

Dear Friend,

We are so excited that you have chosen to participate in this important personal Bible study concerning the greatest subject that any person can learn about and experience - salvation! What does the word salvation mean? Generally it carries with it the idea of being “rescued”, just as a lifeguard or fireman would save a person from death. In the spiritual, biblical sense, it refers to being rescued from the wrath of God that justly comes on all mankind because of our sins against Him. Being “saved” is not only a very frequent subject in Scripture, but it is also every person’s greatest need.

This study is designed to take you through the “Seven Essentials of Salvation”, or in other words, seven great truths that each person must understand, believe, and act upon in order to be saved. They are called essentials because none of them can be left out or substituted without preventing a person’s salvation. Much like certain ingredients must be included for a recipe to turn out right, so all these parts in salvation have to be included for a sinner to properly understand and respond to the Gospel (“Good News”) of Jesus Christ and the work that He did to save us from our sins!

In a day when there are religious voices teaching all sorts of different ideas about God, truth, and a pathway to heaven, it’s necessary to find out what is the standard to determine life’s “ultimate questions”? Since every major religion in the world claims to teach the true way, but none of them teaches the same way, and all are in contradiction to each other, they cannot all be right. There must be absolute truth, and a way to find it. As it has been rightly said, “Eternity is too long to be wrong!” In the pages of this study, we will show why Christianity is not just another religious opinion, but why it is the only truth about our Creator, and how we can enter into a right relationship with Him.

This study is designed to be completed in seven weeks with the help of a teacher coming into your home weekly at an agreed upon time to go over the answers to each of the seven sections. The time with the teacher can also be used to answer other questions that may arise during your study. We recommend that you write down additional questions for discussion at each of the weekly meetings. If you would rather do this study on your own, without the help of a teacher coming to your home, that would be perfectly fine. We can offer to help you via email or phone if you have questions for discussion. The most important thing to us is that you receive these wonderful truths that can change your life! May God bless you with understanding as you study His plan of salvation from His only record of Himself, the Holy Bible!

Pastor & Membership
Arlington Baptist Temple

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Written by James R. Hamilton
Cover and Layout Design Kelly Ticzkus
Editing by Jerry Kaifetz and Holly Hestand
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Dedicated to the One who saved me and is
the “Author and Finisher of our Faith” –
Jesus Christ the Lord!

“I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.
He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my
feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many
shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.”

Psalm 40:1-3

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Foreword

From my earliest experiences in church ministry, especially in the area of evangelism, I have seen the need to present the Gospel in a more scriptural and thorough way. While I would never question the sincerity or intention of any Christian who's trying to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, I do have to test all men and ministries by the fruits of their work. Jesus said "ye shall know a man by his fruits" and I believe that that applies to methods, ministry, and the message that is being given out in His name.

In a day when many who say they are Christians, have little to no evidence to back that up, the answer is to return to the basic truths that establish what Christianity is, and how one becomes a Christian to begin with. These questions must be answered from God's only source of truth – the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The reason Christianity has such a weakening influence in America and around the world is that much of modern society has been misled about the "good news" concerning Jesus Christ and what He came to do!

It is imperative that Christians in the Lord's churches revive a "back to basics" approach in presenting the Gospel to the world! Mere professions, empty prayers, and ritualistic Sunday religion won't do, and are the results of the shallow preaching and easy-believism methods so rampant in Christendom today.

This study of the "7 Essentials of Salvation" is an attempt to declare the non-negotiable truths about God's greatest work and desire, which is to save men from the sins! After asking several different groups the question, "how many points (truths, ideas, etc.) must a person know, believe, and embrace (with more than a head knowledge) in order to be saved", I received various answers ranging from one to no more than three. When I then rebutted with "seven", most didn't understand why so many. Was I making salvation too hard, or purposely trying to confuse people with unnecessary elements in the Gospel message? I had people quote to me I Corinthians 15:3-4 telling me that the Gospel is only the "death, burial, and resurrection of Christ". But my reply was and continues to be – but who is Christ, how do we know about Him, and what must be our response to the truths that make up His Gospel? I'm convinced that not one of these seven essentials presented in this workbook can be left out and still have someone sincerely turn to the Christ of the Bible and be saved! Think of these essential truths as seven rungs on a ladder that must be climbed up in order to get to the top – leave one out and the ladder is no good!

May these life-changing truths from God to man, be used by Him to bring you into a full understanding of His Son Jesus Christ, and by doing so, to save your soul for all eternity!

Author

Outline

Essential #1 – Creation

- Creation is Foundational
- Creation is Scriptural
- Creation is Scientific

Essential #2 – Revelation

- It's Source
- It's Structure
- It's Sacredness
- It's Sufficiency
- It's Sureness

Essential #3 – Legislation

- The First Law
- The Universal Law

Essential # 4 – Condemnation

- The Basis for Condemnation
- The Declaration of Condemnation
- The Executing of Condemnation
- The Finality of Condemnation

Essential #5 – Redemption

- Defined: What it is
- Designed: How it is pictured
- Divine: Who would accomplish it
- Declared: How He did it

Essential #6 – Qualification

- Understanding the Principle
- Applying it to a Person
 - His Deity
 - His Humanity
 - His Perfect Life

Essential # 7 – Appropriation

- A Summary
- A Balanced Approach
- Man's Response
 - Repentance
 - Faith
- The Benefits

WEEK #1 – CREATION

The story of creation is not only the first subject that God brings up in His Word, the Bible; it is also the beginning of every person's understanding of God, and of the entire universe around them. Belief in creation by a Divine Creator establishes a proper world view to understand all of life's events and purposes.

CREATION IS FOUNDATIONAL (Genesis 1:1)

It's the first evidence of the existence of God. (Romans 1:20)

It answers man's first and most basic question of life, "where did I come from?" (Hebrews 11:3)

It makes people see their proper place in the world as creatures of the Creator, showing us that:

- We belong to our Creator; He owns us! (Psalm 24:1)
- We must give an account to our Creator; we will ultimately answer to Him. (Hebrews 9:27)
- We must accept the rules of the Creator. (Psalm 78:1)

Creation is the basis for salvation for when a person comes to understand and respect the fact of creation; it will lead them to know more of their Creator.

Accepting God as Creator is the starting point to submitting to Him as Lord and Savior. (Hebrews 11:6)

All people come into the world with an innate belief in a Creator; it's only after being trained to deny Him that many willfully choose to reject their Creator and seek out some man-made idea for the origin of life. (Romans 1:21-23 / Ecclesiastes 12:1)

Creation proves that there must be a God, but knowing just who that Creator is and how He created all things demands additional information from the Creator. The Creator had to give us a record of His creation since none of us were there when it happened. (Job 38:4, 33; 42:1)

That record is the very word of the Creator written down by the Creator's inspiration and preserved down through the ages in His book called the Bible! (Psalm 119:89-91)

CREATION IS SCRIPTURAL (Psalm 104:24)

God's record, the Bible, teaches many things about creation:

- All things were created by God. (Isaiah 42:5)
- All things were created out of nothing, simply by the all-powerful Word of God. (Hebrews 11:3 / Psalm 33:6-9)

- All things were created in six, literal, 24-hour days. (Exodus 20:11)
- All things are held in place and kept going by the continual power and care of God the Creator. (Hebrews 1:3)
- The creation was ruined by the sin of the first man and woman who were created by God. (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:6,16-19)
- All things in the world are moving towards decay and death. (Romans 8:22)
- Death passed upon all the descendants of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve. (Romans 5:12)

The Creator showed His disapproval of man's sins by bringing a world-wide flood that destroyed all living things but a small remnant of man and animals.

The flood came when God saw all the sins of man on the earth. (Genesis 6:5, 12)

Only one man and his family would be spared because they turned from the sins of their generation and trusted in the Lord, being saved from the flood by God's grace and mercy upon them. (Genesis 6:8)

The flood was universal covering all the earth and killing all but that remnant who were alive aboard the ark that God had directed them to build. (Genesis 7:18-23)

So the Bible teaches a perfect and beautiful world at the beginning, but that the creation was ruined by the disobedience of man, God's highest creation. All tragedy, sorrow, and death is not the fault of our all-loving Creator, but the fault of selfish, sinful man who refuses to live under the discipline and provision of that Creator.

CREATION IS SCIENTIFIC (I Timothy 6:20)

Perhaps the biggest lie told to people today is that creation is merely religion, but that evolution (the invention of atheistic men) is truly scientific. Sadly, people have made man's scientific knowledge their god despite the fact that man's theories and discoveries change with every passing generation, and thus cannot be trusted to determine ultimate truth.

Evolution is nothing but an empty theory that tries to explain the origins of life apart from a Divine all-powerful Creator.

Evolution says that all things got here by natural, chance, and random processes that are still at work today, and that it took billions of years to bring about all that we see in the universe.

Evolution claims that life evolved (progressed) upwardly from the most basic one-celled forms of life into the most complex systems in the world such as the amazing capabilities of the human brain. Yet evolution is false for many reasons.

Evolution has no true beginning. The very fact that evolutionists since the 1880's have moved the date for the beginning of life from just several million years ago to as many as twenty billion years, shows in itself that they do not know when life began, even using their own system of belief.

Evolution has no mechanism, or way to make it happen, except for chance since it denies the existence of any Creator to bring forth life. How then can it answer such questions as:

What made the objects that supposedly exploded in the "Big Bang" that many evolutionists claim began the process they call evolutionary life?

How did the sea of chemicals, from which they say life evolved, get there to begin with?

Since evolution begins with non-living matter that they claim eventually formed living plants, animals, and man, then they must prove that non-life at some point produced life. In other words, at some point from a rock, or a pool of non-living chemicals, living cells had to be formed by nothing but chance combinations and forces. Such is a fallacy since at no time in human history has anyone witnessed or produced life from non-living matter.

There is no proof in the fossil record of transitional forms of life leading from one kind (species) to another. That is to say, that if life has been evolving upward, from lower to higher forms over the last several billion years, as claimed by evolution, then there should be vast evidence of creatures found in their in-between stages such as half fish-half reptile or half dog-half horse, etc. However, the fossil record clearly indicates that past life existed in its full and present form just as it was created by God in the beginning.

Since evolution supposedly occurred so long ago when no human was there to witness it happening, and proponents claim it takes great lengths of time for the evolution of one species into another to take place, then evolution cannot be proven, so it is not truly scientific at all. Science is the study of observable, testable facts—which evolution is not.

On the other hand, creation can be proven not only by the record of the Bible, but by many other ways.

Design: It's impossible to believe something as complex as the human eye could have come about by chance, or by mutations which are always destructive. All things have cause and effect; they do not happen by themselves.

The exact order seen in the orbits of the planets around the sun, the cycle of the seasons, and the birth of a new life demands that an all-knowing, all-powerful Creator had to have brought this order into being.

Probability: There is a scientific study known as "probabilities" that studies and estimates the likelihood of something happening by chance or accident.

In one such study, the probability that even one living atom with its neutron, electrons, and protons moving in perfect orbit and unison could have happened by chance was stated to be 1 in 10^{40} , which is one chance in ten with 40 zeros following it.

It would be like the chance that if a person took a bag full of marbles and dumped them out on their driveway that those marbles would line up to form letters in a sentence? Such is impossible unless an outside force moves those marbles into such a pattern.

The opposite of chance is design, and since it's impossible that the universe could have come into being by chance and random processes, then the only other alternative is that someone made it happen.

That someone had to exist before the creation, and be greater, more intelligent, and more powerful than the creation itself to make it come about. That someone is God, the Divine Creator!

Logic: Nearly all cultures in the history of mankind have attributed the origins of life to a Creator.

That's why the Bible says in Psalm 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God."

Unless a child is influenced not to, every human being grows up understanding that there must be some Divine Being, greater than themselves that made all things.

Purpose: Creation by a Creator gives both meaning and direction to life. It tells man where he came from, that he's no accident, and that he has purpose for being alive in the world.

The Creator Himself revealed the purpose for which all men were created: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." (Revelation 4:11)

But evolution, or any other belief in the origins of life that leaves out a Creator, puts man in the world without a purpose or reason for being here.

If evolution is true, then all of us are just taking up space. Our lives don't matter, we don't have anyone to answer to so it doesn't matter how we live.

Without a Creator that made us and to whom we are accountable, there's no moral code in life, it's just up to every person to live like they want to.

If evolution is true then life is nothing and our entire existence is useless!

Evolution teaches that man is just a higher form of animal. So why not live like an animal? That's exactly how more and more people are living who have been taught that there is no God that created them.

A belief in creation and a supreme Creator gives us a right beginning and leads us on the right path to seek to know who this Creator is and to please Him in our lives. (Ecclesiastes 12:1, 13-14)

To do that we must look more closely into the record that this Creator has given of Himself; it's found in His holy book known as the Bible which is the main subject of the next lesson.

QUESTIONS:

1. What basic question in life does creation answer? _____

2. Creation is the first _____ for the existence of God.

3. Creation teaches us that we _____ to our Creator, and will one day give an _____ to Him of our lives.

4. Briefly explain how the Bible says that God created all things. _____

5. One of the biggest lies told to people today is that creation is _____ while evolution is _____.

6. Evolution attempts to explain the origins of life and the universe without _____.

7. How does evolution supposedly work? _____

8. The greatest evidence for Creation is _____. It is impossible to imagine that something as complex as the human eye could have come about by _____.

9. Why did the Creator create the universe and all of us? _____

10. Creation gives man _____ and _____ to live his life.

WEEK #2 – REVELATION

By “revelation” we mean the desire for the Creator God to reveal or make Himself known to His creatures. Looking out at the creation makes us know that there had to be a Creator, and we are then led to ask other important questions:

Can we know this Creator? Has He revealed Himself in a way that we can learn about Him? Asking “what is He like?”, “can I know Him personally?”, and “what does He expect of me?” are all normal and reasonable questions about our Creator. God knew we would ask these things, so He left us a special record of Himself to answer these and many other questions that all mankind would and should have about their Creator.

That special record of Himself is called the “Bible”. The word Bible comes from a word that means “the books” because the Bible is a collection of sixty-six books or parts that make up one divine record from God. All the books of the Bible have the same author, God, and tell the same story, that of man’s salvation (deliverance) through God’s provision, Jesus Christ! Several important points to know about the Bible are:

IT’S SOURCE (II Timothy 3:16)

The Bible is the word of God written to man! It was penned down by over forty different men over a period of 2,000 years (1900 BC to 100 AD), but every word that they wrote was inspired by God Himself. In the same way that a subordinate would send out a letter, email, or memo from a superior to a designated person, God sent His word to mankind through human writers that wrote down exactly what He wanted them to write (II Pet. 1:21). So when we read the Bible, we are not reading the words or ideas of men, but of God Himself (I Thess. 2:13). We believe the Bible to be of divine origin for two reasons:

Internal Evidence: In other words, the Bible itself makes the bold claim that it is the word of God. It says that the “word of God is pure” both in Proverbs 30:5 and in Psalm 12:6. God commands His words to be written down so as to be preserved for every generation (Ex. 17:14 / Deut. 31:24). Hundreds of times within the pages of scripture such statements are made as: “thus saith the Lord”, “and the Lord said”, “my word”, etc. God takes responsibility for giving us His word by saying in Psalm 68:11, “The Lord gave the word, great was the company of those that published it”. We are commanded throughout the Bible to hear God’s word, believe God’s word, and share God’s word with others (Jer. 31:10 / Jn. 5:24 / Rom. 10:8, 14-15). Since the Bible is God’s record for every generation of events that happened in past times, to reject the Bible as being God’s word is to literally call God a “liar” (see I Jn. 5:9-10). New Testament writers often quoted the Old Testament scriptures and viewed them as authoritative, as did Jesus Christ our Lord. (Mt. 1:22, 5:18, 26:31, 56 / Mk. 1:2-3 / Jn. 5:39 / Acts 1:30 / Rom. 1:17)

External Evidence: Meaning things that can be proven about the Bible from outside of the scriptures themselves to verify and confirm that the Bible is divine and not human.

Historically:

1. Oldest continually translated, distributed, and read document in all of history with parts of the OT written almost 4,000 years ago.
2. Has the greatest number of ancient manuscript copies from the originals proving it’s’ preservation and longevity. These copies have been found closer to the times of the original

autographs, and in more translated languages than any other continually copied historical document.

3. All its' claims about people, places, and events of the ancient world have proven to be true. It speaks of kings and kingdoms such as Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome all of which have been confirmed by other historical sources to be accurate.

Popularity:

4. The Bible is the worlds all time best selling book, dwarfing any other religious or secular writing.
5. It is the most translated document in history; over 4,000 languages have some or all of the scripture available.
6. It was the very first book ever produced from a printing press of movable type - invented by Johannes Gutenberg in 1453!

Scientifically:

7. The Bible has always been way ahead of its' time, stating facts that man only later has been able and willing to confirm. Things such as the sun being the center of the solar system, and the earth being a round globe and not flat were stated thousands of years before man was able to confirm these truths (Gen. 1 / Ps. 104:1-2, 19, 22 / Isa. 40:22 / Job 26:7)
8. Thousands of years ago the Bible recorded medical facts that only within the last one hundred and fifty years has man found out to be true such as blood being the life source of the body (Lev. 17:11), that harmful germs can only be washed away by running water (Lev. 15:13), or that a person can be put under such a deep state of sleep as to operate on the body without pain (Gen. 2:21-22).
9. As discussed in Lesson 1, a special creation of the universe as well as a world-wide catastrophic flood is proven by all the evidence around us.

Prophetically:

10. The Bible predicted thousands of events before they came to pass, and those that have already been fulfilled, have occurred exactly as foretold. For instance, some three hundred prophecies were made about the person and work of Jesus Christ the Messiah prior to His first coming all of which came to pass exactly as predicted. (Mt. 2:5-6, 3:3, 4:14-16, 11:10, 12:17-21, 13:34-35, 21:4-5, 27:9-10, 27:35)
11. God foretold the rise of empires before they even came to power (i.e. Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome in Dan. 2:39-40).
12. Amazingly enough, God predicted in His word that the Jewish people would return to their ancient homeland and settle there after a long world-wide dispersion characterized by great persecution and suffering (Ezek. 36:24, 37:11-13 / Amos 9:14-15). These spectacular prophecies were fulfilled in modern times when the state of Israel was reborn in 1948.

IT'S STRUCTURE (Revelation 22:18-19)

The Bible contains the story of all ages from God to man. It spans all of human history past, present, and future. It starts in Genesis with creation, and ends in Revelation with eternity! Since it was given to us by the God of all purpose and order, we should expect it to be laid out in a very organized fashion. The Bible is the record of God's work among men through various periods of time. For sake of clarity and brevity, we might separate these times as such:

Creation: the beginning of all things.

Calamity: the fall of man in sin.

Cataclysm: God's judgment by a world-wide flood.

Confusion: the separation of peoples by languages.

Covenant: God's choice to work through one special people, Israel.

Christ: His coming – life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension back to heaven.

Church Age: the time period between the first and second comings of Christ.

Consummation: when Christ returns and the final state of all men is determined.

More specifically the Bible is divided into two main divisions:

I. The Old Testament

Thirty-nine books written mainly in Hebrew (a small portion in Aramaic) from 1,900 to 400 BC. They can be divided into three main categories:

- A. Historical (Genesis – Esther / 17 books)
= A chronological record from creation (4004 BC) to the time of Israel's last OT prophet named Malachi (400 BC)
- B. Poetical (Job – Song of Solomon / 5 books)
= Poetical style literature dealing with various themes such as God's providence, human suffering, marriage and family relationships, worship, and instruction for right living.
- C. Prophetical (Isaiah – Malachi / 17 books)
= God speaks through prophets (spokesman) to Israel and to the world about what He would do then, now, and at the end of time.

II. The New Testament

Twenty-seven books written in Greek from 45-95 AD. They can also be divided into three main categories:

- A. Historical (Matthew – Acts / 5 books)
= The history of the life of Christ and the early churches taking His message to the world.
- B. Doctrinal (Romans – Jude / 21 books)
= Explain the beliefs and practices of the Christian faith – how to become a Christian and live as a Christian.
- C. Prophetical (Revelation / 1 book)
= Records the events of the second coming of Christ and the end of this present time period giving the eternal state of all men.

IT'S SACREDNESS (Psalm 138:2)

The Bible is foremost about God! It tells us who He is, what He's like, and how we can have a relationship with Him. When we use or hear statements like "God bless you" or "Under God", who are we really speaking of? The name "God" is the most generic title for the Creator. He has other names in scripture such as "Jehovah" (the One who keeps His word) and "Lord" (Master or Owner). Since no single title can describe everything about God, we must take what He reveals about Himself in the Bible to understand more about who He is!

Before looking at some of God's many attributes, we must remember that as finite, human beings we can never fully understand God – to do so would demand that we be God, which we are not! While the Bible gives us enough detail about the characteristics of God, we will always be left with a certain mystery about Him because He is so much greater and different than we are (Deut. 29:29 / I Tim. 3:16).

1. Holiness (Ps. 99:9 / I Pet. 1:15-16)

God's holiness means that He is without sin, or any taint or touch of evil. He cannot sin in thought, word, or deed (James 1:13-15). Nor can He have sin or sinners enter into His presence in heaven (Hab. 1:13a).

2. Righteousness and Justice (Ps. 89:14, 119:137)

These attributes go so closely together that they are often found together in scripture. This means that God is always right in every judgment He makes in His universe. He not only has the right to judge all men, but His judgment is always right! Every law that He has ever given to mankind, He Himself has and will always perfectly keep!

3. Eternal (Isa. 43:13, 44:6)

This simply means that God had no beginning; neither will He have any end. God is not bound by time because He has always existed. He lives in the ever present even referring to Himself as the "I AM" (Exodus 3:14). When people ask, "Where did God come from?" The simple answer is that God has always been, for without an eternal Being, nothing could have ever come after Him! Nothing cannot create something!

4. Immutable (Mal. 3:6)

This important attribute of God says that God never changes – He's always the same! Unlike people and the world that are constantly changing, God can be trusted because He never changes (Heb. 6:17-18, 13:8).

5. Omniscient (Job 34:21)

The prefix "omni" means "all", and so this attribute teaches us that God is all knowing! There is nothing that happens, not even a word or thought from man, that God does not know about (Ps. 139:1-6). How comforting for the Christian to know that all we do and go through is noticed by God. Yet, on the other hand, how alarming for the wicked to realize that all that they do is seen by God as well!

6. Omnipresent (Ps. 139:7-12)

God is a Spirit (Jn. 4:24) meaning He is not limited to one place at one time, so He is everywhere all at once. There is not a place where a Christian can go that God is not with him, nor is there anywhere that an unbeliever can hide that God does not see them! (Prov. 15:3)

7. Omnipotent (Rev. 19:6)

This means that God is all-powerful! One of God's many titles in scripture is "the Almighty" (Genesis 17:1). No one can stop God from doing what He promises, nor is there anything ever too hard for God to do! (Jer. 32:17)

8. Love (I Jn. 4:7)

The Bible defines love as the desire to put the well-being of another before your own. Love is not merely sentiment or emotion, but actively giving to others (Jn. 3:16). God's love for the

world is unconditional meaning it is not based on the loveliness or the merit of the one loved. God's love does not condone sin, and like with all His attributes, it must be kept in perfect harmony with His holiness. The greatest act of love that the world has ever seen was demonstrated by Jesus Christ, God's Son, dying on the cross for sinners. (Rom. 5:8)

9. Truth (Ps. 31:5, 117:2)

This great characteristic of God means that He always tells the truth, so He can always be trusted (Titus 1:2). He's never broken a single promise in His word, and never will because His very essence is truth. Men are liars, but God is true! (Rom. 3:4)

10. Merciful and Gracious (Ps. 130:3-4, 145:8-9)

To show mercy means to withhold judgment from someone deserving of it. To show grace is to extend goodness and favor to one that does not deserve it. In offering salvation to sinful man, God shows both of these wonderful traits! (Eph. 2:4-9)

IT'S SUFFICIENCY

The Bible itself testifies to being the only revelation of God needed by man. Once it was completed, no other record would come from God (Jude 3 / II Pet. 1:3). This is why the Bible warns against adding or taking away from His word that would try to corrupt His final standard (Deut. 4:2 / Rev. 22:18-19). When the apostle Peter was writing to testify of the all sufficient nature of the Bible, he even compared it with an event that he and two other apostles were present to witness during the life of Christ. Yet, Peter states that it is the scriptures that are more sure than even the event that he witnessed (II Pet. 1:16-21). That's because not everyone could be present when such events took place, but God could give His divine record of these events and preserve that record for all people of all time.

We cannot trust other men's stories, visions, traditions, or writings to be the ultimate standard of truth since men lie, are deceived, and do not have perfect knowledge. The Bible was given by God to be the final authority for all faith and practice, and to be the test in determining all truth (I Thess. 5:21). Since none of us has perfect knowledge, nor were we present for God's past dealings with men, we needed a record that we could trust to know exactly what happened. The Bible is that record! Even when such a great man as the apostle Paul spoke, early Christians were commended for "checking out" what he said by the standard of the Bible (Acts 17:11).

The scriptures are so important that no one can be saved without them, meaning without the truths and events recorded in the Bible for us to know today, we could never understand who God is or how to be made right with Him (Rom. 10:17 / I Pet. 1:23-25).

Because of the earlier evidences given for the accuracy of the Bible, we can say emphatically that no other holy writing of any other religion or philosophy is like it, or can be used in the same way as a guide for all truth! We challenge any open-minded person to compare the facts of the Bible with any other ancient or modern document and see for yourself why true Christians make so much of it!

IT'S SURENESS

As stated earlier under this point of revelation, God inspired the original writings of the sixty-six books of scripture. But just as important is the promise of God to preserve those same writings in a trustworthy, inerrant manner so that we would know that what we are reading "is the word of God"

(Ps 119:89). Such a statement about God’s word being “settled in heaven” would make little difference if it was not settled (sure) on earth as well. Can we know that we have the God’s Word today after nearly 2,000 years of time since its’ completion? Absolutely! Knowing how important the Bible is to our knowledge of God, and having seen God’s many attributes discussed in the Bible, it would be unthinkable to imagine that this same great God would not be able to keep His word perfect.

If God inspired the original writings in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, does that mean He only intended for people that spoke those languages to have His word in a pure form? Non-sense! Especially considering that it was God who confounded the languages to begin with, and has the ability to overcome any language translation barrier. The same God that keeps His entire universe in perfect order (see Colossians 1:17), can and does keep His word in perfect order by divinely watching over it’s transmission into the many languages it is found in today.

Once the original books of the Old and New Testaments were written, God had them copied and recopied, and then translated into other languages so that men could read God’s word for themselves. In the English language, which became standardized in the 17th and 18th centuries, God used the King James Version (Authorized Version – AV) of 1611 to preserve His word in English. Though certain grammatical and structural changes were made after 1611, the text of the KJV has remained the same, and is a trustworthy translation of the Hebrew Masoretic Old Testament text, and the Greek Textus Receptus or Received Text of the New Testament. All other modern English translations that have come out since 1881 have been translated from different corrupted texts, by wrong methods, and by questionable translators who often did not look at the Bible as a sacred document, divinely inspired of God. Thus, our church uses and recommends only one standard for the English Bible, the KJV.

QUESTIONS:

1. What do we mean by the term “Revelation” that is the title for this week’s lesson? _____

2. The Bible is the word of God and not _____. Give at least one “internal” and one “external” reason why we believe that the Bible comes from God. _____

3. List the eight statements and their meanings that separate the history of man as found in the Bible: Creation: _____

4. The Bible is divided into two main divisions called the _____ and the _____ Testaments.

5. List at least five of the ten attributes of God and their meanings as found in the Bible:

6. Explain what the term “inspiration” means: _____

7. Can anyone be saved without the Bible? _____ Explain your answer: _____

8. In the original writing of the Bible, give the languages for the Old and then New Testaments:

Old: _____ New: _____

9. Why can we not trust man as the final source of truth, and why do we need the Bible to be the standard? _____

10. For the English language, the _____ is the standard that we use; why not use the other modern versions in English? _____

WEEK #3 - LEGISLATION

The word “legislation” refers to the establishing of laws to keep peace and order in any society. Since our Creator is a God of order and design, He established laws to govern His creation. These laws become the basis of our accountability to God. Like with the laws of human government, man is responsible to live by the laws determined by those in authority over him. Since God the Creator is the Supreme Authority for all life, man must answer to God’s laws whether he agrees with them or not!

Laws carry with them the choice of those governed by them. Everyday we make choices dictated by the standards that we have either made for ourselves, or have been established for us by society. God gave to every man “free will” meaning a choice to obey Him or to not obey Him. Moreover, man is never forced to even recognize God’s existence, let alone submit to Him or to worship Him. Many people make a willful choice to reject God either claiming that He does not exist, or stubbornly refusing to come under His authority over them. Since God gave men such freedom, they can live their lives without God. Yet, because life comes from God, when this limited lifetime is over, we shall all have to give an account for our obedience or disobedience to the laws of our Creator (Hebrews 9:27 and Romans 14:12).

The First Law:

When God created the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, as recorded in Genesis chapters 1-2, God gave them only one law to obey. God said in Gen. 2:16-17, “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Because God did not make that first man and woman to be as mechanical robots, they were given a choice to obey or disobey Him.

Adam and Eve were made in a state of innocence, but had to choose to remain in that state of their own will. We know from the record in Genesis chapter three that they broke that one law and were made to suffer the consequences of their fatal choice. The result of their sin will be the subject of our next essential in understanding salvation.

The Universal Law:

From the time our first parents disobeyed God, man became a sinner able to choose any and all forms of evil. So God had to expand on that first law to include regulations for other wrong choices man could make - one law became many laws. Indeed, the Bible is full of laws, standards, and principles of right and wrong. But God chose to summarize all His regulations into one moral code called the Ten Commandments. These ten laws would apply to every area of sin, but God gave them so that all men could know and remember them. The Ten Commandments are crucial in coming to understand who God is and how we can be made right with Him! Consider several preliminary points about this universal law:

1. The law shows how holy and righteous God is! (Romans 7:12)
2. The law shows how sinful and selfish man is. (Romans 3:10,23)
3. Every person must be judged by this law. (Romans 3:6)
4. The law sets such a high standard because it deals with not only our words and deeds but also our thoughts. (Romans 7:7 – “covet” means to be selfish and greedy)

5. We are accountable to God's law from the time we are mature enough to understand right from wrong until the day we die. There are no exceptions, statutes of limitations, or excuses that we can make for breaking them. (Romans 3:19)

When we think of the Ten Commandments many people immediately picture Charlton Heston (i.e. the great 1956 classic movie directed by Cecil B. DeMille) coming down the mountain with two tablets in his hand. Yet actually, the law of God summed up in the Ten Commandments has been written not only in the Bible (Exodus 20), but on the heart of every human being that has ever lived. So God's law has been put into our minds through our conscience – that inner voice that tells us instinctively when something we are doing is right or wrong. God gave us conscience as a way to convict us when we do wrong, but we still have to obey it (Romans 2:15).

The law of God serves as a mirror to show us where we are dirty and need to be cleaned up. Take for instance, how each morning we go into the bathroom and look at ourselves in the mirror. We see our hair is messed up and our eyes half closed from sleep. The mirror reflects these problems so that we will know where to clean up. The mirror itself can't clean us - how ridiculous to think of taking it down off the wall and rubbing our face with it! It can only show us the problem. Just like the law of God; it cannot clean us up, but was given instead to show us that we needed to be cleaned from all the filthy, evil things that we do. Every person must examine themselves in light of God's laws to see how we line up. Are we keeping these laws? Have we kept them up to now? Can we keep them perfectly the rest of our lives? Remember, God knows and sees all that we do so we must be honest with Him and ourselves. Let's look at each of the Ten Commandments and see how we are doing:

- I. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." (Ex.20:3)

What does this mean? By definition a "god" is someone or something that you worship, serve, and love above anything else. Ask yourself – have I worshipped, served, and loved the only True God, the God of the Bible that way? Have I put Him before anyone or anything else? Jesus was once asked by a man, "which is the greatest commandment in the law?" Listen to His answer, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." If we have not always put God first and made Him the most important thing in our lives (He is worthy of such devotion), then we have broken this first commandment – it is idolatry or the worshipping of anyone or anything else besides God!

- II. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," (Ex.20:4)

What is a "graven image"? It's any representation of a god or object of worship and devotion. It's literally making up "your own god"! All of us have heard and perhaps seen people who actually worship statues and images whether of some man-made gods (i.e. Buddha) or angels or even animals (ie. Hinduism). Of course, this would be a breaking of this second commandment. But more common is the practice of man making up his own god in his own mind. A god that really does not exist, but one that fits our liking and lifestyle. Many have wondered why there are so many religions and so many "so-called gods", and this is the reason. Man does not want to come under the authority of the Creator God, but instead likes to make up his own god or gods to soothe and satisfy his religious conscience. People will say, "I don't believe in a god that would create a hell, or that would ever punish sinners". But the problem is that their "god" is just that "their god" – he/she/it only exists in their minds. We've established that the only True and Living God revealed Himself in His word the Bible, so any god that does not agree with the description and words of the True God, is a false god (I Corinthians 8:5-6). Many make a god out of themselves (pride), out of money (greed), out

pleasure (lust), and out of convenience (selfishness), but this is clearly a breaking of this second commandment! Have you made up your own god to suit yourself?

III. “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;” (Ex. 20:7)

This 3rd commandment stems from the first two in that it deals with our reverence and respect to our Creator, the One True God! It’s speaking mainly about our words, but applies also to our thoughts since we only speak what we first think. To speak God’s name in vain is to speak His name without the proper respect and honor due only to Him!

If the president of the United States walks in a room, people do not address him by his first name because his office deserves the respect to properly address him. If we would give respect to a man on earth, and rightly so, how much more should we honor and reverence the God who gave us life for whom we “live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

Yet, today in our world, it’s nothing to hear God’s name used in profanity, cursing, anger, and disgust. People use names for God like “the man upstairs” or the “big guy” which are really blasphemy (to disregard God or give another His attributes). So serious is this sin of taking the Lord’s name in vain that God ends this third commandment in the law with this warning, “for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

Ask yourself, how many times have I used God’s name disrespectfully, or in any other way but with proper honor, awe, and worship?

IV. “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” (Ex. 20:8)

This commandment addresses our worship to God. The seven day week was established by God at creation; it has no corresponding time determinants like the day, month, and year. God created the universe in six days, and rested on the seventh, not because He was tired (He never gets tired, nor does He ever sleep), but to set a pattern for man to work six days and to rest his body on the seventh. That physical was to allow man to concentrate more on his spiritual dimension especially as it would relate to his worship of God.

In Old Testament times, the Jewish, chosen by God to be His witnesses to the rest of the world, set aside the Saturday Sabbath for worship and rest from their physical labors. In the New Testament since Christ came, the principle of setting aside one day per week to rest the body and worship God was continued on the Lord’s Day or Sunday because it was on Sunday, the first day of a new week that Jesus rose from the dead. Early Christians set the pattern of meeting together in the church (the local assembly of baptized believers) to worship Christ on this special day (John 20:1, 19, Acts 20:7, Revelation 1:10).

In the New Testament, all that were saved made it a practice of assembling with the other Christians to identify themselves as a believer wanting to love and obey the Lord with other believers. God would even command us in Hebrews 10:25 to “Not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.”

It used to be that in America there were “blue laws” that forbid most all businesses from being opened on Sundays so to allow people of any faith to worship as they chose. Now, Sunday has become a busy work and play day with people shopping, going to recreational locations, going out to eat, etc. all on the day that should be set aside for the recognition of God.

We must again ask ourselves; have I always set aside a day to rest from my regular routine of life, and used it to honor and worship God?

V. “Honor thy father and thy mother:” (Ex. 20:12)

As we are to love and respect God for giving us life, we are to do the same for the parents that God gave us who were used by God to bring us into the world. As we are accountable to God as creator, we are held accountable to our parents being under their authority at least until the age when we go out from our parents home to form our own families.

It’s interesting that this fifth commandment is the first that involves our relationship with others, while the first four were all about our relationship with God. Thus, it would indicate that the first relationship God puts us into (a family) is extremely important to Him.

This commandment has to do with submission to God-given authority. Any child that learns to submit to and obey their parents will normally be ready to submit to other authorities in life (teachers, police, government, employer, spouse). On the other hand, children who aren’t taught this commandment and made to be humble before other authorities over them, are doomed to a life of crime, poverty, and broken relationships. The New Testament counterpart to this fifth commandment says, “Children obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.” (Eph. 6:1)

In a day when children throw tantrums in stores, hit their parents, talk back to them, and where violent teens now kill their parents, teachers, and school mates, we can easily see how this commandment is being neglected and disobeyed. Have we always honored our parents, even as adults, and even when we didn’t agree with their opinions?

VI. “Thou shalt not kill.” (Ex. 20:13)

This sixth commandment involves murder. It does not forbid killing of any kind as has been wrongly applied to this law. For instance, God commanded that those who take another person’s life, forfeit their own life (Gen. 9:6). Also, the Bible teaches that to kill someone in self-defense, or if someone is breaking into one’s home, or in defending one’s country against an invading army is not wrong (Ex. 22:2). God even ordered a place of refuge for one to flee if he had accidentally killed someone, but the victims family still sought revenge (Ex. 21:13). Finally, we know that the killing of animals for food and clothing is not forbidden since God permitted man to eat meat and even clothed man in animal’s skins (Gen. 9:3, 3:21).

This law does in fact condemn murder; the taking of another life that has been made in the image of God. Every life is precious to God, and no one has the right to take another life unless God permits it. All forms of killing such as homicide, suicide, and abortion (since God considers life to start at conception – see Ps.139:13-16) are murder and violate this command.

Yet this law against murder, like other laws, does not just condemn the actions of man, but goes farther to expose the thought life of man. Jesus said in Matthew 5:22 “That whosoever is angry with his brother (any person created by God) without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.” So murder begins in the mind before being carried out in an action. So, many who believe they have not trespassed this commandment must rethink what they have thought about others! Have you hated

other people, held prejudice, bigotry, been angry with people without a reason that God would allow such as being angry at evil? Then you have broken this command as well!

VII. “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” (Ex. 20:14)

This command involves the sanctity and purity of marriage. How that intimacy was reserved for the marriage union of one man and one woman for life (Gen. 2:21-25). All forms of sexual expression outside of marriage are a breaking of this seventh commandment. That would include pre-marital sex, affairs during marriage with another married or unmarried person, and homosexuality.

Sex is not evil, but a beautiful and normal act between husband and wife designed not only to produce children but to bring pleasure. However, like fire, if sex is taken outside of this confined boundary of marriage it is destructive. Many couples have divorced over adultery, and many sexually transmitted diseases have plagued mankind as a result of God’s clear warnings about sexual purity.

Perhaps the most frequent violation of this command comes by way of lusts in the mind. Jesus said in Matthew 5:28 “That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with already in his heart”. Again, the starting place for sin is in the mind! Sexual images fill our world using TV, movies, internet, magazines, and advertisements to tempt us to lust. Men who are addicted to pornography are captive to this sin, and women that dress immodestly are fueling the fires of adultery in our world. How often have each of us violated this commandment?

VIII. “Thou shalt not steal.” (Ex. 20:15)

Like life itself, our possessions are given to us by God, so for someone to take them from us without our permission is a serious crime. Stealing is not justified by the value of the item, or how many times one has stolen. If we have taketh anything that was not ours, even one time, then we are guilty. Cheating is also stealing because it’s a dishonest way to obtain something other than by hard work which is God’s plan for providing for our needs. Not working during all the hours that we are paid to work, or cheating on our taxes are just a few ways that people steal. What do we call people that steal? Thieves! Have you ever taken anything that wasn’t yours?

IX. “Thou shalt not bear false witness” (Ex. 20:16)

This is what we know as the sin of lying. It’s a sin that many take too lightly today! Anytime we leave out part of the truth, exaggerate, or try to deceive people, we are guilty of lying. It’s referred to as “bearing false witness” because to often our words effect how others are looked at. We often lie to make ourselves look good, but at the same time give a false impression of someone else. To show how serious God takes the sin of lying, consider that it is included in among other forms of sin that result in everlasting damnation for those who die without pardon from God (Rev. 21:8).

We live in a society where politicians, public figures, and people associated with religion are regularly exposed for lying. Could any of us count how many times we have lied? If we’d be honest with God and ourselves, we have all lied more than we can remember, let alone count! When God wanted to remind mankind that He was different than us, He first mentioned that He was not a liar (see Numbers 23:19). Also, Jesus said of the devil that he is a liar (John 8:44)! How many times have you lied?

X. “Thou shalt not covet” (Ex. 20:17)

To “covet” means to desire what is not yours; to be greedy and selfish. It has to do with caring only for ourselves and not for others. Covetousness is a way of life for most people today. In our “dog eat dog” society of “get all you can, and can all you get” people have little concern for others. Greed is the motivation behind most crime and other vices in our world.

The Bible clearly teaches that the “love of money is the root of all evil”. Not being content with God has given us and wants us to have is a sin because it accuses God of being unloving, unwilling, and unable to take care of our needs. Having money or nice things is not a sin, until they have us by way of controlling our thoughts and actions. The Bible says that anyone can be saved, yet Christ Himself said of the rich, “how hard it is for those that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God”!

This commandment against greed shows that God’s law even holds us accountable for our thinking, not just our actions and our words. As we saw with hatred and lust, to think it is to do it! Even a poor person can be covetous because they are not satisfied with what they have, and are consumed with thoughts of getting more. Jesus gave an illustration about a man who had gained great riches but cared nothing for his soul, and without warning he died not ready for heaven (Lk. 12:16-21). This is why covetousness is so dangerous!

A Summary of the Law:

So we have seen that these Ten Commandments are God’s standard by which all men shall be judged. It does not matter how our lives measure up to other people (we can always find someone that lives a more sinful, selfish life than we do). It matters only how we have kept God’s laws. Furthermore, to break one of God’s laws is like breaking them all since every sin is equally wrong to God and brings the same final punishment (James 2:10).

The greatest error that people make is to think that they can be right with God by trying to keep the Ten Commandments. The fact is that no mortal man has ever kept all of the commandments “all of the time” which is what God would require for us to be acceptable to Him through trying to be “good enough” (Gal. 3:10). In our next essential to salvation we will learn more about the consequences that we all face from breaking God’s laws!

QUESTIONS:

1. What does the word “Legislation” mean in referring to our third main essential to salvation?

2. Laws always demand _____ from the governed, and serve as part of our _____ to those in authority over us.
3. What was the “first law”? _____
4. What do we call the “universal law”? _____

5. List the five preliminary points about this universal law:

6. List the Ten Commandments with a brief explanation for each:

7. In what way have we all been given the Ten Commandments? _____

8. How are the Ten Commandments like a mirror? _____

9. Does it matter how we live in comparison to other people? Why or why not? _____

10. What is the greatest error that people make concerning the Ten Commandments? _____

WEEK #4 – CONDEMNATION

Every culture lives by certain laws, and those laws must be enforced! A law without a penalty would not be a law, neither would be a penalty for breaking a law have any meaning if it was not carried out. This is what we call justice. When a crime is committed we all expect “justice to be served”. Take for example, a criminal breaks into your home to steal your possessions. Would you expect the police to arrest him? Of course you would, because without such action thieves would have no deterrent for their crimes and no one’s life or property would be safe! If we accept justice for human crimes, why would we question that there must be justice for crimes against God’s laws?

The Basis for Condemnation:

God is a perfectly righteous and just judge who cannot allow His laws to be broken without retribution. One of His traits is that God is full of righteousness and justice (Ps. 89:14). Christ, who is God the Son, is called the “Just” in Acts 3:14. Any judge that would let a defendant walk free from his courtroom that had been shown to be guilty “beyond a shadow of a doubt” would be a corrupt and wicked judge! The fact is that God is always right in every judgment that He makes (Ps. 119:137/Gen. 18:25)!

Because of God’s holiness and perfection He cannot have sin or sinners in His presence where He dwells in the highest part of heaven. He cannot even look upon sin for it is so repugnant to His nature (Hab. 1:13). How do we feel when we hear or read of a terrible, horrific crime committed against an innocent child? Does it make us angry? Does it make us desire justice to be carried out upon the perpetrator? This is natural for such a reaction is one of the many ways that we were created in the image of God who Himself is angry at sin and sinners (Ps. 5:4-5, 7:11).

We must all learn to see sin as God sees it, not as man sees it! The Bible defines sin as the “breaking of God’s law” – called a “transgression of the law” in I John 3:4. Sin is a crime against the justice of God, and must be punished! Yet, in our modern world, sin has been redefined, watered down, and lessened in its’ severity! Drunkenness is called alcoholism; sexual perversion is called one’s orientation; the murder of innocent life in the womb is called choice! Until we own up to how awful sin really is and how God sees it, then we will never seek to be forgiven of our sins!

Why do we all rationalize or make excuses for our sins? Because it makes us all feel better about ourselves. We can easily compare our lives with others who live more selfishly and sinfully than we do. But remember from an earlier lesson, the standard for right and wrong is God’s law (the Ten Commandments) and not someone else’s conduct. It matters not if we sin less than someone else for the standard of good with God is perfect righteousness – keeping all of God’s laws all of the time! The very laws of God were given to show us our sin and leave us guilty before God (Rom. 3:19-20). Without seeing our guilt we will never seek God’s mercy in the pardon that we can receive from Him!

The Declaration of Condemnation:

All of us are guilty before God – the Bible says that “there is none righteous; no, not one”, and that “there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Rom. 3:10, 12). We are all sinners by nature and by deed. By nature (instinct) because we inherited sin from our parents, Adam and Eve (Rom. 5:12). Since we were all represented in Adam, when he sinned, we all sinned. His sin nature was passed on to us like the nature to bark is passed on from two dogs to their offspring. The reason we do not have to teach our children to do bad, but to do good is that we all carry that sin nature and from a young age we all show

that we are sinners (Ps. 58:3). But we cannot simply blame Adam for making us sinners because we all choose to sin every day which means we are all accountable for our own sins.

The Executing of Condemnation:

Well, if all of us are sinners, and we all sin, what's the big deal about sin? It's punishment! How does God punish sin? In two ways:

First, there's immediate consequences for our sins. Think about it; does anyone like to be around a person that lies, steals, is lusting after their wife or daughter? Of course not! How about people that do not respect their parents or that are angry all the time – do they make good friends or mates? No, not at all! So there are ways that sin affects our lives here and now.

Secondly, the final consequence of sin is death! When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden by taking of the fruit of the forbidden tree, God kept His promise when He had said, “in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17). Man has reserved the “death penalty” for certain crimes, but God has pronounced the death penalty for all crimes against His laws! He said in His word, “the soul that sinneth it shall surely die!”

But to better understand the severity of this judgment, we must ask and answer the question, “what is death”? Man thinks of death as the end of something, but it is really the beginning of the next life – the eternal existence we will have after this life. Death is really a separation of the soul and spirit from the body in which we lived in here on earth. Like God who made us, man is a triune being, body (physical), soul (emotional), spirit (eternal) – see I Thessalonians 5:23. At death, the soul and spirit, which are non-material, leave the body for their eternal dwelling place, while the body goes back to the dust of the ground from which it came (Gen. 3:19). What we see at a funeral of a loved one or friend is just the body (shell) laying in a casket, while the spirit and soul have already departed. So death came because of sin and affects us all because we all sin!

Ultimately the punishment for sin is that God must separate sinners from Himself for ever and ever. Since mankind was created in the image of God, that means we are eternal, and thus we will live somewhere forever! According to the Bible, the standard of all truth that comes from the Creator Himself, there is only one of two places that a person can go after death – heaven or hell!

The Finality of Condemnation:

Despite all the arguments against hell, mainly from those who hope that their denial of hell will in some way make it disappear, hell is as real as heaven! We can't have one without the other. Everyone wants to go to heaven, and thinks that they are going there, but at the same time we must admit that there is a hell. Hell is real and literal because God speaks of it that way many times in His word. For example, Jesus referred to hell as a place “where (location) their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.”! He told an actual story of two men that had died, one of whom went to hell and was in a place of torment (Lk. 16:23). The Bible describes hell as a place of suffering, loneliness, darkness, and fire all of which lasts forever!

People will argue with the idea of a literal hell, even many groups that call themselves Bible-believing Christians deny its' existence. Yet, Jesus is the only man who ever lived, died, and came back from the dead after three days (never to die again) to tell us what's on the other side, so I choose to believe His word over all others who have not been resurrected from the dead to testify about the next life.

The justice of God demands that there be a hell. Without hell there would be no ultimate punishment for the wicked. If death was just annihilation, or an end of one's existence, then there would be no ultimate judgment for the many wicked people throughout history who have escaped the judgment of men for their heinous crimes! Imagine a person like Adolf Hitler who masterminded the brutal genocide of six million innocent people (including one and a half million children), getting away with his crimes by simply taking a poison and shooting himself. If death itself is the only punishment for sin in this life, then he suffered no more than those innocent children that he ordered to be killed. No, indeed a just God will not allow any crime to go unpunished throughout all eternity. After the first murdered Cain, had killed his brother Abel, God came to Cain and said "...the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Gen. 4:10). This means that God not only saw and knew what Cain had done, but that justice for his death was mandatory!

Many will say, "I don't believe in a god that would send people to hell?" The truth is that their "god" doesn't even exist for he is only a figment of their imagination. As we saw earlier in our lesson on God's revelation of Himself in the Bible, we can only know who God is and what God is like by what the Bible says of Him. It's not a matter of understanding or figuring out God and what He does, since we will never be able to do so. Can the thing created question the one that created them (Rom. 9:20)? Man will never fully understand many things about God because to do so we'd have to be God! His ways are far different than ours, and we have no right to question what He does (Isa. 55:8-9). God never has to get our opinion before He does anything (Rom.11:33-36). Hell is hard for man to comprehend, but it's not up to us to do so! Like with many things that God reveals about Himself in His word, we believe in a literal hell because God says there is, not because we can or cannot understand how it could be!

A Warning about Condemnation:

The Bible ends with a horrifying description of the final judgment of all those that have died in their sins; it's not imaginary but real while yet future. It's called the Great White Throne where all the wicked are judged for their sins that were never forgiven since they rejected God's only way of pardon through His Son Jesus Christ. Revelation 20:15 says, "And whosoever (anyone) was not found written in the book of life (record kept of all the saved) was cast into the lake of fire." How terrible it will be to watch people from every age thrown kicking and screaming into this horrible place of eternal doom! It ought to make the sinner cringe, and the Christian wake up to tell more people about Christ.

Instead of arguing with or denying hell, man should be thankful that God has warned man so many times of judgment to come. God once sent a flood over all the earth and killed all air-breathing life except for Noah, his family, and the animals that were taken onto the ark. This showed how angry God is with sin that He would destroy the whole earth because of it (see Gen. 6-9). But God left evidence all over planet earth of that flood to remind and teach the future generations from what happened – are we learning? How many are glad when their local community has a "tornado warning siren"? You do not get mad if the siren goes off in the middle of the night and wakes you from a calm sleep when you know that it is meant to save your life! God has warned us of the judgment of sin – will we need that warning? There will never be a person in hell who was not warned about that place, or who had to go there because, God made a way for all of us to escape that horrible fate – that will be the subject of our remaining lessons.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why must God always punish sin? _____

2. How do earthly judges compare to God as judge? _____

3. We must learn to see _____ as God sees it! How does the Bible define it? _____

4. What two mistakes do all of us make about our own sins? _____

5. Where did sin come from? And in what two ways are we all sinners? _____

6. The big deal about sin is its' _____. In what two ways does this happen:

7. Explain what happens at death? _____

8. If there's a heaven, there must be a _____. Who spoke of it literally? _____

9. Without a hell, there would be no what? _____

10. Explain why God must send unforgiven sinners to hell for ever? _____

WEEK #5 – REDEMPTION

Define: What it is

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines “redemption” as “the act of redeeming, or the state of being redeemed” meaning that it involves both the one doing the redeeming and the one being redeemed. So what does it mean to be redeemed? The same source defines the word redeem in many ways such as 1) to ransom, free, or rescue by paying a price. 2) to free from the consequences of sin. 3) to remove the obligation of by payment. 4) to convert into something of value. 5) to make good a promise by performing.

These definitions of the word redeem are a perfect basis for understanding what God did through the person of His Son Jesus Christ to “free us from the consequences of our sins” by “making good His promise to all mankind” (i.e. the new covenant based on the person and work of Jesus Christ) that He Himself would “make the payment necessary to remove the obligation” men had to God’s justice, and to ultimately “convert us into something of value” to God!

As seen in the previous lessons, our sins against God’s law (the Ten Commandments) demanded that the penalty of death (separation from God’s holy presence) be meted out upon all transgressors (all of Adam’s race). That “death sentence” constantly hangs over our heads creating fear because we never know for sure when it can be carried out (Heb. 2:15).

That is until we come to hear and embrace the good news from God! Our Creator has provided a way in which His law would be kept by a righteous man, the payment of death made for unrighteous men, and reconciliation to God offered to all of us through the Creator’s plan called salvation. This is the “good news” – the Gospel! God desired and accomplished this plan to provide all men with deliverance from sin so that none need end up separated from Him in that terrible place called hell!

We’ve all heard the statement, “I have good news and bad news – which would you rather hear first?” Most of us would want the bad news first so we can end on a good note. That’s exactly how God’s revelation to man is laid out. All throughout the Old Testament we see man’s sin followed by God’s punishment, but all along there is the promise of coming good news - prophecies that a special Redeemer would come to rescue mankind! Like the damsel in distress saved by the knight in shining armor living happily ever after – so God’s story to the world is that His Son, the hero of history, would come to save endangered humanity and take us to Himself to live eternally in His wonderful presence.

So according to the definition, redemption involves both a redeemer and a redeemed one. Both actually have a part in the act of redemption, but for our purpose in this and the following lesson, we shall concentrate on the Redeemer’s part in redemption. The Redeemer has to be both willing and able to redeem those that are in need. Since in God’s work for man, God is the Redeemer, we must understand His desire and ability to save us.

1. The Bible clearly teaches that God wants all people to be saved! In I Timothy 2:4, it says of God’s will, “Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”. Furthermore, in II Peter 3:9 the Bible states that God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”. So, if a person ends up in hell as the just punishment for their sins, they will not be there because God wanted or intended for them to be there (Ezek. 33:11)

= The Bible says that “whosoever will” can be saved because God wants all people to be saved. You can literally take the following verses where the word “whosoever” is used and put your name in the place of that word knowing that God wants you to be rescued from your sins – John 3:16 / Romans 10:13 / Revelation 22:17.

2. It’s one thing to have the desire to help someone, but what if one has no ability to do so? I can want to give a poor person a million dollars to get them out of poverty, but I don’t have the ability to do so. When God says He wants to save sinners, He backs it up with the ability to save them!

= We looked earlier at one of God’s many attributes which was His “omnipotence” which means He is all powerful. There is no one that God cannot save – no one who is too sinful, too far gone for God to rescue! It says of Christ in Hebrews 7:25 that “he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him....”

= In the Gospels Jesus majored in rescuing the outcasts. He saved a man possessed by demons, a woman taken in the act of adultery, and a super pious religious man all of whom were far away from God before they met the Master!

Design: How It’s Pictured

The greatest question of all time may have been asked in the OT book of Job when it makes this inquiry in 25:4, “How then can man be justified with God?” In other words, how can sinful man, rightfully condemned under God’s law be declared not guilty?

This is the very heart of what redemption is all about. A price had to be paid to satisfy God’s law, and that price was very high because the breaking of the law demands death! All throughout the OT, the Jewish people were commanded to offer animals as sacrifices for sin – not that the animal itself could ever take away their sin, but that it was teaching the important lesson that an innocent substitute must be punished for our sins lest we be made to pay for them through an eternity of separation from God.

From the very first sin ever committed by man, to the very last one that will ever be committed, a price of one’s life had to be given to pay for that sin. In the garden when Adam and Eve first sinned, God Himself had to slay an animal by shedding its’ blood, and then taking that animal’s skin and covering the nakedness of man (nakedness picturing our shame and open rebellion against God – Gen. 3:21).

Story after story throughout the remainder of the OT shows that God was teaching man that to approach Him as a sinner, we must have an innocent sacrifice whose blood was shed to atone or cover our sins. So the lesson is clear: one must die, that the other may live (Lev. 17:11). The importance of blood being part of the forgiveness of sin is because blood is the life source of all living things, and so the pouring out of blood becomes a necessity in taking away sin (Heb. 9:22).

All the lambs, goats, rams, bulls, and birds that were killed and had their blood poured out for the forgiveness of sin were only pictures of a final, one-time, ultimate human sacrifice that would have to be made to take away all man’s sin for all time! That sacrifice would be the greatest redemption payment ever made, for it would be made by God Himself in behalf of His own creation!

Divine: Who Would Accomplish It

God sent His only Beloved Son, Jesus Christ to offer up Himself as the final sacrifice for sin – this was the climax of all redemptive history! In the most well known verse of the Bible we see this truth so wonderfully stated:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Perhaps the greatest recognition that our Lord ever received from any mortal man was when John the Baptist said of Jesus Christ, “Behold, the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!” So much meaning was found in that statement, especially for the Jewish people that heard it. Christ was and is that “Lamb” slain for the sins of all mankind.

Jesus died a cruel and violent death having His precious blood shed at the cross to pay the redemption price that His Father’s justice demanded so that men could go free having their sins fully paid for! God cannot allow anyone into heaven where He dwells if they have even one sin on their record. So that leaves mankind with only two options: pay for our own sins which demands eternal separation from the Holy Creator, or find one who is willing and able to pay that debt for us. This is what Christ did at the cross!

Most people, at least in our western society, have heard about and know the basic details about the death of Jesus Christ on the cross – it was indeed the most infamous murder in all of history. Yet, many of the same people don’t understand why He died, and what it means to them.

Declare: How He Did It

Just how important the death of Christ is to the Christian faith is shown by how often it is mentioned in scripture, and the amount of the narrative it takes up in the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Though each of the four writers present the life of Christ from a different perspective (and never contradicting), and they all include some material unique to their account, they all spend a great deal of time telling the story of Jesus death (Matthew 26-27, Mark 14-15, Luke 22-23, John 18-19).

The fact of Jesus dying on a cross during the reign of Tiberius Caesar around the year 30 AD and supervised by Roman soldiers in Jerusalem, Israel is factual history stated even in sources outside of the Bible. It’s the how and why of His death that are most important!

How He died is discussed in scripture, but a summary is given here. He was falsely accused by the Jewish people of the religious crime of blasphemy (the act of claiming to be God or defaming God) which we know was false because He was and is God (John 1:1,14 5:17-18, 10:30-31). The Jews, who had no authority to execute criminals on their own since they were under the rule of Rome, had to convince the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate (appointed to keep peace and administer Roman justice in Israel) to put Jesus to death. They did so with an equally false charge of treason – claiming Jesus was trying to overthrow the rule of Caesar by claiming Himself to be the “King of the Jews.”

After a series of deceitful trials, Jesus was handed over to the Romans to be beaten and crucified. Crucifixion was a horrible method of execution – the victim was nailed to a cross and would eventually, from weakness (sometimes lasting days), be unable to lift up his chest cavity enough to breathe air into his lungs thus dying a slow death by suffocation. The record shows that Jesus was beaten nearly to death

before He was ever placed on the cross at 9:00 AM, the morning of His execution. He hung on the cross for six hours, and died at 3:00 PM.

But the agony of Jesus death was not simply physical, it was more so emotional and spiritual. First, Jesus had been abandoned by all His closest friends and followers. He had been falsely accused and lied about with no one coming to His defense. Moreover, while He hung on the cross, His Father had to turn His back on His Son while allowing Jesus to take all of our sins upon Himself at that specific time in history.

Because Jesus is God and man – He could accomplish an eternal and all-inclusive work for all men, for all time. God His Father chose to pour out all His wrath and anger for men’s sins on His Son Jesus Christ at that one time in history while Jesus hung on the cross! So from the first sinners Adam and Eve, to the last sinner that shall ever live, Jesus was taking ALL (for all people, for all time, for all that we ever did) of our punishment on Himself!

Imagine how terrible was the wrath of God the Father poured out on His Son that day! Think of how upset we can get about hearing of one heinous crime committed by one person, and then multiply that by all the wicked and ungodly things mankind has ever done! Only then can we even begin to understand what a horrible death Jesus died in our place taking all of God’s wrath upon Himself.

Of course, the death of Christ has two sides; He was indeed murdered by men, but on the other hand it was all done in the will of God. Jesus death was no accident – it wasn’t plan B. God had foretold from the very beginning of time that His Son the Messiah would come and die for the world (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Daniel 9:24-26). This is all part of what was meant from the famous verse that we read earlier, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...” – He gave Him to die for sinners like you and me! Jesus last words from the cross sum up the extent of His love for us when He cried, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do”!

After Jesus died on the cross, He was taken down and buried according to the Jewish custom of burial. His body was wrapped, anointed, and placed in a tomb (cave) since the Jews could not bury under ground as we do because of the rocky ground. The burial of Christ proves that He died, and that all of man’s sins were put in the grave with Him. His enemies rejoiced at His death thinking that He was gone forever, but the story was not over!

After three days, just as He had predicted (Mt. 16:21) and the scriptures had foretold (Ps. 16:9-11 / Isa. 53:10), Jesus rose from the dead! His resurrection is a proven fact of history because He showed Himself alive ten different times, and to as many as five hundred people at once (see the resurrection accounts in Mt. 28, Mk. 16, Lk. 24, Jn. 20-21, - also I Cor. 15:3-8).

The resurrection of Christ becomes the cornerstone of the Christian faith separating it from all other world religions. No other belief system claims that their deity became a man, died for men, and then rose from the dead, literally, physically, bodily! But the God of the Bible, the Creator, became a man in the person of Jesus Christ – this is an historic fact undeniable to even those that refuse to accept that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation. It is the resurrection of Christ that was at the heart of the early church’s preaching to both Jews and Gentiles (Acts 2:24,-36, 13:26-36).

Among the many proofs of the resurrection of Christ such as the empty tomb and the eyewitnesses that saw, touched, and ate with Him after He rose, is also the amazing testimony of those that were willing to die for what they believed about Christ. Of the original twelve apostles, ten died violent deaths as martyrs, and yet none of them that died in such horrible ways ever recanted (gave up or rejected) their

faith in the risen Savior! Would a person “die for a lie”? Never! Only those that are completely convinced of their cause will die for it! Furthermore, not only the apostles but also millions of other Christians, even to this present day, have willingly given their lives for Jesus Christ rather than to deny Him!

The importance of the resurrection is enormous! By His rising from the dead after taking all of the Father’s wrath for sin at the cross, it shows that God’s punishment for the sins of the whole world was accepted by the Father (see I Jn. 2:2). The supreme payment for sin, justly deserved by all sinners, was received by the Father. All this was proven by the fact that Jesus Christ did not stay in the grave! Death, which is the consequence of sin, was conquered by Christ – He is the Victor over death and hell (I Cor.15:53-58 / Rev.1:18). Because He overcame death, Christ has the power to share His victory with all who will come to Him to receive the benefits of His great work. How He alone was qualified to be over Savior will be the theme of our next lesson.

QUESTIONS:

1. Give several definitions for the word “redemption”: _____

2. Why was a payment necessary to forgive our sins? _____

3. Who made the payment for man’s sins, and when and where was that payment made? _____

4. Why was it necessary for Jesus to shed His blood in dying for our sins? _____

5. What illustrative title did John the Baptist give to Jesus Christ, and why was it so important for the Jews that he was speaking to? _____

6. A redeemer has to be both _____ and _____ to redeem someone. Explain how Christ fulfills both of these requirements: _____

7. Did all the animals sacrificed in Old Testament times actually take away peoples sins? _____ Explain your answer: _____

8. According to the Gospel accounts in the New Testament, what was the most important event that they each record about our Lord? _____

9. List several proofs for the resurrection of Christ: _____

WEEK #6 – QUALIFICATION

Understanding the Principle:

Many have applied for a job or for acceptance into a school with the question, “Do I qualify?” In other words, do I meet the requirements; do I have the necessary skills; can I accomplish the tasks that will be asked of this job or school. This is what is involved in the word “qualification” – it speaks of someone who is fit, ready, and able to do something needed to be done.

In the case of God saving mankind from our sins, truly there was only one “qualified” person that could meet all the requirements, pass all the tests, live up to every expectation in the greatest work of all history. That work involved paying the redemption price for man’s sins to be forgiven, and living a perfect righteous life that could be applied to man in the place of our sinful record. The only qualified to do that is Jesus Christ!

To be qualified to do something is very important! Would you be weary of asking a car salesman to perform a life threatening surgery on a loved one? How would you feel after seeing a blind man with his cane tapping his way into the cockpit of the airplane you are about to board? Of course, these examples are exaggerations to make a point, but we all want someone qualified to do a task especially when it involves life and death! The trust we have in fireman, law enforcement, doctors, etc. is all based on this idea “are they qualified?” Can I trust them with my life?

What about Jesus Christ? Is He qualified to save me - to rescue me from eternal hell? Or is there someone else, or something else I can and should look to for salvation? This is the greatest question any person can ever answer! Jesus Himself asked the people the same question when He was here on earth, “What think ye of Christ...?” (Mt. 22:42). He knew that everyone who would ever hear of Him and consider His claim to be the only Savior of the world would have to answer that question for themselves. Is He the only way!

Yes, Jesus said that He was the only way to be saved – not one of many ways. For instance, in John 14:6 He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”. Again in John 8:24 He said, “...for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” In speaking of Christ, the apostle Peter said in Acts 4:12, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” In I John 4:14 the apostle John wrote of what he and the other eyewitnesses saw, “And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” These and other verses that could be given are very dogmatic in stating that Jesus is the only way to be saved, to have eternal life, and to escape the wrath of God upon our sins. But can these claims of Christ be substantiated? Is Christ the only one qualified to save sinners from judgment?

Applying It to a Person:

To answer that question, we need to examine a principle taught in the Bible, and often applied in earthly affairs that will show us how Christ is the only qualified Savior for mankind. Let’s take an example of two warring parties; two enemies that cannot reconcile their differences. Whether it’s two armies at a stalemate in battle, or the owners and workers of a company that cannot settle their disagreements to go back to work, in either case, what is needed is a “mediator.” A mediator is a go-between; an arbitrator that steps into the middle of both parties, representing equally both sides without favoritism, and brings them together so that an agreement can be made to settle their problem. This is exactly what Jesus Christ

came to do. In I Timothy 2:5 we read these words, “For there is one God, and one **mediator** between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” In this one verse, we are told exactly why Christ is the **ONLY** qualified Savior for mankind.

Let’s go back and remind ourselves of the problem we are in with God. Because of God’s holiness and our sinfulness, we cannot come to God on our own. We are separated from Him under His just judgment for sin. God could not lessen His standard of perfect righteousness because His very nature cannot tolerate sin. We could not change our position with God because we are sinners by nature and deed. A stalemate existed in which we were God’s enemies. His love for us alone could not save us – His justice had to be kept in tact. A payment for our sins had to be made. A great gulf of separation existed between the Holy Creator God and His creation. The only way that gulf could be “bridged” is for a mediator to come representing both God and man – that mediator was Christ, and only Christ! That means for Christ to be this mediator who could reconcile man to God, He had to be both God and man! Let’s look at both sides of the person of Christ; His perfect deity and His perfect humanity.

His Deity

Literally what makes Christianity unique from all other spiritual faith systems is that it alone teaches that the very Creator God became one of His own creatures, in order to save His creation from ruin. In II Corinthians 5:19 we read, “To wit (know), that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself”. Every year at Christmas time the world recognizes, at least by the admission of the holiday itself, that Christianity teaches that God came into the world in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ! (Mt. 1:18-25) Whether people want to believe it or not, the Bible clearly states that Jesus is God, equal in character and essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

1. The Old Testament teaches that Messiah, who is Jesus Christ is God (Psalm 2:11-12, 110:1 / Isaiah 7:14, 9:6, 43:10-11 / Daniel 7:13-14 / Micah 5:2)
2. Jesus Himself said He was God, and the Jews that He spoke to, knew exactly what He was saying (John 5:17-18, 8:58-59, 10:30-31 / Mk.14:61-62)
3. The rest of the New Testament writers believed and wrote that Jesus was and is God, with all the same attributes of God (Romans 1:1-4 / Philippians 2:6-11 / Colossians 1:13-18 / I Timothy 3:16 / Hebrews 1:8)
4. He did things that only God could do such as raising the dead by His own power (Luke 7:11-16, 8:41, 49-56 / John 11), - healing the blind, deaf, handicapped, leprous, etc. (Mark 1:40-45, 2:1-12, 10:46-52), - controlling the weather (Matthew 8:23-27), - casting out demons from those possessed by the devil (Mark 5:1-21).
5. He received worship as God (Matthew 2:2,11, 8:2, 9:18, 15:25 / John 9:38 / Hebrews 1:6) Compare this to times in scripture where a man or even an angel refused to receive the worship that is due only to God (Acts 10:25-26 / Revelation 22:8-9)

For Christ to be the true mediator in the dilemma between God and man, He had to be God in order to truly represent the party (God the Father) that had been offended by man’s sin. One aspect of Christ’s work that is often unknown or overlooked is that He had to appease the Father’s justice by fulfilling the two requirements that the law of God demanded (Mt. 5:17-18).

Every law has two sides: a positive (proactive – responsibility of the law keeper), and negative (reactive – responsibility of the law giver) part. We who live under many man-made laws are supposed to keep those laws (proactive), but when we break the law, the state has to punish us as for that offense (reactive). So

for Christ to meet both demands of God's law (refer to Lesson #3 – Legislation), He had to both keep all of God's laws for us, as well as die for our transgressions (offenses against those laws). That means He had to live a perfect life (keeping all the laws of God – i.e. be able to save us), and then die for the sins of man (i.e. be willing to save us). This brings us to the other side of Christ being the Mediator between God and man.

His Humanity

Though it is difficult for our limited minds to understand, Jesus was and is God and man at the same time – He's the God/Man! As much as we showed He was/is God, He also had to become a man so that He could represent man in our enmity with God. It's the same as how all men are represented by Adam, the earthly father of us all. In Romans 5:12 it says, "Wherefore as by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." That means we were all represented in Adam – when he sinned, it was as if we all sinned since we came from him and carried his same nature – everything reproduces after its' kind (two sinners will produce another sinner).

As we were all represented in a negative way by Adam (sinners that disobey God), we can also be represented by Christ in a positive way (One who lived a perfect life). If one man Adam (and Eve the mother of us all) could get us into the predicament of sin, only One man, Christ could get us out of that terrible situation. So we see in Romans 5:19, "For as by one man's (Adam's) disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one (Christ) shall many be made righteous". We must then show that Jesus Christ was not only a man, but the **perfect** man!

First, the birth of Christ is important to begin the discussion of His humanity, while always keeping in mind His constant deity. According to scripture, Jesus was God come down to man in the flesh (I Tim. 3:16). He was born of a young Jewish virgin woman named Mary who was engaged to a man named Joseph, living in the city of Nazareth in Israel (Mt. 1:18-25). God performed a miracle called "the incarnation" by placing the body of His eternal Son into the womb of Mary so that He would not be born from an earthly father who must carry on a sin nature to his offspring (Heb. 10:5). Jesus, because He had to be fully man, must start His earthly from the womb of His mother, like all of us enter into life. He received His humanity from Mary; was born a Jew in the land of Israel from the tribe of Judah and the family of the great king David (Mt.1:1 / Rom. 1:3). We celebrate each year the miraculous birth of the God-Man who was born in Bethlehem (Lk. 1-2). It was to be a supernatural birth, of a supernatural man, who would live a supernatural life!

Though only one story is given of Jesus early life (Lk. 2:41-52), we know that He grew up much the same way as all of us under the authority of His earthly parents. He would have experienced much of the same things we do, but of course, all the time He was still God, and thus without sin, making Him unique and no doubt peculiar to those around Him. His earthly parents (for the purpose of His upbringing), Mary and Joseph had other sons and daughters after Christ was born. Can you imagine raised in the home of One who never sinned; never did anything worthy of discipline or correction?

Jesus began His public ministry at the age of thirty, and from then on we have the record of His life as found in the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. From these inspired accounts, we know that Jesus Christ was a real man, not a ghost, or hallucination of a man. For example, His body had physical requirements of food, drink, and rest just like ours (Mt. 4:2, 8:23-24 / Jn. 4:6, 19:28). He felt the same human emotions as we do: He wept over death (Jn. 11:35); had compassion for the less fortunate (Mt.9:35-36); became angry over evil and hypocrisy (Mt.23 :13-36). In summing up the life of the

promised Messiah who would come to save Israel and the world from their sins, the Old Testament prophet Isaiah under divine these amazing words foretelling how our Lord would be hated, despised, and rejected of men, and feel great sorrow over these responses of men (Isa. 53:3-4).

Someone has rightly said that “Jesus was as much man as if He’d never been God, and as much God as if He’d never been man”. He as truly the God-Man! But Him being fully man was not enough. He had to be the **perfect** man – without sin. In order for Him to take our full punishment for sin, He had to be totally without sin!

His Perfect Life

In writing about the person and life of Christ, Paul wrote in Hebrews 7:25, “...who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.” Peter would also write a similar statement about Christ in I Peter 2:22, “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.” Jesus enemies hated Him, and often tried to trip Him up, catch Him in, or accuse Him of sin, but they were never able to justly find fault in Him. Jesus said these words of Himself in defense of the false accusations that the Jewish leaders were making against Him, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” At His death (executed for crimes He was not guilty of), both His betrayer Judas Iscariot and the very wife of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor in Judea that ordered His execution, said that Christ was totally innocent of any crime (Mt. 27:4,19,24). In summing up the life of Christ, the apostle Peter made what is perhaps the greatest statement about Jesus’ perfect life when He said in Acts 10:38 that He “...went about doing good...!”

Though Jesus was a real man, who lived a real life, died a real death, and rose in a real body – He never ceased to be God! Thus, because He is God, He could not sin, for sin is contrary to the very nature of God! So perfect did Jesus live as a man, yet remain God, that He alone could bridge that gap of separation that existed between God and man. He died to satisfy the just demands of the law of God that we had broken, and at the same time kept the law in our place, so He could give to us His perfect record. Salvation is not simply the act of God forgiving us of our sins, but also the replacing of our sinful record with the perfect record of Christ. In one of the most important verses in all the Bible, Paul wrote this, “For he (God the Father) hath made him (God the Son) to be sin for us (at the cross), who knew no sin (His perfect life); that we (anyone who will be saved) might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Where we had failed so miserably in pleasing God due to all our sins, Christ pleased God in our place by living a perfect life. He then offers that forgiveness of sin on one hand, and the righteousness of His perfect life on the other, because we need both! In our next and last lesson of this study, we will see how we come to receive this great salvation!

QUESTIONS:

1. Explain what we mean by “qualification” when it comes to the person of Christ? _____

2. Did Jesus Christ claim to be the only One qualified to save us? _____ Give at least one verse that shows Jesus is the only way of salvation. _____
3. What is a “mediator” and why did we need Christ to be our mediator? _____

4. Christ had to be both _____ and _____ to be our mediator with God!

5. Give one verse from the OT and one from NT that teach that Jesus is God: _____

6. List several things that Jesus did to prove that He was God: _____

7. How many parts does every law have to it, and explain them? _____

8. How were we all represented by Adam and then by Christ? _____

9. Jesus had to be more than just a man; He had to be the _____ man! How did He prove that? _____

10. To be saved, what do we need just as much as the forgiveness of our sins? _____

WEEK #7 – APPROPRIATION

A Summary:

This is the final lesson of our study on “salvation”, and as is the case with any final chapter in a book or last scene in a movie, this lesson will bring everything we have studied to a climax and conclusion. It might be good to quickly review the first six essentials of this study – seeing them together as they flow into this last truth:

- I. Creation – God made us so we are accountable to God.
- II. Revelation – God revealed Himself to the world through His word, the Bible.
- III. Legislation – God gave laws by which all men will be judged.
- IV. Condemnation – God’s punishment against sin is eternal death.
- V. Redemption – God saves sinful man through the payment of Christ at the cross.
- VI. Qualification – God’s Son, Jesus Christ, the God-Man is the only One qualified to save us.

The last of these “7 Essentials” is called “appropriation” which literally means to “take possession of” or to “obtain” something. For the purpose of our study, it means to appropriate (obtain) salvation from God which involves being rescued (saved) from the penalty of our sins, and to receive the perfect righteousness of Christ so that we are eternally accepted by God. The benefits of salvation, which are many (eternal life, peace with God, the provision-protection-promises of being part of God’s family) are referred to in the Bible as a gift (Eph. 2:8-9 / Rom. 6:23). But a gift must be received; it is not automatically obtained just because it’s offered. Two things have to take place in receiving a gift: it has to be offered by the giver, and received by the taker.

A Balanced Approach:

This teaches us that there are two parts to salvation: God’s part and man’s part. God offers salvation to all people – He’s the giver. Yet, each person has to receive it – we are the takers! Say for instance, a person was offering a thousand dollar gift to anyone who would come and listen to him speak for one hour about something he felt was of vital importance. He advertised where to come, and when to come, and the conditions to receive the money. Yet, because of unbelief (thinking it was too good to be true) no one came at the appointed time to receive the prize. Whose fault would it be that the money was never received? It wouldn’t be the giver’s fault, but the lack of the takers!

Really, the first six essentials of salvation have described what God has done to save mankind from our sins, and this last essential truth is man’s part in receiving what God has done for us. This balance between God’s part and our part is critical because any tilting of this balance will nullify salvation. If God was to save us without our having any part in the transaction, then we would be nothing but robots without a choice. Even a gift, no matter how desirable it might seem, must be accepted, never forced! If man had no part in his salvation, God would be saving people who might not want it or appreciate it. On the other hand, if man tries to save himself without God, like through religious routines or good works, he is left guilty before God and never able to obtain forgiveness of sin.

No amount of good works that we do, or promise to do will ever take away even one sin. If a criminal has been found guilty in a court of law, and stands before the judge for the sentencing phase of his trial, he will not be set free even if he brings up many good things that he has done or promises to do in the future. Good deeds – past, present, or future – do not take away sin. Only paying the prescribed punishment will bring justice when a law is broken.

Sadly, many people, following the man-made religious systems of the world, think that God (or who they believe to be God) will accept them if they just try to do good or better than before. But all of us are sinners by nature (from our first Adam and Eve), and cannot make ourselves better no matter how hard try. In Jeremiah 13:23 the Bible says, “Can the . . . leopard change his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” We cannot change ourselves, but must come to the Lord and allow Him to change us. God always changes us from the inside out, unlike religion that tries to clean us up from the outside-in (looks, habits, etc.). God cares about the heart, what we really are inside, and since we are selfish and sinful at heart, we must be made totally new.

The Bible speaks of being “born again” (John 3:3, 7) which is a transformation that creates a new spiritual person that did not exist before. Just like we each have a physical birthday, one day per year, we need a spiritual birthday where God starts a new life in us. It has been rightly said that those who are only born once (physically) will die twice (physically and eternally), but those who are born twice (physically and spiritually) can die only once (physically)! But before every birth, there is a pregnancy, and so that period of time in which we come to learn about salvation is God’s way of leading us to the point of being “born again.” Among the many names or descriptions of being saved is this one called being “born again”!

Man’s Part in Salvation:

So having studied God’s part in saving us, we now need to see our part which is our “proper response” to God. God initiates salvation, and we respond; He extends the gift, but we must reach out and take it. It’s much like when a man courts a woman that he desires to marry. He makes the first move; he must prove himself, show his true intentions, win over her heart, and in the end she must decide whether or not to marry him. So God “woos” us by showing us our need and His solution – which is the Person and Work of Jesus Christ! Yet, in the end though, we must decide to choose Christ and His salvation; it will not be forced on anyone!

It’s often wrongly assumed by many, especially in America where there are churches on nearly every corner of every town, that just because Jesus died and rose again that all people will be saved and go to heaven – at least those that know about the story of Christ. But that it not true! Knowing will not save anyone from their sins; their must be a receiving of Christ to “appropriate” what He did for us. It’s no different than saying, “I know this medicine would make me feel better”, but just knowing that won’t make you feel better until you take the medicine. The Bible says in John 1:12, “But as many as **received** him (Jesus Christ), to them gave he (Jesus Christ) power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

So the question becomes, “How do we receive Jesus Christ?” We can be thankful that God has not been silent or secretive about the answer to this all-important question. The Bible says that God requires two responses from man to the good news of what Christ did in order for us to receive it. I like to think of these two responses as two sides to the same coin; Siamese twins that cannot be separated. In other words, to do one is to do the other. To leave out either one means a person will not be saved!

If someone asked you for directions, and you told them that you knew how to get there but you left out a turn or a street name or a landmark and they ended up lost, would they have a right to be upset with you? Yes indeed, and so it is that we cannot leave out our part in receiving all that He has for us in salvation. Part of those directions (i.e. to get to heaven) include this two-fold response we must have towards God. Let’s look at them both in some detail.

Repentance

The first thing God says we must do to be saved is to **repent** of our sins. What does it mean to repent? Literally the word means “to change direction” like a U-turn or a 180 degree turning around. All men begin life going one way – the way of sin and selfishness that takes us further and further away from God. Isaiah 53:6 puts it this way, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way....” We are born sinners by nature, and begin to go away from God as we learn and practice sin. But all the time, God is calling us to turn away from our sins and around to Him – this is what it really means to repent. In Acts 17:30 the great apostle Paul was preaching the Gospel to a group of unsaved men, and he ended by saying this, “...God ... now commandeth all men every where to repent.” Repentance is not an option to receive salvation; it is a necessity! Throughout the Bible we see repentance preached by God’s spokesman using either the word repent, or other words that mean repentance, or teaching lessons about repentance. For example, in Ezekiel 33:11 the prophet Ezekiel said to sinful Israel, “...turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” In the great story of Jonah, a prophet sent by God to a wicked Gentile city called Nineveh, the lesson of repentance is clearly shown. As Jonah preached that God’s judgment would fall on the city if they did not repent, we see that from the king down to the most common citizen, they did repent and God had mercy on them, withholding His just punishment (see Jonah 3:4-10).

All the great preachers of the New Testament preached repentance by word and illustration. John the Baptist came on the scene and said, “Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”. Peter preached repentance in Acts 3:19 – Paul in Acts 26:20. Most importantly, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself preached repentance. His first message to Israel having begun His public ministry was recorded in Mark 1:15 where He said, “...repent ye, and believe the Gospel!” Now having seen that repentance is the first requirement from God for us to be saved, let us define repentance in three ways:

First, to repent means to admit or confess our sins. It’s really “coming clean” with God, others, and ourselves about our sins. In our modern society, sin is being covered up or excused- blamed on one’s upbringing or social status, but this is the opposite of a repentant heart. Those that repent will not hide their sin, but openly confess it. Proverbs 28:13 says, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.” We will never be forgiven of sin that we won’t own up to and take full responsibility for! We studied earlier from God’s law that all of us have sinned against God; why would we then try to hide or deny that sin? We must be honest and open before God who sees all our sins and records them! (Hebrews 4:13)

Secondly, to repent also involves being sorry for our sins. Sometimes we will hear a criminal confessing to a crime, but his attitude shows that he’s not sorry for what he did, and if he had the chance to do it again, he would – that’s surely not repentance! Repentance always involves a remorse over what we have done – a sorrow that realizes how much we have offended our Holy Creator by our sins, as well as hurt others by our selfish thoughts, words, and actions. When we consider how much harm sin has brought to the world (i.e. crime, bigotry, wars, catastrophes, sickness, death), why wouldn’t we be sorry for what we have done. All the world’s problems can ultimately be traced back to man’s selfish ways – sin! But when we repent, we not only admit our sins, but are broken in heart and mind over what we have done. Paul wrote in II Cor. 7:10, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation....”

Lastly, there is one final aspect in defining repentance that cannot be left out, and that is that true repentance is a willingness to turn away from sin in our lives. **It is not** a promise that we will never sin again, because no man could ever keep that promise (I Jn. 1:8, 10). But it is a desire from the heart not to

keep living in the same sinful way that we've been living prior to coming to Christ. Let's say that a criminal on death row, knowing his only hope to escape death is a pardon from the governor, writes a letter asking for clemency. In the letter he never admits his crime, shows no remorse for what he has done, and never even insinuates that he will live a different life if he's pardoned. Do you think that the governor will be inclined to grant that pardon? No, and it's no different with a sinner that's broken God's laws and deserves punishment to think that he/she will receive God's pardon for sin when they have no intention of giving up their old sinful life. While repentance is not first giving up all our sins and then being saved, it is true that those who repent will show a definite change of life. In Luke 3:8, John the Baptist said, "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy (evidences) of repentance..." Paul wrote of the believers from the city of Thessalonica, and said this about their salvation, "...ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God."

Now, lest we think repentance is all of man and something for which we take credit when we repent, we must add that God leads us to repentance. It is the work of God's Holy Spirit to convict all men of our sins which leads us to repent (John 16:7-10). Without that conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit, no man would ever repent on his own. Romans 2:4 says, "...the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance." It's again an example of the balance between God and man's part in salvation – God convicts, but we must repent! In fact, the person that refuses to repent can never be saved. Proverbs 29:1 says, "He, that being often reproved (convicted) hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." God had to initiate this process (the pregnancy period) of salvation or it would never happen. Man, on his own, would never even seek the Lord to be reconciled to Him (Rom. 3:11b), but because God has moved first (Mt. 18:11), we are now commanded to seek the Lord in response to what He has done for us (see Isa. 55:6-7 / Acts 17:27).

Faith

The second response that God requires of man to receive the benefits of Christ's work is **faith**. Faith is one of those crucial words in the Bible used many times, but necessary to define. There are several other words that the Bible uses that mean the same as faith – the primary one being to "believe" someone or something. We showed earlier that Jesus said, "Repent and believe the gospel." What then does "faith" mean? Or what does it mean to "believe". First, we must say what it doesn't mean – it does not mean to simply acknowledge some facts. To the Jewish mindset, to whom and by whom the scriptures were given, to believe something was to act on what you believed. It was not just something in the mind, but something that came out in the life because of what you believed.

Many people today think that being a Christian simply requires believing some facts about the historical person of Jesus of Nazareth. Because of the influence of Christianity in America, polls have shown that an overwhelming number of Americans acknowledge that Jesus Christ lived on earth some 2,000 years ago in the land of Israel, that He died on a cross, and many would even agree that He rose from the dead. Does that make them Christians? Not by what the Bible says of a Christian. The problem is that many of these that would call themselves Christians have not believed in the way the Bible defines belief (let alone most have never understood or realized their need to repent).

Neither is faith a "blind leap into the darkness of the unknown." Many have misrepresented faith as "wishful thinking" (such as hoping there's a heaven) or "superstition" having no basis in reality but simply to be motivated by mental desire for something to be so. Yet, faith is only as good as the object for which one's faith is directed. For instance, many children are taught to believe in Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy only to find out later that their belief was not real, but pretend, since what they were told was a lie.

This is not Christianity at all because our faith is based on real, literal, historical facts, not myths and fairy tails. In fact, the only verse in the Bible that directly states what faith is says this, “Now faith is the **substance** of things hoped for, the **evidence** of things not seen” – Hebrews 11:1. Note the words “substance” and “evidence” – doesn’t sound like make-believe at all! No, the Christian faith is based on solid evidence for things like creation, the flood, people-places-events, miracles done on earth, the life of Christ – including His death, burial, and resurrection, just to name a few. The reason God inspired His word to be a perfect and trustworthy document of His work in the world is so that the Bible could be tested to find out whether these things are so!

The best alternative word to describe faith or belief is the word “trust” which means to depend on something to the point of acting on it. Let me give a few examples; first, when my children were young I put up an above ground pool in the backyard with a platform built next to it to jump into the pool. Though the water was only four feet deep, my kids could not stand and touch the bottom. When I began to teach them to swim and get them over their fear, I would stand out in the water, and tell them to jump into my arms from the platform. Of course, I would tell them not to be afraid because I would never let them go under and drown. After some hesitation, they would each learn to jump into “daddy’s arms” and before long they were swimming around on their own. But at first, they had to **trust** that dad would not drop them – that trust had to be strong enough for them to actually jump. See, that’s trust – you believe enough to act on what you say you believe. Take someone who claims to believe in flying as the quickest and safest form of transportation, yet they never get on a plane and actually go anywhere - are they really trusting the pilot or the aircraft? No, not until they get on board and take off? So to say you believe in something but never show that belief in action means you really didn’t believe in it at all!

When the Bible says “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:33), it’s referring to a trust in the person and work of Christ to the point of acting on that trust. Part of acting on our faith means we give up any other man-made or self-made way (religion) to think we can be right with God, and depend only on Christ to save us! Remember to be saved is a desperate thing that means we see that we are in danger and that only Christ can save us. Would we not think it ridiculous if someone’s house was engulfed in flames and people were trapped inside, but when the fire department showed up, those in the home were heard to yell, “we’re fine, we don’t need your help; we have a garden hose, and we’ll take care of things ourselves.” That’s just as foolish as people who think Christ needs our help to save us! No, He needs our surrender so that we’ll let Him save us, and not try to save ourselves!

The trust we must put in Christ relates to everything about who He is and what He came and did for us. We must believe that He is God, that He came to earth and lived as a perfect man, that He died in our place to satisfy the justice of God for sin, that He was buried for three days, that He rose from the dead, later ascended back to heaven where He came from, and will return to earth one day exactly as the Bible predicted. We have to believe that these facts of history about the real person and life of Jesus Christ are the way of salvation; the only way God will forgive sinners and bring them into His family.

This trust will also include a desire to obey Christ. Much like with repentance, it’s not what we do to be saved, it’s what we desire to do that saves! We don’t start to obey God’s word in order to be saved, but when we come to trust Christ, we are saying we desire to obey Him. Sinful man could not obey God on his own anyway! Theologians and Bible scholars used to say it this way, “We are saved by faith and not by good works, but the faith that saves will always produce good works.” This is how true faith can be gauged – how can we know if we are really trusting Christ? Are we now willing to follow what He says, and let Him lead our lives?

James, a writer of one of the New Testament books, described true faith as always resulting in good works. He said in James 2:17, “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.” It really has to do with how we come to Christ; are we coming selfishly just wanting an escape out of hell, or are we wanting Christ to change us because we see how wrong we have lived in the past. The Bible says that Jesus is Lord – meaning Master and Owner of everything, and when we come to Him for salvation we need to recognize Him as the new Master of our lives. Romans 10:9 says, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the **Lord Jesus...**” – that’s who He is and that’s how we must receive Him. Let Him have our lives so He can make them good and right and profitable to God! Everyone that comes to Christ on His terms, He makes new forever – “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new” (II Cor. 5:17).

The Results:

Let me conclude this thought on how we must come to Christ in order to be saved. Say our whole lives could be illustrated like driving a car. We’ve driven where we want, turning which direction we choose, going at what speed we desire, etc. When we consider what a terrible driver we have been, and that our lives were in constant danger of a fatal (eternal) accident, we then stop (repent) and get out of the car, hop in the passenger side, and let Jesus Christ take the wheel from then on. We trust that He knows best how we should live, so we seek from then on to learn what He wants us to do in life and try our best to do it – that’s real trust! Anyone can claim to be a Christian, but mere words don’t make them so, it’s whether or not we are living an obedient life doing what the Master says! Jesus said some very hard hitting statements about this willingness to trust Him to the point of following Him. In Luke 9:23, He said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

Now the beautiful thing about this faith that leads to salvation is that God works in us to bring us to this point of faith. He shows Himself to us through creation, our curiosity, other Christians, churches, and finally by the scriptures. He wants us to be saved so He “draws us to be saved!” He shows us why we need Him and how we can come to Him, but then also gives us the power to live the Christian life once we do come to Him (Philippians 2:12-13)!

Finally, how and when does the actual event of salvation occur? We mentioned earlier that being saved, becoming a Christian, is called being born again, and that is instantaneous. Yet, the pregnancy period (coming to understand our sins and the good news of Christ) must finish with a real “life birth.” It does when we do our part, and God does His part. Literally, at the moment any sinner repents and trusts Jesus Christ alone to save them, God performs this miracle known as the “new birth.” Though it’s impossible to fully understand all that happens at the moment of salvation, since it is really the work of God, we do know that a new life has been born (John 3:8) by the creating power of the Holy Spirit. Several things happen at the moment of salvation; they actually happen at the same time and are not listed in order of importance because they are all part of what it means to be saved:

We are forgiven of all our sins (Col. 1:14). We are reconciled to God (II Cor. 5:18). We are justified before God - having a standing with God as if we had never sinned – we are declared not guilty (Rom. 3:25-28). We are now at peace with God (Rom. 5:1). We are delivered from the judgment of this present evil world (Gal. 1:4). We are adopted into God’s family given full privileges as a child of God (Gal. 4:4-7). We are sealed by the Holy Spirit – an act of God showing eternal ownership (Eph. 1:13). We have the Holy Spirit living in us (Rom. 8:11). We are accepted by God (Eph. 1:6). We have eternal life and shall never perish - be sent to hell (Jn. 3:16, 5:24).

Literally, when we come as sinners to Christ, helpless-hopeless-in danger of eternal damnation, He rescues us. He's the Savior, and when we repent and trust Christ alone, we are the saved! It's all the work of God – He gets the glory and not ourselves. This is why the Bible is so clear that salvation is by grace – God's unmerited favor that includes the ability to now live a new and righteous life that we could never live on our own (Ephesians 2:8-10). In salvation, God gives us what we don't deserve – pardon (i.e. grace), and withholds from us what we do deserve – punishment (i.e. mercy – Titus 3:5).

Jesus Christ is the theme of all the Bible – He's the hero of history – our "Knight in Shining Armor" who was sent to earth to save us from the dread of eternal hell. What should be our reaction to anyone who saves us from death? Gratitude, appreciation, a feeling of a debt owed? Of course! Yet, Christ suffered the pain of death for us willingly, and desires only that we repay Him with love! Christianity is not a religion based on rituals and routines, but on a relationship with the Creator of the Universe! Our hope is that this study has led you to understand who He is, and how you can enter into a loving and everlasting union with Him!

QUESTIONS:

1. There are _____ parts in salvation - describe them: _____

2. The first six essentials dealt with what _____ and how about this final essential? _____

3. List the "7 Essentials" in their entirety with a brief explanation for each:

4. The two responses that God requires for us to be saved are _____ and _____.

5. Define repentance, and then explain the three parts to it: _____

6. Define what faith is and is not, and list the one key verse from the Bible that tells us "what faith is":

7. Explain why God must save us and why we can't save ourselves: _____

8. List the truths about Jesus Christ that we must believe in order to be saved: _____

9. List some things that happen to us when we are saved: _____

10. Christianity is not a _____, but a _____ with our Creator!

Bonus: How has this study affected your life? _____
