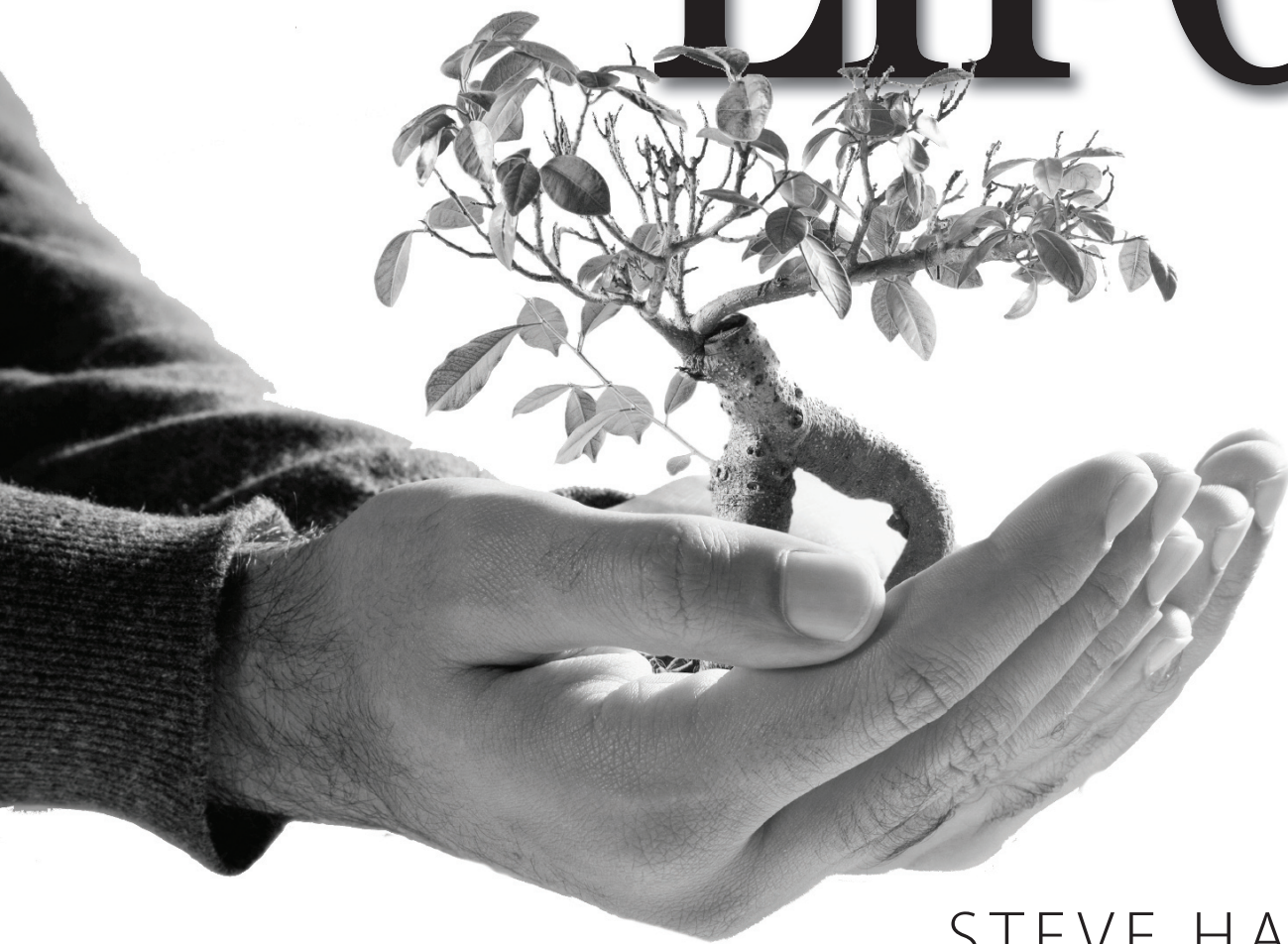


SMALL GROUP APOLOGETICS STUDY

answers FOR LIFE



STEVE HAM
WITH TERRY CAVE

1:1

answers^{ing}genesis
Petersburg, Kentucky, USA

PARTICIPANT
WORKBOOK

Answers for Life Participant Workbook

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Thank you Terry (and Julie) for your friendship and support and your passion for others who need to know Christ's salvation.

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Video Introduction

In this opening video, Steve Ham explains the *Answers for Life* program. We will spend the next six weeks answering six questions the world has about Christianity. Steve explains the purpose and the process of the program.

Purpose: To help participants answer questions about the relevance of the Bible and Jesus Christ, with the goal of leading them toward a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Process: To search the Bible for answers to six crucial life questions relevant to the purpose of the program.

1. Is the Bible relevant?
2. Who does God say He is?
3. What does the Bible say about origins and science?
4. Why is there death and suffering in the world?
5. What is so important about Jesus?
6. Do I have to go to church to be a Christian?

Discussion

- Do you agree that everyone has a faith-based belief about God, whether they believe in God or not?
- What does the term “blind faith” mean?
- Do you think Christianity requires blind faith? Why or why not?

- Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? “Having faith in God is intellectual suicide.” “Christianity is only for people who need a crutch.”

The writer of the second letter to Timothy, Paul, says in 2 Timothy 1:12 that he *knows* what he believes in.

Definition of faith: *The assurance of the heart in the adequacy of the evidence.*

Consider your faith in the chair you are sitting in. Was there adequate evidence for your personal assurance or belief that it would hold you up when you sat in it?

Christianity is all about having *faith* in Jesus Christ. Over the next six weeks we will discuss some of the evidence that has provided millions of Christians with a strong basis for their faith in Jesus. Remember, we’re not out to *prove* that Christianity is true; rather, we want to understand the Bible’s claims, and how these claims explain the world around us.

- Is this statement true? “Everybody lives by a faith-based belief about God.”

These are the questions we will be discussing:

1. Is the Bible relevant?
2. Who does God say He is?
3. Is there credibility in what the Bible says, especially about origins?
4. How can there be a God of love when there is death and suffering in the world?
5. Who is Jesus and why is He so important to Christians?
6. Does a person have to go to church to be a Christian?

Is the Bible Relevant?

- If there is a God, would you expect Him to reveal Himself to us?

The Bible claims to be one way that God has revealed himself to us. So, we need to find out if the Bible's claim to be a revelation from God is defensible.

If the Bible is God's revelation to us, what would you expect from it in relation to the following?

- The degree of truth
- The degree of authority
- The degree of reliability

We should therefore consider the Bible's claims of truth, authority, and reliability. We should also consider what the Bible says about how God has revealed Himself to us.

Biblical Claims about Revelation

From the Bible, we know that there are two ways in which God has revealed Himself to humanity: general revelation and special revelation. General revelation refers to the way that God has revealed Himself through creation, morality, and religious sense. Special revelation refers to how God has revealed himself through the written word of the Bible and through Jesus Christ. To include every biblical reference for general or specific revelation would seriously lengthen this study; however, we have provided a few examples.

General Revelation: Creation

Romans 1:20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Acts 17:26–27 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each of us.

In these two passages the Bible claims that God has revealed Himself through His creation. The verse in Romans clearly points to the whole of creation compelling us to ask, “Where did it come from?” The verse in Acts shows that all nations are compelled to ask specifically about the origin of humanity. The Bible states that if we can view the created world around us, we are without excuse in not making an effort to know the Creator.

At this stage we may be tempted to speak more of creation, origins, and science; however, these will be discussed in the third session. For now, it is simply important to understand that it is a biblical claim that God has revealed Himself in a general way through the material creation. If this claim alone is found to have merit, the Bible is certainly relevant in guiding us through living in God’s created world.

General Revelation: Morality

Romans 2:13–15 For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves, their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.

In these verses, the biblical claim is that there has been a law of morality written on the hearts of all mankind from the beginning.

Is the Bible Relevant?

- Have you ever wondered where a sense of good and evil or morality came from?

General Revelation: The Religiousness of Man

Psalm 139:7–10 Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.

This is a small section of a psalm where the writer is showing he has a built-in sense of God. This happens all over the world where generations of all nations have been seeking God (or gods) with great religious fervor.

Have you ever wondered why people all over the world are so fascinated with a “god” or religiosity?

The Bible claims that even without the Bible or any spoken word from God, people can see from the physical material surroundings, from a basic understanding of good and evil, and from a sense of the religious that there is a very strong case for believing there is a God who has revealed Himself.

The Bible also claims that God has revealed Himself in two special ways.

Special Revelation: Jesus Christ

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

The gospel of John begins with talking about Jesus. Jesus is called “the Word.” We know that this passage is talking about Jesus because verse 14 clarifies it in this way:

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

During the next session, we will discuss who God says He is in the Bible (His Word). It may be a difficult topic to consider, but for now we need to understand that the biblical claim is that God has come physically among us in a special way through Jesus Christ. This is another claim of God's revelation of Himself to us. Notice how the first verse of John says clearly that the "word" was God and in verse 14 how the "Word" became flesh (i.e., a human being).

Philippians 2:5–7 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

- If the biblical claim is that Jesus is in fact God in human form, and every part of the Bible directly or indirectly points toward Jesus Christ, would you consider that the Bible is a relevant document? Why?

Special Revelation: The Bible

THE BIBLE CLAIMS ONLY GOD'S AUTHORITY

2 Peter 1:19–21 And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

- These verses make pointed comments about the Scriptures (the Bible) in relation to interpretation, will, and inspiration. What does this passage say about the prophecies found in the Bible?

Since the Bible is to be considered truthful, authoritative, and reliable, you would expect that it came from the God who is the source of truth and authority—not from man. The words of Scripture are actually from God totally, with man as His writing instruments. This is a logical conclusion if this book claims to be God's Word and revelation to humanity.

Not only this, but if God's Word is to reveal Himself to man, you would expect it to have great purpose.

Is the Bible Relevant?

2 Timothy
3:15–17

and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

- According to these verses, why was the Bible written?

POINTS TO CONSIDER

- ∞ Only God can be a fit witness concerning Himself.
- ∞ General revelation can turn us toward God.
- ∞ Only special revelation through Jesus Christ and the Bible can give us the message of salvation.
- ∞ If God is the perfection of truth, He can be trusted.
- ∞ If mankind is limited or corrupted, we will struggle with truth.

THREE DESCRIPTIVE WORDS ABOUT THE BIBLE

God's Word is:

- ∞ **Infallible:** it is totally trustworthy and will not mislead.
- ∞ **Inerrant:** it is free from error (as originally written).
- ∞ **Authoritative:** in every matter it deals with, it is the sole (or ultimate) authority.

If there is an all powerful Creator, wouldn't you expect these things to be true about His written revelation to us? Would you also expect these things to be testable?

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE REVEALS GOD'S CHARACTER

1. Written over the course of 1,500 years (God is timeless)
2. Written by more than forty authors from every walk of life: kings, military leaders, poets, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, musicians, tax collectors, shepherds (God rules over all)

3. Written in different places: jail cells, palaces, dungeons, in exile, hillsides, while traveling (God is everywhere)
4. Written in different moods: joy, despair, conviction, certainty, confusion, tribulation (God is an emotional being)
5. Written in three languages: Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic (God communicates and reveals)
6. Presents hundreds of controversial subjects with complete harmony (God is truthful and noncontradictory)
7. Presents one universal unfolding story of God's redemption of humanity (God saves)
8. Contains predictive prophecy that has been accurately fulfilled (God is in control)
9. Written in different styles: historical narrative, letters, poetry, song, biography, law, prophecy (God is creative)

Understanding that God has revealed Himself to us is the first step toward establishing a firm foundation for our faith. A Christian should have an axiom (or presupposition or basis) that God's revealed Word is the sole and total authority. We can choose to see the world through God's perspective or our own.

Accepting and understanding the whole teaching of Scripture is akin to putting on a pair of glasses to help us to see the world better. When we embrace biblical teaching and understand how it applies to the world around us, we have a biblical worldview. Over the next five weeks, we will see how a biblical worldview improves the way we view our lives. Since the Bible is God's Word, everything we learn will be taught from this book and tested for trustworthiness. Since this book is the trustworthy, revealed Word of God, it is totally relevant for every human being of every age.

Further Reading

The New Answers Book, chapters 1 and 25

Nothing But the Truth by Brian Edwards

www.answersingenesis.org/go/bible

Conclusion

In 1632 the Italian scientist Galileo published a book in which he supported the view of Copernicus a century earlier that the earth is round and that the sun is the center of our solar system. The church authorities disagreed and his book was banned. Galileo was forced to renounce his views under threat of death by the infamous Inquisition. In fact Galileo was right and he knew he was right; merely declaring him to be in error and forcing him to change his views altered nothing of the truth. Today any school children who learn about Galileo know what the great mathematician and astronomer really believed.

Is the Bible Relevant?

In the same way we cannot read the Bible honestly without coming to the conclusion that what it claims for itself is an authority that allows nothing higher. No other writings, no other documents, and the views of no other teachers or philosophers are ever referred to in the Bible as carrying the same authority. Some of our great philosophers and religious leaders were alive in Bible times, including Plato, who was born 400 years before Christ, and Gautama the founder of Buddhism, who was born a century before Plato, but they are never mentioned and certainly never quoted in Scripture. To the human writers of the Bible, both in the old and new testaments, there is only one authoritative Scripture.

Like the authorities in Italy who punished Galileo for telling the truth, critics may not like what the Bible says about itself, they may even consider it to be wrong. But what they must never do is to pretend that it does not claim such a clear authority for itself. We may twist its words and change its meaning but, like the views of Galileo, the whole world will know what the Bible really teaches about itself. Willful unbelief, ignorance, or fear of accepting the claims of the Bible can never change the truth of them. (Brian Edwards, *Nothing But the Truth* (Evangelical Press, 2006), pp. 114–115)

Video Close

In this first session you have considered the following.

- ⌘ Having faith in what we cannot prove still requires a logical basis. For the Christian, having faith in Jesus Christ does not require that we leave our intellect at the door.
- ⌘ Faith is *the assurance of the heart in the adequacy of the evidence*.
- ⌘ Since God exists and is the reason and source for all that exists, it is reasonable to expect that He would in some way reveal Himself to us.
- ⌘ The Bible claims to be God's written revelation to man and indicates that God has revealed Himself to us through such things as creation, morality, religious sense, the written word (the Bible), and Jesus Christ.
- ⌘ The Bible claims to be authoritative, reliable truth from God.
- ⌘ The Bible claims to be breathed out by God through the writers.
- ⌘ The Bible claims to be inerrant.
- ⌘ The Bible claims to have no higher authority: From God.

Bottom Line: The Bible claims to be an authentic and accurate message from the Creator, and it actually reads like one. The onus, therefore, is on its critics to prove otherwise.



2 WHO DOES GOD say He is?

What did we learn last week about the Bible being God's revelation?

Video Introduction

Most people have an opinion about who God is (i.e., what He is like) and if He exists at all. Some base their opinion on what their parents told them; others have had their opinion formed through their ethnic community; still others have formed an opinion based on their personal experience. For the Christian who accepts the Bible as the true and authoritative Word of God, the Bible itself needs to shape our idea of who God is.

The Bible describes for us who God really is. However, the descriptions given are limited. All the books in the world couldn't contain a complete description of God—He is simply unfathomable and, in some ways, difficult for us to understand because there is no other being exactly like Him. We need to keep in mind that we are not the Creator but the created. Our finite minds cannot fully comprehend Him. But we have a responsibility to understand what He has revealed about Himself in His Word.

If we could truly and completely comprehend all that there is about the Creator, this would show that He is limited just like us. When we jump to our own conclusions about who we think God is, we are simply trying to understand the incomprehensible in human terms. This simply doesn't work.

Only God can be a fit witness about Himself. Therefore, as His revealed Word, the Bible is relevant as the only source of authority. As has been stated before, it is not up to us to prove the truth of Bible. The Bible claims to be the authoritative Word of God, full of truth. The onus is on the reader to show that it is otherwise.

Discussion

- What have you heard from others about who God is?
- Discuss the logic of “only God can be a fit witness concerning Himself.”
- How can anyone who doesn’t know God tell us who He is or what He is like?
- What limits our capacity to be our own witness concerning God?

In this session, we are going to allow God to be God. We are going to accept that the Bible is what it claims to be—His Word—and consider what He says about Himself.

Who is God?

God is Spirit

John 4:24	God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.
1 Timothy 6:16	who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

- How do these verses answer people who want to actually see God to believe in Him?

God is Personal

In what ways do these verses show that God is a personal God?

Genesis 1:26–27 Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 3:8–9 And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”

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

John 14:9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Phillip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”

God is Infinite and Perfect (Holy)

2 Samuel 22:31 As for God, His way is perfect;
The word of the Lord is proven;
He is a shield to all who trust in Him.

Psalms 147:5 Great is our Lord, and mighty in power;
His understanding is infinite.

- What concepts about God are impossible for humans to fully understand in these verses?
- How can the imperfect and limited really understand perfection in the unlimited?

Names of God

God reveals Himself to us through the different names given to Him in the Bible.

- ∞ El and Elohim: strong and mighty; to be feared
- ∞ Elyon: Most high; object of reverence and worship
- ∞ Adonai: Lord; the possessor and ruler of all men
- ∞ Shaddai: Stresses the divine greatness, but source of comfort and blessing for His people.
- ∞ Jehovah (Yahweh): greatest name for God; held sacred by the Jews

Exodus 3:13–16 Then Moses said to God, “Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?”

And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”

Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.’

Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them, ‘The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, “I have surely visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt.”’”

- God describes Himself as I AM. What does this teach us about His presence, power, or knowledge?

God's Attributes

If God is truly the infinite Creator, we would expect that He would have attributes that are not common, or shared, with us, His limited creation.

Unique attributes

These are attributes that God does not share with humans because God is not a human.

INDEPENDENCE

Isaiah 40:13–14 Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, or as His counselor has taught Him? With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, and showed Him the way of understanding?

- How does this verse describe God as being independent?

We would expect that the Creator would be independent of His creation.

IMMUTABILITY (*UNCHANGING*)

Psalm 102:26–27 They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak you will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end.

- According to these verses, how is God different from us?

INFINITE

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Revelation 1:8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

There can be only one of two possibilities concerning the origin of all things: either matter pre-existed eternally and formed itself into our universe or the eternal Creator created everything.

- Which one do these verses point to as the answer?

TIMELESS

Psalm 90:2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

- Why is timelessness impossible for human beings to comprehend?

Who Does God Say He Is?

Shared Attributes

These are attributes that God shares with humans because we are created in His image.

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, let Us make man in Our image

Note that mankind does not express these attributes in the unlimited way that God does. However we will recognize that each of these attributes is—in a limited form—visible in mankind.

WISDOM

Romans 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

GOODNESS

Psalms 145:8–9, 16 The Lord is gracious and full of compassion,
Slow to anger and great in mercy.
The Lord is good to all,
And His tender mercies are over all His works.
You open Your hand
And satisfy the desire of every living thing.

OTHER ATTRIBUTES

- ∞ Love—1 John 4:7
- ∞ Grace—Ephesians 1:6
- ∞ Mercy—Romans 15:9, Luke 1:78
- ∞ Patience—Romans 2:4
- ∞ Justice—Psalm 89:14
- How does it make you feel that this God who has amazing unique attributes has also made us in His image to reflect shared attributes?

According to the verses we have just read, God has both common and non-common attributes with man, and He is an eternal, timeless, unchanging God. This means that He has all of His attributes consistently at the same time without change forever.

The Trinity

Trinity is a word that is actually not used in the Bible. The church has used *trinity* to describe the concept that God has given us about Himself through His Word. While this word is not used in Scripture, the Bible very clearly describes God in this way. This section will also be another example of God who is outside the realm of His creation and beyond our limited understanding.

The doctrine of the trinity is unique to Christianity and the Bible. It teaches that God is one God in three persons. Although some have attempted to use various analogies to help convey the concept of the Trinity, all fall short of the goal. For example, they may compare the Trinity to water: water can take the form of ice, steam or liquid, yet all three are water. God is clearly described in the Bible as being one God yet being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: God in three persons.

God is One God

Ephesians 4:4–6	There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.
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Exodus 20: 3	You shall have no other gods before Me.
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The Trinity in the Old Testament

Genesis 1:26	Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”
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Genesis 11:7	Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech.
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- How do these verses identify that God has plurality in unity from the very beginning?

THE FATHER IS KNOWN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Isaiah 64:8	But now Oh Lord, You are our Father. We are the clay, and You our potter. And all we are the work of Your hand.
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Who Does God Say He Is?

THE SPIRIT IS SPOKEN OF AS A DISTINCT PERSON

Isaiah 63:10 But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit;
So He turned Himself against them as an enemy,
And He fought against them.

THE SON (JESUS) IS MENTIONED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Psalms 2:7–12 “I will declare the decree:
The LORD has said to Me,
‘You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You.
Ask of Me, and I will give You
The nations for Your inheritance,
And the ends of the earth for Your possession.
You shall break them with a rod of iron;
You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’”

Now therefore, be wise, O kings;
Be instructed, you judges of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear,
And rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry,
And you perish in the way,
When His wrath is kindled but a little.
Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.

The Lord speaks of His Son and in verses 11–12, “worship the Lord” is connected to “Do homage to the Son.”

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His
shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father,
the Prince of Peace.

- This verse is a prophecy about Jesus (He is the Son that will be born), and His deity is clear. How?

The clearest Old Testament reference to all three persons of the Godhead is found in Isaiah 48:12–16.

Isaiah 48:12–16 “Listen to Me, O Jacob,
And Israel, My called:
I am He, I am the First,
I am also the Last.
Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth,
And My right hand has stretched out the heavens;
When I call to them,
They stand up together.
“All of you, assemble yourselves, and hear!
Who among them has declared these things?
The LORD loves him;
He shall do His pleasure on Babylon,
And His arm shall be against the Chaldeans.
I, even I, have spoken;
Yes, I have called him,
I have brought him, and his way will prosper.
“Come near to Me, hear this:
I have not spoken in secret from the beginning;
From the time that it was, I was there.
And now the Lord GOD and His Spirit
Have sent Me.”

The Trinity in the New Testament

Matthew 28:19	Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
2 Corinthians 13:14	The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

THE FATHER

John 5:19	Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.
Ephesians 1:3, 17	Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. . . . that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.
Romans 15:6	that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
John 5:23	that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Who Does God Say He Is?

- This verse in particular directs us to give the same honor to the Son as we do the Father. What does this tell us about the relationship between Father and Son?

THE SON

John 5:17–18	But Jesus answered them, “My father has been working until now, and I have been working.” Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His father, making Himself equal with God.
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- The Jews were angry and understood that Jesus was making a particular point in His statement. What is the point they were angry about?

John 10:25–29	Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand.”
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- How could Jesus have authority to give eternal life?

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Galatians 4:6	And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”
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Romans 8:9	But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.
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Acts 1:8	But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.
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- What do these statements say about how God works in our lives through His Spirit?

Further Reading

From the *Westminster Confession of Faith*:

In the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit: the Father is of none, neither begotten, not proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.

1 John 5:7; Matthew 3:16–17, 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; John 1:14, 18; John 15:26; Galatians 4:6

Video Close

Accepting the God of Bible means that we allow Him to tell us who He is and that we don't presume to tell Him who He is.

Accepting that God exists means accepting that He would reveal Himself to us. If this revelation is from God and about God why would He lie about Himself? What purpose does this meet?

God is God: The Bible tells us that He has created us with some of His characteristics, but He also has characteristics that we don't share, such as immortality. Therefore, it stands to reason that we fall short of His brilliance. Understanding that we are limited means we are reliant on His revelation about Himself.

As mortal beings, we will struggle with understanding the immortal God. How can we fully understand what we cannot be ourselves?

God has revealed other things in His Word that we can understand and confirm, and this helps us have confidence in the things we can never understand.

Over the next three weeks, we will find out how the following are explained in the Bible: creation; sin, death, and suffering; prophecy fulfillment and Jesus Christ.

Who Does God Say He Is?



3 THE BIBLE & SCIENCE: IS IT CREDIBLE?

Video Introduction

So far in the series we have discussed two major issues: the relevance of the Bible, and who God is.

We might expect that if God exists, He would reveal Himself. One of the major ways God has revealed Himself is through the Bible. If the Bible is God's Word, then we must consider its claims of authority and sufficiency. Since the biblical claims are true, every word of Scripture is relevant to every human being, and its message must be the most important of all messages.

Since the Bible is God's revelation to us, we must allow our understanding of God to come from His revelation. Only God can be a true witness of Himself. It is impossible for human beings to completely understand God; in itself, this is a confirmation that He is God. We would not expect to understand all there is to know about an eternal being who is infinite in power, knowledge, and presence. We cannot understand the eternal, and we cannot understand the unlimited as we are mortal, limited beings.

According to the Bible, God is an unlimited, eternal, triune God. This is well beyond our understanding and requires faith. We accept this because the Bible reveals it to us and there are plenty of good reasons to trust the Bible, including fulfilled prophecies and (as we will consider in this session) that it makes sense of the world around us.

This session allows us to examine the credibility of the Bible in relation to the evidence we see in the world. This session is a simple overview of a few questions about origins; it is not designed to answer every question. We will focus on the fundamentals of science and the biblical explanation of origins.

This session may totally intrude on years of education and training you may have received. We ask that you give it time and truly investigate these issues with an openness to the truth. Feel free to continue to ask questions. Also, please give the session leader some latitude in answering questions. After all, we don't have all of the answers on mental record all of the time, but we will find that most questions can be adequately answered through the resources available to everyone today.

Discussion

What does the Bible say about origins?

Let's begin this study by considering the wonder of the creation account given in Scripture. We need to consider the act of creation in relation to the God who accomplished it.

Is this account of the origins of heaven and earth different from what you have previously known or have been taught? If so, in what ways? What stands out to you?

Isaiah 40:26 Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them [stars] all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing.

- What does this verse tell us about one of God's attributes in creation?

Psalms 90:2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting You are God.

- What does this verse tell us about God's existence before all matter?

Psalms 33:6-9 By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses. Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

- What does Psalm 33 tell us about *how* God created?
- From this verse, we can infer that God created all matter out of _____.

It may seem difficult to understand that *something* was created out of *nothing*. In his commentary on Genesis 1:1, Henry Morris explains the meaning of the Hebrew word *bara*, which means *to create*:

This is the remarkable word “Bara,” used always only of the work of God. Only God can create—that is, call into existence that which had no existence. He “calletth those things which be not as though they were” (Romans 4:17). “The worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do not appear” (Hebrews 11:3).

Men can “make” things or “form” things, but they cannot *create* things from nothing as God can. God also can “make” things and “form” things (Hebrew “asah” and “yatsah” respectively), and do so far more effectively and quickly than man can do. The work of making and forming consists of organizing already existing materials into more complex systems, whereas the act of creation¹ is that of speaking into existence something whose materials had no previous existence, except in the mind and power of God.

The use of the word “create” here in Genesis 1:1 informs us that at this point, the physical universe was spoken into existence by God. It had no existence prior to this primeval creative act of God. God alone is infinite and eternal. He also is omnipotent, so that it was possible for Him to call the universe into being. Although it is impossible for us to comprehend fully this concept of an eternal, self existing God, the only alternative is the concept of an eternal self existent universe; and this concept is also incomprehensible. Eternal God or eternal matter—that is the choice. (*The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1997), pp. 39–40)

- Every human being has to make a choice about the origin of all things. What is this choice?

As humans, we cannot fully comprehend the possibility of anything eternal. The concept of a self-existent eternal God is, however, consistent with the claims of Scripture that tell us that God created matter. Scripture at no point indicates matter existed prior to God’s first act of creation.

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

What sort of creation would you expect to see after God finished creating?

Genesis 1:31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

¹ To be clear, while *bara* (to create) is used in Genesis 1 to speak of creation *ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing, from no pre-existing materials), it doesn’t always mean that. Context determines when it does and when it doesn’t. For example, God created (*bara*) Adam and Eve in His image (Genesis 1:27), but later He tells us that He made them from pre-existing materials, dirt and a rib, respectively (Genesis 2:7 and 2:21–22). For further discussion on the use of *bara* (to create), *asah* (to make), and *yatsar* (to form) in relation to the creation week, see www.answersingenesis.org/articles/am/v2/n3/did-god-create-or-make.

- This description of the world seems to be at odds with the world we live in today. This apparent “discrepancy” will be dealt with in the next session. What inconsistencies do you see in today’s world, which was originally described by God as “very good”?
- Since God is the Creator of everything, how should we view our relationship to Him?

The Bible not only claims that God created out of nothing by speaking, but also tells us how long He took to complete it. Since God is Creator and the sole authority in life and history, we will read His Word and, without any form of outside influence, find out how it explains the evidence before us.

Days of Creation

A direct reading of Scripture, without any outside influence, clearly reveals that the whole of creation occurred over a period of six normal-length days. In Genesis 1, note the use of a number and the words *evening* and *morning* in conjunction with the word *day*.

- Which meaning for the word *day* is this pattern consistent with and why?

Day: a generational time period (for example, “back in my father’s *day*”)

Day: the daylight portion of a day (“during the *day*”)

Day: a normal 24 hour day (“three *days* ago”)

We can see that biblical creation is instantly at odds with the evolutionary / “millions of years” explanation of origins. If everything was created in six days, then mankind was created on the same day (Day 6) as land animals, such as apes and dinosaurs. And the stars and sun were created *after* the earth. Both biological evolution and the big bang idea are not consistent with a direct reading of Genesis. So, how does the Bible explain the “evidence”?

Do the Bible and Science Conflict?

What is science?

Science is the systematic study of some aspect of the physical world (using our five senses) in order to gain a true understanding of the world.

Two Types of Science

Operational (observable, repeatable) science: A systematic approach to understanding that uses observable, testable, repeatable, and falsifiable experimentation to understand how nature commonly behaves.

Example: Testing chemical reactions in a laboratory.

- What are some other examples of operational science?

Historical (origins) science: interpreting evidence found in the present left by past event(s) to reconstruct the historical event(s).

Examples: Police trying to figure out how a person died (naturally or by murder or suicide), figuring out how and when the Grand Canyon was formed or how and when fossils formed.

- What are some other examples of historical science?

Molecules-to-man evolution is the idea that “all life on earth has come about through descent with modification from a single common ancestor (a hypothetical primitive single-celled organism).”

- Is this an example of historical or operational science?

The Bible also offers an explanation of how all things have come to be: the original organisms were created supernaturally by God as described in Genesis 1.

- Is this an example of historical or operational science?

Both evolutionists and creationists have an explanation of the past that is historical science. They look at the same evidence but come up with different interpretations (reconstructions) of the past. The difference comes from their starting assumptions, or presuppositions.

Two Main and Opposing Presuppositions

1. The Bible provides a reliable record of the key events in history that have contributed to making the world the way it is today, and man by himself cannot reconstruct an accurate history of the world.
2. The Bible is not reliable, and man can and must determine what happened in the past on his own.

From a biblical perspective, the earth is relatively young (approximately 6,000 years old).

Approximately how long has it been since Jesus Christ was born?

Luke 3:23–38 shows a list of men (genealogies) in the line from Adam to Christ. Many of the ages of these men are given in the Bible (for example, Adam was 130 when he fathered Seth, Genesis 5:3). When these ages are added together, and certain other time frames are taken into account, we realize that the time from Adam to Christ was around 4,000 years. When added to the 2,000 years that have passed since the time of Christ until today, we realize that the earth (and universe) is around 6,000 years old. (For more on the calculations involved, see www.answersingenesis.org/go/ussheer.)

This, of course, seems to fly in the face of all the “scientific evidence.” However, we need to keep in mind the difference between historical and operational science. Along with this, we need to realize that the “evidence” (e.g., fossils, stars, rocks) exists in the present. When we dig up a fossil with our hands, we dig it in up in the present. The evidence itself cannot tell how old it is; therefore our determinations of the age of evidence will heavily depend on our presuppositions. Each of the areas of science that follow will be looked at based on one simple presupposition—the Bible is a reliable historical account. If it is not, the evidence will not support it as a credible source.

Biology

Evidence: diversity among animal and plants

According to Genesis 1, God created animals and plants each according to their kind. From this, we can gather that the various kinds of animals and plants are to reproduce according to their *kind*.

Do we find each kind of animal reproducing after its own kind today? Yes. Dogs produce dogs; cats produce cats. We observe much variation within each kind (for example, poodles, Great Danes, and wolves showcase the variety in the dog kind). However, we do not see plants and animals changing from one kind into another.

DNA is the basic model of hereditary information, which serves as a code for the production of proteins and is common to all living organisms. Human DNA contains a different set of information than, for example, dog DNA.

Molecules-to-man evolution requires that the information content of a genome increase over time. However, observational science has shown that there is no known mechanism that serves to increase genetic information. Both mutation and natural selection (alleged mechanisms for evolution) operate on pre-existing genetic information and do not bring about brand new genetic information. This means, for example, that a lizard cannot, on its own, develop the information needed to grow feathers.

To think otherwise is to assume that what currently does not happen in the present actually did happen in the past.

- Does the biblical account of “after its kind” explain what we see happening among the animal and plant kingdoms?

Natural selection is often touted as “evolution in action.” And the formation of a new species is claimed as proof that evolution happens. Mutation is said to be one of the mechanisms of evolution. However, each of these processes actually operates in the opposite direction from what molecules-to-man evolution requires.

Geology

Evidence: Rock layers and fossils

- Do rock layers and fossils exist in the past or present?
- Does the Bible indicate any event that could account for large rock layers and an extensive fossil record?

Genesis 7:18 and the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all of the high hills (mountains) under the whole heaven were covered.

- What does Genesis 7:18 teach about the extent of the Flood?
- Some people think the Flood was a relatively calm event. What in this passage would indicate whether that understanding is correct?
- What would you expect the results to be of torrents of water flowing and erupting across the entire globe?

Anthropology (People Groups)

Anthropology is the systematic study of the characteristics of humans through history.

Evidence: Different people groups, with different physical and cultural characteristics.

Genesis 10–11 provides us with the historical account of formation of people groups and the Tower of Babel incident. After the Flood, God told Noah and his family (the only human survivors of the global Flood) to fill the earth. However, as people do, they disobeyed. And because of the rebellious pride of humanity, God supernaturally brought into existence many languages to divide the people who had previously all shared a common language. This happened around 4,200 years ago.

- What impact would a sudden multiplicity of languages have on a culture that traditionally spoke the same language? What would be the first thing you would do if it happened to you?

After the confusion at Babel, the family groups began to move away from each other to various parts of the world. Over time, physical characteristics among the groups became more pronounced. Science has shown, however, that the genetic difference between humans is miniscule. The differences really are only skin deep.

Of course, we would expect that each family group took with it the knowledge it had of the beginning of all things and the great Flood. This explains why we find many creation and flood legends around the world.

The Bible explains the evidence found in the field of anthropology.

Astronomy (space, stars, planets, etc.)

Evidence: A spherical earth floating in space

Over the years, the church has been blamed for being the proponents of the flat earth idea. In more modern times, through technological advancements, humans have been able to witness that the earth is round, that it actually floats in space, and that clusters of galaxies seem to move away from all other clusters, indicating an expanding universe.

Is it possible that the Bible could have given us this understanding from the beginning?

Isaiah 40:22 (a) It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers

Job 26:10 He drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters

- These two verses indicate that the earth is a _____.

Job 26:7 He stretches out the north over empty space, He hangs the earth on nothing

- This verse indicates that the earth is actually floating in space and hung on _____.

Isaiah 40:22(b) Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.

- This verse suggests that the heavens have been stretched and _____.

This seems to indicate that the universe is expanding.

There are many other examples where the evidence in our universe is explained by biblical statements.

A study of origins means that we are using historical science methods to determine what might have happened in the past. The major difference between evolutionary/long-age ideas and the Bible is the starting point. Christians should start with the Bible and the assumption that the God who wrote it would give us a correct account of history. Evolutionists have no such historical resource to consider (since they reject the Bible); therefore, their presuppositions do not include the supernatural work of an all-powerful God. Since the historical statements of the Bible are from an all-powerful God who has revealed Himself to us, and since these historical statements explain the evidence that is available to all of us, there is credible reason to have faith in the things of this God that we do not understand. We also have to accept that none of us was there in the beginning. Only God was there.

We have to ask ourselves the major question that God asks Job.

Job 38:4 Where were you . . . ?

Were evolutionary scientists around in the beginning or during the supposed millions of years?

Is it possible to prove that the statements of historical science are true?

Having the starting point that the Bible is credible when it comes to science helps us understand the answers to other hard questions.

- ⌘ Where did Cain get his wife?
- ⌘ What about natural selection?
- ⌘ What about carbon dating?
- ⌘ What about dinosaurs?
- ⌘ How did the animals fit on the Ark?
- ⌘ What about all of the scientists who accept evolution / millions-of-years ideas?

Video Close

There is so much to learn on this topic, and we have only touched on a little bit of it.

If God really did reveal Himself to us, and if He really is the all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-present God, and if He really is the Creator, the ramifications for us are great. There is a response that is necessary, and that response must be our sincere motivation to know and honor Him. There is, however, one thing that has stopped us from doing this. It has affected not only our ability to know God, but also our ability to accept the truth of His greatness. It is also the reason we are living in a world that is much less than acceptable to a God who created everything “very good” to start with. Next week we will discover why this contradiction exists.



4

WHY IS THERE DEATH & SUFFERING IN THE WORLD?

Video Introduction

According to the Bible, when God had finished creating, He pronounced His handiwork “very good” (Genesis 1:31). As we look around at creation today we see something much less than “very good.” We see a fossil record of death, we see pain, we see suffering, we see natural disasters like tornadoes and earthquakes, we see people taking advantage of others, we see animals killing each other and humans doing the same thing. How could this evidence comply with a perfect creation in any way? This leads most in the world to ask the questions: Why is there death and suffering? How could a loving God allow pain and death? Did God make a world with natural disasters that would destroy plants, animals, and people?

This session is all about bad news. Nobody enjoys hearing bad news, and nobody particularly enjoys hearing bad news that impacts all of us individually. While humanity has to agree that we are all less than perfect, we don’t like to admit what makes us this way. Why are we less than perfect—or more accurately, far less than perfect and rather selfish and mean in so many ways? Why do we have an inbuilt system that gives us the ability to reject authority? Think about it: from the earliest age, one of our first words ever spoken is *no*. Why?

There is something wrong with this world, but in considering this we have to ask if there is also something wrong with us. The transparent and brutal truth about humanity and the consequences for what we have done are going to be openly discussed from biblical teaching. Be prepared for some tough truth, but I urge you to respond not through depression or even anger but through an active search for God’s remedy.

Discussion

The Condition of Humanity

What is man?

Matt 10:28	And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
Acts 7:59	And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

- These verses say that there are basically two aspects to mankind’s make-up. What are they?

How was mankind originally made?

Genesis 1:31	Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.
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- Mankind was part of the creation on the sixth day. What does this verse tell us about mankind as originally created?

1 Corinthians 15:26	The last enemy [of mankind] that will be destroyed is death.
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- How does this verse describe death in respect to mankind?
- How does death therefore correlate with a “very good” human being?

God created and was satisfied that His creation was very good. Humans were part of that creation. Death (and its accompanying struggle, sickness, and suffering) is considered an “enemy.” It is not good and does not correlate with a good creation. The Bible even indicates that death is an enemy of man. Something is not right.

What were we to do in the garden?

Genesis 2:15–17 Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

- This passage indicates that man was created to live in perfect and willing obedience to God and to live forever, if he remained obedient to Him. What phrase in this verse indicates that man had a choice to obey His Creator?

How is mankind different from the animals?

Genesis 1:26 Then God said, “Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

- In what ways was humanity created differently from the animals?

Why is mankind no longer perfect?

Genesis 3:6–7 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

This is the account of man’s sin.

Sin is disobedience to God’s commands. Sin is a willing rejection of God’s authority for our own. Sin immediately changed the nature of everything in the world. The entire creation was no longer perfect because of this one tragic act of disobedience.

- From previous passages we have read, what was one of the main consequences of sin?

Why Is There Death & Suffering in the World

In the following verses, identify the different aspects of death indicated below.

1. Physical (death of the physical body)
2. Spiritual (separation from God)
3. Universal (all mankind will die)
4. Ongoing judgment after death

Genesis 3:19	In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.
Genesis 3:22–23	Then the Lord God said, “Behold the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken.
Romans 6:23	For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 3:10–12	As it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.”

The fact that we don’t even seek after God is an evidence of being dead spiritually.

Romans 5:12	Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.
Hebrews 9:27	And as it is appointed for men to die once—but after this the judgment.
Matthew 25:46	And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.

These verses have shown why human beings have the problems that we do. Because of sin we have death, and along with that, pain, suffering, and disease. We are no longer perfect because our first two parents sinned. Imperfect people cannot have perfect children. Every human being is born outside of the realm of what God intended for us to be. Sin has affected every human being from birth. The entire human race is guilty because the entire human race sinned against God in the Garden of Eden (through Adam, the representative head of the human race). We also all frequently rebel against God’s commands, just like Adam did.

Romans 3:23	for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
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This verse indicates that only those living in God’s glory are without sin, but all have fallen short of that through sin. We were created to reflect the glory of our Creator. By rejecting His Kingship for our own, we attempted to replace God’s glory with our own. This verse indicates that all of us are in the same boat. We are all subject to His response

to our sin.

In previous discussions we have found that the Bible says that God's character is both merciful and just. It would be reasonable to expect to see both aspects in His response to our sin.

Consider some of God's possible responses to sin and consider how this would align with God's character being both merciful and just.

Could God have

1. Wiped us out? Not merciful
2. Not worried about it? Not just
3. Dealt with it justly but provided opportunity for reconciliation? Just and merciful

Romans 8:20–22 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

- What evidence from the world today do you see that is explained by this passage?

These things came into the creation when man sinned. Genesis 3:14–19 shows that the animals were cursed, Adam and Eve's bodies were changed in some ways, and the ground was cursed (producing, among other things, thorns for the first time). This fact of the curse was remembered 1,100 years later by Noah's father (Genesis 5:29).

- Suffering, death, and tragedy are evident today. Those who do not accept the Bible as a historical record form their own interpretations of history. What are common statements about death and suffering?
- How is the death and suffering in the world today explained by what we read in the historical account of the Bible?

Much of the hurt that we experience we bring upon ourselves and others as a result of sin. Take,

Why Is There Death & Suffering in the World

for instance, the tragedy of war. Where does it come from?

James 4:1	Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members?
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- What does this verse say about how sin works in our lives today?
- Sin has enormous ramifications in society. To keep our evil nature in control, society requires a strong justice system. Why is justice in society important?

God is just and He must punish sin. We hear much more about the love and mercy of God than about God's justice and wrath. Yet in the Bible all of these are given much attention as attributes of God's eternal character.

Most people who understand basic Christianity easily accept that God shows His everlasting love, grace, and mercy by saving people and allowing them to live forever with Him in heaven. However, we must also accept that the same eternal God who saves some people forever in heaven also punishes other people forever in a place of eternal judgment. This is often referred to in the Bible as Hell or Hades. We will now look at some aspects of this eternal judgment.

What does the Bible clearly point out about God's eternal judgment on sin?

Luke 12:4-5	And I say to you , My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more they can do. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him who, after He has killed, has power to cast into hell; yes, I say to you, fear Him!
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2 Peter 2:4-9	For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)- then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.
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Matt 25:46	And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.
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Mankind is left in a desperate situation as a result of our sin. Our world is groaning and natural

disasters happen constantly. We face disease, suffering, wars, and death. After death we face the judgment of an eternally and perfectly just God. But in the ultimate act of grace and mercy, God has willingly dealt with His own wrathful judgment on us when He made Jesus to be a sacrifice to atone for His wrath on sin.

Romans 5:8	But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Isaiah 53:4–7	Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.
1 John 4:10	In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation [sacrifice taking the full brunt of wrath] for our sins.

- What do these verses tell us about how God has dealt with His own judgment?

While we will look at this in next week's study in detail, for now we can note God has provided a substitute to bear the penalty of His judgment. This substitute has accepted and taken the full brunt of God's wrath. But how do we access this substitution for God's wrath to be put in our place? How do we correctly respond to this amazing sacrifice that has been made on our behalf? Jesus Christ is the only answer. How do we know Jesus is real? How do we know His message is true? How can we be sure He can truly take this wrath for us?

If Jesus Christ truly dealt with sin, He would need to be different from us, since all of us have "sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

- In what ways do you think a substitutionary sacrifice for our punishment would have to be different from us?

During the past sessions, we have studied the credibility of the Bible in several areas.

1. God's revelations in the world and through His Word are consistent. (Session 1)
2. Only God can be a fit witness concerning Himself, and His message about Himself is consistent. (Session 2)

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3. The Bible explains the origin of all things and provides a logical explanation for the physical evidence. (Session 3)
4. The Bible explains the origin of death and suffering is the result of man's sin. (Session 4)

During the next session, we will discuss Jesus Christ. No normal sinful man could possibly be a fit substitute for us in taking God's judgment. Next week we will look carefully at Jesus and see if there is any credibility to the account of His life and His ability to be the perfect sacrifice for judgment in our place.

Further Reading

www.answersingenesis.org/go/curse

How Could a Loving God . . . ? by Ken Ham

The New Answers Book, chapter 26

Conclusion

Excerpt from *How Could a Loving God . . . ?* (Ken Ham, Master Books, 2006, p. 10)

Humanity is always looking for someone else to blame and it seems that it may as well be God. Do you notice though that the blame is always laid before a “loving God”? How could a loving God . . . If your God is a God of love . . .

Before we read this book, I think it is important to consider the God we dare to blame.

Paul writing to Timothy describes God in 1 Timothy 1:17: “*Now to the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, the only God be honor and glory for ever and ever.*”

Or consider Psalm 102:27: “*But you remain the same and your years will never end.*”

Job 26:14b says, “*Who then can understand the thunder of His power?*”

Romans 11:33 “*Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out.*”

1 Timothy 6:16 “*who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To Him be honor and might forever. Amen.*”

These are just a few verses that tell us that the God we dare to blame is eternal, immortal, invisible, glorified forever, has thunderous power, riches of knowledge and wisdom, is unsearchable in His judgments, is beyond our imitation, lives in unapproachable light and will have honor and might forever. Perhaps we better have very good reason for playing this blame game. Perhaps we should think very carefully before shaking our finite fists at the infinite Creator.

Video Close

In this session we have considered the following points:

- ⌘ Mankind was created with both a physical and spiritual essence.
- ⌘ Mankind was made perfect and seen as being good by a perfect God.
- ⌘ Death and suffering are not consistent with a perfect world.
- ⌘ Man was created to reflect God's glory in obedience.
- ⌘ We have all rejected God's rule for our own rule—this is called sin.
- ⌘ God is eternally just and merciful.
- ⌘ The predetermined result of man's sin is death, and death and suffering today are the direct results of this.
- ⌘ Death is both spiritual and physical as it relates to God's judgment.
- ⌘ After death we will face God in judgment, which will have eternal consequences.
- ⌘ God has graciously provided a substitute for us so we don't have to face His judgment.

Bottom Line: Sin has put a barrier between us and God who is perfect. We, as created beings, cannot save ourselves from this situation. Everyone is born in sin, and everyone sins every day. There is no escape except through the way that God has provided.

Next week we learn more about Jesus and the wonder of what He did for us.



5

WHAT IS SO IMPORTANT ABOUT JESUS?

Video Introduction

Human history in relation to God is not positive. The death and suffering we see in the world is a direct result of man's disobedience to God. We have seen that this disobedience is called sin, and all human beings have inherited from Adam this propensity to rebel against the Creator. And we choose to sin, just as he did. We live in a sinful world, and we are part of it. We are also subject to the wrath of an eternal, unlimited God.

This session reveals God's action to save us from His own wrath. This is Jesus. The most important decision anyone can make is to receive or deny Jesus Christ.

In this session we will look at an overview of who Jesus is, the evidence that Jesus existed, and what He did. We will be assessing the difference between knowing *about* Jesus and actually *knowing* Jesus. There is an everlasting difference between the two.

Before we attempt to answer the above question, we need to look at the evidence for Jesus's existence. Is there sufficient evidence to believe that Jesus really did exist?

This is a very important question. As none of us were around in the time of Jesus, we have a choice of trusting others' beliefs before us or we can explore the evidence.

Discussion

- If Jesus Christ did exist, would you expect that such a prominent person would be written about in non-Christian historical records?
-
- ⌘ Josephus ben Mattathias (AD 37–100), Jewish historian. He wrote of the works and crucifixion of Jesus.
 - ⌘ Cornelius Tacitus (AD 55–120), Roman historian. He discussed the death of Christ and the existence of Christians in Rome.
 - ⌘ Lucian of Samosata (second century AD), a Greek Satirist. He spoke against Christ and the Christians and never assumed or argued that they were not real.
 - ⌘ Suetonius (first century AD), Roman historian. He spoke of how the Jews were expelled from Rome, as the Jews were making constant disturbances because of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.¹

Of course, the best evidence for Jesus Christ comes from the Bible itself.

The Bible is made up of the Old Testament (written between 1500 BC and 400 BC) and the New Testament (written between AD 44 and AD 96).

- Considering the above statement, what is significant about the Old Testament testifying about Jesus Christ?

The Dead Sea Scrolls confirm the existence and accuracy of the Old Testament prior to the birth of Christ.

The Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947. A shepherd boy named Muhammad stumbled across the scrolls (there were over 40,000 inscribed fragments) whilst searching for a lost goat. Archeologists have dated the scrolls to more than a century before Christ's birth. This not only shows that the Old Testament was written before the time of Christ, but it also qualified how accurate the copyists were, as there are very few discrepancies between these documents and the existing documents (the oldest documents we had before this find were written around AD 900, hence very few discrepancies over a 1,000 year period!).

None of the very few copying discrepancies had any bearing on the message of the Old Testament Scriptures.

If someone today stated, in writing, specific details of a particular event that would happen 20 years in the future, how would you react?

If documents from various authors who lived hundreds of years apart foretold different specific details about a particular person in the future, what would your reaction be?

What would your reaction be if all of these prophecies actually came true?

There are over 60 prophecies written in the Old Testament which Jesus fulfilled and which are documented in the New Testament.

We will look at *some* of the prophecies, as we do not have time to discuss them all.

Fulfilled Prophecy

Jesus's Birth

PROPHECY—OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.

- The Savior will come from the seed of _____.

FULFILLED—NEW TESTAMENT

Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.

PROPHECY—OLD TESTAMENT

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

- Why is it significant that Jesus is born of a virgin?

What Is So Important about Jesus?

FULFILLED—NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 1:23 “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated “God with us.”

PROPHECY—OLD TESTAMENT

Micah 5:2 But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the one to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.

- The Savior will come from _____.

FULFILLED—NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 2:1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem

The Nature and Ministry of Jesus

PROPHECY—OLD TESTAMENT

Isaiah 33:22 For the Lord is our Judge,
The Lord is our Lawgiver,
The Lord is our King; He will save us

- The Savior will have the authoritative nature of a _____.

FULFILLED—NEW TESTAMENT

John 5:30 I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.

PROPHECY—OLD TESTAMENT

Isaiah 11:2 The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

- Jesus would have a special anointing from the Holy _____.

FULFILLED—NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 3:16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

PROPHECY—OLD TESTAMENT

Isaiah 40:3 The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
“Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert
A highway for our God.”

- There will be a messenger who will _____.

FULFILLED—NEW TESTAMENT (about John the Baptist)

Luke 1:17 He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, “to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,” and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

PROPHECY—OLD TESTAMENT

Isaiah 35:5–6 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
Then the lame shall leap like a deer,
And the tongue of the dumb sing.
For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness,
And streams in the desert.

- Jesus would perform _____.

FULFILLED—NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 9:32–33, 35 As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, “It was never seen like this in Israel!”

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

There were also 29 prophecies fulfilled in one day. These included very specific prophecies:

- ⌘ His betrayal by a friend (Psalm 41:9; Matthew 10:4);
- ⌘ for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:15);
- ⌘ the betrayal money was thrown on the floor in the house of the Lord (Zechariah 11:13b; Matthew 27:5a);
- ⌘ the money was used to buy a potter’s field (Zechariah 11:13b; Matthew 27:7).

What Is So Important about Jesus?

Jesus's Crucifixion

PROPHECY—OLD TESTAMENT

Isaiah 50:6 I gave My back to those who struck Me,
And My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard;
I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.

- Jesus would be _____.

FULFILLED—NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew 26:67–68 Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, “Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?”

PROPHECY—OLD TESTAMENT

Psalms 22:16 For dogs have surrounded Me;
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.
They pierced My hands and My feet;

- Jesus's hands and feet would be _____.

FULFILLED—NEW TESTAMENT

Luke 23:33 And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

Other Old Testament prophecies fulfilled on the day of crucifixion:

- ⌘ He suffered thirst (Psalm 69:21; John 19:28)
- ⌘ His friends stood afar (Psalm 38:11; Luke 23:49)
- ⌘ He was hated without cause (Psalm 69:4; John 15:25)
- ⌘ His garments were divided and lots cast (Psalm 22:18; John 19:23–24)
- ⌘ He was offered gall and vinegar (Psalm 69:21; Matthew 27:34)
- ⌘ He committed Himself to God (Psalm 31:5; Luke 23:46)
- ⌘ His bones were not broken (Psalm 34:20; John 19:33)
- ⌘ His side was pierced (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:34)
- ⌘ Darkness fell over the land (Amos 8:9; Matthew 27:45)
- ⌘ He was buried in a rich man's tomb (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57–60)

The Resurrection

PROPHECY—OLD TESTAMENT

Psalm 16:10 For You will not leave My soul in Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

- Jesus would _____.

FULFILLED—NEW TESTAMENT

Acts 2:31 He, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

The Deity of Christ

Is Jesus revealed as God in the Old Testament?

Isaiah 9:6 For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

- Among other names, Jesus is called Mighty _____
and Everlasting _____.

Is Jesus revealed as God in the New Testament?

Romans 9:5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all,
the eternally blessed God. Amen.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

(John 1:14–18 reveals that the Word became a man, who is Jesus.)

- How does John 1:1 correlate to Genesis 1:1?

Jesus also reveals Himself as God in His actions and statements. He forgave sins, which is something only God has authority to do. He spoke authoritatively about salvation and judgment, He performed miracles, and He confirmed that if you have seen Jesus, you have seen the Father (John 14:6–9).

Was Jesus a Liar?

Matthew 20:18 Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death. [Jesus's own words]

- There was no personal gain for Jesus in dying on the cross. Some people might die for a great cause, but would they die for what they knew to be a lie?

Was Jesus a Lunatic?

Luke 1:1–4 Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eye witnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

Luke starts his gospel in this way and continues with his account of the life and ministry of Jesus, including the witness of many to His miracles. If many eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ (many of whom were writers of the New Testament books) all testify to His great credibility, even though He was a lunatic, then we must conclude that all of these people were fooled by a lunatic. But these eyewitnesses also testify to seeing His miracles and His resurrected body, and many of them died a martyr's death for that testimony. What does this say about the idea of Jesus being a lunatic?

- If Jesus was not lying, and if He was not crazy, what is the alternative?

The Importance of the Cross

- Is there a way to heaven other than by believing in and trusting in Jesus?

The way to make things right with God is through repentance of our sins and believing that the One who is without sin took the punishment that we deserve. Jesus is that sacrifice. He died on the cross to pay the penalty for mankind's sin.

Romans 5:18	Therefore, as through one man's offense, judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.
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In the Old Testament, the sacrifices without blemish pointed to the sinless Messiah Jesus.

Leviticus 22:19	you shall offer of your own free will a male without blemish from the cattle, from the sheep, or from the goats.
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1 Peter 2:22–24	“Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth”; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.
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Romans 6:23	For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
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Jesus came to earth to die for our sins and make us right with God, so He could accept us into heaven.

- What does this verse say about the gift of eternal life?

Did Jesus Really Deal With Sin Completely?

John 12:27 “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I came to this hour.”

Think about that! Jesus knew He was going to suffer the pain of being beaten, nailed to a cross, and hung in the sun until He could breathe no more. But He also knew that He would suffer for mankind’s sin.

Luke 22:44 And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

- How agonized was Jesus in taking the fullness of God’s wrath on sin upon Himself?

Which of these matters do you think caused Jesus real agony?

1. The coming physical pain of crucifixion
2. Taking on the wrath of God for the sin of the world

He died to be our Savior!

1 Peter 2:24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.

Therefore, Jesus dealt fully with our sins as He was a perfect sacrifice.

The Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:3–6 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.

Acts 1:9–11 Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

Without belief in the physical resurrection of Jesus, the Christian faith could not have come into being. The disciples would have remained crushed and defeated men. Even had they continued to remember Jesus as their beloved teacher, His crucifixion would have forever silenced any hopes of His being the Messiah. The cross would have remained the sad and shameful end of His career. The origin of Christianity therefore hinges on the belief of the early disciples that God had raised Jesus from the dead. (William Lane Craig, KTR, pp.116–117.)

If the resurrection is not a historic fact, then the power of death remains unbroken, and with it the effect of sin; and the significance of Christ's death remains meaningless, and accordingly believers are yet in their sins, precisely where they were before they heard of Jesus' name. (W. J. Sparrow-Simpson, cited in Hastings DCG: 514.)

In your own words, describe the importance of the Resurrection.

Jesus Predicted His Death and Resurrection

Matthew 12:38–40	Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."
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- Jesus predicted that He would rise after ____.

The Old Testament Predicted Jesus's Resurrection

Isaiah 26:19	Your dead shall live; Together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs, And the earth shall cast out the dead.
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There is only One Way to Salvation!

John 14:6	Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."
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- We must turn to God, away from our self-centered lifestyle, and allow Him to control and change our lives. Jesus says no one comes to Father except through Him. Does this verse indicate that there is any other way to be saved?
- Some people think that they can get into heaven by being good. From what you have learned so far, does the Bible teach this? Why or why not?

What Is So Important about Jesus?

We need to confess and express our faith in Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:9	that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.
Luke 5:31–32	Jesus answered and said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

Salvation comes through Jesus Christ alone. It comes through a confession of sin, and belief in Jesus Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection on our behalf. We need to be willing to live for Him and turn away from our sinful ways (repent).

Further Reading

www.answersingenesis.org/go/Jesus-Christ

New Evidence that Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell

More Than a Carpenter by Josh McDowell

Video Close

You have learned about Jesus Christ, the Savior and true God. Romans 10:9 says “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe with your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” The biggest question in life that I can possibly ask you is this: What are you doing about Jesus? Is He your Savior and Lord? If He is, your life has already changed. You are living for Him and seek to glorify Him for His wonderful saving work. A living faith in Jesus Christ is the only way you can be saved.

Salvation is not about anything you can do. None of us can save ourselves, and this is the most thrilling part of this message. If left to our own ability to save, we would be in a hopeless state. But God has not left us there. Jesus has done it all. He has taken our sin on His own shoulders and borne the full wrath that we deserve. Jesus has done it all. Salvation is a free gift from Jesus to all who will receive Him by faith. If you want to receive the free gift of eternal life through Christ, tell your leader now.

Further Reading about Jesus

Deity of Jesus

How do we know that Jesus was actually God?

There are only three reasonable explanations for Jesus. He is either a liar, a lunatic, or our LORD! Jesus can only be one of these three things.

If Jesus was a liar:

He was a hypocrite, as He told others not to lie.

He would have to be a demon to make others believe that they would go to heaven by believing in Him, when He would know that was not true.

It would not be very smart to die for a lie, especially if you had made up the whole story about heaven. All of the apostles would have also died for a lie, as most of them were martyrs. Yet not one of the apostles recanted on his death bed.

If Jesus was a lunatic (maybe He thought He was God but was mistaken):

From all accounts, He showed no imbalances or abnormalities in personality or the life that He led.

He also showed practical wisdom, was able to read human hearts, showed deep love and compassion, and had an ability to attract people.

He performed many miracles that were seen by others, not only by His followers but also by His enemies. His disciples would also have to be lunatics, for they died as martyrs for their faith.

If He is Lord:

This is the only other alternative. Logic brings us to this conclusion. Jesus must be either a liar, a lunatic, or Lord.

Since He is not a liar or a lunatic, then He must be Lord!

The resurrection proves that Jesus is who He claimed to be: the Messiah, the Son of God, the Lord (Romans 1:3–4).

Answering the Skeptics of the Resurrection

There are many skeptics of the Resurrection. Below are some thoughts (in response to some of those skeptics) you may need to consider in more depth.

- ✧ Jesus would have to be crazy to tell everyone He would rise after three days and then not! Everything now hinges on this and all credibility would be lost if He didn't.

It's remarkable how He predicted His resurrection, and therefore authenticated His claim to be the Messiah.

What Is So Important about Jesus?

⌘ We know more about the details of Jesus's death than any other person in history. Why?

⌘ Josephus (Jewish historian) wrote of Jesus's death and resurrection:

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him many Jews, and also many of the Greeks. This man was the Christ. And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross, upon his impeachment by the principal man among us, those who had loved him from the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive on the third day, the divine prophets having spoken these and thousands of other wonderful things about him. And even now, the race of Christians, so named from him, has not died out. (Josephus, AJ, 18.3.3.)

⌘ After Jesus's death, His followers were dejected; a short time later, they were elated. Why? How could we explain the change in their lives except by the fact of the bodily resurrection of Jesus?

⌘ What if Jesus wasn't dead when they took Him off the cross, and He then escaped from the tomb? Four executioners examined Him. Pilate required certification of His death. He was speared in the side on the cross. His friend Joseph took Him from the cross and prepared Him for burial according to the tradition of the Jews (wrapped the body in 100 pounds of linen and spices).

⌘ Did Jesus roll the stone away from the tomb entrance in his weakened and wounded condition? If so, how did Jesus get past the guard?

⌘ The church exists, but the first Christians were all Jews. How could Christianity, as a religion separate from Judaism, develop without a faith in the Resurrection?

⌘ Most importantly, no one can plausibly deny the historicity of the Resurrection.



6

DO YOU NEED TO GO TO CHURCH TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

Video Introduction

From being blamed for starting wars to perpetrating lies, the church has been criticized many times over the years. While certain individuals within the church have given cause for such criticism, neither the experiences of the past nor the ideas of tradition are acceptable for finding out what and who the church really is.

Only God's Word can tell us the purpose and practice of the church as He has instituted it and commanded it to be. In this session we will take the authoritative claims of Scripture and find out what the church is and how it is to behave. No other resource will give us an accurate picture of the biggest organization in the world today. Many people have received Christ as Savior but choose not to associate themselves with the local church as a community of believers. Does one *need* to go to church to be a Christian? Is it possible to be a saved believer and reject those who have also chosen to be in God's family? Only Scripture has the answer.

The Bible talks much about the gathering of God's people as a community of believers. There are many functions of the church and many purposes. We should start by looking at verses that describe the importance of the church.

Discussion

The Church

Organization

1 Corinthians 14:33, 40 For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.
Let all things be done decently and in order.

One of the roles of the church is to provide an organized way of building each other up in the faith. Why do you think it is important that Christians learn in an orderly fashion?

Do You Need to Go to Church to Be a Christian?

Fellowship/Edification

Hebrews 10:24–25 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Paul also says in 1 Corinthians 14:26 that when we come together as believers,

1 Corinthians 14:26 Let all things be done for edification . . .

As believers in Jesus Christ, we are called to meet regularly for the purpose of fellowship and edification, that is, building up each other in the Lord—encouraging, supporting, and challenging each other toward spiritual growth and maturity (see also Romans 14:19; 1 Corinthians 10:23, 14:1–26). The purpose of meeting is not just to worship God but also to stimulate one another to godliness for His glory. We cannot really grow properly in isolation from other Christians. We need each other to be all that God wants us to be as followers of Christ. We grow in community with other believers.

- Would it be possible to gauge your Christian growth, if you were not associating with other believers regularly?

Ephesians 4:15–16 but speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

- The above verses tell us that we are joined together in Christ and we should be a healthy body, meeting together regularly to encourage each other in our Christian lives in strong fellowship as Christians. From these verses, what benefits can you see in meeting with other believers?

Teaching

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

- In addition to celebrating the Lord's Supper (breaking of bread) and praying together, the church devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles about Jesus. The Bible claims that it is God's Word, so what prominence would you expect to see biblical teaching given in a church gathering?

Providing Opportunity to Serve

Ephesians 4:11–15 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man to the measure of the stature of fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into him who is the head—Christ.

Hebrews 6:10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

We are called to serve God's people (the saints) and to use our God-given talents to serve. The church provides us an opportunity to honor God in this way.

- Why do you think it would be important to use your talents in the service of God, if you are a Christian?

Spiritual Leadership and Protection

Titus 1:9 holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.

Acts 20:28 Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

- What do these verses say about the importance of good, biblical leadership in the local church?

The Ordinances Given by Jesus

Acts 2:42

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

The Lord Jesus gave the church two ordinances to help us remember what Jesus has done on our behalf. These include the taking of communion (1 Corinthians 11:17–34) and baptism (Matthew 28:18–20).

- Why do you think such reminders are important?

Correction

Titus 3:10–11

Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self condemned.

While the church is not to have a primary function of wielding a big stick, the church is responsible to protect the authenticity of the message of Jesus and the purity of the church. It must protect those who stray from God's path in order to keep unity in the church.

- Why do you think it is important that the church actually protect the message of Christ and the purity of the church?

Is it Possible to Follow Christ on Your Own?

The simple answer is *yes*. There is no scriptural passage which says that you must go to church to be saved or to be a “good Christian.” Salvation, as we have seen, is a gift given to those who repent and have faith in Christ alone. Only the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is sufficient for salvation, and He completed His saving work. Therefore it is possible to be a Christian and not go to church. However, such a Christian is disobedient for we have seen that Scripture

commands all believers to regularly fellowship with other believers under the teaching of God's Word with prayer and the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This regular fellowship has a very important function and purpose to help us grow and be faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ.

Consider these verses.

1 John 4:7	Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
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We are commanded to love each other as fellow believers.

Colossians 3:13	bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.
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We are commanded to bear with and forgive each other.

James 5:16	Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.
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We are commanded to help each other overcome sin and to pray for each other.

It is therefore impossible to be obedient to Christ in the above matters if we are rejecting others He has saved and never or seldom associate with them. We need them and they need us as brothers and sisters in God's family, the church.

1 Peter 5:8 also states another reason to be close to other believers.

1 Peter 5:8–9	Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.
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2 Corinthians 11:3	But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.
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- If the same Devil who tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden is also tempting us away from God today and seeking to destroy us, how will community and fellowship in the church help us in this battle?

After reading the following verses, describe how the church is used by God to fulfill His plan for this world.

Do You Need to Go to Church to Be a Christian?

Romans 10:13–15 For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.” How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!”

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

Many people have asked this question: If God saves us from sin in this world, why doesn’t He take us straight to heaven rather than leaving us in this sinful world?

In what ways do the following verses answer this question?

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

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Universal and Local

The church is comprised of millions of people all over the world who believe in Jesus and follow the teachings of His Word, the Bible. This is the “universal church.” If we all belong to the universal church, is there still a place for the local community church?

1 Corinthians 1:2 To the church of God which is at *Corinth*, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in *every place* call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. [emphasis added]

- To whom does Paul address this letter? How does this explain his view of the local and universal church?

The local church has been established from the very beginning.

The Future of the Church

While Christ has not taken us immediately to be with Him in heaven and while He is using us and equipping us to fulfill His purpose on earth, the church also has one major event to look forward to.

Titus 2:11–13	For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.
Romans 14:10b–12	For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: “As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.” So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.
2 Timothy 4:8	Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

These verses teach that Jesus will come again in great power and authority, and we will give an account of our lives. Those who have faith in Him eagerly await this day as He will judge them as having His righteousness in their lives.

The following section of Scripture tells us three very important points about the future return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:8–9	But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.
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- Why is Christ waiting to come?

Do You Need to Go to Church to Be a Christian?

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

- When and how will Christ come?

2 Peter 3:11–13 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

- How should we live until He comes again?

While going to church is not necessary for salvation, it certainly is part of God's plan. It is in the fellowship with God's people that we are to grow in our faith in and obedience to Christ. For the protection of the good news of salvation, the maturing of His followers, the encouragement of each other, and the consistent teaching from His Word, the church is an important and integral part of His plan. The church also is a beacon for the world, pointing mankind to Christ prior to His return. While God is patient, desiring that all would be saved, the church is on an urgent mission to reach the unsaved that they may be saved from His great judgment and enjoy an eternity of living in His glory. While it is possible to be saved and not regularly attend a local church, it is impossible to obey His call on our lives and disassociate ourselves from the local assembly of believers to whom He has given His instruction.

Further Reading

How to identify a good church to go to:

- ✧ God's Word is the standard for all beliefs and behaviors of the congregation and it is identified in practice.
- ✧ Prayer is encouraged and modeled.
- ✧ Fellowship of believers is promoted and expected.
- ✧ Preaching the gospel is encouraged and practiced.
- ✧ Public services are centered on honoring God and His Word and work.
- ✧ Opportunities are provided to serve using your God-given talents.

- ⌘ All age groups are provided for, and the church is located near you.
- ⌘ Strong leadership by godly, biblically-grounded men is given.
- ⌘ Financial integrity is promoted.
- ⌘ Membership behavior matches the beliefs of the church.
- ⌘ Teaching in no way compromises the six foundational truths you have learned in this course.
 - The Bible is the full and sole authority as God's Word.
 - God is one God in Three persons (the Trinity).
 - God created the heavens and earth out of nothing in six days, and it was originally a perfect creation.
 - In Adam, humanity sinned against God. The result was God's judgment of man and the rest of creation resulting in death and the judgment to come. We are in need of a Savior, as we are unable to save ourselves as sinners.
 - Jesus Christ is the perfect God-man, born of a virgin, who died on a cross as the substitutionary atonement for our sin. We receive salvation and reconciliation with God through repentance and faith in Jesus.
 - As His part of His church, we reflect His glory by encouraging each other and telling His news to the world while awaiting His return and final judgment.

Video Close

The church is a visible taste of heaven's community established on earth through Christ and waiting to be perfected in Him when He returns.

Being involved in a local church means being involved with sinful people because we are all struggling with sin in our lives and will not reach spiritual and moral perfection this side of heaven. But, it also means being involved with a family of believers who are saved in Jesus and have an eternal unity in Him alone.

The relationship between the Christian and the church is a bit like being married. It is possible for a married couple to live separately, but their marriage will not grow, and they are not respecting their marriage vows. The church is full of imperfect people who have acquired salvation and forgiveness through Jesus. It will remain this way until He comes. In the meantime, the church will also spread His message, enabling millions to access an eternity of wonder and glory in the presence of God.

