

Seeing the BIG PICTURE

Bible Study Series
Lesson 1



Looking at the Bible story from beginning to end

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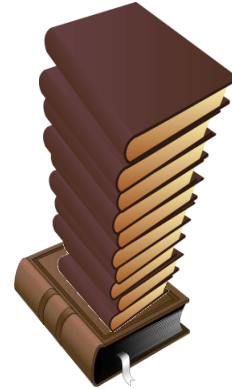
The Bible contains a total of 66 books. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament.

These books were written over 1500 years between 1450 BC & AD 100.

The books of the Bible were written by 40 different inspired authors.

These authors were from 3 different continents, different nations, and varying cultures.

In addition to these facts, the Bible was written in 3 different languages. These languages are Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.



Even though the Bible has come to us under these circumstances there is still an even more important reality that must be appreciated.

The Bible only has one theme that is woven into its pages.

This one theme is God's amazing plan of redemption.

God's Plan of Redemption

The Bible says of our God that, "He chose us...before the foundation of the world that we would be holy and blameless before Him." (Ephesians 1:4)

This means that before the world was ever formed, God had an eternal plan to make us holy and blameless.

Why would God make such a plan even before He created us? The reason can be found in something called, "free will"

FREE WILL

God has allowed us to choose whether or not we will live according to His will for our lives. He wanted to redeem us if or when we ever fell into sin and unrighteousness.

God's plan can be summed up in a message of good news called the gospel.

If you only had ten minutes with those that you truly loved, what would you say to them? Certainly, you would tell them something that was close to your heart.

Just before Jesus left this earth He was in a situation to give parting words to His disciples. He said:

*“Go into all the world
and preach
the gospel
to all creation.”*

Mark 16:15



The gospel is a MESSAGE that is to be PREACHED to every person - a message of SALVATION. Paul wrote in the Bible:



*“I am not ashamed of
the gospel
for it is the
power of God
for salvation...”*

Romans 1:16

The gospel is a spoken message that is objective truth. Those who hear and respond to the good message are led to God's eternal plan of redemption.

**The Gospel is
Objective Truth!**

On the other hand those that never obey the gospel will be lost. The apostle Paul taught:

“...when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power...”

II Thessalonians 1:7-9



At this point in our lesson it should be clear that the gospel is very important. It should also be understood that not only must we respond to the gospel in obedience, but we should be careful not to change or manipulate the teachings of the gospel when we share it with others.

Paul told Christians who had already obeyed the gospel:

*“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a **different gospel**; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!”* Galatians 1:6-9



What the Holy Spirit warned us about has come to pass? How many different and distorted gospels are in the religious world today? It wouldn't take long to see that "the gospel" has been changed in many ways. Paul said that even if an apostle or an angel preached a different gospel they were to be condemned. Let us be diligent to find, "the gospel".



Most people who become frustrated with a search for “the gospel” don’t realize that this happens for several unnecessary reasons.

First, we need to make sure that we are searching for the gospel in the Bible. Many people look to their preacher or someone they respect to tell them about the gospel. If your search for the plan of redemption begins in the religious world, you will be so confused that you will quickly lose interest. Not only that, but if we don’t find the right answers, we will be lost.

Secondly, a lot of people are overwhelmed by all of the doctrines of the Bible, instead of seeing the overall theme. If you had to know all of the details of words like, sanctify, justify, atonement, sin, redemption and mercy, in order to enjoy God’s plan of redemption, then indeed the task would seem impossible. God is not calling us to be experts at Bible vocabulary, but to know the Bible story and respond to His will for our lives.

**How can I be certain?
Where would we start?**

Please be sure that in these lessons, everything that is presented will be supported by the text of the Bible. If you read or see anything that is a cause for concern, please make note of it and contact us so that we can either correct this material to be in harmony with the Bible or so that we can better explain the meaning of any point offered herein.

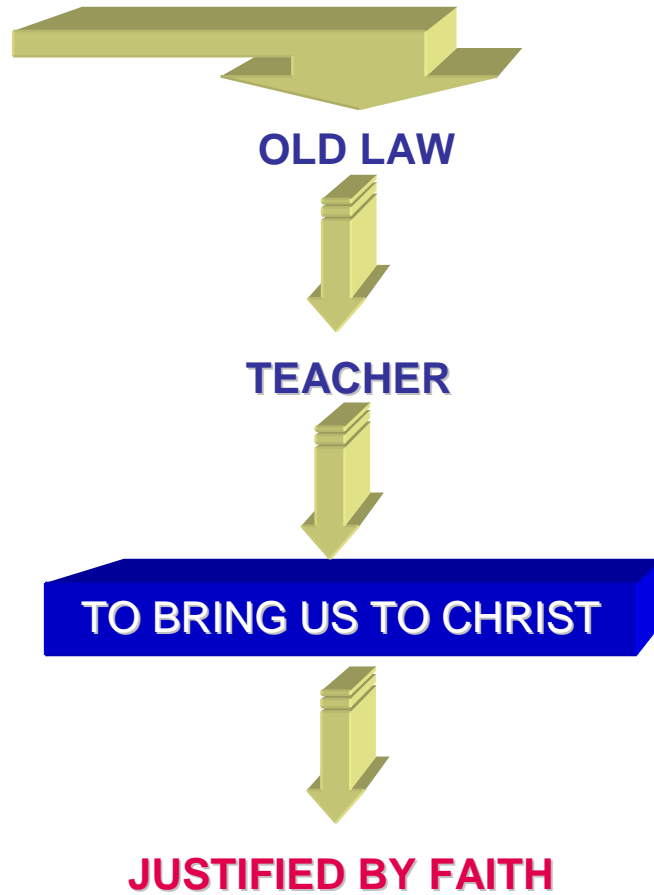
In Galatians 3:24 the Bible teaches us that the Law of the Old Testament was our teacher or tutor to lead us to Christ so that we might be justified by faith.

That law would not be permanent, but would serve as an instructor of the good things to come in Christ.

In Romans 15:4 Paul the apostle wrote:
“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”

The Old Testament was important because it has prepared us for what God had planned from the beginning. He intended to make us holy and blameless through His eternal plan of redemption.

Have you ever wondered why we see God as a harsh disciplinarian in the Old Testament and then a loving, merciful Father in the New Testament?



God used the Old Testament to instruct us so that at the revealing of his love to all, the world could see His true character. He is both just and merciful all at the same time. This is the God of the Bible.

The psalmist wrote in Psalm 33:4-5, "For the word of the LORD is upright, And all His work is done in faithfulness. He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the LORD." In this passage we see the character of God. He is not only one to carry out justice, but this world is full of His love. The justice and love of God leads us to learn that:

GOD IS HOLY

GOD'S ATTRIBUTES...

OMNISCIENT
(ALL KNOWING)

OMNIPOTENT
(ALL POWERFUL)

OMNIPRESENT
(EVERYWHERE
PRESENT)

ARE GOVERNED BY HIS CHARACTER...

When God tells us that He wants us to be holy and blameless, the main goal is to make our character like His. God is holy! In the book of Job, chapter 34, verses 10-12, we read, "Far be it from God to do wickedness, And from the Almighty to do wrong... Surely, God will not act wickedly, And the Almighty will not pervert justice." Also in Psalm 5:5 we read, "For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You." Because God is holy, He calls us to be holy. The writer of Leviticus stated the words of the Lord as:

Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine. *Leviticus 20:26*



God desires a relationship with us. He wants to have spiritual fellowship with His creation. The difficulty in this scenario is that if we want to be in this relationship with a holy God, then we too must be holy. Unfortunately when we sin, we are unable to be in the presence of God, not to mention a close loving relationship with Him. Sin is a major problem that must be removed.



The Bible teaches that sin separates us from God. In Isaiah 59:2, the prophet Isaiah wrote:

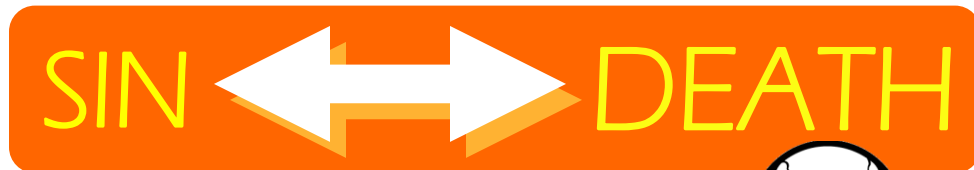


SIN



“Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden his face from you.”

Remember that the reason for God separating from us is due to His holiness. In Habakkuk 1:13 the writer says of God, “You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon wickedness.” Paul describes this predicament by saying, “you were dead in your trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1) The Bible says specifically that sin leads to death:

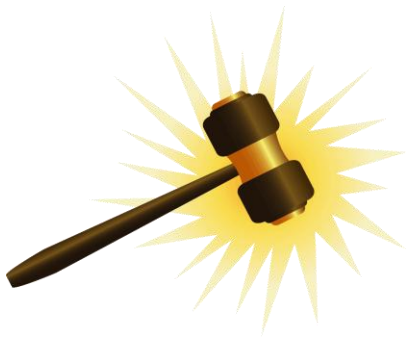


“...for the wages of sin is death...”

Romans 6:23



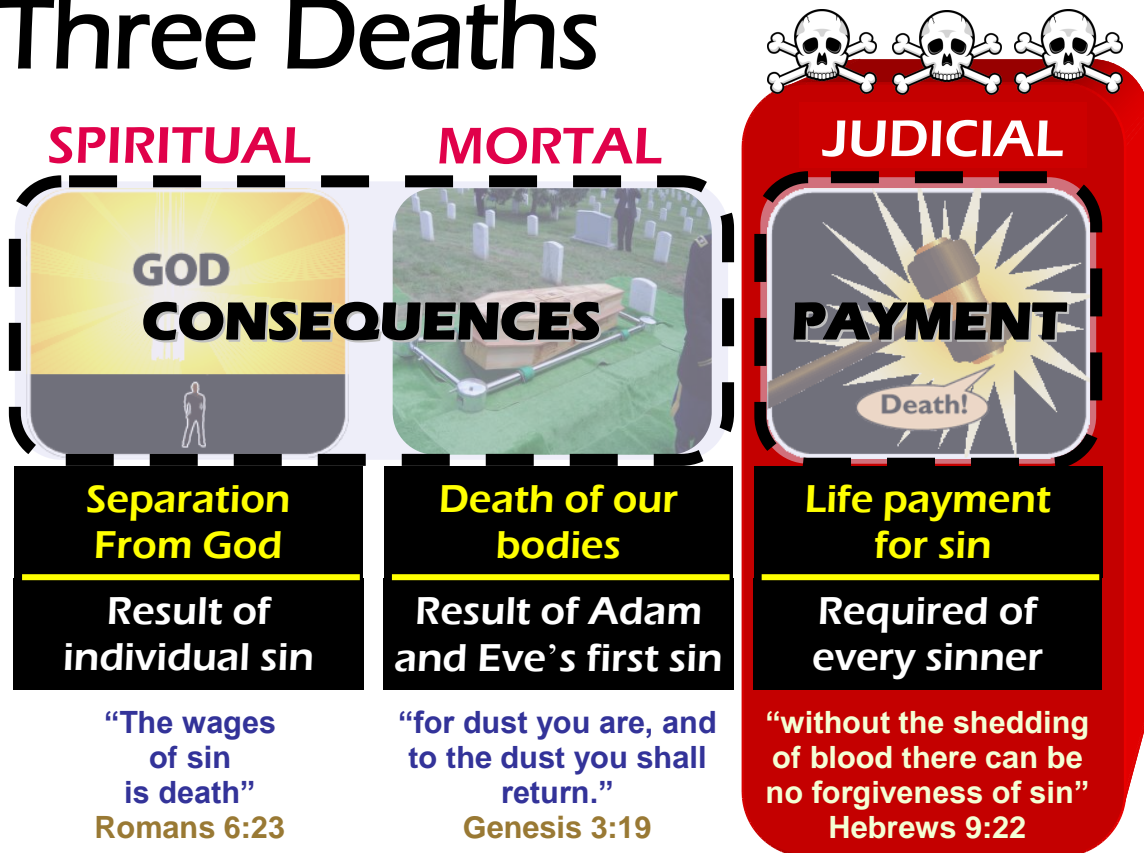
The fact is, there are consequences for our sins. Unfortunately, the consequences involve both mortal and spiritual death. When Adam and Eve committed the first sin, they were given the following consequence, “For out of the dust you were taken; for dust you are, and to the dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19). This is a picture of death and it was not an unjust punishment for sin, since God is holy and just. God had already warned Adam and Eve in saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17).



This judgment of God can be called the judicial penalty for sin. For example if you are caught speeding at 84 miles an hour in an area where the speed limit is 65 miles an hour, there is a judicial penalty that you will have to pay. The limitations were set in place and they were broken. There is nothing unjust about a judge forcing you to pay the price for your failure to abide by the law.

We find that the price for sin is a life that must be given. The Bible teaches in Hebrews 9:22, "without the shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness of sins." The problem is, that if you die for your own sins, you are just dead in your sins. Besides, the life that is to be given cannot be involved with sin. So in reality we are in a very desperate situation. In essence we can say that there are three deaths that the sinner must face. We die spiritually when we sin against God and are separated from Him. We die mortally because of sin and we are destined to return to the dust of the ground. Finally, the only way to pay the judicial penalty for sin is for blood to be shed and a life to be given. Ezekiel 18:20 reveals that, "the person who sins will die" What can a sinner do to pay this price?

Three Deaths



Before we answer the question about what a sinner can do to pay the price for sin, be sure to make this lesson very personal. The Bible informs us that:

...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” Romans 3:23

Everyone has sinned against God and is now accountable for finding a way to pay the judicial penalty for sin. The price is right; we deserve to die for breaking the laws of the God of the universe!!! God’s justice demands death as the payment for sin. Our sin has separated us from a holy God, and the price of death hangs over our head (which we cannot pay) by a just God! So the question is, what can you, as a sinner, do to pay the judicial penalty for sin?



Now that we have spoken in great detail about God’s justice, we come to the point where we reveal God’s love. God’s love provides a way to pay the price for sin. God’s grace and mercy are demonstrated by giving us life when it is not deserved and by not giving us death when it is deserved.

GRACE
God *gives* what is *not* deserved
(Rom. 3:23-26; 5:6-11) **LIFE**

MERCY
God *does not give* what *is* deserved
(Romans 1:18) **DEATH**

In the Old Testament we are introduced to the concept of atonement. This is where an animal was sacrificed and its blood was shed for the sins of the people. This was God's way of showing His grace and mercy to His people, which demonstrated His love.

In a passage describing the Day of Atonement, we read:

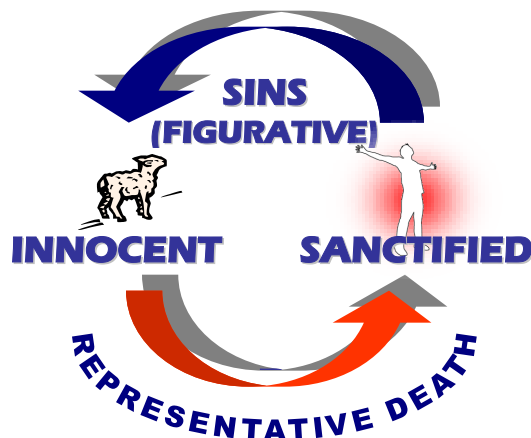
"for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you will be clean from all your sins before the LORD."

Leveticus 16:30



BLOOD

God then explained why this method of sacrificial death was acceptable to atone for the sins of the people. In Leviticus 17:11 it is written, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement." Since life is in the blood, then the innocent life of the animal sacrificed provided the blood (life) to die in the place of the sinner. This can be referred to as representative death. The death of the innocent life is representative of the sinner and by the sacrifice, the price has been paid. We are then considered sanctified before a holy God.





Once sin has been removed we are sanctified in God's sight and we are permitted to dwell in the presence of God again. Since sin separates us from God, then sanctification reunites us with God.

For example, do you remember the story of Adam and Eve, where they were being questioned by God after they had sinned? Adam and Eve hid themselves in the midst of the trees because they knew that they were naked. God then asked them if they had disobeyed His command. They had sinned and were

then in need of the forgiveness of their sins. Notice how God remedied the situation even from the very beginning of time.

"The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them." Gen 3:21

Have you ever thought about where God found the skin to make the garments? While it could be argued that He is God and He can do whatever He wants, it is very clear that a sacrifice was made for sin. God then clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of that animal sacrifice.



This tells us that God's justice and mercy have been clearly demonstrated to His people from the beginning. One point that will always be true and that must be understood is:

We will never appreciate God's *mercy* if we don't understand His *justice*

Adam and Eve died representatively through the death of the animals offered to provide for them the garments to cover their sinfulness. While God's justice can be seen in the death being suffered by the animal, God's mercy is also abundantly expressed in that Adam and Eve were still alive. From that moment God has been seeking to show all people the way to life.

What made this plan for atonement work? Why did this sacrificial system atone for the sins of the people? The answer can be found in a principle called, "faith".

Let me illustrate. A man was once accustomed to offering a yearly sacrifice for his sins. The man often took his son with him when he traveled to offer the animals. Unfortunately, the man died and the child never understood why his father would offer these sacrifices. What would happen if one day when the child became a man he simply decided to do as his father did because it was a tradition. Would he be offering the animal while realizing that it was an offering for his sin? No. This is where faith has a vital role in the process of the forgiveness of sins.

When we act upon what we hear from the word of God, we are living by faith. Consider the following chart based upon Hebrews chapter 11:

ROM. 10:17	Abel	OFFERED
	Noah	PREPARED
	Abraham	OBEYED
	Abraham	LIVED
	Sarah	CONCEIVED
	Abraham	OFFERED
	Isaac	BLESSED
	Israelites	PASSED THROUGH
	Walls of Jericho	ENCIRCLED

Genuine FAITH requires Belief-based ACTION

The Bible gives us an understanding of faith in Hebrews 11 while reporting about all of these faithful saints of the Old Testament. In Hebrews 11:6, it is written,

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Hebrews 11:6

"must believe" = FAITH "diligently seek" = ACTION

*(John 3:16) For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

Contradiction?

*(James 2:19) You **believe** that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.*

Does the Bible contradict itself? No. While it would look like the Bible is teaching that if we mentally give recognition to who Jesus is we can be saved, it then states that the demons believe in this same way. Does this mean that the demons will be saved (See Mark 5:7)? No. We understand that the type of faith that the demons have is one where Jesus is acknowledged but is not obeyed. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys. This has been true throughout the Bible. James handles this dilemma when he writes that faith alone is not acceptable without the belief based actions that accompany faith. James makes several valid points in James 2:14-26,

(v14) Can that type of faith save a man?

(v17) Faith without action is dead

(v18) Faith is shown by action

(v20) Faith without action is "useless"

(v21-23) Abraham's faith was perfected by belief working with his actions

(v24) Justified by action, not "faith alone"

(v26) Faith without action is dead

(v19) Devils are believers! – and lost

We all know that it is impossible for true believers to be in hell, but that is where the believing demons are. We must conclude after investigating this passage that true faith is more than merely believing (mentally).





Let me illustrate this by talking about what happens on your birthday. If you went to the mail box and found an envelope with your name on it, there is a pretty good chance you will be quick to open it. You pull out a card and open it up to find a check for one hundred dollars. Would you consider that check to be a gift? Yes. Now you get into the car, drive to the

bank, endorse the check and wait to receive the cash. After receiving the gift money you return home. The question is, since you went to the mailbox and picked up the mail, opened the card and found the check, went to the bank and waited to receive the money, is it still a gift? Yes. You didn't earn the money. It was sent to you by someone else and you must realize that even though you had to do something to take advantage of the gift, it was still a gift. This is how faith "works".



**"What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?
Can such faith save him?"**

James 2:14

The obvious answer to the question that James asks is a resounding, "NO". We cannot be saved by simply believing. We need to live according to our faith and this requires some action on our part. If we are going to adequately deal with and overcome our sins we need to listen to our God who is seeking to redeem us. When we are sick in this life, we often seek out the advice and assistance of the physical health authorities. When a doctor gives you a bottle of pills to take, it will do you absolutely no good to simply believe that if you took the medicine that it would heal you and make you whole again. You understand that you will have to follow the instructions for taking or administering the healing power of the prescription. When the Lord calls us to obey Him and He tells us just what we need to do to be saved, we need to listen and take what He offers us. Just as the faith in atonement for animal sacrifice along with the offering, is what made the sinner clean, we too must be willing to accept what the Lord has asked of us to be forgiven of our sins and obey Him.



At this point in our lesson let me inform you that you now know more about the eternal plan of God than most people in the world. You are to be commended for taking this opportunity seriously as we study about seeing the big picture of the Bible story.

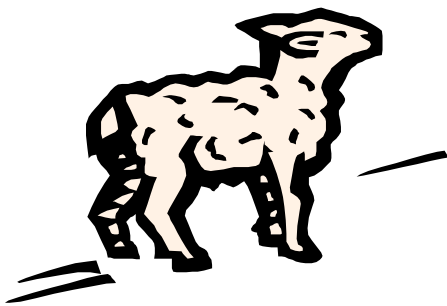
TUTOR
Gal 3:24

We have studied sin, sacrifice, holiness, grace, faith, blood atonement, justice, mercy, redemption, reconciliation, the concept of representative death and sanctification along with many other subjects.

While we have investigated some New Testament passages as proof texts and examples, most of this biblical knowledge has come from the Old Testament. Do you remember what the purpose of the old law was? We read it in the beginning of our lesson. In Galatians 3:24 we read,

“Therefore the Law has become our tutor {to lead us} to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.”

Without an understanding of what the Old Testament teaches us, we will never be able to grasp what the New Testament teaches us. One of the clearest examples of this is to look at what happened when the Christ finally did come to earth. When John saw Jesus coming to start His ministry, he said in John 1:29,



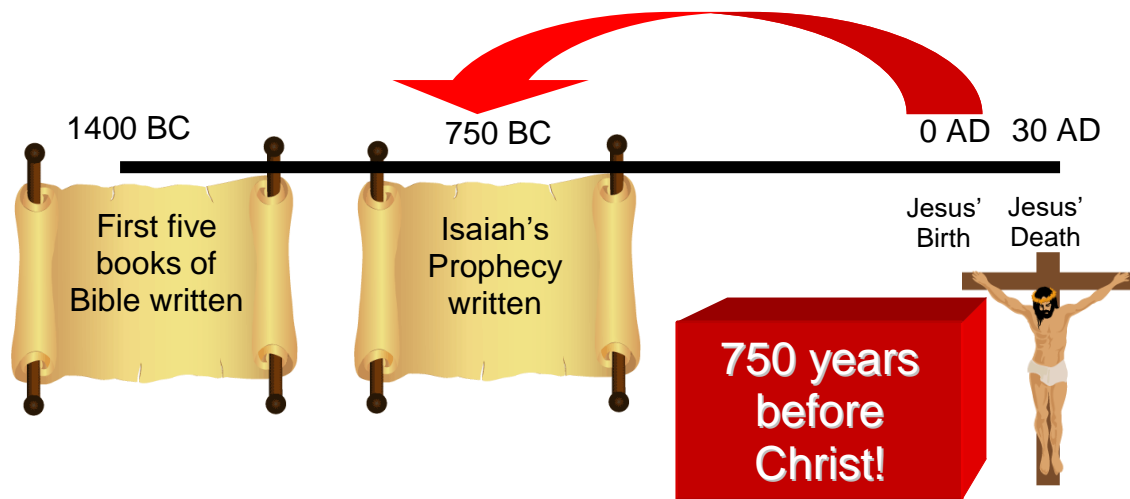
“Behold the

LAMB OF GOD

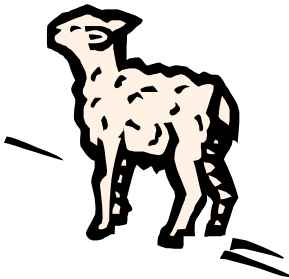
that takes away
the sin of the world”

The only way that John’s statement makes any sense is in light of what we studied in the Old Testament. Why call Jesus a lamb or even beyond that “the Lamb of God”? The answer is simple. Jesus was sent here by God to redeem us by dying for our sins. He came to pay the price for sin once and for all. He died so that we may live.

Isaiah 53



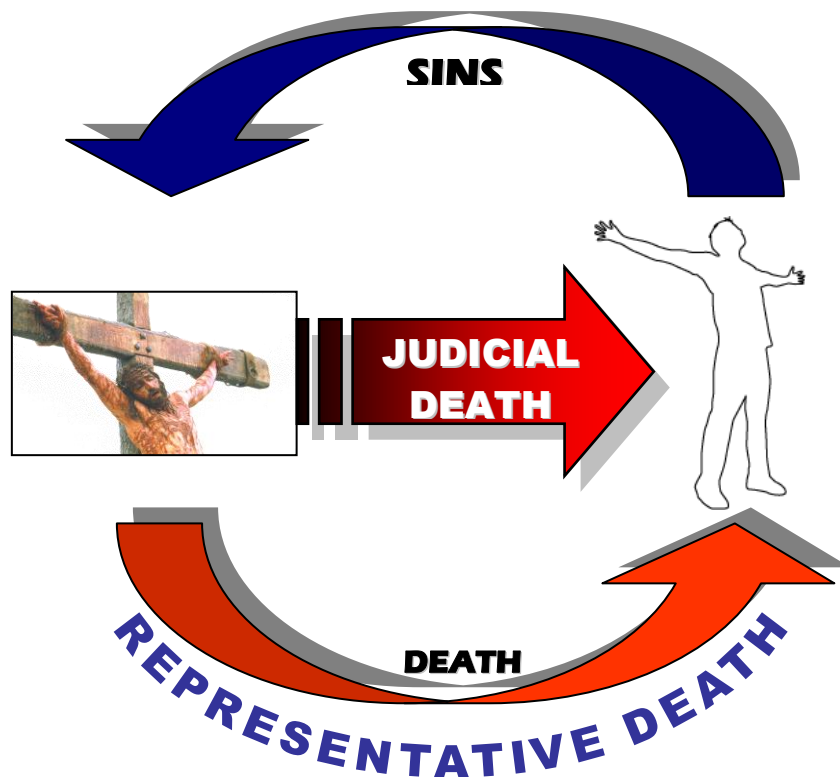
It was 750 years before the time that Jesus came that Isaiah wrote about His suffering for the sins of the world. Isaiah prophesied, *“Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried... He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed...Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”* The prophet Isaiah continued, *“He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due...But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities...He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors.”* (Isaiah 53:4-6, 8, 10, 12). The language found in this text is clearly showing us that God planned to offer His Son, Jesus, to die for the sins of the world.



The Lord is spoken of as this sacrifice throughout the Bible. In I Peter 1:18-19 the apostle wrote, “knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.” Paul told Christians, “for you have been bought with a price”, in reference to the shed blood of Christ (I Cor. 6:20). We were redeemed from our sin, by the blood of the Lamb of God. When we were held in the bondage of sin, the ransom price was paid. In Matthew 20:28, we read, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”.

A few chapters later in Matthew 26:28, Jesus said, "...for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." One of the main reasons that Jesus could offer Himself as the sacrifice for sin is because He was sinless. John wrote in I John 3:5, "But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin." If Jesus had committed one sin, He could not have been the Lamb of God. Just like the amoral animal sacrifices of the Old Testament that were innocent, so also was Jesus the Son of God. Peter wrote the following about Jesus:

"He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin." I Peter 2:24



The fact that Jesus died for our sins shows us God's justice and mercy all over again. He allowed His Son to take our place. He died so that we might die to sin but live eternally. When Jesus died and paid the price for our sins, the one truth that gives us hope is that He was raised up from the dead never to die again. Mankind has been under the curse of sin and has been destined to die for a long time. We now have the opportunity through Jesus the Son of God to be redeemed from sin and to be promised everlasting life. The Bible says in II Corinthians 5:21 that God, "...made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

QUESTIONS

1. How many books are in the Bible? How many in the Old Testament and how many in the New Testament?
2. What were the parting words of Jesus to His disciples?
3. What will happen to the souls that never obey the gospel of Christ according to II Thessalonians 1:7-9?
4. How many gospels are revealed in the Bible?
5. How can we be certain that we are following the gospel?
6. In Galatians 3:24, what does the apostle Paul say was the purpose of the Old Testament?
7. What does it mean when we say that God is both just and loving at the same time?
8. Since God is holy, what does He require from us in order to be in fellowship with Him?
9. What separates us from God and leads to death?
10. What are the three deaths revealed in the Bible and which one is the most consequential because of its penalty and the payment required?
11. What is required of the sinner to pay the penalty for sin?
12. How did God demonstrate mercy and love in atoning for sin?
13. What is the significance of blood in God's plan of redemption?
14. Why did the blood cover the sins and allow the sinner to be forgiven?
15. How does faith factor into our forgiveness and why should faith include obedience from the heart?
16. What is the significance of Jesus being "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"?
17. Have you allowed the blood of Jesus to wash away your sins?

Please continue to lesson 2 for more information about the BIG Picture of the Bible. Thank you for completing lesson 1 and for your interest in studying the word of God.

Seeing the BIG PICTURE

Bible Study Series
Lesson 2

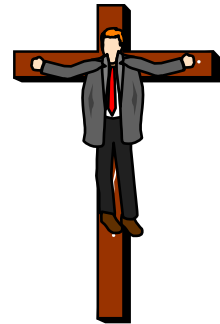


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When Christ died on the cross the eternal plan of God in redemption was fulfilled. Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). Paul affirmed this when he told Christians in Colossians 1:22, "But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation." Those who accept the offer of salvation are no longer guilty of the judicial price that once hung over their head. This penalty is removed in Christ. Again the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 5:8-10, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." In Romans 6 then, we read in verse 8, "Our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with."

The idea of our death or crucifixion with Christ is all over the New Testament. For example, Paul wrote to Timothy and said,



"It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him" I Timothy 2:11

It was Paul who said of himself, "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). When addressing all Christians Paul said in II Corinthians 5:14, "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died." From this we can conclude that our sins cannot and will not be forgiven:

UNLESS:

We have died *with* Christ
We have been united *with* Christ in His death
We have been crucified *with* Christ
We have died *to* sin

Right now you should be asking only one question. That question is:

When?

At what point in my faith do I die to sin? When do I die with Christ? At what point does God view me as having been united with Christ in His death? When does God consider me to have been crucified with Christ? These are all important questions. If we can determine when it is that we are crucified with Christ, then we can determine when we are redeemed and freed from sin.

The answer to this question is clearly stated in Romans chapter 6. Paul began in that text,

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? [Romans 6:1-2](#)

How did these Christians die to sin? Paul continues and reveals,



“Or don’t you know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?”

**Baptized into Christ
Baptized into His death**

Now pay special attention to what Paul says next:

“Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

We have a new life in Christ after we have been buried with Him by being baptized into His death. The Bible promises that if we are buried with Christ we will also be raised to life just like He was after His own death. We no longer have to be dead in our sins because we can die with Christ and be raised to walk in the newness of life. The Bible calls this in other places a new birth (John 3:5) and a new creation (II Cor. 5:17).



To further establish these truths Paul says in verses 5-6,

“For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection knowing this,

that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin”

Paul continues in verse 7 to say that those who have died are freed from sin. That means that our judicial death has taken place. But the most important statement that we read in Romans chapter 6 is what is found in verse 8,

Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him...

Do you believe that you are going to live with Christ? You need to die with Christ and you can have faith that you will live with Him. Just as verse 10 tells us that Jesus died to sin, verses 11 and 12 reveal that once we have died with Christ we should also cease the practice of sin and live the rest of our life for the Lord.

The question is, did the Christians in Rome earn their salvation because they were obedient to the gospel in being baptized? No. These were people who were demonstrating true faith before God. We defined faith biblically by recognizing that it included obedience from the heart. Listen to Paul in Romans 6:17,

“But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed...”

Did these Christians receive salvation and were they able to be in a relationship with God again? Yes! Were they now destined for eternal life as opposed to eternal separation from God? Yes! Let's hear Paul in Romans chapter 6 verse 22,

“But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.”

These Christians were sanctified and made holy again. They were forgiven and freed from sin. The reward for their faith was eternal life. This is so easy to understand and yet so many people are unwilling to accept these simple truths from the word of God. Paul concluded in verse 23, “for the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

This last statement shows that even after we have obeyed the gospel of Christ, salvation is still a “gift”. We can never earn or merit salvation. Our responsibility is to love the Lord enough that we would be willing to obey His words. When we do, it is called faith, and true faith in the Lord and His saving power will cleanse even the vilest of sinners.

Right after Paul taught that the law was a tutor to lead us to Christ, he tells us that the purpose was so that we could be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24). In Galatians 3:26 Paul added, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus”. The question is when do we become a child of God and how is faith demonstrated. All you have to do is read verse 27 and it says,

“For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

Faith is demonstrated by being baptized into Christ. This is the only way that we can get into Christ where there is no condemnation (Romans 8:1). Otherwise we are outside of Christ and are without salvation from our sins. It is not about what we do, but our faith in what the Lord is doing. This is made clear in Colossians 2:12, “having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” Peter saw the clear connection between our salvation and baptism. It was not because we were trusting in water to remove the filth of our flesh or even to rid us of even one sin, Peter knew that when we submit to God in baptism, that we are making an appeal to God for a good conscience. Peter simply said, “Baptism now saves you” (I Peter 3:21). It is a spiritual submission when we trust in God’s plan to save us by the blood of His Son. If indeed the blood of Jesus was shed in His death, then I need to come into His death to come in contact with His saving power. God chose baptism to serve that purpose. This is why men like Paul, when he was converted, was told,

“Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.” Acts 22:16

We read about those who were converted as being washed, sanctified, and justified (I Cor. 6:11). While a lot of religions consider baptism to be a secondary or even an unnecessary part of the Christian faith, Paul thought it was so important that he included it in a list with other cardinal doctrines of the faith. He said, “There is one body and one Spirit -just as you were called to one hope when you were called, one Lord, one faith,

one baptism,

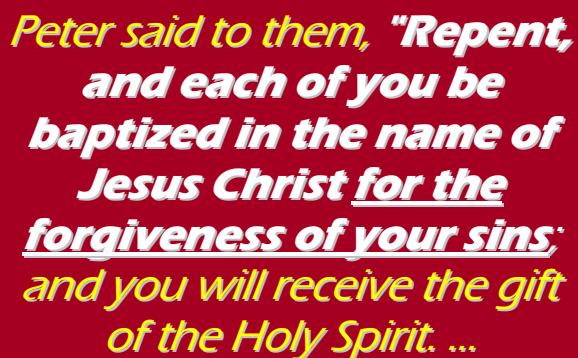
one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all." What is baptism doing on a list with the Lord Jesus, the Father and the Spirit?

The answer is simple. It was by the authority of God that we are commanded to be baptized (Matthew 28:18-20). We started out by reading Mark's account of the great commission where it says, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." Let us finish that passage for emphasis at this time. Jesus continued there and said,

"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." Mark 16:16

When the Lord commanded His disciples to preach the gospel to the world, He made it clear that baptism would be connected directly with a man's salvation. It is not offensive to the Lord that after He shed His blood for our sins that we would put such an emphasis on the act of baptism. After all, that is exactly where He put the emphasis.

Once the apostles began to fulfill this great commission, we read exactly what they preached in the book of Acts,

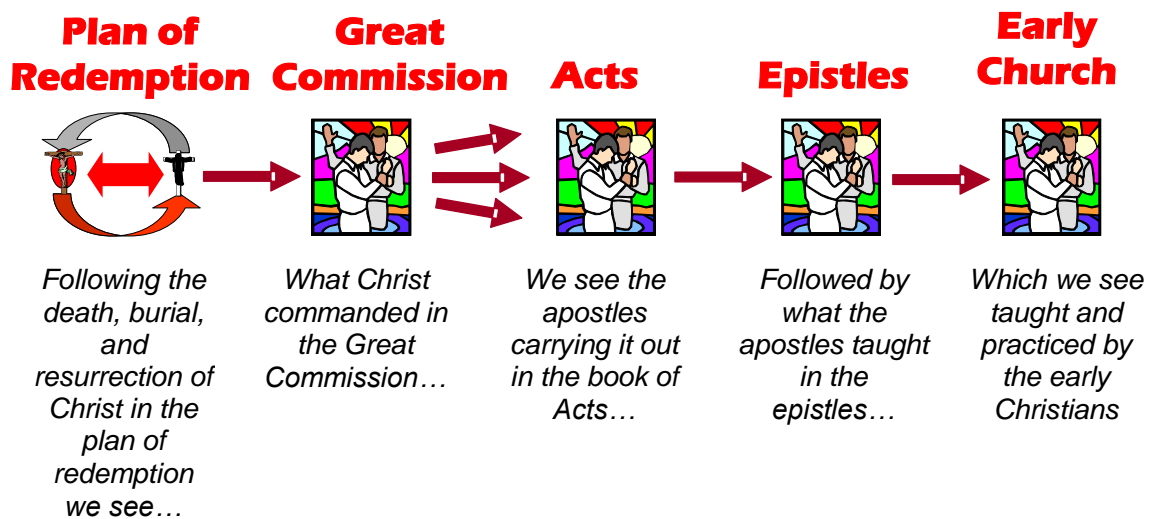


Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ..."

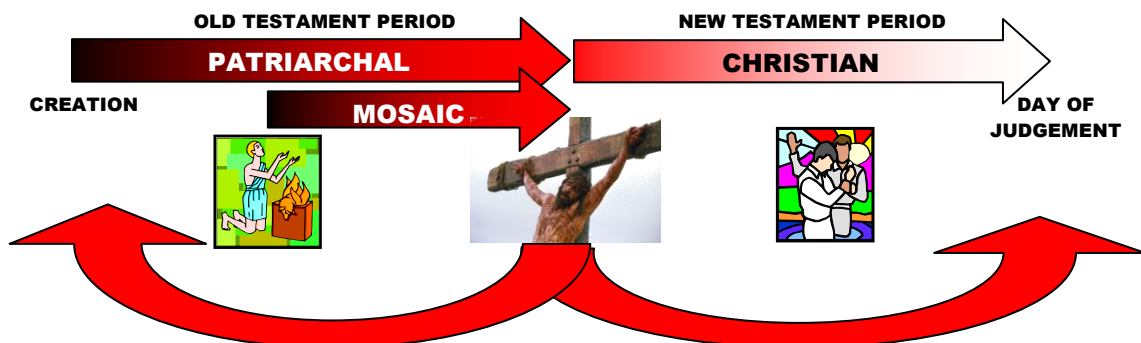
When someone wants to know what to do to be saved, the gospel response must match what we read in the Bible. Obedience does not nullify grace as we see that, "those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls..." The Lord was collecting those who loved Him and had an obedient faith into His body, the church. This adding to the church takes place every time that someone is saved through obedience to the gospel (Read Acts 2:47).

The early Christians wrote about these truths even outside of the New Testament. Barnabas, who was a companion of the apostle Paul, wrote, "Blessed are they who, placing their trust in the cross, have gone down in the water...We indeed descend into the water full of sins and defilement. However, we come up, bearing fruit in our heart, having the fear of God and the trust of Jesus in our spirit."

As we conclude our study in taking a look at the Bible story from the beginning to end, let us summarize all that we have learned and then ask some important questions.



From the Old Testament to the New Testament we can see that everything written pointed to the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. From now until eternity the saving power of Jesus will be preached to all mankind. Those who accept the invitation to come and be saved will enjoy eternity with the Lord. Those who reject this loving invitation will suffer eternal separation from the Lord. Everyone deserves a chance to accept or refuse this gospel (good news). What will you do with Jesus?



God's amazing plan of redemption has been made available and this plan has been unfolding for thousands of years. We have the blessed opportunity to see all that God has done to redeem us and then respond to the gospel in full submission and obedience.

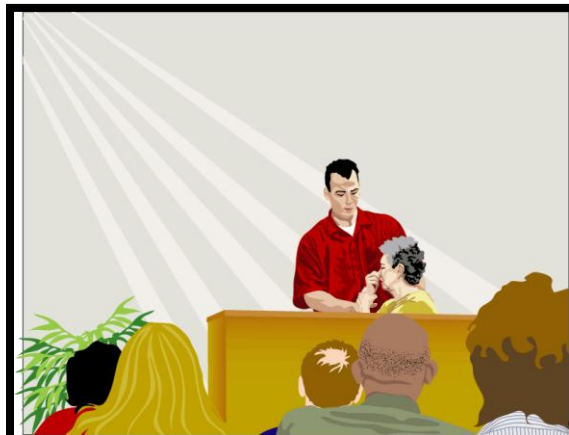
There is a song that we sing called, "Nothing But the Blood of Jesus" where the question is asked, "What can wash away my sins?" and the answer is, "Nothing but the blood of Jesus". The lyrics of this song are so true. Will you submit to the will of God and be buried with Christ in baptism? Have you died with Christ?

Perhaps you are feeling like the psalmist who wrote,

"For my iniquities are gone over my head; As a heavy burden they weigh too much for me.

Psalm 38:4

You can have your sins washed away today? Don't delay. If we can help you to accept the eternal plan of redemption and be obedient to the Lord by submitting to the gospel, please let us know. We would consider it a joy to be there when you start your new life in Christ. We are ready and willing to serve you. If you have any other questions or just want to talk, we would be thrilled to have the opportunity to sit down with you and discuss further these matters related to salvation.



Please send all questions and further interest in future Bible studies to:
Cedar Avenue Church of Christ
210 Cedar Avenue
Moundsville, WV 26041

Thank you for taking the time to study the Bible with us. For more biblical materials, visit www.CedarSower.com. Please come and visit with us in one of our assemblies for worship and spiritual edification. God bless you!

QUESTIONS

- 1. What does Paul mean when he says that he has been crucified with Christ?**
- 2. When do we die to sin and die with Christ according to Paul in Romans 6?**
- 3. When do we start our new life in Christ and have the hope of our own resurrection from death when life on earth is over?**
- 4. After baptism, have we earned or merited salvation?**
- 5. What was the definition of faith that we found in the Bible in Romans 6:17? How can you prove salvation is still a gift even after obedient faith from Romans 6:23?**
- 6. Galatians 3:26 teaches that we are all children of God by faith. What does Paul say in verse 27 that shows how baptism is important to that new birth?**
- 7. In Paul's conversion he was told not to delay, to get up and be baptized to wash away his sins. Was Paul saved prior to baptism? If so, how can someone be saved prior to having their sins washed away?**
- 8. Jesus taught in his final message to his disciples that they should go into all the world and preach the gospel. What did he say next in Mark 16:16? How can someone claim to follow Jesus and not obey these words?**
- 9. When the disciples of Jesus went into the world preaching the gospel, how did Peter respond to the question of the people about what they should do about their sins in Acts 2:38?**
- 10. About 3,000 souls responded in obedience to the gospel and the Lord added these souls to His church. How does this show the importance of being a part of the church of Christ?**
- 11. What have you decided to do with the gospel (good news about Jesus)? Are you ready to become a follower of Christ and become a member of His church?**
- 12. How can we help you?**

This brings the study of the BIG Picture of the Bible to a close, but our studies together do not have to end. If you want to respond to the gospel invitation or if you want to study at greater length from the word of God, we want to offer you the opportunity to come and study with us. If you cannot come and visit our church family, we want to continue to communicate and help you get connected to a good church where you are.