquered the city in A.D. 70.

The public and private execution of followers of Jesus was prophesied: "They will put you out of the synagogue\*"; in fact, *the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God*" (John 16:2 NIV. \*The first generation of believers were primarily Jewish, so "synagogue" is mentioned.)

## 3. Some prophecies await *future fulfillment*.

These predictions refer to events before, during and after our current generation: "Then they will deliver you [followers of Jesus] up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:9-14).

Jesus was also emphatic that He will return at the end of this age in power and glory. At the Second Advent, "Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matthew 24:40-44).

## Issues arising

**Question:** To whom does Deuteronomy 18:18,19 refer? "I will raise up for them a Prophet like you [Moses] from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be that whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require it of him."

**Answer:** No one before or after Jesus passed the two crucial tests of a true prophet *and* had another prophet designate him as the one who fulfilled the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:18,19. However, the New Testament explicitly applies this fulfillment to Jesus. The apostle Peter proclaimed, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a *Prophet* like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear *that Prophet* shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' To you first, God, having raised up *His Servant Jesus*, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (Acts 3:19-26).

**Question:** Did Jesus' teaching contradict the Old Testament scriptures?

**Answer:** No, Jesus declared, "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" (Matthew 5:17,18). Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied of the New Covenant that God would establish. Jesus fulfilled that prophecy through His redemption (Jeremiah 31:31; Ezekiel 36:25-28; Matthew 26:28).

## Notes

For a Bible survey with a prophetic orientation, see the book, *All That the Prophets Have Spoken*. [goodseed.com/all-that-the-prophets-have-spoken.html](http://goodseed.com/all-that-the-prophets-have-spoken.html)

For a comprehensive, scholarly study of prophecy throughout the Bible, see *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy: The Complete Guide to Scriptural Predictions and Their Fulfillment* (1980) by J. Barton Payne.

## Session 6

### Jesus is the Truth: The Reliability of the Bible

Since this series is based on biblical teaching as authoritative, now we consider the possibility that the Bible has been changed.

We will examine two categories of evidence: *internal* evidence and *manuscript* evidence.

#### 1. Reliability of the Old Testament: internal evidence

The Old Testament has repeated claims to inspiration.

"And when they say to you, 'Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter,' should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:19,20).

"The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD. 'Is not My word like a fire?' says the LORD, 'And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?'" (Jeremiah 23:28,29).

If any people had a motive to change and edit the Bible to present themselves and their leaders in a more favorable light, it was the people of Israel. Their leaders were great men and women of faith, but almost all had failures and inconsistencies that the Bible does not ignore. Blatant failures of heroes (that were not changed for a more favorable image) include the sins of Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and David (Gen. 12:13-19; Exodus 2:11,12; Num. 20:11,12; 2 Sam. 11:3-23).

Most of the Old Testament prophets rebuked wayward Israel (northern kingdom) and/or Judah (southern kingdom) for their unfaithfulness to God's covenant. These failures were not edited out of their holy book.

#### 2. Reliability of the Old Testament: external evidence

If someone alleges that the Old Testament text has been changed so as not to be reliable as inspired Scripture, they should consider the evidence of the manuscripts.

From the time the original autographs were written until they were standardized through the printing press, many copies were carefully made by scribes. These devoted men were painstakingly detailed and accurate in their discipline of copying sacred Scripture. Malachi, the last of the Old Testament books, was written about 400 B.C. There are many biblical Hebrew manuscripts from the following centuries.

One of the fascinating archeological discoveries of the last century has given us confirmation that the copyists were accurate. The Dead Sea Scrolls are a collection of ancient manuscripts discovered starting in 1946 from caves near the Dead Sea in southern Israel. Dating methods place these copies as far back as the third century B.C. They were copied and preserved by the community in Qumran. These scrolls contain at least part of every Old Testament book (except Esther) plus many other texts. When scholars compared the biblical Dead Sea scrolls text of Isaiah, for example, with the earliest full manuscripts extant (about A.D. 900), they discovered essential consistency and reliability.

### **3. Reliability of the New Testament: internal evidence**

Jesus promised that the Spirit of God would guide the authors of the New Testament to remember and accurately record the completion of the Bible (John 14:26). The same kind of observations noted about the internal honesty of the Old Testament also apply to the New. The early Christians, or later the Roman Catholic Church, would have had human preferences that were contradicted by the unbiased record of Scripture. Heroes were described with their shortcomings and failures. Peter (the lead apostle in the early chapters of Acts) was rebuked by Jesus and denied Him when waiting on the outcome of the trials. James and John wanted to call fire down from heaven to judge cities that refused to welcome Jesus (but He rebuked them). Frequently the disciples demonstrated lack of faith. The hero of the parable of the Good Samaritan was the half-breed, who would be looked down upon by most of the early church in Judea. The first eye witnesses of the risen Christ were the women who had come to anoint the body of Jesus, but found the tomb open and empty. But in the first century, women were not recognized by Roman law as valid witnesses in court (Matthew 16:23; 26:69-75; Luke 9:54; 10:33; Matthew 28:9).

Therefore, early generations of copyists were faithful to their task even with these somewhat humanly embarrassing--yet accurate--New Testament accounts.

The Roman Catholic Church considers Peter as its first Pope. Yet, Peter was married, whereas Rome forbids priests to marry (Mark 1:30; 1 Corinthians 9:5). Many other examples could be given to demonstrate that there is no indication of internal editing; quite the contrary.

#### 4. Reliability of the New Testament: external evidence

From the original copies of Scripture in the first century until the printing press was invented in the west by Johannes Gutenberg (around A.D. 1440), many generations of copies in the original Greek, and other translations, were made. In the last couple of centuries scholars have carefully studied about 5,000 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament that have survived from many areas of the middle east and beyond. Editions such as the United Bible Society's Greek Testament record detailed footnotes of all significant variants of words and spelling. The extensive research of this lower textual criticism has assured the modern reader that *no teaching of the New Testament is affected by any of these minor variant readings.*

#### Summary

The apostle Peter testified, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' [Matthew 17:5]. And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed" (2 Peter 1:16-2:2).

*Other Biblical quotations and allusions in the video lesson:*

"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

"from the blood of Abel [Genesis] to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the temple [2 Chronicles]. Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation" (Luke 11:51 -indicates first to last books of the Hebrew Old Testament).

“Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising. Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:29-31).

“...[Jesus affirmed] the Scripture cannot be broken...” (Joh 10:35).

“These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (John 14:25,26).

*Could this 'helper' refer to a human being?* No, He is the Spirit of God: "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you" (John 14:17).

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field” (Matthew 13:44). Note: since parables are illustrative, they can have a primary meaning and other secondary applications.

"[God assures us] And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

## **Issues arising**

**Question:** Does the Bible contain contradictions?

**Answer:** Critics of the Bible have made this allegation. Yet, there are no proven contradictions in the Bible. There are, however, cases where different accounts of the same event contain different--though noncontradictory--details. The Gospel writers sometimes present the same event with different perspectives and details. For example, were there two blind men healed or just Bartimeus? Were there two angels at the empty tomb or one? Note that variation does not require a contradiction. (If two people were present, it would not be false to limit the description to one of them, etc.) Historians confirm that minor, non-contradictory variations in accounts are actually *a further indication of their authenticity*.

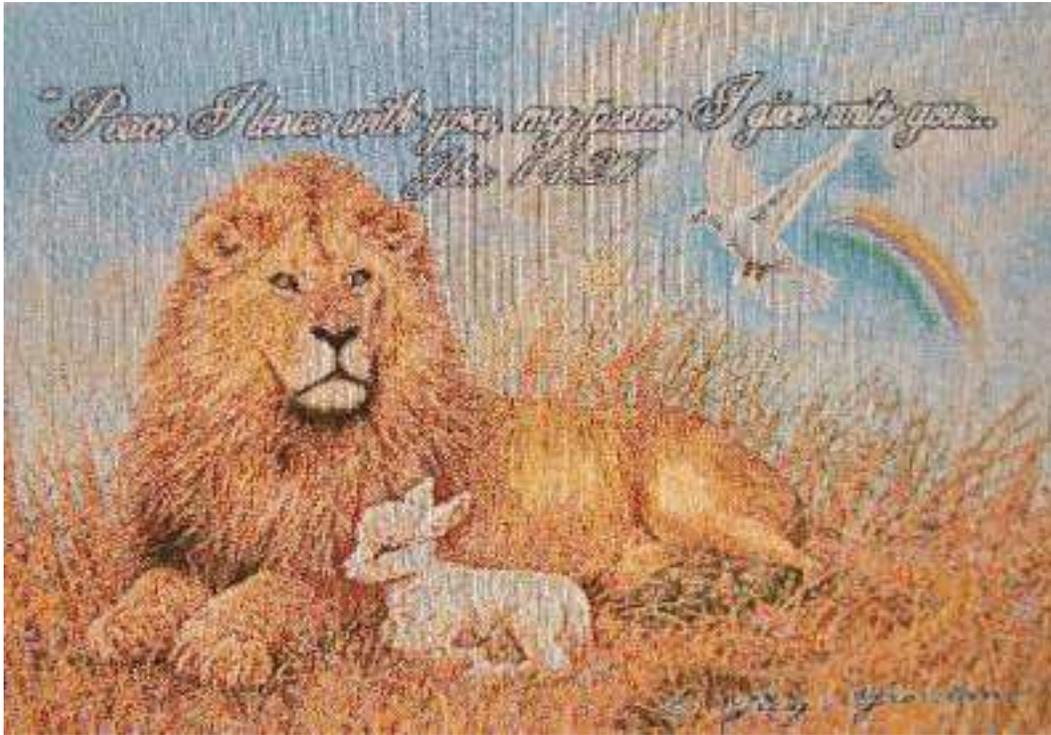
**Question:** Could another prophet coming after Jesus supersede Him and His ministry?

**Answer:** If Jesus rose from the dead, His message and mission have been verified (Acts 17:30,31). Since there is no convincing evidence internally or externally that the Bible has been substantively changed, *no one coming after Jesus could be greater than He is.*

The last book of the Bible has a revelation of the risen Jesus: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Revelation 1:8). The context demonstrates that these titles are attributed to Jesus: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last" (verse 11; verse 13 identifies Him as the *Son of Man*). These are titles reserved for the true and living God. Centuries earlier God declared, "Thus says the LORD... 'I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God....Listen to Me, O Jacob, And Israel, My called: I am He, I am the First, I am also the Last'" (Isaiah 44:6;48:12). These titles can also refer to Jesus because the Bible reveals Him as God manifested in human nature. John the apostle testified: "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death" (Revelation 1:17,18).

**Question:** Did the God of Abraham, Moses, and David give supplementary inspired Scripture after the first century?

**Answer:** The last book of the Bible was written about A.D. 90 and concludes the whole sacred library. There is a warning not to add to it or subtract from it: "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18,19).



Tapestry

**Illustration:** If a tapestry is woven from one end to the other and displays the detailed design of the artisan, even so the Bible, written over a span of about 1500 years by forty different authors shows a consistent, unified, unfolding revelation. If some manuscripts had been intentionally changed to portray a divergent message, that would have been *isolated* in the manuscript evidence and obviously *interfere* with the seamless pattern of Scripture.

### Notes

For more on the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and their confirmation of the accurate copying of biblical texts, see <http://bible.org/article/dead-sea-scrolls>

For further discussion of resolving alleged contradictions in the Bible, see:

<http://discoveryseries.org/discovery-series/studies-in-contrast-resolving-alleged-contradictions-in-the-bible/>

On the unique evidence for Biblical inspiration see <http://www.josh.org/resources/apologetics/answering-skeptics/what-makes-the-bible-so-special/>

For a more comprehensive academic study on alleged contradictions, see *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, by Gleason L. Archer Jr.

For further evidence and analysis of the reliability of the biblical text and compilation, see books such as *A General Introduction to the Bible*, by Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix.

## Session 7

### Jesus is the Life: Now and Forever

The unparalleled and unsurpassed integrity and ministry of Jesus is also seen in His role as "the life." More than instructing *about* life, and how to gain eternal life, He embodied and provides this life.

Jesus contrasted Satan's agenda with His own mission: "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have *life*, and that they may have it *more abundantly*" (John 10:10).

Jesus boldly asserted: "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have *life in Himself...*" (John 5:26). "And *I give them eternal life*, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand" (John 10:28). "Jesus said to her, '*I am the resurrection and the life*. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?'" (John 11:25,26).

The early preaching in the book of Acts gave Jesus the title, "Prince of Life" (Acts 3:15).

The believer's hope is also related to Jesus as Life: "When Christ *who is our life* appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" (Colossians 3:4; 1:27).

As was presented in session three, Jesus as Redeemer provides life to all who repent and receive Him by faith: "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and *this life is in His Son*. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life..." (1 John 5:11-13).

These statements are either blasphemy or true. In light of New Testament evidence in this series, we believe Jesus really is the exclusive source of God's life now and forever!

## Lesson Diagrams

In the video lesson, various diagrams are presented to illustrate how we can receive spiritual life. They also describe the source of mental, emotional, and behavioral sins and problems, and how these can be overcome through God's gracious enablement.

*The Wheel diagram* visualizes the physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of man (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Even after being spiritually reborn, children of God can be defeated and conflicted due to walking according to the old patterns (the "self-life" or "the flesh," Galatians 5:16,17). They need to appreciate their spiritual blessings, yield to God's control, and claim by faith their spiritual union with the Lord. This should become the ultimate resource for living.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me...And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:13,19).

*The Line diagram* illustrates the fatal condition we were all born with due to our lineage in Adam (Romans 5:12). The diagram about being placed into Christ pictures how the believer is spiritually and positionally identified with Christ in His death, burial, resurrection and ascension (1 Corinthians 1:29; Ephesians 2:4-7).

The Christ-centered wheel diagram illustrates the Galatians 2:20 testimony: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

The lesson concludes with Messiah Jesus' invitation which is still offered today: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

A sample "Selfer's Prayer" could be a helpful guideline that a child of God could pray in response to this lesson:

". . . I hereby surrender everything that I am, and have, and ever will be. I take my hands off of my life and release every relationship to You--every habit, every goal, my health, my wealth, and everything that means anything. I surrender it all to You. And by faith I take my place at the Cross, believing that when the Lord Jesus was crucified, according to Your Word, I was crucified with Him; when He was buried, I was buried; when He was raised from the dead, I was raised with Him. So I deny myself the right to rule and reign in my own life and take up the Cross and believe that I was raised from the dead and seated at your right hand. I thank You for saving me from my sins and myself. And from this moment on I am trusting You to live Your life in me and through me to do what I can't do and quit what I can't quit, and start what I can't start --that You might receive all the glory. I thank You now by faith for accepting me in the Lord Jesus, for giving me Your grace, Your freedom, Your joy, Your victory and Your righteousness as my inheritance in the Lord Jesus Christ. So even if I don't feel anything, I know that Your Word is true. I am counting on Your Spirit to do what Your Word says. . . to set me free from myself, that Your resurrection life may be lived out through me, and that You may receive all the glory. I thank You and praise You for victory right now in Jesus' name, amen." - by Dr. Charles Solomon

*Other Biblical quotations and allusions in the video lesson:*

"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24).

"to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:1,2).

"knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin....Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:6,11).

"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).

"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

## Issues arising

**Question:** What is the role of psychology in biblical people-helping?

**Answer:** This lesson discusses several issues and problems related to psychology. The term *psychology* technically refers to the study of the soul (mind, will, and emotions). There is a whole field of academic research, speculation, and counseling modalities that relate to psychology. Although there is not space here to fully address such topics, consider the *role of observable data* about human behavior, relationships, cognition, and emotions. We believe that this information--if rightly observed and interpreted--has some value to understand *the context of life* in this fallen world. However, psychology is typically blinded to spiritual root causes and the potential of spiritual solutions. Dr. Charles Solomon has written on the theme of rejection--the absence of meaningful love, and our quest for a meaningful identity. Many have found these insights helpful. But the model of discipleship and counseling introduced in this lesson shows that the root problem and ultimate answer relate to the spiritual realm. If someone is struggling with chronic depression and anxiety, for example, the first priority is the discovery of redemption through the Gospel. With one's eternity assured, all other problems are comparatively lessened. When someone is spiritually alive to God, there is the additional potential of discovering the interference of "self" ("the flesh") which is the root problem in most cases. With an accurate *diagnosis* of what underlies the many potential psychological and psychosomatic (stress-induced) health problems, the counseling can move toward discovering and appropriating supernatural resources in God to gain immeasurable love and an unshakeable, positive identity. For more on these issues, see GFI's inventory and training which includes *Handbook for Christ-centered Counseling*, by Dr. Solomon.

## Notes

For an explanation of the Wheel and Line diagrams and their biblical meaning and application, please read the article: "The Wheel and Line" by Dr. Charles Solomon: [www.gracefellowshipinternational.com/resources/wheel-and-line/](http://www.gracefellowshipinternational.com/resources/wheel-and-line/) These are further explained in his *Handbook to Happiness* (Tyndale Publishing House), and Grace Fellowship's course, *For Me to Live is Christ*. This course is available as a [free online module](#) at the GFI web site under the menu "Resources" / "Discipleship Courses". It was re-published in 2014 as a DVD album with a fill-in-the-blank workbook.

At GFI's web site under "Resources"/ "Audio channels", there is a lecture titled "Determining a Counseling Model". Dr. Solomon's books are available through the Grace Fellowship International's store.

## Session 8

### Jesus: The True and Living Way – Exclusively

The theme verse of this series is: “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).

We are very aware that such a claim contradicts political correctness, humanistic philosophy, and competing beliefs as taught by world religions. Certainty of the gospel's absolute truth should never, however, be communicated through hatred and animosity.

#### 1. Exclusivity Issues

##### A. *Is affirming the exclusivity of Jesus intolerant?*

The objection of political correctness would be "such an exclusive claim is intolerant!" The answer of the Bible-believing follower of Jesus is that "tolerance" has been redefined in recent history. We would agree that we should tolerate people with different viewpoints, whether relating to politics, religion or sports! Jesus Himself demonstrated His love and tolerance by associating with Samaritans of His day and coming to redeem people of every language, ethnic group, and culture that would come to God through Him. However, "tolerance" has been *redefined* to mean the acceptance of contrary values, ethics, and religious beliefs as equally valid and acceptable. The kind of "tolerance" that seeks to validate immorality and falsehood is incompatible with biblical discipleship. The inconsistency of those who espouse such political correctness is seen in their total *intolerance* of conservative Christian beliefs and ethics.

Jesus exemplified and taught tolerance of others: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:43-45). How different this world would be if everyone followed the values of Jesus! No wars, no terrorism, no revenge...

## B. *Is truth only relative?*

The objection of humanistic philosophy to the exclusive way of Jesus would be, "there is no absolute truth;" "What is true for you is not necessarily true for me." This belief in *relativism* is woven through *postmodern* thought and culture. Some allege that even logic is suspect...that the law of non-contradiction is a western concept and optional for the eastern worldview. However, any attempt to disprove the law of non-contradiction must use it in an attempt to disprove it. For example, the statement, "there are no absolutes!" is an absolute statement. Just as arithmetic and science require objective, real accuracy, even so we need real truth in spiritual and religious matters.

At this point, the lesson confesses that those who profess Jesus today, and in earlier centuries *have often been sinfully intolerant*. We have been proud and self-righteous. Therefore we pause right now....We repent and ask for forgiveness.

## 2. Confession of our failures

A. *We confess the sin of antisemitism* (rejection of, and hatred of the Jewish people).

Although the Holocaust of World War 2 was ordered by an insane, non-Christian man (Hitler), there have been many tragic cases of oppression against the Jewish people in the name of the Christian Church. Although most of this would be under the domain of the Roman Catholic Church, cultural antisemitic attitudes and actions polluted the Reformation as well (as in the case of the latter years of Martin Luther). Gentile (non-Jewish) believers should recognize their indebtedness to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for the Bible, for the Messiah, and witness of the early church (Romans 11:18-36). Any who harbor hatred, especially to the Jews, are knowingly or unknowingly siding with the Adversary (Esther chs 1-9; Revelation 12:1-18).

B. *We confess the sin of the Crusades*. These misguided, cruel campaigns to reclaim the Holy Land were Christian in name but *not* Christian in spirit, ethics, or character. Whether or not other religions are spread through military conquest, this is *not* the way of the Bible's New Covenant.

See the nature of God's Kingdom through Jesus as described in His trial before the Roman governor: "Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' Jesus answered him, 'Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?' Pilate answered, 'Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?' Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.' Pilate therefore said to Him, 'Are You a king then?' Jesus answered, 'You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.' Pilate said to Him, 'What is truth?' And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, 'I find no fault in Him at all'" (John 18:33-38).

In this age, the gospel heralds *not* a geopolitical, humanly coerced way, but a love induced, grace-based *spiritual* Kingdom.

3. *We confess the sin of hypocrisy.* A common complaint among skeptics is that those who identify themselves with Jesus often live in a way that is inconsistent with His teaching. Historians observed that Mahatma Gandhi, the reformer of India, greatly respected the life and teaching of Jesus. However, his impression of many "Christians" living in an unloving, unrighteous way hindered him from embracing Jesus as "the way." This tragic example has been all too common.

Jesus warned that many who claim to be his followers were externally religious but not spiritually reborn. "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).

The only perfect example of righteous love is Jesus Himself. "The way" is not professing Christians, or churches, but *Jesus Himself*. That is why everyone is summoned to "look unto Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2).

If believers lived in surrender to God and by faith in their union with Him (as presented briefly in lesson 7), they would less hypocritical and more like the salt and light they are called to be (Matthew 5:13-15).

Another way to view this issue is that, if one is opposed to hypocrisy, he/she should appreciate Jesus even more. He was--and is--absolutely real and consistent. He boldly rebuked self-righteous religious people of their hypocritical ways (Matthew 23:13-15. See also James 3:17; 1 Peter 2:1).

If we followed Christ's primary command, these failures (as confessed above) would be avoided: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you... By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34,35).

### **3. *The Exclusivity of the Gospel--Jesus as the Only Way***

This is also confirmed in the preaching of the early church. "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name [than Jesus] under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). That statement was just as offensive to the Jewish ruling council as it is to unbelieving ears today. However, to compromise with modern culture, philosophy, or religious traditions (of whatever heritage) would be disobedient to Jesus.

Paul warned, "...there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 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. For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ (Galatians 1:6-10).

*Other Biblical quotations and allusions in the video lesson:*

"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 3:4-7). Good works are the fruit, not the root: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men" (vs. 8).

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

"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 2:5,6).

"Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21).

The account of Phillip's witness to the Ethiopian official is in Acts 8:26-39.

In addition to the cumulative evidence, through salvation you can have the inner witness of God's grace and presence: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16).

### Issues arising

**Question:** Doesn't God's sovereignty authorize the use of force in spreading religion? Didn't Jesus say one time that he did not come to bring peace, but a sword?

**Answer:** The passage from the Bible where this statement is made indicates that Jesus was not speaking of a literal military sword. Notice the context: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. *I did not come to bring peace but a sword*" (Matthew 10:34). He goes on to explain this as the division (figurative "sword") that would be caused by the hostile reaction of misguided zealots. These persecutors would turn against the ones who identify with Jesus (even their own family members). "For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household' [Micah 7:6]. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me [God the Father]" (Matthew 10:35-40). Although Jesus is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), many reject Him and persecute His people from the first century until today—some with a figurative sword (causing opposition), some with a literal sword (causing martyrdom).

Jesus rebuked His well-intentioned disciples; they were *not* to use violence to further God's agenda in this world. He was aware that the disciples had a couple of swords with them for self-defense. Then He was betrayed by Judas in the garden near Jerusalem, "When those around Him saw what was going to happen, they said to Him, 'Lord, shall we strike with the sword?' And one of them struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear. But Jesus answered and said, 'Permit even this.' And He touched his ear and healed him" (Luke 22:49-51). "But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26:52).

Let no one confuse meekness with weakness. When Jesus confronted the soldiers who came to arrest Him, they were so shocked by His boldness that they stumbled backwards and fell to the ground (John 18:6). He reassured the disciples that the Cross was part of God's plan which He could have prevented if He wished: "Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53).

## Notes

Messianic believer, Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbam, shares his testimony and resources at Ariel Ministries: [www.ariel.org](http://www.ariel.org)

Dr. Ravi Zacharias is an Indian-born scholar, author and international evangelist. His testimony and resources are at [rzim.org](http://rzim.org). One of his associates is Dr. Nabeel Qureshi: [nabeelqureshi.com](http://nabeelqureshi.com).

If the Bible seems too large to start reading from cover to cover, consider beginning with a volume featuring four biblical books that convey the essence of the Gospel: *The Heart of The New Testament*, editor: John Woodward (ebook at Amazon/ Kindle).

## Conclusion

Saul of Tarsus was well educated in biblical literature and languages and was convinced that Jesus was a false messiah. He took that belief so seriously that he persecuted early followers of "the Way," throwing them into prison, and pressuring them to renounce their faith. The only viable explanation for how a man so opposed to the gospel became so powerfully involved in heralding it throughout the Roman Empire is that he *did* encounter the risen Christ. He discovered that, though sincere, he was sincerely mistaken. After his conversion he became known as Paul the apostle (a sent one). His testimony is recorded in several places in the New Testament (1 Timothy 1:12-17; Philippians 3:3-10; Acts chs. 9, 22-26).

God's Kingdom has come in biblical history, and it expands with every person who is redeemed. "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13,14). Therefore we are to pray, "Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9,10). In the future this prayer will be answered when the prophecy is fulfilled:

"For the earth will be filled  
With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,  
As the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14).

Although His first coming was to live and die as "the Lamb of God (John 1:29), the second coming of Jesus at the end of this age will be totally different. This is an encouragement to those who are suffering because of their Christian faith. The Bible gives this consolation (to believers) and warning (to persecutors): "We boast of you [believers in Thessalonica, Greece] among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer; since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, 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, 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" (1 Thessalonians 1:4-10).

Some who study these lessons will face a serious dilemma: Should you follow the evidence of the Bible and witness in your heart, even if this may trigger severe rejection by your family and society? How can you take a *True and Living Way* that your culture and ancestors have mostly opposed?

People faced this dilemma during the ministry of Jesus, so He gave a parable about what happens after death (Luke 16:19-31). In the story, a rich unsaved man dies and awakens in torment in Hades. However, a poor man (whom he had neglected) was a believer. After death, this poor man was saved and in fellowship with Abraham. When the unsaved man learned that it was too late to be delivered from judgment, he said, "I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.' Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"

Although there are symbolic aspects to the parable, the stark reality of future judgment is dreadful, and it should be. Final Hell was not originally intended for people but to judge the devil and his fallen angels (Matthew 25:41). Note these vital lessons from the story of the rich man and Lazarus:

1. If anyone dies having been deceived and unsaved, they would not want their family to follow their misguided beliefs and values.
2. The testimony of the Bible is provided to be the adequate and convincing testimony of the way of salvation.
3. God has mercifully provided the additional evidence that was requested in the story: Jesus *did* come back to life on the third day, just as He promised. He was seen by many after the Resurrection, including about 500 at one time (1 Corinthians 15:4).

There may be persecution following your redemption through Jesus, but this is part of the cost we must recognize when we receive the free gift of salvation. Jesus put this in perspective: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:10-12).

Missionary martyr, Jim Elliot (1927-1956) wrote in his journal, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose."

The apostle Peter, who was later martyred, counseled us not to live the rest of our days in futility, but for the will of God. "For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles--when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries. In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are [now] dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh [killed for their faith], but live according to God in the spirit [in the life to come]. But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. And above all things have fervent love for one another..." (1 Peter 4:3-8).

God's personal invitation extends to everyone:

"Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good;  
Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" (Psalm 34:8).

"And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!'  
And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life  
freely" (Revelation 22:17).

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