

Lesson

1

The Authority of Scripture

The Scriptures are inspired by God for our instruction and spiritual growth.

Introducing the Study

What do you think of when you hear the word “authority”? People often cringe at this word, as it is sometimes seen with suspicion in our world today. However, the divine authority of Scripture is a fundamental belief for Christians.

Today’s lesson emphasizes the divine inspiration of the Word, acknowledging God as the Author and the Holy Spirit as the One inspiring the writers. Considering the source of the Bible’s authority allows us to look at how we apply it personally and in our community of faith. As we look at the Scriptures in this light, think about how you are using it to guide your perspective and provide direction for your life.

Study Text

Psalm 19:1–14; 119:105–112; 2 Timothy 3:14–17; 2 Peter 1:16–21

Key Verse

2 Timothy 3:16

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (KJV).

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (NIV).

Commentary & Application

1. The Scripture Is Divinely Inspired

2 Timothy 3:14–17; 2 Peter 1:16–21

To better understand 2 Timothy 3:14–17, we need to look back at verse 13. There, Paul warned Timothy of false teachers who would try to lead others astray. In response, Timothy needed to focus on God’s Word—the only source of spiritual truth.

Timothy had begun to receive instruction in the Word as a youth.

Now an adult under Paul’s discipleship, he could be sure that what he had learned was true.

Scripture can make us wise, instructing us to make the choice that leads to salvation. This stands in opposition to the deceptive words of false teachers.

“Holy scriptures” in verse 15 (KJV) refers to Jewish Scripture: the Old Testament. But Paul also included as Scripture those things he had received from the Lord and taught to others (1 Corinthians 11:23; Galatians

SCRIPTURE SETTING

King James Version

2 Timothy 3:15. And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

16. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:

17. That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

2 Peter 1:20. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

21. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Psalms 19:7. The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

8. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

9. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

10. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

11. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

12. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.

13. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

Psalms 119:105. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

106. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

107. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.

108. Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments.

109. My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.

110. The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.

111. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

112. I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end.

New International Version

2 Timothy 3:15. And how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

16. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

17. so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Peter 1:20. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things.

21. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Psalms 19:7. The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

8. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

9. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous.

10. They are more precious than gold than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.

11. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

12. But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

13. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

Psalms 119:105. Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

106. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws.

107. I have suffered much; preserve my life, LORD, according to your word.

108. Accept, LORD, the willing praise of my mouth, and teach me your laws.

109. Though I constantly take my life in my hands, I will not forget your law.

110. The wicked have set a snare for me, but I have not strayed from your precepts.

111. Your statutes are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.

112. My heart is set on keeping your decrees to the very end.

1:11–12; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 3:16). “All scripture” (2 Timothy 3:16) also included the writings that became the New Testament.

Scripture is “God-breathed” (verse 17). God is the Author, through human writers. They were carried along by the Holy Spirit to convey truth through their own styles and vocabularies.

Paul described areas in which the Bible could help believers grow in the faith: doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction. All these were provided so that the believer could be well-equipped to live for the Lord.

What do we mean when we say that the Bible has authority?

2. The Scripture Is Divine Revelation

Psalm 19:1–14

The universe declares the glory of its Creator (Psalm 19:1). This was an important assertion in Bible times, since pagan cultures saw the heavens and other elements of Creation as gods in themselves. By saying God is the Creator of all, the psalmist declared his God to be the one true God, glorious over all. Verses 4–6 focus on how life on earth depends upon the regularity of the sun.

Psalm 19 is a great example of Biblical poetry, illustrating how Bible writers conveyed key principles in ways that helped readers recall the truths, and inspired them to apply those truths to life.

Notice how verses 7–11 list several synonyms for God’s Word, followed

by characteristics of each, and then ways the faithful might adhere to the Word.

God’s Word impacts hearers in ways that help them put it into practice (see Luke 11:28). The Word also calls the hearer to self-examination. It is a warning (Psalm 19:11–13), telling the faithful how to live, yet its warning can be received with joy because the Word also provides help and direction. Its teachings can be trusted to lead believers in the right way, the way of righteousness (verse 9).

As Christians meditate on the Word, they can live in a way that is pleasing to God (verse 14).

How has Scripture influenced your perspective on life?

3. The Scripture Gives Divine Direction

Psalm 119:105–112

Psalm 119 is an acrostic poem. It uses the Hebrew alphabet to form stanzas. Each verse in a stanza begins with the same letter. Verses 105–112 form a stanza in which each verse begins with the Hebrew letter nun.

You’ll find much parallelism in these verses: “Guidance” is parallel with the Law; “following” is parallel with remembering God’s commands; and “suffering” is parallel with the snare of the wicked. This all builds to the psalmist’s proclamation that he would keep God’s commands because they were the joy of his heart (verses 111–112).

This parallelism emphasizes the central role Scripture ought to fill throughout the seasons of life.

Verse 105—among the most quoted verses in Scripture—serves to emphasize the message of this psalm. The light cast by Scripture is a lamp for lost souls to find spiritual truth. But it is also a source of light for God’s people as they walk through life.

And so, God’s Word holds an important role in the believer’s life, from the first moment of faith in Christ all the way to the end. “Heritage” in verse 111 speaks to the legacy of the Word handed down through generations.

What do we mean when we say that God’s Word is a light to our paths?

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday

Live by the Word.

Deuteronomy 8:1–6

Tuesday

God’s Word Honored.

Nehemiah 8:1–12

Wednesday

The Power of God’s Word.

Jeremiah 23:25–29

Thursday

God’s Word Endures

Forever.

Matthew 5:17–20

Friday

Hold Fast and Keep

God’s Word.

2 Timothy 1:8–14

Saturday

God’s Word Reveals All.

Hebrews 4:12–13

Scripture’s authority comes straight from God, its Author, and is affirmed within us by the Spirit as we read and apply it to our lives. The authority of Scripture means that it can offer guidance and provides direction through life’s many diverse circumstances. Scripture speaks with authority into our lives, through any season to all believers, as we seek God in the reading, teaching, and discussion of His Word.

Do you view the Bible with the authority it deserves, as represented in this lesson? What can you do to not only respect the Bible’s authority, but to also obey God as He speaks to you through His Scriptures?

One thing I can do this week in response to this lesson . . .

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Lesson

2

The Bible Provides Moral Guidance

Submitting to Biblical moral teaching leads to a good and fruitful life

Introducing the Study

When we think of someone representing proper morality, we might compare their lifestyle to a code of ethics. The Bible's provision of moral guidance does more than just offer such a Christian code, however. It connects us to the One who represents all goodness and who gives us our worth as His image-bearers.

This lesson connects the significance of representing God as His image-bearers to the driving force behind all Biblical morality: God's love. Think about how you are fulfilling your moral responsibilities to God and those around you. Then consider the motivations that drive you to continue in these responsibilities.

Study Text

Genesis 1:26–28; Matthew 22:35–40; Colossians 3:1–17,24

Key Verse

Matthew 22:37

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind (KJV).

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind and with all your mind" (NIV).

Commentary & Application

The Basis of Biblical Morality

Genesis 1:26–28; Matthew 22:35–40

The Creation story reminds us we serve the one true God. The peoples of the ancient Near East worshipped many pagan gods and held differing views on how the world came to be.

Humans, who were created both "male and female," distinctly bear the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27).

As His image-bearers, we have dominion over Creation, acting as stewards of what God has made

(verses 26–28). However, our unique value to God isn't found in what we do. Rather, it comes from our relationship with a good God: We have been made in His image.

In Matthew 22:35–40, Jesus further informed our understanding of ethics and holiness. When asked to name the greatest commandment, Jesus responded by combining two Scriptures with a shared command to love (see Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18). By acknowledging the greatest commandment concerning

SCRIPTURE SETTING

King James Version

Genesis 1:26. And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

28. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

Matthew 22:37. Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

38. This is the first and great commandment.

39. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

40. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Colossians 3:1. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

5. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

6. For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7. In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

8. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

9. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

10. And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

16. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

17. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

24. Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

New International Version

Genesis 1:26. Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

27. So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

28. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

Matthew 22:37. Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

38. This is the first and greatest commandment.

39. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

40. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Colossians 3:1. Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

5. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

6. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

7. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.

8. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

9. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices

10. and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

16. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.

17. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

24. Since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

our relationships with God and others, Jesus showed that the law of love guides every other law. There are, in fact, 613 commandments in the Jewish law, and all are in a sense derived from these two (verse 40).

How is humanity unique from the rest of Creation?

2. The Scope of Biblical Morality

Colossians 3:1–11

Colossians 3:1 begins, “since then,” indicating something that has already happened. As Christians, we have already been raised to new life in Christ. Therefore, we are to set our minds on heavenly things rather than the values and priorities of the world.

Paul used parallelism to tie verses 1 and 2 together: “set your hearts on things above” and “set your minds on things above” (NIV). This speaks to the Christian’s affections, desires, and pursuits. In a sense, then, what we pursue is a reflection of what we love. So, we must keep our focus on things “above,” a reference to heavenly things. When we set our hearts on things above, we are setting our hearts on Christ.

God has called us to respond to sinful desires by putting them to death, so to speak. We eliminate them—that is, seek to have them removed from our lives. This represents a very real, very observable life change. Verses 5–11 offer listings of the kinds of conduct that must be rejected. Take a moment to reflect on what Paul

addressed here: hurtful and destructive speech and unhealthy emotions, as well as a call to truthful interaction with fellow believers. These very practical things come about through surrendering one’s desires to Christ.

Reading Colossians 3:1–11, it is valuable to note that the Early Church battled a heresy known as Gnosticism. It taught that sins of the flesh do not matter because what is done in the body has no bearing on the spiritual aspect of a person.

With these errors in mind, we can find better understanding as to why Paul declared that we are “renewed in knowledge after the image of him” (verse 10, KJV). Knowledge of Christ is no mystery.

How would you respond to someone who says it does not matter how we live because we are under grace?

3. The Goal of Biblical Morality

Colossians 3:12–17,24

Becoming more like Jesus is a process. And while it includes the cleansing and renewing of our souls (Colossians 3:1–11), it also involves the way in which we, as Christians, interact with one another within the body of Christ (verses 12–17). This “love in practice” reflects the virtues demonstrated to us by Christ Himself.

Note especially how verse 12 focuses on considering others above self, a Christlike attitude that is very much lacking in our fallen world. It is perhaps not surprising, then, that

Paul moved from there to mutual forgiveness—which is rooted in Christ’s forgiveness (verse 13). Such a standard indicates that we ought to be willing to forgive even the worst of wrongs, since Christ died to grant us the ultimate gift of forgiveness. Love again is described as the foundation of these virtues of selflessness and forgiveness, in verse 14.

As God’s Word dwells within us, we will live in right fellowship with our fellow believers, admonishing each other and worshipping together. As we serve others, we are in fact serving Christ (verse 24).

What does it mean for you to forgive as Christ has forgiven? How have you practiced such forgiveness in your life?

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday

Blessings for the Faithful.

Deuteronomy 11:26–32

Tuesday

**God’s Word Guards
Against Immorality.**

Proverbs 7:1–5

Wednesday

**Consequences of
Rejecting God’s Word.**

Isaiah 30:8–14

Thursday

**God’s Word Supersedes
Human Traditions.**

Matthew 15:3–9

Friday

Obey the Word of Life.

Philippians 2:12–16

Saturday

**God’s Word Teaches
Self-Control.**

1 Thessalonians 4:1–8

Considering the importance of being God’s image-bearer, how are you fulfilling this call to represent Him to the world around you? Are you driven by an understanding of His love? Do you live out the renewed image of Christ, renouncing and putting off sin through the power of the Holy Spirit?

When you think about the motivation behind your morality, do you find yourself driven by God’s love, as well as His will and commands to love? As you go about your week, consider how you are representing Christ through this love-driven lifestyle. Make a renewed commitment to represent our good and loving God through your renewed image in Christ.

One thing I can do this week in response to this lesson . . .

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Lesson

3

The Bible Speaks to Individuals

Through the Scriptures, God speaks to us.

Introducing the Study

The Word of God is full of value, authority, and guidance. But how would you find these things unless you seek them out, personally engaging in the study of Scripture?

This lesson emphasizes the benefits of Bible study as we interact with it on a personal level. God's Word is formative—it establishes us and provides wisdom for our lives. His Word directs us in His ways as we internalize it, and it provides sweet nourishment to our souls when we study it. As you read this lesson, think about the importance of meditating on the Bible in your personal life and how you should engage in the Word on an individual level.

Study Text

Psalms 1:1–6;
119:1–11,97–104

Key Verse

Psalm 119:98

Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me (KJV).

Your commands are always with me and make me wiser than my enemies (NIV).

Commentary & Application

1. God's Word Forms Us

Psalm 1:1–6

Psalm 1 speaks to the challenges God's people face while walking with Him. The person who heeds the instruction of this psalm is called "blessed" (Psalm 1:1), a reference to a happy state of being. The Word can produce blessings that stabilize our lives, calling us to reject evil.

Verses 2–6 spell out the contrast between those who walk with God and

those who live in sin. The psalmist describes right living by pointing out how not to live. Wrong living places a person on a tragic progression of sin:

(1) "Walking" in the counsel of the ungodly is the beginning, as the person allows the values of the world to sway him or her.

(2) "Standing" in the way of sinners refers to abiding with the wicked person who disregards God's commands.

(3) The progression then moves to "sitting with" the scornful. This refers

SCRIPTURE SETTING

King James Version

Psalms 1:1. Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

3. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

4. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

5. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

6. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

Psalms 119:1. Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

2. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

3. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

4. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.

5. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!

6. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

7. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

8. I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

11. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

97. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.

98. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.

99. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

100. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

101. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

102. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

103. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

104. Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

New International Version

Psalms 1:1. Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,

2. but whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night.

3. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.

4. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

5. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

6. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.

Psalms 119:1. Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD.

2. Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart—

3. they do no wrong but follow his ways.

4. You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed.

5. Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!

6. Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all your commands.

7. I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws.

8. I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.

11. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

97. Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

98. Your commands are always with me and make me wiser than my enemies.

99. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.

100. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts.

101. I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word.

102. I have not departed from your laws, for you yourself have taught me.

103. How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

104. I gain understanding from your precepts; therefore I hate every wrong path.

to those who mock God and His ways. At this point, the person has started to become comfortable with both the presence of sin and its terrible effects.

But there is a godly alternative to this progression: Delight, or find joy, in God's commands by meditating on them (verse 2). This simply means taking moments to ponder, perhaps silently, the significance of the Word and how it applies to our lives.

Psalms 1:3 provides a powerful word picture to contrast the difference between those who delight in God's commands and those who have assumed the position of mockers. All who delight in the Word find stability. The mockers of the Word are far different. Verse 4 compares them to chaff, the outer layer of wheat kernels. It is a picture of instability and, ultimately, destruction.

What do you think it means to “walk in the counsel of the ungodly” (Psalm 1:1, KJV)?

2. God's Word Directs Us

Psalms 119:1–11

Psalms 119 begins with three action verbs relating to our response to the Word: walking, keeping, and seeking (verses 1–2). In a practical sense, then, we find Scripture instructing the believer to walk every day in the way of the Word out of a deep desire to follow God. Believers need to resolve to turn from sin and toward God, through the help of the Holy Spirit. In verses 4–5, the psalmist prays for

help to walk in His ways. Today, we can live in the assurance that God still gives us the help we need.

Verses 6–7 emphasize knowing the Word as well as understanding its meaning. This includes internalizing it, putting it into practice (verses 7–8).

The psalmist exhorts the believer to place proper value on the Word, a need illustrated well in verse 9 with a practical rhetorical question: How can a young person stay pure? The answer: Live according to the commands of Scripture. However, outward obedience grows out of one's heart. Right doing is the result of right thinking—of cultivating godly values and desires.

Scripture hidden within the heart is readily available to provide help when needed. One way we can prepare, then, is through the often-forgotten discipline of Scripture memorization.

Where do unbelievers often look for direction, and why is Scripture uniquely qualified to direct our lives?

3. God's Word Informs Us

Psalms 119:97–104

The value of the Word in the life of individual believers can be seen in the marvelous wisdom it brings into their lives (Psalm 119:97–100). In Scripture, the definition of wisdom includes an ability to understand the surrounding world and respond in a correct and godly way. The wise person knows and follows God's righteous commands.

The psalmist also notes that the wisdom that comes from God’s Word is not the kind of wisdom held by his enemies. Nor is it the type of wisdom coming from a person simply by virtue of being a teacher or an elder (though both could certainly have this wisdom). Godly wisdom is unique, bringing discernment between good and evil. It helps the person grow strong in righteousness and obedience.

It has been said that hunger for truth and revulsion for evil are “acquired tastes.” Wisdom gleaned by the Word helps the believer reject evil, just as he or she has embraced the good (Psalm 119:101–102). Scripture provides the tools needed to identify and respond properly when evil tempts us.

Why must we look to the Word for discernment between good and evil?

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday

Enoch’s Fellowship
With God.

Genesis 5:21–24

Tuesday

Moses’ Face-Time
With God.

Numbers 12:4–8

Wednesday

God Calls Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 1:4–10

Thursday

The Scriptures Testify
About Jesus.

John 5:36–39

Friday

The Spirit Speaks
to the Church.

Acts 15:13–22

Saturday

Hearing God’s Word
Produces Faith.

Romans 10:8–17

The Word of God is greatly beneficial to our lives as we take the importance of Scripture seriously. In what ways are you challenged to read, study, meditate on, and discuss the Bible after reading this lesson?

As we interact with the Bible and work to internalize the Scriptures, we reap genuine benefits as it forms our lives, directs our paths, and informs us of God’s plans. In coming days, think about ways you can meditate on the passages you are reading during your devotional time. As you meditate, select a few verses that stand out to you and work to memorize them. When you dig into the Word of God, He will faithfully refresh your soul through its teachings.

One thing I can do this week in response to this lesson . . .

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Lesson

4

The Bible Speaks to Families

God created the family and provides direction for it through the Bible.

Introducing the Study

What should a family look like? A variety of marriage seminars and parenting classes are available for us to learn from in our culture today. However, we must be careful that the information we take in is rooted in the foundation of family roles, responsibilities, and direction God has given us in His Word.

The Bible beautifully lays out the origins of family, teaches God's commands for how families should integrate faith and the Word into their homes, and offers timeless instruction for family structure. Through this lesson, consider what the Bible teaches you about family as well as how it can enrich your family life.

Study Text

Genesis 2:18–25; Deuteronomy 11:18–25; 30:15–16; Ephesians 5:21 through 6:4

Key Verse

Genesis 2:24

Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (KJV).

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh (NIV).

Commentary & Application

1. Origin of the Family

Genesis 2:18–25

Adam was unlike anything else God created (Genesis 2:18–20), a reality that left him alone in the world. And no other created being could meet Adam's need because only humanity is made in the image of God (1:26–27). Yet Adam needed a "helper" (verse 20) made specifically like him—physically, mentally, and spiritually. God provided by creating a woman, who

would be his wife (verse 18). She was his counterpart, to love him and be loved, and to share the responsibility of nurturing the family.

So God united the two for life, thereby creating the institution of marriage and family. Their close relationship set the foundation for relationships between husbands and wives from that time forward. Such a relationship would call for the man to separate from parents to give his deepest commitment to his

SCRIPTURE SETTING

King James Version

Genesis 2:18. And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him.

21. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

22. And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

23. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.

24. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.

Deuteronomy 11:18. Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.

19. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

20. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates:

21. That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.

Ephesians 5:21. Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

22. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

23. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body.

33. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

6:1. Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.

2. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;

3. That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

4. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

New International Version

Genesis 2:18. The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

21. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh.

22. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

23. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

24. That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Deuteronomy 11:18. Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.

19. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

20. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates,

21. so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.

Ephesians 5:21. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

22. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.

23. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

33. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

6:1. Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

2. "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—

3. "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

4. Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

wife (verse 24). This would be fitting, because husband and wife are one flesh.

God never intended for the marriage bond to be broken. Spouses are to cleave to one another with open, loving hearts, because this union has been designed by God Himself.

How does a Christian view of marriage differ from secular views of marriage, and how might you explain these differences to an unbeliever?

2. Responsibilities of Family

Deuteronomy 11:18–25; 30:15–16

Deuteronomy 11:13–21, along with 6:4–9 and Numbers 15:37–47, constitute what is called the Shema, a great confession of faith in Judaism. Still today, devout Jews recite it twice daily. After affirming that God is the one true God, Deuteronomy 6 outlines the obligations of His commandments. In other words, it defines what the follower of God is to do in response to his or her love for God.

Deuteronomy 11:18–20 forms a key portion of the Shema. In these verses, the Shema commands God's people to teach His Word to their children from a young age. Think about the imagery used to explain the devotion parents were to show in doing this. They were to take the lead in conveying God's commands, not just leave the responsibility to religious leaders and teachers.

Yet the children also needed to know that following these commands

led to blessing. For them the blessing would be receiving the Promised Land. Today the blessings are spiritual and include God's provision as well as victories in difficult spiritual battles.

Deuteronomy 30:15 reminds us that everyone faces a choice during their lives: Choose life in the Lord, or reject Him and face judgment. God has created the family to convey life to the next generation, so that they may do the same for their children.

What part can you play in teaching God's Word to children within your sphere of influence?

3. Direction for the Family

Ephesians 5:21 through 6:4

To grasp Paul's teaching on submission, note that Ephesians 5:21 calls each spouse to submit to the other. This means each spouse is willing to serve the other rather than exalt self.

Paul directed wives to submit to their husbands. This is based on God's design for marriage. The husband's responsibility includes that of a spiritual leader, provider, and protector. The wife's call to submission does not imply inferiority, but rather is a recognition of the role of the husband.

Verses 25–29 turn to the husband, who is called to love his wife with the kind of love Christ has for the Church—pure, selfless love. He is to focus on her needs and her well-being.

The attitudes and behavior of children are also important to the family. Children should respect and honor parents (Ephesians 6:1–2). We often see how the breakdown of families will coincide with the breakdown of societies.

However, fathers also have a responsibility regarding their attitudes toward children. They must not be

too strict, which can prompt undue anger and resentment. Even times of discipline must be marked by love, respect, and servanthood. In this way, fathers can do their best to train children up to love and serve the Lord.

How would you explain the teaching of Ephesians 4:21–33 in your own words?

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday

God's Word in the Home.

Deuteronomy 6:4–8

Tuesday

Failure To Receive
the Faith.

Judges 2:8–14

Wednesday

Good Parental Counsel.

Proverbs 1:7–10

Thursday

A Family Follows
Dad's Example.

Acts 16:25–34

Friday

Instructions for
the Household.

Colossians 3:18–21

Saturday

Pass On the Faith.

2 Timothy 1:1–5

Families form the basic social unit of a community. Scripture challenges every person to work toward the goal of unity and selfless love as he or she functions within the family unit. If you are not already employing some sort of Christian education in your home, consider how you might do that, in light of God's commands for family discipleship.

As you further explore and ponder God's intention regarding families—including how He elevates the family as an important part of the community—think about how He also elevates Christians into His family.

How can you reach out to those around you, offering the opportunity to become a part of the family of God?

One thing I can do this week in response to this lesson . . .

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Lesson

5

The Bible Speaks to Society

The Scriptures reveal God's message to society.

Introducing the Study

The Israelites were chosen by God to declare His name and prepare the way for Jesus. As God's people, He gave commands for them to follow as a nation. Today, God's people are still called to obey His righteous moral commands found throughout Scripture in places like the Ten Commandments.

These commands also speak to believers today, informing us of why we needed the salvation only Christ can bring. Think about what God's commands mean to you individually as well as a member of society as a whole. How can your proclamation of God's righteousness and grace make a difference in the world around you?

Study Text

Deuteronomy 5:1–33; Romans 1:21–32; 3:21–26

Key Verse

Deuteronomy 5:33

Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess (KJV).

Walk in obedience to all that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess (NIV).

Commentary & Application

1. The Bible Presents God's Commandments

Deuteronomy 5:6–22,32–33

Most societies are governed by rules, and this was true among God's people, as God Himself established His commands for them. The Ten Commandments form a central part of these commands, and are presented to us in Deuteronomy 5:6–22.

The first four commands deal with how people were to relate to God,

with the first being foundational: God's people must not have any other gods (verse 7). God will not share our affection; our loyalties must not be divided. The second command is similar (verses 8–10). Graven images were widely worshipped, but Israel was not to mingle its worship practices with those of pagans—nor should we.

The third command forbids using God's name in unholy ways. This includes speech, but also addresses one's testimony. They were not to

SCRIPTURE SETTING

King James Version

Deuteronomy 5:7. Thou shalt have none other gods before me.

8. Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth.

11. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

12. Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee.

16. Honor thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

17. Thou shalt not kill.

18. Neither shalt thou commit adultery.

19. Neither shalt thou steal.

20. Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbor.

21. Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbor's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbor's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbor's.

Romans 1:21. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

25. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.

32. Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

3:21. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22. Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

23. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

24. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

New International Version

Deuteronomy 5:7. "You shall have no other gods before me.

8. "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below."

11. "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

12. "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you."

16. "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

17. "You shall not murder.

18. "You shall not commit adultery.

19. "You shall not steal.

20. "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

21. "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor's house or land, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Romans 1:21. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

25. They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

32. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

3:21. But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

22. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile,

23. for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24. and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

do things that reflected poorly upon God's character or reputation.

The fourth command conveys an important principle that applies well today (verses 12–15). We must take time to rest and to refocus on God. This shows our trust in Him.

God also calls His people to have healthy relationships with others. The final six commands dealt with acts and attitudes, and they mirror laws we will find in almost every society. They address parental respect (verse 17); respect for life (verse 18); respect for property (verse 19); honesty (verse 20); and covetousness (verse 21). If a society ignores these things, crisis will soon follow.

As a Christian, you can testify that these commands come from a loving God who desires to have relationship with the people He has created.

What do the Ten Commandments teach us about the nature of God?

2. The Bible Warns of Sin's Consequences

Romans 1:21–32

While society often scoffs at the notion of sin, Scripture describes it as a dangerous downward spiral. Romans 1:21–23 speaks of people who worship images of their own creation rather than worshipping God. The human heart is inclined to worship something. So, when people reject God, they find it necessary to create other gods. This is the essence of idolatry.

These obstinate unbelievers become slaves to their sinful desires (verses 24–25). Because they harden their hearts, God gives them over to their shameless sensual cravings.

Sexual immorality is a common source of this kind of degradation. However, verses 26–27 focus on homosexuality. This sexual sin perverts God's intention for sex, and those who practice it exchange the truth of God's plan for a lie.

Verse 26 again speaks to the idea that God “[gives] them over” (NIV) to their sin. He abandons them to the depraved acts that consume them. Their sins drag them ever deeper into the spiritual mire.

This passage is a good reminder: We must tell society that it needs Jesus. Judgment is certain if one does not receive salvation. Marking the “bottom” of the spiral, Romans 1:28 describes a tragic scene. As people continue to reject the Lord, He allows them to follow the desires of their corrupt minds to a horrible conclusion.

What role does the message of judgment play in sharing our faith?

3. The Bible Reveals a Forgiving God

Romans 3:21–26

While the consequences of sin are horrible, there is good news: God sent Jesus to be the sacrifice for our sins so we can be forgiven (Romans 3:21–24).

Unbelievers commonly say that good works make us right with God.

Paul emphasized, however, that our worthiness cannot be earned. Only through Christ can a person be made right before God (verse 22).

Grace lies at the heart of the gospel. Sin must be punished because our God cannot overlook sin. And we were helpless because our sinfulness required atonement that we could not perform. So God sent His Son to be our sacrifice (Romans 3:25).

Grace is also seen in God's restraint. In Old Testament times, God withheld judgment even though atonement had not yet been made. Sin was covered in anticipation of Christ (verse 26). Today, God offers to save all who will make Jesus the Lord of their lives.

What does God's restraint in enacting righteous judgment tell you about His nature?

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday

Laws of Justice
and Mercy.

Exodus 23:1–9

Tuesday

God's Word Brings
National Repentance.

2 Kings 22:18 to 23:3

Wednesday

Judgment on a
Rebellious Society.

Amos 2:6–16

Thursday

Gospel Declared
to All Nations.

Romans 16:25–27

Friday

Delivered From
an Evil Society.

Ephesians 2:1–7

Saturday

A New, Righteous Society.

Revelation 14:1–5

What is happening in society around you? In what ways do you see people expressing their need for Jesus? How can you effect change in these areas? Have you considered the Bible's ability to speak to society today? Just as God's covenant commands impacted the Jewish community, and the Early Church community, His Word should still impact us as Christians involved in our communities today.

Think about how you are involved in society and how you individually, along with other believers, are working to be witnesses of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. Consider how you can take action to influence your society toward Christ this week.

One thing I can do this week in response to this lesson . . .

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Lesson

6

The Bible and Culture

God calls His people to live by Biblical values in a sinful culture.

Introducing the Study

You may have heard the old saying that Christians can either be a thermometer or a thermostat in the world. We either adapt to the values of our culture, like a thermometer changes in response to temperature, or we can shape culture, like a thermostat controls the temperature. The Scriptures we will study in this lesson present an important truth: Rather than allow the world to change our values, we should live out the values of Scripture and thereby influence culture.

As you move through the lesson, think about how you can make a difference in your culture. Keep in mind that this often begins with God doing a work in your own life.

Study Text

Exodus 31:1–5; Isaiah 5:20–24; Matthew 5:13–20; 1 Corinthians 10:31–33; 15:58; Philippians 4:8–9

Key Verse

Matthew 5:16

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (KJV).

“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (NIV).

Commentary & Application

1. Be Salt and Light

Matthew 5:13–20

Salt was essential to life in the Ancient Near East. It was often rubbed into meat as a preservative and used by farmers to fertilize the soil. Yet it was usually found mixed with other minerals. Then, when the rains came the salt would leech away, leaving just the other minerals. This is the sense in which salt would lose its saltiness (Matthew 5:13). It was a serious problem because salt was so important.

Through this example, Jesus urged His followers to declare God’s kingdom and purposes. If we lose our identity and become mingled with the world, we will fail to fulfill that role.

We are also called to remain clearly visible (verses 14–16). As light, Christians convey the gospel to a world stumbling in the darkness of sin. We must let our faith be seen and our message known. This is foundational to our identity as Christians.

Being salt and light is especially important in a culture filled with false

SCRIPTURE SETTING

King James Version

Matthew 5:13. Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

14. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

16. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

17. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

18. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Exodus 31:2. See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah:

3. And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship.

1 Corinthians 10:31. Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.

32. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.

15:58. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

Isaiah 5:20. Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Philippians 4:8. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

New International Version

Matthew 5:13. "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

14. "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden."

16. "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

17. "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

18. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

19. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Exodus 31:2. "See, I have chosen Bezaleel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah,

3. and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills."

1 Corinthians 10:31. So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

32. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God.

15:58. Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

Isaiah 5:20. Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

Philippians 4:8. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

religions and unbelief. Our light will dim if our message is tainted. But as we live for God, we convey the gospel message of love, grace, and hope so that others can hear and become worshippers of God as well.

Matthew 5:17–20 may seem confusing at first glance.

When Jesus said He came to “fulfill” the Law (verse 17), He meant that He came to accomplish its purpose.

Matthew 5:19 is clear. God’s people are still called to obedience to God’s commands. But these commands must be seen in light of verses 17–18. The Law pointed to the life and ministry of Jesus, therefore He defines how it is to be observed. We don’t offer sacrifices, because Jesus has atoned for our sins (Hebrews 10:1–10). Dietary laws are fulfilled because defilement is now an issue of the heart (Mark 7:14–23).

How can you shine light into your culture today?

2. Scripture and the Arts

Exodus 31:1–5; 1 Corinthians 10:31–33; 15:58

What do you think of when you hear people talk about using skills and talents for God?

Exodus 31:1–5 describes a man, Bezalel, who had skills that through the Spirit of God. Using these skills to work with precious metals, Bezalel made an important contribution to building the tabernacle.

Sometimes Christians wonder how their skills can be valuable to God’s

kingdom. It is important to remember that God anoints His people in many ways for many purposes.

We find understanding about this in 1 Corinthians 10. Paul said that we ought to choose our way of life based not upon what is lawful but what is beneficial to others (see verse 23).

As you think about the gifts and talents God has given you, remember that God has a higher purpose than your own pleasure or benefit. Let everything you do be done for the good of God and the good of others (1 Corinthians 10:31).

The principle of verse 31 can help you no longer focus on self, but instead on blessing others. Gifts and talents from God can bring unique, even unexpected, opportunities to tell others about Jesus and help fellow Christians grow (verses 32–33).

How can the principles in 1 Corinthians 10:31–33 change the way you look at your gifts and abilities?

3. Biblical Wisdom on Entertainment

Isaiah 5:20–24; Philippians 4:8–9

Biblical values and cultural values are constantly in conflict. As Christians, we should view the world differently than unbelievers. As a result, our approach to life is different. The contrast is illustrated in the way we entertain ourselves. Where do we turn for recreation? Scripture offers some important principles.

In Isaiah 5:20–23, Israel had reached a point where they had no

understanding of right and wrong. They were self-indulgent, and treated others terribly (verses 21–23). They forgot that God watches out for the vulnerable (Proverbs 22:22–23), and therefore faced judgment (Isaiah 5:24).

Just as in Bible times, sin leads to judgment. That’s why we must have values that grow out of a love for holy things and a priority for the eternal.

So as we confront issues as simple as entertainment choices, we are wise to examine Philippians 4:8–9. Here we find godly thoughts that naturally lead to godly actions and attitudes. As such, they form a good standard by which to choose entertainment.

How can a Christian avoid adopting the values of the world?

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday

A Proud and Rebellious Culture.

Genesis 11:1–9

Tuesday

Called To Be a Sanctified Culture.

Numbers 33:50–56

Wednesday

God’s Call for Renewal.

Malachi 4:4–6

Thursday

Beware of Worldly Values.

Matthew 6:19–24

Friday

Chosen for a Holy Culture.

2 Peter 2:9–12

Saturday

Anointed To Discern Spiritual Deception.

1 John 2:18–23

As a Christian, you are a citizen of God’s Kingdom, even as you live in this world. As a result, you will battle the temptations of spiritual darkness daily, even as you walk in the light of Christ. This is why issues like your entertainment choices are so critical; they often present situations in which you will choose between being influenced by culture and living in a way that can testify to the world of Christ’s work in your life.

We should seek wisdom in deciding what we watch, listen to, search for online, etc. The principles of Scripture are our greatest guide. Pray that God will help you honor Him with your entertainment choices.

One thing I can do this week in response to this lesson . . .

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67 1477 Summer 2020 Vol. 101, No. 4, Part 6

Lesson

7

The Bible and the Marketplace

Business performed within Biblical boundaries invites God's blessings.

Introducing the Study

Money is often a difficult, even controversial, topic. So, it is important for Christians to explore Biblical views of how money is obtained as well as how it is spent. As we examine the Scriptures, we find that the Bible offers some practical instruction on this topic. In this lesson, we look at what the Bible says about doing business in—and with—the unbelieving world around us. Thus, it is an examination of our priorities, our concern for the needy, and our ethics. A Biblical approach to the marketplace brings glory to God and provides a strong testimony to the world of the life-change that takes place in those who live for Him.

Study Text

Genesis 1:28–31; Proverbs 11:1,23–31; 21:25–26; 22:16; Jeremiah 29:4–7; 2 Corinthians 9:8; James 5:1–4

Key Verse

2 Corinthians 9:8

God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work (KJV).

God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work (NIV).

Commentary & Application

1. Biblical Purpose of Business

Genesis 1:28–31; Jeremiah 29:4–7

In the chapter of beginnings, Genesis 1, God gives direction on a practical question: “What does the Bible say about how we are to make a living?” The answer starts with a good understanding of who humanity is in this created world. Having made us uniquely in His image, God gave humanity a measure of authority to rule over the rest of the created world.

We are to “subdue” the earth (Genesis 1:29–30). This means that we are to steward the resources of Creation to glorify its Creator. Keep in mind that this command was given before the Fall, and God saw that this, and all Creation, was “very good.” From the beginning God intended us to be wise stewards of all that He made.

We are reminded of this in Jeremiah 29:4–7 when, centuries later, the nation of Judah was exiled to Babylon for their sin. Despite the fact that

SCRIPTURE SETTING

King James Version

Genesis 1:28. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

29. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

30. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.

31. And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Proverbs 11:24. There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

25. The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

26. He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him: but blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.

27. He that diligently seeketh good procureth favor: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.

28. He that trusteth in his riches shall fall; but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

31. Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.

2 Corinthians 9:8. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.

Proverbs 11:1. A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.

22:16. He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.

James 5:4. Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.

New International Version

Genesis 1:28. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

29. Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.

30. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

31. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Proverbs 11:24. One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.

25. A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.

26. People curse the one who hoards grain, but they pray God's blessing on the one who is willing to sell.

27. Whoever seeks good finds favor, but evil comes to one who searches for it.

28. Those who trust in their riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.

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

2 Corinthians 9:8. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Proverbs 11:1. The LORD detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him.

22:16. One who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and one who gives gifts to the rich—both come to poverty.

James 5:4. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty.

they would be in a hostile foreign land hundreds of miles from Judah, God commanded them to continue to have a “normal” life, planting crops and building families, and even promoting the peace and prosperity of the city.

As we interact in the marketplace, it is important to recall that we, too, are called to function as productive members of our society, even if it is hostile toward our faith. By seeking peace with others and praying for the world around us (see Matthew 5:44; 1 Timothy 2:1–3), we open doors of opportunity to demonstrate God’s love and grace to a lost world.

What does Genesis 1:28–31 teach you about the way you utilize the resources God has given you?

2. Biblical Responsibilities in Business

Proverbs 11:23–31; 2 Corinthians 9:8

The Book of Proverbs is filled with sharp, poetic contrasts that teach us in practical terms the difference between important issues like good vs. evil, wisdom vs. foolishness, and responsibility vs. laziness. Take a moment to read through Proverbs 11:23–31 a couple of times. Note what the contrasts teach you about being a righteous God-follower. As such, you walk the way that leads to everlasting blessings while rejecting the way of sin and judgment.

This clear distinction between right and wrong must reach far beyond our

“church lives” and permeate how we function in the marketplace. Righteousness must not be compromised when we are going about our career pursuits and doing business in the marketplace. Our motives must be godly, centered on eternal pursuits and desires.

Godly values are also to be expressed externally, demonstrated in generosity and selflessness in our dealings with others. The apostle Paul addressed this in 2 Corinthians 9:8 with a reminder that God blesses our work for a purpose far beyond our own prosperity. He wants us to “abound in every good work” (NIV).

Are there any areas of compromise in the marketplace where you struggle? How can you prepare to avoid compromise in the future?

3. Biblical Ethics in Business

*Proverbs 11:1; 21:25–26; 22:16;
James 5:1–4*

As a Christian, there are few places where your ethics will shine brighter than in the marketplace. As you read Proverbs 11:1; 21:25–26; 22:16, think about what these verses teach concerning how to live as a follower of Christ: Be honest. Show compassion. Recognize that prosperity is given to you for a purpose beyond your own pleasure or comfort. And don’t let your treatment of a person be driven by what he or she might be able to do—or not do—for you. In short, God has called

His people to live righteously, practice love, and reject injustice. Such virtues must be evident in how we conduct ourselves in the marketplace as well as the church.

The danger of compromise is especially seen in James 5:1–4, warning those who would use wealth—and the power that accompanies it—to act selfishly and exploit the

poor. Injustice and greed are age-old problems. As we negotiate our way through the marketplace, God calls us to instead live as a shining testimony to His kingdom.

Why do you think God commands people not to hoard possessions, and how does a Christian know when he or she is hoarding possessions?

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday

Wise Counsel Given.

Genesis 41:28–40

Tuesday

Wise Leadership Provided.

Nehemiah 4:13–23

Wednesday

A Godly, Successful Businesswoman.

Proverbs 31:10–20

Thursday

Hold Earthly Riches Lightly.

Mark 10:17–31

Friday

Diligence Commended.

1 Thessalonians 4:9–12

Saturday

Proper Use of Wealth.

1 Timothy 6:17–19

Take a moment to think about how our culture defines success, as well as what the secular world promotes as appropriate means for attaining that success. Too often, the unsaved world delivers a message that people should look after their own interests first, as they try to get the most enjoyment possible out of this life.

But God has instead called us to focus on the values of His kingdom. What comprises the marketplace of your world, whether you're pursuing a career, working toward a degree in college, or raising a family at home?

Ask God to help you maintain a proper attitude toward possessions, express compassion for others, and honor His kingdom in all you do.

One thing I can do this week in response to this lesson . . .

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Lesson

8

The Glorified Christ

*The glorified Jesus Christ
has all authority.*

Introducing the Study

The apostle John had the unique experience of beholding Jesus from many different perspectives. As an apostle, he had walked with Jesus during the ministry of the Savior in everyday life. Then John beheld the terrible scourging Jesus received, followed by the horrors of crucifixion. And John also was privileged to see the risen Christ. But in Revelation 1, John also uniquely saw an incredible revelation of Jesus in His great glory.

As you begin this study of John's account, be prepared for a fresh revelation of Jesus in your life—not in sight, but in spirit. And be open to what the Holy Spirit has for you in response.

Study Text

Revelation 1:1–20

Key Verse

Revelation 1:18

I [Jesus] am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death (KJV).

"I [Jesus] am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades" (NIV).

Commentary & Application

1. John's Vision

Revelation 1:1–3,9–11

John began the Book of Revelation by identifying the subject of the revelation—Jesus—and the servant in this relationship—himself. Though the book is mostly prophetic, the core message focuses on the glory of Christ.

John stated that he was on the island of Patmos on account of his service to Jesus (Revelation 1:9). Patmos is a small volcanic island in the Aegean

Sea near the west coast of Turkey. It's because of his faithfulness to his work in declaring the word of God and testifying to the lordship of Jesus that he ended up on this rocky isle.

John was not alone in suffering for the gospel. He called himself a "brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (1:9, KJV). We know from this description and visions later in the text that Christians were undergoing severe persecution.

SCRIPTURE SETTING

King James Version

Revelation 1:8. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

9. I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

10. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

11. Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

12. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

13. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

14. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

15. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

16. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

17. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

18. I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

19. Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

20. The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

New International Version

Revelation 1:8. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

9. I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

10. On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet,

11. which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea."

12. I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands,

13. and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest.

14. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire.

15. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters.

16. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

17. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

18. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

19. "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.

20. "The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."

John said that he “was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” (1:10, KJV). John received a divine commission to share the message he received with the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia (the area that is now western Turkey). It is believed that these churches were closely affiliated with him and under his pastoral care. We would do well to understand and apply the messages these churches received in much the same way that we treat Paul’s letters to the different churches to which he ministered.

John extended grace and peace from Jesus and the Spirit (“seven Spirits” can be read “sevenfold Spirit” and is a clear reference to the Holy Spirit). Jesus is clearly the central figure in this book.

How can reading John’s seven letters to the churches in the same manner as Paul’s Epistles affect how we apply them to our lives?

2. The Glory of Jesus Christ

Revelation 1:12–16

The last time John had seen Jesus was on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9,12). But in Revelation 1:12–16, John saw the ascended Christ. His trumpet-like voice seized John’s attention so that he turned to see its source. John was riveted as he beheld One greater than all else, and the fulfillment of all the Biblical hopes of God’s people.

John then noted seeing seven golden lampstands. The image is reminiscent of the sanctuary in the Temple, a place where heaven and earth overlapped,

a place where God was enthroned between the cherubim. The Spirit had made John’s location a sacred place.

John turned his gaze to behold the One with whom he had spent the most transformative years of his life and to whom he had completely committed. Now he saw Jesus in such a way that the Savior’s glory overwhelmed him.

Jesus’ appearance sets the tone for the remainder of the Book of Revelation.

How was John’s vision of Jesus different from the Jesus he knew previously on earth (cf. Isaiah 53:2–3)?

3. Authority of the Risen Christ

Revelation 1:17–20

When John fell before Jesus, the Lord laid His right hand on him. The right hand signifies strength and authority. Then, with encouraging words, Jesus reassured John.

The Lord instructed John to not be afraid. As with many passages in Revelation, there seems to be more than one meaning here. Certainly, the Lord was giving John strength to withstand the heavenly vision. At the same time, we can see a word of encouragement for the harsh circumstances faced by the apostle and the churches.

By identifying Himself, Jesus underscored His power and authority. He was eternal Lord and will forever be eternal Lord. Death is not to be feared, for He has triumphed over it and now possesses the keys of “death and Hades” (verse 18, NIV; “hell and of death,” KJV).

At the conclusion of Revelation 1, Jesus explained the mysteries of the lampstands and stars. The lampstands are the seven churches of Asia (verse 11). The churches are located in cities that form a semi-circular geographic arrangement. It would seem that the lampstands are arranged similarly, for Jesus stands “among” them.

John enabled us to see a vision of Christ working in history. Christ

shows us that we are part of His great plan. We may face trials, but we should take heart that the victorious Lord stands with us and intends to use us to bring about His purposes.

Since history is shaped by God and affected by the proclamation of His Word, how should we view today’s governmental and cultural powers?

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday

God, in the Beginning.

Genesis 1:1–5

Tuesday

The Lord’s Glory Revealed.

Isaiah 6:1–5

Wednesday

An Everlasting Kingdom.

Daniel 7:9–14

Thursday

The Eternal Word.

John 1:1–5, 10–14

Friday

Isaiah Saw Christ’s Glory.

John 12:37–41

Saturday

Supremacy of Christ.

Colossians 1:15–20

An amazing aspect of Revelation 1 is the closeness of Jesus to this world. His return to the Father didn’t make Him far off. While it may not be surprising that the apostle John saw a vision of Jesus when he was “in the Spirit,” the closeness that the ascended Jesus has with His Church may surprise some. He is among them, and as will be noted next lesson, He is intimately aware of the strengths and struggles of each.

The same is true of the life of every believer. Jesus is present and aware of your strengths and struggles. And He’s ready to be a part of every detail of your life. It’s up to you to listen to what the Holy Spirit reveals to you and to respond by drawing closer to your Savior.

One thing I can do this week in response to this lesson . . .

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Lesson

9

Christ's Messages to the Churches (Part 1)

Jesus Christ instructs His churches.

Introducing the Study

On the surface, the messages to the churches in Asia Minor might seem specifically directed at those people in that time. But with some examination, it becomes clear that principles within these messages are as relevant today as they were at the time Jesus revealed them to John.

As you explore Christ's words to these churches, keep your local church in mind. Identify what Jesus notes as positives. How does your church measure up? Explore the exhortations of Jesus. How could they influence your church to a higher level of faithfulness? Remember that the struggles in your church aren't new, and you, too, can overcome!

Study Text

Revelation 2:1–29

Key Verse

Revelation 2:1

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks (κιν).

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands" (niv).

Commentary & Application

1. Ephesus: Return to First Love

Revelation 2:1–7

Ephesus was a prominent metropolis in ancient Asia Minor. As the site of the temple of Artemis, it flourished.

Jesus commended the Ephesians' commitment to purity. They refused to put up with wickedness in their midst. They tested and exposed false apostles. Years before, the apostle Paul warned that the Ephesians would face these challenges (see Acts 20:17–18,28–31).

The next commendation from the Lord revealed their perseverance. In the midst of the pressures of a city that promoted idolatry, magical arts, and emperor worship, the Ephesians remained true to the gospel and endured hardship for Jesus.

The Lord's rebuke may seem surprising—given the nature of His commendations. While they engaged in serving the Lord, they had lost the intensity of that first love. Simply put, they had the right doctrines and were

SCRIPTURE SETTING

King James Version

Revelation 2:1. Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

4. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

5. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

6. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

7. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

8. And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

10. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

11. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

12. And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

16. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

18. And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

25. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

26. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations.

New International Version

Revelation 2:1. “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.”

4. “Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first.

5. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.

6. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

7. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

8. “To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.”

10. “Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown.

11. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

12. “To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.”

16. “Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.

18. “To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.”

25. “Except to hold on to what you have until I come.”

26. To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations.”

vigilant in their purity, but were lacking in their love. Yet Jesus offered a way of amends, calling them to return to that first love.

As the Ephesians returned to their original affections, God would give them fruit from the Tree of Life. We, too, have the sure hope of eternal life as we stay true to our first love.

What kinds of steps might be involved in testing doctrines?

2. Smyrna: Remain Faithful

Revelation 2:8–11

The ancient city of Smyrna was built partly on the shore and partly on a hill topped with temples and other important buildings. As such, it, too, was a key city in Asia Minor.

The Lord noted how the Smyrnan Christians had endured poverty and tribulations. This hardship was likely a result of their faithfulness to Jesus and refusal to participate in idolatrous activities. Thus, amid their struggles, their spiritual wealth was everlasting.

Two promises were given to these believers. Those who endured the coming persecution would receive a crown of life, and the overcomers would not experience spiritual death. And so, they were both “poor and rich,” facing slander and death but awaiting life everlasting.

What does the poverty of Smyrna say about worldly wealth, in light of Jesus’ commendation?

3. Pergamos: Hold to the Truth

Revelation 2:12–17

Pergamos had a lofty history. The environs of the city included a hill with temples to several deities including Zeus, Athena, and Asclepius (the god of healing or medicine).

Jesus acknowledged the challenging environment the church faced at Pergamos, referring to the city as Satan’s throne and the habitation of Satan. In the face of these hostile demonic powers, Jesus commended the church for holding to the truth, singling out a Christian man named Antipas, who was killed for his faith.

In spite of their faithfulness to Christ, the Christians of Pergamos had not been careful with their doctrines. Jesus referred specifically to the teachings of the Nicolaitans. They had been flirting with idolatry and sexual immorality—even while calling themselves followers of Christ.

Jesus gave the Pergamos believers a warning: If they did not return to holiness, Jesus would fight against them with the sword in John’s vision.

Yet Jesus also had a wonderful, twofold promise involving manna and a white stone. This imagery spoke both to Jesus as the Bread of Life and, likely, to the fact that they would be found blameless in God’s eyes.

How can a church avoid being deceived despite the fact that it contains unfaithful believers?

4. Thyatira: Increase in Good Works

Revelation 2:18–29

Thyatira was a smaller city, yet quite wealthy and well-known, especially for a special process of dying fabrics. Commercial guilds here were well-organized, and it was difficult to do any business without membership.

The Christians at Thyatira had allowed false teaching, leading to a belief that God’s grace gives a license to sin freely. The teachings of a false prophetess called Jezebel led some into this evil practice of mixing the Christian faith with idolatry and immorality.

Why might a church be tempted to not stand against those teaching false doctrines?

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday

God Promises a Blessed People.

Genesis 12:1–3

Tuesday

God Hears His People’s Cry.

Exodus 3:7–10

Wednesday

God Establishes a Covenant People.

Exodus 19:1–9

Thursday

Jesus Commissions His Church.

Matthew 28:16–20

Friday

Jesus Directs His Followers.

Acts 1:1–8

Saturday

Jesus Confronts a Chosen Vessel.

Acts 9:1–6, 10–16

The overarching theme to these letters is a call for faithfulness. To each church, Jesus spoke of His appreciation for their faithfulness to Him despite persecution. Then, He called them to be restored to their previously faithful state.

Today, Jesus issues the same calls and commendations: Follow Him in fidelity and good works. The Church is called to faithfully pursue truth and holiness, godly knowledge and behavior. The voices of those who have overcome through Christ should be an encouragement to us. Eternal life is awaiting those who respond faithfully to the words of Jesus and the moving of the Holy Spirit. It’s a call worth answering!

One thing I can do this week in response to this lesson . . .

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67 1477 Summer 2020 Vol. 101, No. 4, Part 9

Lesson
10

Christ's Messages to the Churches (Part 2)

Jesus Christ admonishes and encourages His churches.

Introducing the Study

Revelation 2 contains three more messages to specific churches in Asia Minor. As such, it deals with a wide spectrum of church health. One church's message contains commendation with no rebuke, another receives rebuke with no commendation, and the other receives both. It's an opportunity to observe how Jesus responds to a variety of churches.

One commonality between all three is that Jesus has a promise for each if they remain in or return to Him. This promise is as real today for you and your church as it was in the first century, when it was given to the three churches addressed in this study.

Study Text

Revelation 3:1–22

Key Verse

Revelation 3:1

These things saith he [Jesus] that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars (KJV).

These are the words of him [Jesus] who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars (NIV).

Commentary & Application

1. Sardis: Be Spiritually Alert

Revelation 3:1–6

The city of Sardis boasted a long history as a strategic military post as well as an important transportation hub. It was located near a mountain with steep cliffs, upon which an acropolis was built. This became a place of refuge during sieges, which in turn enabled the city to remain largely impenetrable to opposing armies. These facts can help us better

understand the message of Jesus to the Christians there.

In Revelation 3:1–6, Jesus changed the order from His previous letters by bringing the rebuke to the front. The church of Sardis had a reputation for being a lively and active church, but in reality they were dead, lacking true spiritual vitality.

Jesus described Himself as holding “the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.” The “seven spirits of God” (or “sevenfold Spirit of

SCRIPTURE SETTING

King James Version

Revelation 3:1. And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

2. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

3. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

7. And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

8. I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

10. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

14. And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

16. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

20. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

New International Version

Revelation 3:1. “To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.

2. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God.

3. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.”

7. “To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

8. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.”

10. “Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

11. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”

14. “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation.”

16. “So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

17. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

18. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.”

20. “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”

God”) makes reference to the Holy Spirit, who resides in the churches. The Spirit brings about the rebirth provided through Christ (see John 3:5–8). Thus, while the church had a reputation for life because of their prosperous setting, it lacked the true life of the Spirit.

In a sense, the church seemed to be “going through the motions,” thinking all was well even as Jesus commanded them to wake up and realize their desperate situation.

Nevertheless, some in Sardis had remained alert and faithful—having given attention to their lives and therefore keeping their “garments” clean. These walked in a way that was worthy of Jesus (verse 4).

The same promise was given to those in Sardis who repented.

What might a busy but spiritually dead church look like?

2. Philadelphia: Hold on to Christ

Revelation 3:7–13

Philadelphia got its name from the ancient King Attalus II, who demonstrated such loyalty to his deceased brother that he was dubbed Philadelphia (Greek for “love of brother”). Philadelphia was located along important travel routes.

Jesus lavished great praise on the Philadelphian church and did not issue a rebuke to them. He opened His message by describing Himself as the One who is holy and true and who holds the key of David (Revelation

3:7), a strong affirmation of His deity.

The key of David is also mentioned in Isaiah 22:22, where the prophet rebuked the royal steward, Shebna. In referencing this prophecy, Jesus demonstrated that it was ultimately a foretelling of His coming Lordship.

In verses 11–13, the Lord instructed the Christians to hold tightly to what they had (i.e., to remain faithful). The promises that followed were rich in meaning to these overcomers. First, the Lord declared that He would make them permanent pillars in God’s temple. This may allude to Philadelphia’s reputation for devastating earthquakes. Often, in the aftermath, only temple pillars would remain standing. Second, these Christians would bear the name of the Lord and the New Jerusalem. This contrasts with the worshippers of the beast, who will bear his mark (see Revelation 13).

Why might a believer be tempted to give up his or her crown despite knowing the consequences?

3. Laodicea: Be Zealous and Repent

Revelation 3:14–22

Laodicea was located at an important intersection of major north-south and east-west travel routes. This gave the city a well-attested significance in the ancient world. As a result, Laodicea often boasted in—and rested in—its abundance.

Jesus began His letter to the Laodicean church with a rebuke, and He offered no commendation for

them. Rather, He simply informed the Laodiceans that He knew their works. They were lukewarm. This was perhaps a reference to the hot and cold springs that fed water into the city. Both hot and cold water were useful for various reasons. But if the two became mixed, lukewarm water resulted. Still today, we can relate to why lukewarm water might be deemed useless and unpleasant. In describing

the Laodicean church, it seems Jesus was depicting them as going through the motions but lacking spiritual vitality and fervor. As a result, Jesus said He would spit them out, much as we would spit out a mouthful of lukewarm water (verses 15–16).

What kinds of things can draw a believer away from right standing with God and into lukewarmness?

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday

God's Chosen and Loved People.

Deuteronomy 7:6–9

Tuesday

God Expands His Kingdom.

Isaiah 55:1–5

Wednesday

God Promises a New Heart.

Ezekiel 11:17–20

Thursday

The Gentiles Brought In.

Acts 10:44–48

Friday

The Holy People of God.

1 Peter 2:6–10

Saturday

Belief in Christ Is Essential.

1 John 5:1–5

The final three letters from Christ to the churches of Asia Minor contain an inclusive call: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Revelation 3:22, κϱν). It’s a reminder that we should all take note of this revelation of Jesus’ relationship with His bride (the Church) as well as the Spirit’s role in the Church.

It also stands as a reminder that the Spirit still speaks to churches, offering direction and correction. As believers, we should desire to always be open to the Spirit’s leading as He calls us to action inside and outside of our church. We should also pray for those in leadership, that they rightly respond to the Spirit’s leadership.

One thing I can do this week in response to this lesson . . .

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Lesson

11

The Lamb Who Is Worthy

*Jesus Christ is worthy to be glorified
as the exalted Lamb of God.*

Introducing the Study

If you've ever been curious about the sights and events at the throne of God, this study will offer a unique view into a key moment there. With Jesus as the main focus of the Book of Revelation, He—the Lamb of God—is revealed in His glory when a sealed scroll that no one can open is announced.

What happens here unlocks the events that follow throughout the rest of the Book of Revelation. The Lamb of God opens the seals that initiate God's plans of deliverance for His people and judgment on the wicked. Revelation 5 concludes with an offering of praise and worship that originates from God's throne.

Study Text

Revelation 5:1–14

Key Verse Revelation 5:9

Thou [Jesus] art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation (KJV).

"You [Jesus] are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation" (NIV).

Commentary & Application

1. Challenge To Open the Book

Revelation 5:1–4

Revelation 5 takes place at the throne of God. The apostle John sees a scroll ("book," κβυ) in the right hand of the One sitting upon the throne, and it is sealed with seven seals (Revelation 5:1). Seven is a number used repeatedly in Scripture and often represents fullness or completion.

Witnesses are present for the opening of this document. The four living

creatures may represent different forms of life upon the earth, and the twenty-four elders are likely a reference to the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. Hosts of angelic beings are gathered around the throne as well (see verses 2–6). Representatives from all Creation in heaven and earth are gathered to witness the opening of this scroll.

Finally, Revelation 5 presents the main participants in this passage—the Triune God. The Father

SCRIPTURE SETTING

King James Version

Revelation 5:1. And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

2. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

3. And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

4. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

5. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

6. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

7. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

8. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.

9. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

10. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

11. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;

12. Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.

13. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

New International Version

Revelation 5:1. Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.

2. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"

3. But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it.

4. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside.

5. Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals."

6. Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. The Lamb had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

7. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.

8. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people.

9. And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

10. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

11. Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders.

12. In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

13. Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

is seated upon the throne (5:1; see also 4:6). Also at the throne is Jesus (5:6). And the seven lamps before the throne blaze with the Spirit of God (see 4:5).

The divine plan for all Creation was sealed in heaven. What was written within contained the answer to the hopes of all God's people throughout history who longed for redemption and suffered under oppression. To this point, no one has been worthy to break the seals and read the royal decree. Thus John wept, for the final hope of the ages remained unrevealed.

What hopes are you holding on to that can only be fulfilled by God, and what is the right response as you wait for their fulfillment?

2. Jesus Christ Prevails

Revelation 5:5–8

John's weeping is interrupted as one of the elders approaches him with good news: One was found who is worthy to take the scroll and open the seals. The elder describes Him as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" (5:5). The Lion is able to open the scroll because He has prevailed, or triumphed. He fought the battle on the cross against the evil forces that seek to destroy the world. He won that battle, defeating the grave.

With the elder's assurance, we might be surprised by John's next words: "And I beheld . . . a Lamb as

it had been slain" (verse 6, κJν). Strikingly, the Lamb has seven horns and eyes. We are told that the seven horns and eyes are the Spirit of God sent out into the earth.

Risen from the dead, the crucified Jesus now comes into the heavenly scene to receive the sealed scroll, which proclaims His divine right over the earth. At this moment, the living creatures and the twenty-four elders fall before the Lamb in worship. The ancient cries of God's people are answered in this moment, as the Lamb receives the scroll. The power of evil is broken by the Lamb's victory. Thus, the petitions of God's people rise before Him and are transformed into the sweet fragrance of worship.

What are some areas in your life you may need to place in God's hands in faith for victory?

3. Universal Worship of the Lamb

Revelation 5:9–14

The triumph of the Lamb is so complete that all Creation joins in worship (Revelation 5:9–14). The first among the heavenly worshippers are those redeemed through the blood of the Lamb. God's people proclaim His redemptive victory and His righteous reign.

The next voices are the angelic hosts. They, too, raise their voices in worship to the Lamb. While they do not rejoice in having been redeemed,

they still celebrate His marvelous victory and ascribe to Him all that He is worthy to receive.

Finally, we hear from the creatures in the heavens, upon the earth, under the earth, and in the sea. Nature now joins to worship the redeeming Lamb and the One upon the throne. All of Creation has suffered since humanity's rebellion and awaits the full

manifestation of redemption (Romans 8:19–22). Even the cosmological and ecological systems are involved. The worship of the Lamb is universal because the redeeming triumph of the Lamb is universal.

How can recognizing the triumph of Christ affect the daily life of believers?

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday

God Provides a Sacrifice.

Genesis 22:9–14

Tuesday

The Passover Lamb.

Exodus 12:1–11

Wednesday

The Scapegoat.

Leviticus 16:6–10

Thursday

"Behold, the Lamb of God!"

John 1:29–34

Friday

Celebrating the Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians 11:23–34

Saturday

The Perfect and Ultimate Sacrifice.

Hebrews 10:1–10

The end of Revelation chapter 5 reveals a truth that is as relevant now as it was at that moment: Jesus is worthy of praise and worship. He has overcome this world and has authority beyond compare. Yet His activity in the lives of His followers isn't yet complete.

Every day, the Lord continues to work in natural and supernatural ways for the benefit of His children. Whether or not you see His hand, He is active in your life, and the proper response is clear. Not only should Christians offer praise and worship in times of clear provision, but they should also offer praise when God's hand is not as clearly seen. Consider how you can better exhibit worship to the Lord in your daily walk with Him.

One thing I can do this week in response to this lesson . . .

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Lesson

12

The Second Coming of Christ

*Jesus Christ will return in victory
over all evil.*

Introducing the Study

Today's study deals with the revelation of Jesus Christ, not to be confused with the rapture of the Church, occurring seven years earlier. At the Rapture, Christ comes in the air; at the Revelation, He comes to earth. Both are part of His second coming. In Revelation 19, Jesus is revealed as King over all, and His enemies are shown to be weak and ripe for judgment.

This topic reminds us of a few key truths. Evil will someday come to an end, with justice prevailing. Christ will be victorious over all of His foes. Every human must choose a side in this struggle. And the followers of Christ must declare His victory to those who have not yet heard.

Study Text

Revelation 19:11 through
20:6

Key Verse

Revelation 19:11

I [John] saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he [Jesus] that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war (KJV).

I [John] saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war (NIV).

Commentary & Application

1. Christ Returns Triumphant

Revelation 19:11–14

Revelation 19:11 begins the culmination of the struggle between God and the devil, and between the saints and the followers of the Beast. This climax is inaugurated with the revelation of Jesus and His army of saints.

John sees heaven open to reveal a Rider seated upon a white horse (verses 11–13). The Rider comes from heaven to do battle with evil

on the earth. We know that this Rider is Jesus, for He is described with images and titles that John has used in Revelation and in his Gospel. The Rider is called “Faithful and True” (Revelation 3:14) and His eyes are as flaming fire (Revelation 1:14). He is also called “The Word of God” which was the title John used in the opening of his Gospel (see John 1:1).

Jesus' Second Coming is a clear contrast to His first Advent. In Revelation, He comes arrayed as a warrior

SCRIPTURE SETTING

King James Version

Revelation 19:11. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

12. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

13. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

14. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

15. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

16. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

17. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

18. That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

19. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

20. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

21. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Revelation 20:1. And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

2. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.

New International Version

Revelation 19:11. I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war.

12. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.

13. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.

14. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

15. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.

16. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

17. And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God,

18. so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and the mighty, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, great and small."

19. Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army.

20. But the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who had performed the signs on its behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

21. The rest were killed with the sword coming out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

Revelation 20:1. And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain.

2. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

king. Readers familiar with the Old Testament will recall that God is described as a warrior who battles for His people (e.g., Exodus 15:1–4). The blood-stained robe is also an Old Testament allusion to God as a warrior (e.g., Isaiah 63:1–3).

The great armies of heaven dressed in clean white linen accompany the Lord in this vision. Recall that the overcoming Christians of Sardis were promised this clothing (Revelation 3:4). This is also the raiment given to the bride of Christ (19:8).

This is unusual dress for battle. Typically, armies go to war in armor. This army's clothing speaks to the divine power of the Rider and also tells us that He will be doing the actual fighting.

What do you think it means to be a part of the Lamb's army today?

2. King of Kings and Lord of Lords

Revelation 19:15–18

Beginning in Revelation 19:15, John describes the Lord going to war. This passage reveals Jesus as the Warrior King and recounts a unique call regarding the battle.

John's description of Jesus includes both Biblical language and historical imagery. The titles and descriptors would be immediately recognized by his first readers. His language counters the claims of the powers of the earth and shows that Jesus is the fulfillment of the hope of God's people.

The Lamb is called King of kings and Lord of lords (verse 16). This

title refers directly to God (1 Timothy 6:15), and it helps us understand why the Rider wears many crowns, for He rules over all kingdoms.

John uses the same phrases we find in Psalm 2, which express the promise of the righteous Messiah, who shall strike down the powers of evil. John also alludes to Isaiah 63, noting that the Lamb will tread the winepress of God's wrath.

Finally, note the weapon of the Lamb (Revelation 19:15). A sharp sword proceeds from His mouth (see also 1:16). With this sword He fights His battle. This depiction fits with His name as "Word of God." His judgments will reveal truth and administer justice.

What should our attitude toward earthly governments be, since Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords?

3. Christ's Enemies Vanquished

Revelation 19:19 through 20:3

Beginning in Revelation 19:19, we see that the Lamb's enemies will be dealt with quickly and decisively. Leading the opposition against the Lamb is the evil triumvirate of the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet (see Revelation 13).

As the Rider from heaven comes with His armies, the enemies of God on earth gather to make war. These earthly armies are responding to the demonic summons from the evil triumvirate (see Revelation 16:12–14). The summons in Revelation 16 is answered in Revelation 19.

The first enemies to be handled are the Beast and the False Prophet (verse 20). They are immediately captured and thrown alive into the lake of fire. This is the fitting place for forces that have opposed righteousness. They are stripped of their kingdoms and authority as the Lamb takes His rightful place.

Next, the armies of the earth face the judgment of the Rider (verse 21).

At His Word, His enemies are killed.

An angel descends from heaven. The angel seizes and binds Satan with the great chain, and he is thrown into the bottomless pit, which is locked and sealed behind him.

Since Satan's future fate is already revealed, why do you think he will still lead opposition to the Lamb?

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday

First Promise of Ultimate Victory.

Genesis 3:8–12

Tuesday

God Enthrones His King.

Psalms 2:1–12

Wednesday

Glory of the Lord's Return.

Zechariah 9:14–17

Thursday

Christ's Sudden Appearance.

Matthew 24:36–44

Friday

Be Ready!

Luke 21:34–36

Saturday

Christ Will Judge the Ungodly.

Jude 1:14–21

Because of its centrality to our salvation, the Cross can become the exclusive focal point when we consider Christ's victory in this world. Yet it is good to be reminded that Jesus' victorious work extends to providing justice at His return through judgment of the wicked and vindication of the righteous.

In the meantime, it's the responsibility of each believer to prepare for His coming. Preparations should be made for the King of kings by ensuring that He's the King over every area of our lives.

We should also help others prepare for this eventual certainty by declaring the victory of Christ and encouraging them to make Him King of kings and Lord of lords of their lives.

One thing I can do this week in response to this lesson . . .

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Lesson

13

The New Jerusalem

*The saints will live and reign with
Jesus Christ for eternity.*

Introducing the Study

The final, climactic chapters the Book of Revelation are set in the glorious place we call the New Jerusalem. Revelation 21–22 present the majesty of God in a way that beckons anyone not in relationship with Him to come. Yet the scene ultimately takes a step further as the Holy Spirit and the Church call to those who have not responded affirmatively to Christ's call.

Though the beauty of the invitation to come to Jesus is the focal point, it also reminds us of the eternal destiny of those who choose not to join Him in the New Jerusalem on the new earth. It is in this final vision that all believers should be inspired to evangelization and devotion.

Study Text

Revelation 21:1 through
22:21

Key Verse

Revelation 21:2

I John saw the holy city,
new Jerusalem, coming
down from God out of
heaven, prepared as a bride
adorned for her husband
(KJV).

I saw the Holy City, the new
Jerusalem, coming down
out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride beauti-
fully dressed for her hus-
band (NIV).

Commentary & Application

1. The Bride of the Lamb

Revelation 21:1–10

Earlier in John's vision, heaven and earth fled before the face of God, who came to execute judgment (Revelation 20:11). In their place will come a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1). Here the New Jerusalem descends from heaven (verse 2). The angels refer to the city as the bride of the Lamb (Revelation 21:9–10). Of course, the people who populate

the city are wedded to the Lamb. The city breaks into the earthly realm to be revealed and established upon the earth. The city is adorned as a bride, likely with shining jewels and precious metals, standard attire for a royal wedding in John's time.

The merging of the heavenly city and the earthly realm represents the fulfillment of God's promises, His plan to overcome the separation caused by sin. The plan's fullness is announced from the throne

SCRIPTURE SETTING

King James Version

Revelation 21:2. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

3. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

9. And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

10. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

22. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

23. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

24. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.

25. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

Revelation 22:5. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

12. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

13. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

16. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

17. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

New International Version

Revelation 21:2. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

3. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God."

9. One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

10. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.

22. I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.

23. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

24. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.

25. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there.

Revelation 22:5. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

12. "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done.

13. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

16. "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

17. The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let the one who hears say, "Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.

(Revelation 21:3–4), and God now dwells gloriously on the earth and makes all things new.

We read of the everlasting destinies of two groups: those who embraced the new creation and those who rejected it. The former are given the water of life and claimed by God as His heirs (verses 6–7). While the overcomers receive life, those who cling to the old order will suffer the second death (verse 8). The list of the condemned is telling: The cowardly and unbelieving may refer to those who abandon Christ. The vile refers to that which God detests. Condemnation of sorcery may be connected to the magical arts practiced in the imperial cults during John's time, and are still practiced today. These individuals are consigned to the lake of fire, the same destiny as the beast, the false prophet, and Satan (Revelation 20:10).

According to Revelation 12:10–11, how do we overcome?

2. The Light of the Lamb

Revelation 21:22 through 22:5

John explains that the city has no Temple, for the Lamb fulfills that role (Revelation 21:22). The previous paragraphs described the dimensions of the city as “foursquare” or cubed. Similarly, the Holy of Holies was also a cubed structure. This can help remind readers why there is no Temple there. None is needed, for now God's presence fills every need.

The need for light in this wondrous place is eliminated by the glory of God, with Christ as the center (verses 23–24). Isaiah describes this glorious time when never again will the sun set (Isaiah 60:19–20). The elimination of day and night cycles reveals how different this new life will be, and the extreme difference God's nearness makes in our existence.

Verse 25 compares the new city and the Holy of Holies. While the Old Testament place of God's presence could only be entered by the High Priest once each year, the Holy City is open to all God's people forever.

Appropriately, the Biblical story concludes where it began: a garden paradise (22:1–2; see Genesis 2). What was lost in Eden is restored. In the city is a garden in which sits the throne of God and of the Lamb. From the throne flows the Water of Life, which Scripture links with the Holy Spirit (John 7:37–39).

Why do you think John emphasized the unceasing light given by God in the New Jerusalem, in 22:5?

3. The Invitation of the Lamb

Revelation 22:12–17

The Lord reminds readers that He is coming soon (Revelation 22:12–13). The One who began all things will end all things. Therefore, He is coming with authority to judge sin and to reward people for their deeds.

The rewards the Lord brings are starkly different from the judgment

(verses 14–15). Believers are enjoined to wash their robes. Their cleansing comes through the blood of Jesus and is a testimony of His work in their lives (Revelation 1:5; 3:5; 19:8). Those who have rejected Him will be cast into the lake of fire (see 21:8).

In His final words, Jesus emphasizes that He has been the Source of this message.

The Spirit and the bride (the Church) unite in issuing an

invitation (22:17). This pairing reveals the necessity that the work of the Church be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Both are calling to Christ, who testified that He is coming soon. Yet, they are likely also calling to the world, encouraging them to take part in the gift of life Jesus is providing.

Why is it important to recall the necessity of the Spirit in evangelism?

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Monday

Enter the King of Glory.

Psalms 24:7–10

Tuesday

The Peaceful Reign
of Christ.

Isaiah 11:6–10

Wednesday

The New Jerusalem
Foretold.

Isaiah 65:17–25

Thursday

Jesus Promises
a New Home.

John 14:1–4

Friday

A City Built by God.

Hebrews 11:8–10

Saturday

A New Heaven
and Earth.

2 Peter 3:10–13

John's call to Jesus in the finale of Revelation might remind us of an engaged bride lovingly calling for her husband-to-be. And John's sentiment should resonate throughout the Body of Christ, as we desire to spend eternity with the One who gave His life for us. The prophetic vision of the New Jerusalem should further inspire us to pursue daily a closer walk with the One with whom we will dwell in that magnificent place.

Though our Lord may return at any moment and move humanity into this end-time drama, that time has not yet come. It is in this meantime that every believer should call Him to "come," in harmony with His Spirit.

One thing I can do this week in response to this lesson . . .

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