

**The Single-Thread Key
to Understanding the Bible**

**by
Philip C. Strong**

Introduction

Many, including myself, have honestly and diligently sought to read through the Bible only to become discouraged, disheartened, and confused. This is especially troubling if something is known of its content and purpose since we then understand the importance of this *Book of books*. These are words given by the inspiration of the Almighty Creator of the universe! Their purpose is to provide all of humanity with an understanding of this life that prepares us for eternity. What could possibly be more important than that? And yet, when we try to read it all, it just doesn't seem to make any sense. So we get discouraged and put it on the shelf telling ourselves, "Someday..." Well that *Someday* is here. This course contains no magic pills or spells. And since I, as your guide, am certainly no magician or scholar, there must be a simpler answer... and there is! The key to understanding the scriptures, including all the genealogies, numberings, prophecies and the like, is to realize that there is a **single thread** which runs through the books from beginning to end- cover to cover. That **single thread** is **Jesus Christ**. When we realize that everything prior to His arrival on the pages of the divine novel is pointed toward that event, and that everything following is pointing to our uniting with Him for eternity in heaven, then most of the difficulties of Bible reading become much easier. It is described in Ephesians as a "mystery" and indeed in some ways it is. But the difficulties of modern mysteries are usually all revealed when the story is completed. So it is with the *biblical mystery*. When we see the final page and the completed form of Jesus revealed in the scriptures, then the whole story makes sense. Many of the *clues* along the way which went unnoticed now become clear. Unfortunately, many of us give up before the mystery is revealed. So it is my hope with this course to give you, the student, an overall view of the basics of the story. This will hopefully accomplish at least two purposes:

1. Allow you to get the 'Reader's Digest' (condensed) version of the story so that the basics of what one must do to be saved can be clearly, concisely, and quickly seen. After all, eternity is at stake and the very purpose of the sacred text and of Jesus Christ is to "save that which is lost".
2. Provide you with a foundation upon which further Bible reading and study can be built for a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Word.

What I want us to do then, is to think of time as a continuum beginning with "*the beginning*" of **Genesis 1:1**- that is the *dawn of creation*, and stretching forward until the *Day of Eternity*- or the day that this life ceases to exist and the next begins as pictured in **Revelation**. From that beginning point to the termination of physical time and the beginning of the hereafter, that **single thread** of **Jesus Christ** traverses the pages of the Holy Bible. If we follow that thread through the pages of Old and New Testaments alike, and understand the passages in light of this singular *story line*, the mysteries of the Bible and difficulties of biblical reading are rolled back to reveal the glorious light of comprehension upon God's holy narrative. With this **single thread** method, we will seek to hang enough of the picture events of the Bible in sequential and chronological order to tell the story. Thus all the *pieces* of the story which we may have known since early childhood, but could not see the connection and correlation between them, can be put together to complete the picture. The picture reveals Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of both man's need and destiny. This is the aim and purpose of our study. With these things in mind, it is prayerfully rendered to you the student in hopes that not only can this life be lived with Jesus Christ... but also the next shall be.

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Lesson #1: *Having Faith in God's Word*

Heb.11:1,6 & Rom.10:17

Many people today use the word "*faith*" in a multitude of different ways. One man means by that word simply that he believes something will occur without any emphasis upon Deity whatsoever. Another may mean that he has a "*better felt than told*" sensation which he believes to be a faith which was given to him by God. Still another believes that God speaks to him either directly or perhaps through dreams or visions and that as a result of these, he has faith. Are *all* of these possible? Are *any* of them possible? Please notice two of the passages cited above. Heb.11:1,6 tells us not only what *faith* is, but also why faith is necessary. So then to have true *biblical* faith, one must:

Believe the *evidence* for God's existence; that is, come to the *mental ascent* that God is. This involves the mind of man- the *intellect*. One who would "*have faith*" must also. . .

Trust that He is a *rewarder* of those who *seek* Him. In other words, we live our lives to the best of our abilities in compliance with God's will *trusting* that our efforts will be rewarded in the Day of Judgment. This life of dedication may not necessarily yield any immediate benefits, but we trust God regarding the future rewards of our devotion. This involves the heart of man. At least to some degree, trust is an emotional process therefore requiring the involvement of the heart.

These two elements accomplished, it is also implied that we must then be *Obedient* to Him. The verse says God rewards those who "*seek Him*". This is accomplished by obedience in the life of God's will (cf. Matt.7:21). Obedience is not just an activity of the heart- it requires the body of mankind, John 14:21,23.

Thus, true biblical faith as described in Heb.11:6 as being necessary to be pleasing to God, requires the involvement of the **head** (mental ascent), the **heart** (emotions- specifically *trust*), and the **body** (physical obedience) of those who would profess *faith in God*.

But how is this *faith* attained? Now notice the passage in Rom. 10:17 where it explains the process by which faith "*arrives*". It comes not through *personal experiences* of dreams or visions, nor is it *bestowed* upon us by God through some direct method of divine operation upon our hearts. Instead, *biblical faith* is the product of *seeking* God on the pages of His revealed word. Heb.11:1 - 12:3 further defines for us what faith is, both directly and also through the examples of past *faithful* men and women of God. Notice in each of these examples that their faith caused them to act- to be obedient to God's will.

Now, if we understand what God says in His word concerning so-called "*latter day revelations*" in passages such as Gal.1:6-8; Jude 3; & Rev.22:18-19, (that such do not originate from God), then does it not follow that before anyone can have "*faith in God*" or "*faith in Jesus Christ*," that he must first have faith in the only source of knowledge and understanding of Deity that

humanity possesses: **The Word Of God?!!!** True Christians do not believe in God because they feel something which they cannot explain or point out authority for in God's word. They believe in God and Christ because He has revealed Himself to them in words which are understandable and can be received or accepted in an intelligent manner. So then, faith in God, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit must be preceded by a firm persuasion in the Bible as the means by which the Godhead chose to reveal Himself to humanity.

**Then to truly have Faith in God, an Individual must first
have *Faith* concerning 3 aspects of His *Word*:**

1. **Faith in its *DIVINITY*- One must believe that it came from God; that Deity is responsible for the contents.** Please read the following passages in your Bible.

1Thess.2:13 Paul was thankful that the Thessalonians had received the message he proclaimed as “the word of God.”

2Tim.3:16 The Greek word which is translated as “*inspired*” (NASV) or “*inspiration*” (KJV) is *theopneustos* {teh-op'-nyoo-stos}. STRONG'S GREEK DICTIONARY defines it as “divinely breathed in: -given by inspiration of God.” Thus, the scriptures are *breathed* by God. Now note the purpose for them in **vv.16b-17**. If the scriptures are to accomplish the task mentioned (*adequacy / equipped for every good work*), then it is good indeed that they come from God!

1Cor.2:6-13 That the scriptures are *Verbally Inspired* can be plainly seen. God, through the Holy Spirit, (**John 16:13-14**) gave or *guarded* even the words the apostles used to relay His message thus eliminating the possibility of human error.

Eph.3:3-4 From this passage we should note primarily two things:

- (a) the “Plenary (or full) Inspiration” of the scriptures. Remember also that the apostle Paul is speaking.
- (b) understanding comes from reading what the inspired writers of the N.T. wrote.

Proper appreciation and respect for the Bible is based upon **FAITH** that it came from God and is therefore His Divine Will.

2. **Faith in its *COMPLETENESS*- If an all-wise God gave us His Divine Word in order that we might study, learn, understand, and apply it to our lives, then He gave us the words that can accomplish the salvation of our souls- *the Complete Word*. There are three questions which must be asked and answered in this regard:**

- (a) “*Is all the information there that God intended for us to have?*” (Has part of it been lost?) Again, note these passages in your Bible:

2Pet.1:2-4 God has supplied all that man needs to know. If some of His word has been lost, would that not impeach the omnipotence (*all-powerfulness*) of God? If He was unable to preserve His will for the future generations of mankind, then perhaps He would also be unable to fulfill the promises contained in it? Such is certainly not so, **Heb.6:17-18!** (see also **1Pet.1:22-25**)

(b) **“Can I understand it?”** (Is it accessible to everyone?)

Consider the logic, or lack thereof, of this question. What kind of a god would give a plan by which salvation was offered in words that the subjects who were in dire need of that salvation could not comprehend? How unfair that would be! That would make *my* faith dependent upon someone else’s understanding of the word. Again, this is not so, **Ezk.18:20.**

John 8:31-32 Those who abide, or live in, His words are truly disciples of His. How can this be if His word is not discernable?

2Thess.1:6-12 There are two groups of people mentioned here upon whom the retribution of judgment will be dealt:

- those who do not know God; and
- those who do not obey His gospel.

Now, did He give us a gospel which we can understand and obey, or didn't He? Which does the Bible indicate?

(c) **“Does it completely supply my needs?”** Do I need anything in addition to the gospel? Creeds? Manuals? Catechisms? Note that it:

Jas.1:21 is able to save souls

Rom.1:16 is the power of God to salvation

Luke 8:11 is the seed of the kingdom

2Pet.1:3 contains everything pertaining to life and godliness

2Tim.3:16-17 is able to thoroughly furnish

Phil.4:19 supplies every need.

What more is needed? Certainly the Bible does not answer every question we might desire to know, but it does give *all* the answers we presently *need to know* to be pleasing to God.

3. **Faith in its AUTHORITY-** Authority must be legitimately attained for proper rule. God has that authority by *Right of Creation*, **Gen.1:1,27** > **Heb.1:1**. We must then believe that God has the *“Right”* to command and that, given the preceding information, He accomplishes this prerogative through His Word. Please note following points which demonstrate this principle.

(a) **God gave Christ Authority in the Spiritual Realm.**

Col.1:15-19 it was His good pleasure
Luke 9:35 He said “*listen to Him*”
Matt.28:18 “*All authority has been given...*”
John 1:1-14 Christ was also Creator > Authority

(b) **While on earth, Jesus prepared the apostles to carry the gospel to the world after His ascension.**

John 14:16 He would send another “Comforter”-

John 14:17 “even the Spirit of Truth”.

John 16:13-15 Notice the authority transfer.

Acts 1:8 They would receive power (authority) with the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:1-4 What they received, they spoke. What did they speak? God’s words, Christ’s words, and the Spirit’s words which are all one and the same- but **not** their own words or ideas!

At first, these *inspired* men **spoke** the words of God, they later **wrote** the words of God by the same process of “*God-breathing*.” Eph.3:3-5; 1Cor.14:37

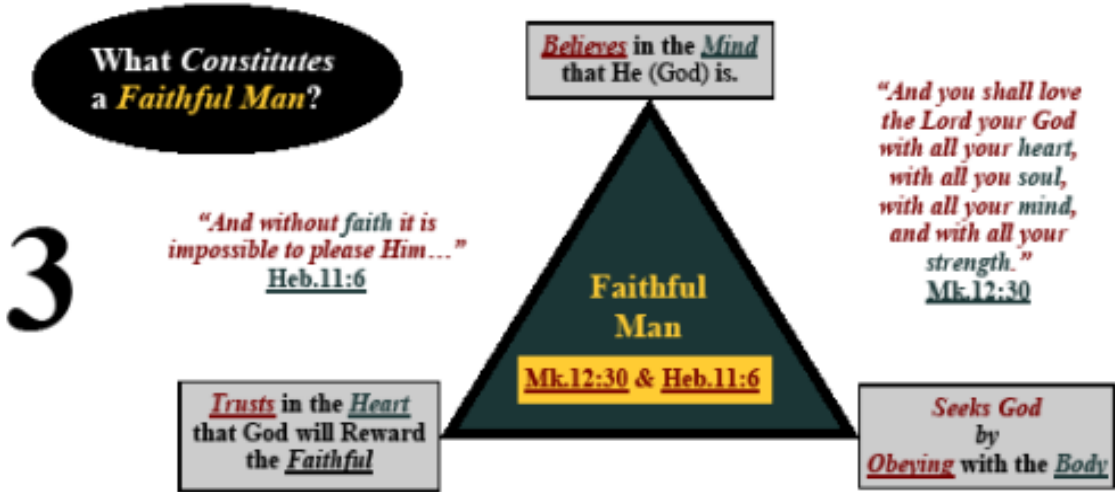
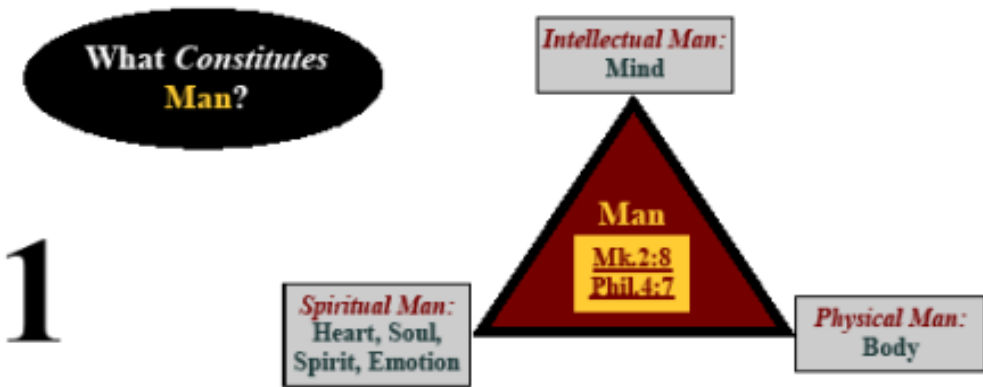
Conclusion: Can we learn about God by looking at a flower (His *creation*) or even searching our own inner being? While it is certainly true that we may recognize *a Creator* by the creation (**cf. Rom.1:20**), it is also true that only through intelligent perception of His words do we learn of His desires and requirements of us. For one to say, “*I feel like I am saved*” gives testimony to self, not to God, **1John 2:3**. We must have faith the Bible came from an all-wise Creator, that He had proper authority to rule by right of creation, and that His rule is manifested in the pages of the New Testament. If these are not true, why believe it? If we cannot believe it came from such a source, then we must not obey it! **But if we believe that it is indeed the word of God and not men, and we believe that He has the proper authority to rule, then we have no choice but to obey it!**

Will you???

In the next lesson, we will begin to look specifically at three distinct periods of bible history as well as their characteristics. This will begin to *unfold* the bible story. The first period to be examined will be the ***Patriarchal Period***, or the period of *father-rule*.

Accompanying Chart for Lesson #1,
 "Having Faith in God's Word"

Chart 1-1



Questions for Lesson #1: *Having Faith in God's Word*

These questions are provided to help clarify and highlight principles and key information from the coordinating lesson. Though meant to be simple and straight forward, this study is also a serious matter. It has as its objective an understanding of God's word which leads to eternal life. Therefore, please give due diligence and prayerful consideration to your part of this effort. May God bless both our efforts to "learn what is pleasing to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:10)

1. Did you thoroughly read the introduction? (If not, please do so now before continuing.) _____

2. What are the two stated purposes of this study? (1) _____

(2) _____

3. What method, or illustration, are we going to be using to reveal the biblical story? _____

4. Who is the 'Single-Thread' of the biblical story which runs through the text from cover to cover? _____

5. What are the 3 elements of biblical faith (Hebrews 11:6)? (1) _____

(2) _____ and (3) _____

6. In what 3 aspects of our (human) nature does biblical faith require activity? (1)

_____ (2) _____

_____ (3) _____

7. From what source does biblical faith come? _____

How do you know this? _____

8. Before we can have faith in God the Father or Jesus the Son, in what must we first have faith?

Why is this so? _____

9. Likewise, in what 3 aspects of the Bible must we first have faith?

(1) Faith in its: _____

(2) Faith in its: _____

and (3) Faith in its: _____

10. In your own words, tell why each of these (from #9) is essential. _____

=====

11. Answer each of the following with Yes or No. Based on the passages that you have read from the Bible, do you believe that:

_____ all the information God intended us to have is in the Bible?

_____ the Bible is intended by God to be, and therefore is, understandable to all who will honestly, sincerely, and fairly read it?

_____ the Bible **can** supply all the information you need in order to be saved?

_____ that God has the right to rule (require certain acts of obedience)?

_____ that these requirements are manifested in the New Testament?

12. How do we know that we “love” Jesus (John 14:15)? _____

13. How do we know that we “know” Jesus? (1John 2:3) _____

14. Finally, from what we have learned, what constitutes a ‘*Faithful Man*’? (3 elements and their location) (1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

Thank-you! If you have any questions, or would like specific answers to any of these questions, please email your request to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com.

Lesson #2: In The Beginning- *The Patriarchal Period*

Family Religion: Genesis 1:1 - Exodus 20:1

Understand firstly, and especially for the purposes of these next three lessons, that the Bible can basically be divided into three distinct *Periods*, or *Dispensations*, of time. Each of these Periods is descriptively identified by the *Means* or *Messenger* through whom God let His will (or law) be made known. These Periods are then the ***Patriarchal***, the ***Mosaical***, and the ***Christian***.

The word *Patriarch* comes from both Latin and Greek etymologies which simply refer to ***father***, or ***lineage***, **cf. Acts 2:29; Heb.7:4**. Basically then, the *Patriarchal Period* is the dispensation of time in which God spoke directly to the heads of families, or *Patriarchs*, **see Heb.1:1-2**, and then they taught their families God's will, **cf. Gen.18:19**. Generally, the oldest living male served as *Patriarch* of the family which would include all direct male descendants and their families.

By comparison, in the ***Mosaic Period*** God let His will be known through Moses. It was then through Moses that the Law, otherwise known as "*the Law of Moses*" (**cf. John 1:17**), was given by God. This was God's Law for the Jewish people at that time. Much more will be covered on this Period in Lesson #3. And likewise, during the ***Christian Period***, the Divine Will was given through ***Christ***, **John 12:48; Heb.1:1-2**. This Period will be more extensively covered in Lesson #4.

So then, understand that the Patriarchal Period was the time in which God spoke directly to the *Heads* of families (*i.e.* the *patriarch*) and they in turn taught their families His law. There is no history of any *recorded* law during this time period. The scripture references which cover this Period are from *the Creation* in **Gen.1:1** until the giving of God's first written Law on Mt. Sinai through Moses, **Ex.20:1**. With the giving of this *written Law*, the Patriarchal Period ceased, and the Mosaical began.

I. One of the Major Significances of the Patriarchal Period Is the Point of *Origins*. So Much of What We Know about Ourselves, God, and Our Relationship to Him Comes from this Period.

There are many aspects of our existence which are explained in the first book of the Bible, ***Genesis*** (which means *origin* or *beginning*). We are, for instance, told of the ***beginning*** of:

-*Earth and Atmosphere*, **Gen.1:1-10**

-*Plant Life*, **Gen.1:11-12**

-*Living Creatures*, **Gen.1:20-25**; and

-*Man*, **Gen.1:26-28**.

But the book of Genesis also gives us knowledge of another very important *beginning*-the ***beginning of sin!*** (**Gen.3:1-7**) It is with this *beginning* that the whole point of the bible is manifested: the allowing of mankind the opportunity to return to the condition of his creation: holiness- "*in the image of God*" (**Gen.1:26-27**) after having become stained with sin. It is sin which separates us from God- His presence, His providential watch-

care, His blessings and benefits, **Isa.59:1-2; 1Pet.3:10-12**. And unfortunately, all become partakers of sin by their own acceptance and practice of it, **Rom.3:23**. Sin has as its eternal reward, spiritual death (**cf. Rom.6:23**). But such does not have to be our destiny despite our having become sinful and therefore by our sin, separated from God. It is that *reconciliation* of mankind wherein we can be reclaimed / redeemed from sin that *is* the *story* of the Bible. And Jesus Christ is the *single-thread* storyline which runs cover to cover. Let me show you.

After creation, Adam and Eve were placed in a garden paradise called Eden, **cf. Gen.2:8,15**. This garden, with man's *cultivation* and *keeping* of it, provided all of their needs. It provided both sustenance for the body and beauty for the soul, **Gen.2:9**. There was but one restrictive law placed upon that first couple: they could not eat from the "*tree of knowledge of good and evil*" **Gen.2:16-17**. This prohibition, with the help of Satan, was soon broken, **Gen.3:1-7**. The flimsy excuses of Adam and Eve were no justification for their actions. They had transgressed God's law. For this violation (or sin- which is literally *missing the mark*, or, transgression of law), God's righteousness would demand that justice be done. Man would have to be punished. Please note **Gen.3:14-24** where God metes out the sentences. The major points are as follows for each of the involved parties:

>**Woman (v.16)**- ❶ *Multiplication of pain during childbirth*; ❷ *subordinate position to her husband despite desire for him*.

>**Man (vv.17-19)**- ❶ *Cursing of ground and destiny to eat from it*; ❷ *survival only by sweat and toil*; ❸ *return to dust from which he was made- physical death*.

Thus Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden paradise and left to their own devices for survival. They were, because of sin, separated from the intimate relationship that they had shared with their Father, **cf. Gen.3:8 > 24**. Obviously these things pertain particularly to our story, but these are not the only points which should be considered relative to the punishments meted by God. Note also the punishment given to the:

>**Serpent (vv.14-15 Satan)**- ❶ *Cursed more than all other creatures*; ❷ *forced to travel on his belly in the dust (cf. Lev.11:42)*; ❸ *enmity between his seed and the seed of woman*.

It was this prophetic promise, given as a punishment to Satan, which gives us our first glimpse of the development of the biblical theme (or thread) of Jesus Christ. He would be the fulfillment, as the ultimate *Seed* of woman, of this promise to deal the mortal blow to Satan- *i.e. "bruise you on the head"* **Gen.3:15**.

II. The next Major Event of this Period Which Bears upon the Biblical Theme Is the *Great Flood of Gen.6:5 - 9:19*.

Gen.6:1,5 tells us that as man began to multiply and fill the earth (**cf. Gen.1:28**); so also did their sin multiply. Man had become so wicked after only some 1600+ years (see accompanying chart 1-4) that God was "*sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.*" (**Gen.6:6**). Mankind had become so utterly wicked that the justice of God demanded expiation (the act of atoning for sin). Man would be blotted out completely by the means of a universal flood! (**v.7**). But one man, Noah, was found to be righteous- not having become party to the wickedness of the world, **cf. vv.8-9**.

Thus, Noah and his wife, three sons, and their wives (apparently all likewise faithful due to the *patriarchal influence* and teaching of Noah) would be given opportunity to save themselves. God warned them of the coming flood and gave Noah the command to build an ark whereby he, his family, and representatives of the animal kingdom would be spared from the oncoming destruction, **cf. 6:14ff.**

Noah and his sons did build the ark... the flood did come, and every living thing that was upon the face of the land was blotted out, **cf. Gen.7:6-23.** After the flood waters dried up, Noah and his family set about the task of repopulating the earth, **cf. 9:18-19.** What does all this have to do with our development of the *single-thread* storyline of Jesus Christ? Just a couple of things:

- ❶ It shows that although God is a loving, kind, gracious, and longsuffering God, He is also a *just* God and demands accountability and payment for sin. (see accompanying chart 2-2)
- ❷ But contrastingly, it shows that God does not punish the righteous for the sins of the wicked, **cf. Ezk.18:20.**
- ❸ It also develops the story of man showing that as all mankind prior to the flood had originated from Adam and Eve, likewise all mankind after the flood came from the family of Noah.

III. Abraham: the *Beginning* of God's Chosen Family.

The next major development in the story of Christ (and reconciliation of man from sin and to God by Him) is God's selection of Abraham. Like Noah before him, Abraham (initially called *Abram* {which means '*exalted father*'}) until his name was changed to *Abraham* {*father of a great number*} by God, **cf. 17:5**) was selected by God because of his faithfulness. Note **Gen.15:6** where, speaking of Abraham, the text says, "*Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.*" But to or for what was Abraham selected? The answer to this question is another major piece of our puzzle. Abraham was selected by God to be the Father of the Jewish people. And more importantly, Abraham was chosen to be the man through whom the *Seed* of **Gen.3:15** would ultimately be born. That is, it would be through Abraham's offspring that the Messiah, Jesus Christ, would be born. Please note **Gen.12:1-4** in connection with **three promises** made by God to Abraham. Namely:

- ❶ the **Land Promise, 12:1**; that would be given to his descendants, the land of Canaan. Its boundaries were later included in the restating of this same promise, **cf. 15:18.**
- ❷ the **Nation Promise, 12:2**; that of Abram's seed God would create a great nation. Obviously, this nation would become the Israelites.
- ❸ the **Seed Promise, 12:3**; that through Abraham's descendants, all nations of the earth would be blessed. This has reference to the coming of the Messiah in the presence of Jesus Christ. He came, as a descendant of Abraham (see **Matt.1:1-16**), to bring the blessing of salvation to all men.

The importance of these promises cannot be emphasized too much for in them is contained the outline, or structure, of the rest of the entire Bible- that is, the rest of the story of the Bible is the fulfilling of these three promises... and specifically the *Seed*

promise relative to Jesus Christ and His bringing the blessing of salvation to all of mankind. But for the time being, the *single-thread* storyline of Jesus Christ weaves its way through the fulfillment of the other two promises: the *Development of the Family of Abraham into the Jewish nation* and *Their Conquest and Settlement of the Land of Canaan*.

IV. The Development of the Nation of Israel.

One of the three promises made by God to Abraham was that of his descendants would become a great nation. Later, this promise was further explained that they would be as numerous as the *sand on the seashore* and the *stars in the heavens*. And yet, when this promise was made, Abraham and Sarah were childless. Furthermore, Abraham was seventy-five years old and his wife Sarah was sixty-five (**cp. 12:4 > 17:17**) and *barren, 11:30!* Because of these things, Abraham and Sarah made two attempts to *help God out* toward the fulfillment of this promise. Though they believed God, they apparently thought He might need some circumventing assistance from them to bring about a child through whom the promise could be fulfilled. First it was proposed that Eliezer, the oldest son born in Abraham's house but to a servant, could become Abraham's son and therefore be the heir to him. But this was not God's plan, **cf. 15:2-6**. After additional time had passed, Abraham and Sarah then decided that perhaps he could bear a son through Hagar, the handmaid of his wife Sarah. This was done and the boy child was named Ishmael. But again God said this was not the way, **cf. 16:1-16**. Many years have now passed- and with them Abraham and Sarah's natural ability to conceive and bear children. But as **Rom.4:16-21**, tells he "*grew strong in faith... and being fully assured that what He had promised, He was able to perform*" and Sarah conceived and bore a son, Isaac. Abraham was one hundred years old, and Sarah ninety, when Isaac- the *son of promise* was born, **Gen.21:1-5**.

Now consider the birth of one son to Abraham by Sarah in view of the fulfillment of God's promise to make of him (Abraham) a *great nation* with descendants *as numerous as the stars in heaven and the sand on the seashore*. Certainly it doesn't seem like much toward a nation, does it? Even less so when we learn in **Gen.25:1-11** that by the time of Abraham's death at 175 years, Isaac and his wife Rebekah had no children. But not too long after Abraham's death, Isaac and Rebekah did have children- twin sons: Esau and Jacob (see **25:21ff**). Through one of these grandsons of Abraham then, the promises God made to him would have to be fulfilled. That is, that through Abraham's *seed* both a great nation and the blessing of all men would come.

Although Esau was older than his twin brother Jacob, it soon became clear that God's choice to fulfill the promises was Jacob, **cf. 28:3-4; 12-15**. Ultimately Jacob would marry two sisters and each of them gave also to him a handmaid as a wife, **Gen.29-30**. To him, by these four women, would be born twelve sons and one daughter (see accompanying chart 3-2). But by far, the favorite was Joseph. It was this favoritism shown to Joseph together with God's help (see **Gen.37**) that caused his brothers to sell Joseph into slavery and deceive his father into thinking he had been killed by wild beasts. Joseph was not dead at all. He was taken by the traders to whom his brothers had sold him into Egypt. Through a series of unusual circumstances spanning several years, and

again by the providential activity of God, Joseph became second in command over all Egypt, **cf. Gen.39-41**. But back in Palestine, Joseph's family was starving as a result of a great famine. God had warned Joseph of the famine and he in turn had prepared Egypt for the desperate times. His family had no such knowledge of the coming difficulties and therefore was about out of food. Ultimately Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy grain, not knowing what had become of their brother whom they had sold into slavery so many years before. Eventually, Joseph revealed himself to them and moved all of his brothers, their wives and children, as well as his aged father Jacob to live with him in Egypt. This was in complete accordance with God's will and was, in fact, a part of His plan for the development of this nation of the family of Abraham, **cf. Gen.46:3-4**. In all, seventy persons of the family of Jacob moved to Egypt, **46:27**.

Yes, seventy people from the family of Jacob (grandson of Abraham) went into Egypt, but a mighty nation of some two million would emerge as God's chosen people- the Israelites. That will be the starting point of our next lesson, ***The Mosaic Period***.

Questions for Lesson #2:

The Beginning- *The Patriarchal Period*

These questions are provided to help clarify and highlight principles and key information from the coordinating lesson. Though meant to be simple and straight forward, this study is also a serious matter. It has as its objective an understanding of God's word which leads to eternal life. Therefore, please give due diligence and prayerful consideration to your part of this effort. May God bless both our efforts to "*learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*" (Ephesians 5:10)

1. What are the three *Dispensations*, or *periods of time*, into which the Bible can be divided?

- ① _____
- ② _____
- ③ _____

2. How are these *Periods* identified or distinguished from one another? (Why are they so named?)

3. Given these things, why is the first period called the *Patriarchal*? _____

4. Was there a *recorded law* during this period? Why or why not? _____

5. The Book of Genesis tells us of the *beginning* of many things. Of which *beginning* do we learn that becomes the whole point of the Bible? _____

6. To prove the truth of the previous question, please answer briefly these questions:

a. In whose image was man created? _____

b. What separated man from that image of holiness? _____

c. How many have become partakers of sin? _____

d. How did they become such? _____

e. What is the just reward of sin? _____

f. What then is the *story* of the Bible all about? _____

7. Concerning the punishments issued by God to Satan for his part in the temptation and sin of Eve and Adam, which one gives us the first glimpse of theme/thread of Jesus Christ?

_____ How so? _____

8. What three things should we learn from the story of the Great Flood which helps to develop the *single-thread* storyline of Jesus Christ?

① _____

② _____

③ _____

9. What was Abraham selected to be or do? _____

10. What three promises did God make to Abraham:

① _____

② _____

③ _____

11. Please explain what each of these three promises mean.

① _____

② _____

③ _____

12. Why are these three promises so important? _____

13. What two attempts to Abraham and Sarah make to *help* God fulfill his promise to give them a child? _____

14. What was the name of Abraham and Sarah's son through whom God would fulfill the promises He had made to Abraham? _____

How old were Abraham and Sarah when he was born? _____ and _____

Why is this significant, or what does it prove? _____

15. Through which grandson of Abraham and Sarah would the fulfillment of these promises continue? _____

16. How many sons did this grandson of Abraham and his wives produce? _____

17. How many people of Jacob's family went to live in Egypt? _____

Why did they move to Egypt? _____

Thank-you! If you have any questions, or would like specific answers to any of these questions, please email your request to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com.

Lesson #3: The Development of a Nation

The Mosaical Period- National Religion

Exodus 20:1 - Acts 2

With the *foundations* of the nation promised to emanate from the seed of Abraham (**cf. Gen.12:2**) now in Egypt as a result of famine (please review previous lesson on this point), it is time for the next step in development of our *Single-Thread* story.

There are essentially three elements which must exist for there to be a *nation*:

- ① Obviously, **People**- of such a number as could be described as a *nation*;
- ② A **Precept** (or **Law**)- which binds and unites them together and gives them basis for such a civilization;
- ③ And a **Place** (or **Land**)- or country, a place for the people united by common law to live.

Without these essential elements, *nationhood* cannot exist. Thus this particular lesson will trace our *Single-Thread* of **Jesus Christ** through the development of the family of Abraham into the Nation, the nation of **Israel**, from which He would ultimately come.

I. The Comparison of the First Two Dispensations: the *Patriarchal* and the *Mosaic*.

Remember a few things with me:

-**Dispensation** simply refers to a period of time. In the course of this study, the Bible is divided into three distinct periods of time: the *Patriarchal*, *Mosaic*, and *Christian* Dispensations.

-The distinctions are made between these periods on the basis of Significant Events marking the beginning and end of each period, the Dispenser of God's Law, and the Type of Religion required and practiced.

Let's then apply these distinctions between the Dispensations to the first two:

The Patriarchal Period- It began at **Creation** and ended with the giving of the **Law of Moses** at Mt. Sinai. The Law of God was disseminated through the **Heads** of the individual families, called **Patriarchs**. The type of religion thus required and practiced was **Family Religion** as each patriarch was responsible to teach and guide his (extended) family according to God's revelations.

The Mosaical Period- It began with the giving of the **Law** to Moses on Mt. Sinai and continued through until the first Pentecost after the death, burial,

resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. As implied by the previous statements, the Law of God was disseminated through God's prophet **Moses**. As this law was given to the family of Abraham, by that time a nation of some two million in number, the type of religion practiced was a **National Religion**; the religion of the Jews.

We will also look at these distinctions relative to the **Christian Dispensation** in the next lesson. But for now, these are sufficient for our consideration.

II. Significant Events in the Development of the *Single-Thread* of Jesus Christ during the *Mosaical Dispensation*.

As we left off the story in our last lesson, **Jacob**- the grandson of Abraham through whom the promise to make of Abraham's family a great nation would be fulfilled, had taken his family to Egypt to avoid starvation from a famine. One of Jacob's sons, Joseph, had been elevated to second in command over all Egypt and had therefore secured a place for his family, **Gen.47:11-12**. Thus our story moves, with the family of Jacob- all seventy of them (**cf. Gen.46:26-27**), from Southern Canaan to Egypt.

A. The Multiplication and Blessing of Jacob's Family in Egypt by God.

The book of Exodus opens at essentially the same place that the book of Genesis closes- the death of Joseph. Thus a seamless continuation of the story exists between these first two books of the Bible in the telling of the story of Jesus Christ.

In **Gen.48:3-4** Jacob reminds Joseph of the promise God had made to him, as He had to his father Isaac, and his grandfather Abraham before him, that his descendants would become a great nation. The difference with Jacob is that God fulfilled the promise directly through his sons- all twelve of them. Both **Gen.47:27ff** and **Ex.1:7** indicate that through God's blessing the sons of Jacob, (whose name God changed to "**Israel**"- hence *Israelites*, **cf. Gen.32:28**) they multiplied in number, strength, and wealth. But it would be this gaining of numbers and strength that would begin their end in Egypt.

B. A Change in Power in Egypt Results in Slavery for the Israelites.

Ex.1:8 simply reads, "*Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.*"

Joseph had died leaving this burgeoning nation-family of his without continued representation in the government of Egypt. Joseph's family had been brought to

Egypt with the blessing and provision of Pharaoh as thanks to Joseph for saving Egypt from the famine and starvation. But once there was a dynastic change in power, that is, a new Pharaoh came to power of a different family than the previous ones, this grateful allowance for Joseph's family was in jeopardy—especially since Joseph had died. Instead, this great throng of people that had arisen within Egypt was seen in two different yet related ways:

- ① with ***Fear***, cf. **Ex.1:9-10**; and
- ② with ***Potential*** as slave labor, **Ex.1:11,13,14**.

Thus Egypt enslaved Israel. But God still had a commitment to these sons of Israel and thus the more Egypt afflicted them, the more He blessed and multiplied them, **Ex.1:12**. This enslavement by the Egyptians and subsequent blessing by God would continue for some 400 years just as God had predicted to Abraham, cf. **Gen.15:13**; **Acts 7:6**.

C. Israel's Deliverance by God through the Man Called *Moses*. (see **Ex.1 - 12**)

At the appropriate time, God decided to send a deliverer to obtain release of the people of Israel from Egyptian captivity and slavery. The man God chose was Moses.

Moses had been brought up in the house of Pharaoh, even as his grandson. Moses was born to Israelite parents but had been spared from the edict issued by Pharaoh that all male children born to the Jews should be killed (see **Ex.1:22**). Pharaoh had made this order because no matter how hard they oppressed the Israelites, they continued to multiply and grow strong. By killing all the male children, Pharaoh had hoped to prevent mutiny. However, Jochebed (Moses' mother) placed the baby boy in a floating basket and hid him in the bulrushes at the water's edge of the river near where she knew the royal princess ceremonially bathed each day. Sure enough, the plan worked. The princess not only saw that baby but was apparently smitten with him and took him as her own. Thus Moses came to be raised as an Egyptian in Pharaoh's own house. (see also **Ex.2:1-10**)

The next major development in the life of Moses came as he witnessed an Egyptian beating an Israelite slave. In anger he slew the Egyptian! Fearing then for his own life, Moses fled from Egypt to a place called Midian, **Ex.2:11-25**. It was there in Midian that God appeared to Moses and told him to go back to Egypt and deliver the Israelites from captivity. Moses was reluctant at first, but being assured of God's power to assist, he went, **Ex.3,4**.

Moses' initial request for the release of the Israelites was dismissed by Pharaoh, cf. **Ex.5**. It was then time for God to show His might to the Egyptians. He did so through the issuance of ten plagues upon the Egyptians. The plagues, designed to secure Israel's release, are as follows:

- ① God **turned the waters of Egypt into blood, 7:14-25**

- ② God sent ***frogs*** throughout the whole territory, **8:1-15**
- ③ God sent ***gnats*** upon both man and beast of Egypt, **8:16-19**
- ④ God sent swarms of ***flies*** to all of Egypt except Goshen (where the Israelites lived), **8:20-32**
- ⑤ God placed a deadly ***pestilence*** upon the Egyptian ***livestock***, **9:1-7**
- ⑥ God struck the Egyptians and their animals with ***boils***, **9:8-12**
- ⑦ God sent severe ***hail*** upon Egypt, **9:13-35**
- ⑧ God sent swarms of ***locusts*** into Egypt, **10:1-20**
- ⑨ God caused ***darkness*** to fall upon the land of Egypt, **10:21-29**.

These nine plagues God sent upon the Egyptians. While the plague was upon them, Pharaoh would relent and say that he would let the Israelites go. But when the plague was removed by God, he would *harden his heart* (**e.g. 9:34**) and refuse to allow them to leave. Thus, God would send another plague. This process continued through nine plagues. But finally, God sent a tenth and final plague upon Egypt:

- ⑩ God ***killed the firstborn male*** of all the Egyptians- including Pharaoh's own son! **11:1 - 12:33**. Incidentally, the plague also affected Egyptian cattle.

At this Pharaoh was broken and allowed the Israelites to leave Egypt. And leave they did! The Lord had caused the Egyptians to look favorably upon the Israelites so that they sent them away with silver, gold, and clothing, **cf. 11:2-3; 12:35-36**. Thus, seventy people of the family of Israel (Jacob) had gone down into Egypt to escape famine, but about two million (**cf. 12:37** which says, "*six hundred thousand men*") which is conservatively estimated to be about ¼ of the total population) left Egyptian bondage and headed for the *Promised Land* (**cf. Gen.12:4; 15:18**).

D. The Giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai.

Remember the things necessary for *nationhood*: ***People, Place (or land), and Precept (law)***. The ***People*** now exist- two million of them! And the ***People*** are headed for their ***Place***- the land of Canaan as promised to Abraham. But there is yet another essential element which must be added: ***Precept***, or Law. This people must have a Law that sets them apart from all others- a Law which will become their *Civil, Religious, and Moral* code for the next 1500 years! So as the Israelites journeyed from Egypt to Canaan (Palestine), God led them to Mt. Sinai where He would give them that Law.

Contrary to what some seem to think, the ***Law***, as given by God through Moses, is more than just Ten Commandments. They indeed are given in **Ex.20:1-17**. But the *rest* of the Law is recorded in **Ex.21 - 31**. Thus two essential elements of *nationhood* are complete and the third awaits. On to Canaan!

E. The Journey to the Promised Land. (Num.13 - 14)

Israel had been camped at the foot of Mt. Sinai for about one year and one month. But the time had come for them to journey on to Canaan, the land promised to their father Abraham long ago as an inheritance to his descendants. Thus Israel journeyed up to the southern border of the land they were to inherit and camped. Spies were sent into the land to see what it was like, to ascertain the nature and the strength of the peoples living there, and to see what fortifications were present in the cities. These spies were gone for forty days. Upon their return, they brought back some of the bounty of the land and descriptions of its natural wealth, **cf. Num.13:23,27**. But they also brought back fearful descriptions of the inhabitants of the land, **cf. Num.13:28-29, 32-33**. Of the twelve spies who were sent in to spy out the land, only two remained confident that they could indeed take the land God had promised. The other ten were faithless and unbelieving. Unfortunately, the multitude of the people, despite the pleading of Joshua and Caleb (the two faithful spies), believed the ten faithless spies and murmured and complained wishing that they had never left their Egyptian bondage, **cf. Num.14:1-10**. They even wanted to stone Moses and his brother Aaron for having brought them there!

This faithless attitude stirred the anger of God. Thus as their punishment for doubting His power to give them the land that He had promised, He assigned them to wander in the wilderness for forty years (one year for each of the forty days the spies had been in Canaan), **Num.14:28-29!** They would wander for forty years until everyone who was twenty years or older died in the wilderness. Only Joshua, Caleb, Moses, and Aaron would be spared from God's vengeful wrath! In large measure, the rest of the book of Numbers gives the account of this forty-year period of wandering in the wilderness (**cf. Num.15 - 35**).

As a side note, when Israel approached the land of Canaan, the Lord took his servant Moses up onto a mountain overlooking it. Moses would not be allowed to enter Canaan as a result of his own sin, **cf. Num.20**. So there on the mountain, Moses died and the Lord buried him, **Deut.34**. His replacement to lead the people on into Canaan was a man named Joshua.

F. The Conquest and Settling of the Land of Canaan by the Israelites. (the Book of Joshua)

Finally, the forty years had ended and with it so had the lives of all faithless Israel who had doubted God's power and provision. Now Israel was ready to receive that *land of promise* as an inheritance from their ancestral father Abraham to whom God had given it. So Israel, with the miraculous and providential help of God Almighty, began to kill, destroy, and drive-out the heathen nations who were living in Canaan. So morally and spiritually bankrupt were these nations of the Canaanites that God used Israel to mete out judgment upon them. The Canaanites

were so wicked that they even offered their own children in sacrificial fires to the idols which they worshiped. Thus God's judgment was that they all must die. He did not want the Israelites to inter-marry with them and be likewise corrupted into such horrendous practices.

So with God's help and under the leadership of Joshua, Israel conquered and settled the land of Canaan. But they did not eradicate the Canaanites as God had commanded. Thus, the warnings given by Joshua that God would drive them off the land He had given them should they fail in this matter would ultimately come to pass, **please read Josh.23:12-16**.

G. Israel's unfaithfulness to God and their subsequent destruction.

The land of Canaan was divided by allotment to each of the Twelve Tribes (resultant descendants of Jacob's twelve sons- see again Chart 2-3 at the end of the previous lesson). Ten of these tribes had settled in the northern portion of Canaan (called "*Israel*") and two were in the south (called "*Judah*"). By 722 B.C., the northern ten tribes had digressed so far into sin and idolatry that God issued a judgment against them. He used a people called the *Assyrians* to destroy that portion of the nation. The Assyrians conquered, killed, and carried away *Israel*. What little remained of them was either sold into captivity or assimilated (by marriage) into the Assyrian culture or other nations. This portion of Israel was never again returned to Canaan.

The southern two tribes of Israel, known as *Judah*, likewise eventually became evil. Not so much as did the northern portion of the kingdom, but sufficient for God to likewise allow them to be taken captive. Their captivity came at the hands of the nation of Babylon. They were plundered and captives taken on three different occasions:

- ① in **605 B.C.** as Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian general returned to Babylon to assume the throne after the death of his father Nabopolassar and after his defeat of Egyptian/Assyrian forces at Carchemish (**2Kings 23:34 - 24:5**)
- ② in **597 B.C.**- at the close of the reign of Jehoiachin (one of the kings of Judah) who ruled only three months before being taken captive to Babylon (**2Kings 24:8-16**)
- ③ and in **586 B.C.**- resultant of Zedekiah's (another puppet leader of Judah) decision to rebel against Babylon; the Jewish Temple was destroyed and all but the *poorest of the poor* taken to Babylon. (**2Kings 24:17 - 25:21**).

The good news is that God has not forgotten His promise to *Bless all nations of the earth through Abraham's Seed*. That promise would ultimately be fulfilled through Jesus Christ. But He wouldn't be born for another 600 years! Thus, despite Judah's wickedness, God would not allow them to be utterly destroyed as were the northern ten tribes of Israel before them. There would be a **remnant** which would be spared! And it would be from this spared remnant of the tribe of Judah that the Messiah would come. That's our next lesson!

Questions for Lesson #3:
The Development of a Nation
The Mosaical Period- National Religion

These questions are provided to help clarify and highlight principles and key information from the coordinating lesson. Though meant to be simple and straight forward, this study is also a serious matter. It has as its objective an understanding of God's word which leads to eternal life. Therefore, please give due diligence and prayerful consideration to your part of this effort. May God bless both our efforts to "*learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*" (Ephesians 5:10)

1. What three essential elements must be present for a nation to exist?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

2. Which of the three essential elements did the Israelites possess at the beginning of this lesson? _____

3. What is a *Dispensation* ? _____

4. In this course of study, we use *Significant Events* (to mark the beginning and end), the *Dispenser* of God's law, and the *Type* of religion practiced to make distinctions between the three major Dispensations of biblical history. Please identify these same elements for the Patriarchal and Mosaical periods below:

Patriarchal Dispensation:

Significant Events- _____

Dispenser of God's Law- _____

Type of Religion- _____

Mosaical Dispensation:

Significant Events- _____

Dispenser of God's Law- _____

Type of Religion- _____

5. Through which grandson of Abraham did God begin fulfill His promise to make of him a great nation? _____

6. Where did this multiplication of Abraham's descendants take place? _____

7. What event brought about the captivity of the Israelites? _____

8. What man did God choose to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian captivity/slavery? And, why was this particular man so well-suited to God's purposes? _____

9. How did God convince the Egyptian king, or Pharaoh, to let the Israelites go free? _____

10. Approximately how many Israelites left Egypt. Remember, 70 had moved there to be with Joseph and to escape the ravages of the famine? _____

11. What was their first stopping point (place) after they left Egypt and why is this important? _____

12. After receiving the Law, where they go next? And likewise, why is important? _____

13. What prevented the Israelites from immediately settling Canaan? How long was it before they finally got to do so? _____

14. Who was God's appointed leader for the Israelites as they began to conquer and settle the "*promised land*" of Canaan? _____

15. Was Israel's continued possession of the land of Canaan (Palestine) *conditional* or *unconditional*? Please explain your answer. _____

16. Who destroyed (either killed or carried away captive never to return) the Northern Ten Tribes of Israel? _____ When? _____ Why? _____

17. Likewise, who carried away as captives the two Southern Tribes of Judah? _____
When? _____
Why? _____

18. Why was it so important that some “*remnant*” of the tribe (family) of Judah be preserved rather than completely eradicated like the northern ten tribes of Israel? _____

Thank-you! If you have any questions, or would like specific answers to any of these questions, please email your request to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com.

Lesson #4: The Coming of the Messiah and the Establishment of the Church

The Christian Period- Universal Religion

Matthew - Revelation

Throughout this study the central theme or *single-thread*, as we have called it, of the Bible has been **Jesus Christ**. From the Creation, through the Flood, the Promises made to Abraham, the development of the Israelite Nation, its Decline and Fall, and the Preserving of a Remnant through which all spiritual blessings would flow, everything has pointed toward the arrival of *the* Messiah, Jesus Christ. Think of biblical record and story from **Genesis 1** through **Matthew 1** as a gigantic funnel of both time and events which all trickle down toward and finally culminate in Jesus Christ. There are a couple of passages which underscore this concept:

Galatians 4:4 “*But when the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law.*”

Mark 1:15 “*and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*”

Hebrews 9:26 “*... but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*”

The arrival then, of Jesus on the biblical scene is the crowning moment of the story- it is *the* moment 4000 or 5000 years of history has awaited! Therefore it is only logical that we very carefully examine and consider this most vital portion of the biblical story.

I. The Comparison of this Dispensation- *The Christian*, with the Previous Two Dispensations- *The Patriarchal* and *The Mosaical*.

Let's review briefly a few important facts:

- Dispensation** simply refers to a period of time. In the course of this study, the Bible is divided into three distinct periods of time: the *Patriarchal*, *Mosaic*, and *Christian* Dispensations.
- The distinctions are made between these periods on the basis of **Significant Events** marking the beginning and end of each period, the **Dispenser** (or

Disseminator) of God's Law, and the *Type of Religion* required by God and practiced by man.

Let's then apply these distinctions between the Dispensations to the first two:

The Patriarchal Period- It began at *Creation* and ended with the giving of the *Law of Moses* at Mt. Sinai. The Law of God was disseminated through the *Heads* of the individual families, called "*Patriarchs*". The type of religion thus required and practiced was *Family Religion* as each patriarch was responsible to teach and guide his (extended) family according to God's revelations (see **Job 1:5** where Job apparently served as priest for his family during this period).

The Mosaical Period- It began with the giving of the *Law* to Moses on Mt. Sinai and continued through until the first Pentecost after the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. As implied by the previous statements, the Law of God was disseminated through God's prophet *Moses*. As this law was given to the family of Abraham- by that time a nation of some two million in number, the type of religion they practiced was *National Religion*; the religion of the Jews.

And now,

The Christian Period- It began with the giving of the *Law* through *Christ* by His Apostles on the first Pentecost after His resurrection and ascension (**cf. Heb.1:1-2; 2:1-4; 9:15-17; Acts 1:8 > 2:1-36**, and will continue through until the day of Eternity (or Day of His Return and end of the world), **2Pet.3:7-10**. With the advent of Jesus Christ and His fulfillment of the promise made long years before to Abraham that through his *Seed* **all nations of the earth would be blessed**, the kingdom was established. Into this sacred relationship all men- both Jew and Gentile (**cf. Gal.3:16,23-29**, could now come. It was not then to be a period dominated by *Family* religion as the Patriarchal had been. Nor would it be a period of *National* religion as the Mosaical had been. But it would be, and indeed is, a period of *Universal Religion* because the gospel of Jesus Christ is indeed for all, **Matt.28:19**.

II. The Significant Events in the Development/Revelation of the *Single-Thread* of Jesus Christ During the *Christian Dispensation*.

A. The Birth of Jesus.

Joseph was a simple carpenter of the house and family of David, **Luke 2:4**. The importance of this is seen through the many prophecies of the Old Testament which had predicted the Messiah to be a descendant of David and therefore of the tribe of Judah, **2Samuel 7:12-13 Acts 2:30-36**. There are differences in the genealogical accounts of

Matthew and Luke regarding Jesus' lineage. Most scholars ascribe these differences to Matthew's account tracing the lineage of Jesus through Joseph- His legal, though obviously not His biological father, while further asserting that Luke's account traces the lineage through Mary- His biological, though obviously not his legal parent.

While Joseph and Mary were "*betrothed*" (somewhat similar to the modern *engagement* though *betrothal* was considered in Jewish society to be legally binding, **cf. Matt.1:18; Gen.29:21; Deut.22:23ff**) they certainly had not consummated their marriage as attested by the fact that Mary is declared by the text to be a "*virgin*" **cf. Luke 1:27 Matt.1:18-19**. Thus Mary came to be "*with child*" of the Holy Spirit of God, **Matt.1:20**. After the birth of the Son of God to Mary and Joseph, little else is said in the text regarding them as the narrative turns its attention to the Savior and follows the course of His life.

There are many details concerning the birth of Jesus Christ pertaining to:

- ❶ Bethlehem- the home of Joseph to which he had returned with Mary to register for the census ordered by Caesar Augustus through which the prophecy of **Micah 5:2** was fulfilled (**Luke 2:1-5**). This was of course how they came to be in Bethlehem when Jesus was born.
- ❷ Manger- apparently because of the census, there was no room to be found in the inn, therefore Mary and Joseph had to stay in a stable. Jesus therefore was laid in a manger (a *feeding trough* for animals).
- ❸ Shepherds; Magi (wise men); and Herod- (*the Great*; king of Israel, with considerable Roman help, from 40-4 B.C.) seeking to kill what he viewed as his own replacement (see **Matt.2:1-20**) as well as one hundred other aspects of the story that could be told.

But of course the most significant miracle of all concerning the birth of Jesus pertains not to the particulars of the birth itself, though certainly the fulfillment of prophecy is a strong proof of *Divinity*. The most important aspect of His birth was the *incarnation* of God into flesh- the *virgin birth*, or *immaculate conception* (see **John 1:14 Rom.1:3-4 Gal.4:4 Phil.2:6,7 1Tim.3:16**). This was the surest sign of all that this was the Christ, the Son of the Living God! **cf. Isa.7:14** For no *man*, ever had been born to a virgin previously, and certainly none would be thereafter either!

It is indeed quite interesting to note how each of the gospels treats the *advent* of Jesus. Mark deals not at all with His birth, but rather begins with John the Baptist announcing His presence. Matthew and Luke give the most detailed accounts including the genealogies as well as the other pertinent details of His birth. But perhaps the most interesting of the four is that of John, who deals with Jesus not from His birth but His *eternal existence*. Please note **John 1:1-13**. He (John) emphasizes the *origin* of Jesus as eternal; *i.e.* from "*the beginning*". This, coupled with His being born of a virgin, gives unmistakable evidence of His authority as God in the flesh, **see also Hebrews 2:6-10 and Col.2:9**.

B. John the Baptist.

John (*the Baptist*, so-called for his preaching of “*baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins*” **Luke 3:3**) was born to a woman of the tribe of Levi named Elizabeth and her husband Zacharias- also from the tribe of Levi and of the family of Abijah (**cf. Luke 1:5; 1Chron.24:10**). His birth was miraculously foretold to his father as he worked within the Temple by Gabriel, an angel of the Lord, **Luke 1:11,19**. In the course of this announcement of the coming birth, Gabriel also made it very clear that this would be no ordinary boy. John was to be the next prophet of the Lord, **Luke 1:13ff**. Not only the next prophet, but John would also be God’s messenger to “*turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous; so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*” (**Luke 1:17**) Little is known of the life of John prior to the beginning of his *public ministry* at about the age of thirty. Most of what is recorded in scripture is found in **Luke 1:57-80**. However, during this period prior to his *public work*, John apparently lived alone in the wilderness. He no doubt was quite a sight to see as **Mark 1:6** tells us, “*And John was clothed with camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.*” Odd origins indeed for the next prophet who would break the previous 400 years of (biblical- canon) silence from God. Origins and habits aside, at the appropriate time John began to fulfill his mission of “*preparing the way*” for the coming Messiah. He attracted a large following who would go to him in the wilderness to hear him preach of the need for repentance and baptism as well as telling them of the one who would shortly appear, **Mark 1:4-5,7-8**.

John’s crowning moment was when Jesus Himself came to him to be baptized. John at first refused saying that he himself needed to be baptized by Jesus. But Jesus prevailed upon him and he did as he was asked and baptized the Son of God, **Matt.3:13-14**. Immediately after Jesus came up out of the water, the Spirit of God, in the form of a dove, descended and rested upon Him. John would later say that this was the sign previously told to him by God that would clearly identify to him who the Messiah was to be, **John 1:32-34**; see **also Matt.3:17**). With the Messiah thus distinguished, John then continued to prepare the people by pointing them to Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world. John was ultimately put to death by Herod (*Antipas*, tetrarch of Galilee and Perea from 4 B.C. - A.D. 39; son of Herod *the Great* and brother to Philip and Archelaus) for reproving him relative to his unlawful marriage to his brother Philip’s wife Herodias, **cf. Matt.14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29**. But his mission had been fulfilled, he had *prepared the way* for the Lord and *he had identified Jesus* as “*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” (**John 1:29ff**) John’s mission was therefore complete and the story continues by following the life of Jesus.

C. The Life, Ministry, Teaching, and Miracles of Jesus.

While the nature of this study deals with an overview of biblical history and telling of the overall story of the bible, a word or two seemingly must be given relative to the life, ministry, miracles, and teaching of Jesus. It should be noted that Jesus *ministered* to people (cf. **Acts 10:38**) by “*doing good*” to them and for them by performing *miracles* and rendering other acts of kindness. But in so doing, the alleviation of their suffering was not the ultimate purpose. The purpose of Jesus’ earthly activity or *ministry*, of and by miracles, is clearly stated at the conclusion of John’s Gospel account in **John 20:30-31** (see also **John 2:11; 3:2**; and **Acts 2:22**). Thus the *ministering, miracles, and/or signs* were for the express purpose of unmistakably demonstrating that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, come in the flesh, and into the world to bring salvation to mankind. He came to *reconcile* man back to the image of God in which he was created and from which he had fallen through sin, (**Gen.1:26; Isa.59:1-2; Rom.3:23; 5:10; 2Cor.5:18-20**). He did this first by the *proclamation of His gospel* (cf. **Matt.4:23-25**), and second by the *sacrificing of Himself upon the cross*.

D. The Death of Jesus.

Why did Jesus have to die to accomplish His mission of reconciliation? Good question—one that deserves an answer. The unwavering *righteousness* of God has always required that a price be paid for transgression, **Rom.6:23**. If this were not so, wherein would be the glory or reward for obedience? This penalty prior to Christ had been the “*blood of goats and bulls*” **Heb.9:13**. But the animal sacrifices of the Law given through Moses did not accomplish forgiveness, but rather a *rolling forward* of the guilt for another year—placating the justice of God until a later time, **Heb.10:1-4**. In essence, these sacrifices cleansed only the “*flesh*” (or the outward body of man) not the “*conscience*” (or inward *spirit/soul* of man), cf. **Heb.9:13,14**. The importance of blood in these matters cannot be denied as evidence by **Gen.9:4 > Heb.9:18,22**. But again the blood of animals did not completely atone for sins committed against God’s law. It would take a purer sacrifice to accomplish this purpose: it would take the *perfect sacrifice*—a perfect Man! A perfect Man who had no sins of his own could therefore shed his own blood for the sins of everyone else. **2Cor.5:21** “*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*” Jesus Christ was that perfect Man, **1Pet.2:21-24**.

The *historical* reasons for Jesus’ death are, in some aspects much simpler, and in others more complex. Remember the prophecy made by God through Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar in **Dan.2:36-45** regarding the statue. It was symbolic of four world empires:

- ① *The Head of Gold* represented the then present empire of Nebuchadnezzar and the **Babylonians** (v.32,38).
- ② *The Breasts and Arms of Silver* represented the combined kingdoms of the **Medes and Persians** who would supersede the Babylonians as the second (from the time of the prophecy of course) world empire (v.32,39; **8:3,20**).

- ③ *The Belly and Thighs of Brass* represented the empire of Alexander the Great, or the **Grecian Empire** (**v.32,39b; 8:5-8,21-22**).
- ④ *The Legs of Iron and Feet of Iron/Clay* represented the **Roman Empire** (**v.33,40-43**).

The importance of this image and its prophecies concerning then future world events cannot be overemphasized. For in **Dan.2:44**, relative to this fourth world empire of the Romans, the text says:

“And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.”

This prophecy refers to the same kingdom to which Jesus Himself referred (in **Matt.16:16-18**) as being synonymous with the church. Thus, *the church* (kingdom) would be established during the days of the **Roman Empire**. This was, of course, the controlling empire at the time of Christ’s birth, life, and *death* (**cf. Luke 3:1ff; Matt.3:1ff**).

What does all of this have to do with the death of Jesus Christ? The Roman government, which controlled Palestine during the time of Christ, cared little about what the Jews actually believed concerning God. Their primary interests were two regarding the Jews:

- ① Keep quiet- the Roman governors (of which Pilate was one, **Matt.27:11ff**) were relatively unconcerned with the Jews or their *customs* provided that they led to no civil unrest which could be reported back to Rome (**Luke 23:1-14**).
- ② Pay the taxes- again, whatever else the Jews did, if they kept it quiet and paid the taxes, was of little interest to the procurators of the region (**cf. Matt.22:15-21**).

The Jews however, being somewhat disappointed that the one named Jesus apparently refused to be the physical king and potentate who would restore political power and dominance to the nation (**see Lk.1:69-74**; and **Acts 1:6** where Zacharias and the apostles manifest the common Jewish attitude and desire toward the restoration of the earthly kingdom and coming of its Messiah), desired to kill Him. But because of Roman control, they had not the power of capital punishment. Therefore, the charges brought before Pilate against Jesus had to be of the nature to arouse *Roman* sympathy to their pleas. Thus, note the charges found in **Luke 23:2,5**. Although Pilate several times stated that he found no fault worthy of death within Jesus, to quiet the situation down lest he be reported to Caesar, he granted the Jewish petition that Jesus be crucified, **Luke 23:20-25**. However, what must be remembered is this: God predicted through Daniel that Rome would be in power when Jesus Christ established His kingdom- this occurred in approximately A.D. 33 with His death, burial, and resurrection.

E. The Resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

Jesus was truly a unique individual on the landscape of human history. He was unique certainly in many regards, but I have particular reference to His *dual nature*. He was, at the same time, both *God* and *Man* (cf. **Col.2:9**). If the death of Jesus proves His *humanity*, and it does for God who is eternal cannot die, then His *resurrection* proves His *deity*, cf. **Acts 2:22-23,24**. While the mortal finite man named Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried, the eternal and infinite Christ came forth from the tomb to live forever, **Rom.6:9**. It is then this *resurrected* Christ which gives us the hope that we too can be raised from corruptible fleshly body of death into an incorruptible body of life eternal, cf. **1Cor.15**. If Jesus had not been raised, then He would have been just a man (and a lying man at that!), and we would have no hope at all beyond the grave. This is the importance and power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

F. The Ascension of Jesus Christ.

With the commissioning of His twelve apostles (as recorded in **Matt.28:16-20**; **Mk.16:14-18**; **Lk.24:44-49**) Jesus' purpose and mission was fulfilled. He had come as *God in the flesh* in fulfillment of prophecy and had lived the sinless life- thus making Himself ready to be the *Passover Lamb* for all of humanity. Indeed He, having no sin of His own, took upon Himself the sins of the world to make propitiation (cf. **2Cor.5:21**; **1John 2:1-2**). But with that cruel sacrifice complete and His apostles awaiting their role in the continuing story of salvation, His humility was complete and it was time for His exaltation. Thus He returned into the heavens from which He came as they looked on with wonder and amazement, **Acts 1:9-10**. He went back the right hand of Majesty on High- the place of power, prominence, and glory. They went back to Jerusalem as He had instructed to "wait for what the Father had promised"- the coming of the Holy Spirit of comfort and guidance upon them which would enable their preaching of the blessed kingdom of God. The whole of the bible story to this point has been in anticipation of that event. And now, as John had warned, "*The kingdom of heaven is at hand.*"

G. The Establishment of the Church.

Think about the scene. The very Son of God has come to the earth, lived and died as a man, but has been resurrected and ascended back to heaven as Conqueror. He has yielded to the agony of death on the cross in fulfillment of **Gen.3:15**'s prophetic utterance to Satan that He would bruise Him on the heel. But at the same instant, Jesus the Christ had dealt the mortal blow- *the bruising of Satan's head* by once and for all overcoming the power of sin and death which Satan had so long wielded over mankind, see **Acts 26:18**. His mission was complete and the reconciliation with God the Father in heaven final. But one part of the biblical story of Jesus Christ, our single thread, remained unfinished: the bringing in of mankind into that saved relationship with God, **Eph.2:10**.

It was now time for the completion of the story in the establishment of the church, Christ's body and kingdom.

Do you remember the things necessary for a *physical* kingdom: **Precept, People, and Place**? The same things are necessary for a *spiritual* kingdom. Please note, the:

- > **Precept** would be the gospel- begun by Jesus' teaching and completed through the inspired teaching and writing of the New Testament. (cf. **Matt.4:23; Rom.1:16; 1Cor.14:37; Eph.3:1-7**).
- > **People** would be those obedient to the call of the gospel, those willing to *believe and be baptized*, **Mark 15:15-16; Acts 2:36-39**.
- > And the **Place**? That would be *heaven*- the ultimate place of abode for citizens of the kingdom of God, **Phil.3:20-21** and **Col.1:13**.

The spiritual kingdom of God was opened on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ when His apostles, filled and inspired with the Holy Spirit of God, preached *repentance and baptism in the name of Jesus Christ* for the remission of sins! **Acts 2:1-39**. Those who were obedient to the gospel's call of belief, repentance, and baptism for remission of sins were *added* by God Himself to the church, the kingdom of God, **Acts 2:41**. The *church* then, by the power and sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross which established it, would be the *organization* through which God would **bleed all nations of the earth through Abraham's Seed**- the fulfillment of the third and final promise made to Abraham so long ago, **Gal.3:23-29; Eph.1:22-23; 5:25!** The *Land* promise had been fulfilled through the attainment of Canaan by the Israelites. The *Nation* promise had been fulfilled through the development of the mighty nation of Israel. Unfortunately, sin and apostasy had caused Israel to lose both its land and, to a large degree, its nation. But this final promise, the *Seed* promise, brought the blessing of salvation not to Israel alone, but ultimately to all mankind!

III. Conclusion

In many ways, the book of **Acts** closes the historical portion of the New Testament in the same way that **Nehemiah** closes the Old Testament. Neither are the last books of their respective Testaments. Both are followed by other books of prophecy and letters of encouragement to God's people. The New Testament books of **Romans** through **2Thessalonians** are letters to churches as they are taught and encouraged in the gospel of Jesus Christ. **1Timothy** through **Philemon** are inspired letters written to individuals serving the same purpose as the previous division did for the churches. The book of **Hebrews** stands somewhat alone in the New Testament as it is written specifically to the Israelite nation, calling them to return to God through acceptance of and obedience to Jesus as the Christ. Then the books of **James** through **Jude** are general epistles (or letters) written by those individuals named in the title. They are *general* in that they address a wide variety of topics concerning faith and fidelity to Jesus Christ. The final book of the New Testament, the **Revelation**, is the only real book of prophecy in the New

Testament. It tells of the glorious triumph of Jesus Christ and those faithful to Him over the forces of Satan: sin and death. It likewise gives us glimpses of the eternal glories of heaven- the future home of the citizens of the kingdom of God.

Questions for Lesson #4:
The Coming of the Messiah and the
Development of the Church
The Christian Period- Universal Religion

These questions are provided to help clarify and highlight principles and key information from the coordinating lesson. Though meant to be simple and straight forward, this study is also a serious matter. It has as its objective an understanding of God’s word which leads to eternal life. Therefore, please give due diligence and prayerful consideration to your part of this effort. May God bless both our efforts to “*learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*” (Ephesians 5:10)

1. This course is about the *single-thread* story line of the Bible: Jesus Christ. Although we’ve seen various indications or *hints* of this story line, when did the New Testament (Gal.4:4; Mk.1:15; Heb.9:26) say He appeared on the scene? _____

2. As was done in the last lesson, please identify the same elements we use to distinguish between the three major periods of biblical history for the ***Christian Period:***

a. **Significant Events** (marking the beginning and end of the period)-_____

b. **Dispenser of God’s Law** (one through whom God spoke) _____

c. **Type of Religion** (required by God and thus practiced by the faithful) _____

3. Concerning the birth of Jesus, what was significant or why was the following significant:

a. **His being born of the lineage of David-** _____

b. **His being born of a *virgin*-** _____

c. **How the Gospel of John treats His birth-** _____

4. What was the two-fold mission of John the Baptist relative to Jesus Christ? (1) _____
_____ ; and
(2) _____

5. What was the specific purpose of Jesus' *ministering to the people* (including the *miracles* and *signs* He performed)? _____

6. Why did Jesus have to die to afford mankind the opportunity for salvation? _____

7. Why was Daniel's prophecy (Dan.2:43-44) relative to the succession of world empires generally, and to the fourth empire (the Roman) specifically, so important to the death of Jesus?

8. If the *death* of Jesus proved His *humanity* what did His *resurrection* prove? Why is this important? _____

9. To where, specifically, did Jesus ascend? Likewise, why is this important? _____

10. Earlier, we identified 3 things which were essential to a *physical kingdom*: *Precept*, *People*, and *Place*. These same three things are likewise essential to a *spiritual kingdom*. Please identify them for these essential elements for the **spiritual kingdom** of the church:

a. *Precept*- _____

b. *People*- _____

c. *Place* (eternal)- _____

11. When then did the “church/kingdom” which Jesus promised to build in **Matthew 16:18** come into existence? _____

12. What was/is required of man to “*added*” by God to the church of which Jesus is Head? _____

13. Obviously Jesus is the One through whom the promise was fulfilled, but what supporting role does the church play toward the fulfillment of the third and final promise made to Abraham to *bless all nations of the earth*? _____

Thank-you! If you have any questions, or would like specific answers to any of these questions, please email your request to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com.

Lesson #5: What Must I Do To Be Saved? What Is God's Plan For Me?

From beginning to end, this course of study has been about understanding the basics of the Bible, and therefore understanding the basics about God. Our attempts to attain this purpose(s) have been fueled by several notions:

- ① that it (and thereby He) *can* be basically understood, **Eph.3:3-5**;
- ② that it *should* be understood, **John 8:31-32**; and
- ③ that such understanding affords one the opportunity to be obedient to God's word and therefore live a richer, fuller life here, and be saved from eternal damnation in the hereafter, **Rom.1:16** and **John 12:48**.

The method we have utilized to come to at least a cursory understanding of the Bible is, as the name of the course states, ***The Single-Thread Key***. The premise of course has been that there is a *single-thread* which runs through the Bible (and the corresponding unfolding of time as we know it). It is my judgment that failing to *identify*, *recognize*, and *follow* this thread through the biblical journey of time is the single biggest hindrance to honest people who earnestly desire to read, study, and understand the book. This failure (to *identify*, *recognize*, and *follow* the thread) renders the reader unable to “*get*” the Bible. It means that despite their best efforts, they will likely to become first confused, then complacent, and finally unwilling to continue genuine efforts to read, study, and learn the Bible story. In short, they will never see the real point of the Book.

What is then the point? In a word, ***salvation-*** salvation from the powers Satan and sin and salvation from impending doom and eternal destruction for failure to comply with God's gracious provisions of redemption. How do we get to that point? First, ***identify*** the *single-thread-* **Jesus Christ**. Second, ***recognize*** the presence of that thread in the various biblical stories. And third, ***trace*** or ***follow*** that thread through from the dawn of creation in Genesis 1:1 to the day of Eternity in Revelation 22:21. Now when, and if, we are able to trace this *single-thread* of Jesus Christ through the text, the pieces to what was formerly the *biblical puzzle* all fit together to show the true picture- **man's salvation by and through Jesus Christ, Eph.3:4-7**. The revelation of the *mystery* becomes obvious- it all fits perfectly together **and makes sense!!!**

There is but one remaining piece to our *biblical puzzle-* in many ways the last piece of the puzzle. It is, the piece posed by our title: *What must I do to be saved? What is God's plan for me and my salvation?* If the *single-thread* of the Bible is Jesus Christ, and the purpose is to bring salvation to mankind, how does this relate to me specifically? Let's see if we can answer these questions- as always, with *book*, *chapter*, and *verse* answers.

I. Review of Previous Lessons and Correlation to this One.

We have, for the purposes of our understanding in this study, divided the biblical landscape of time into three distinct periods called *dispensations*. They are the ***Patriarchal***, ***Mosaical***, and the ***Christian Dispensations***. Likewise, we have distinguished between these periods of time through the use of three factors: ***Events*** (marking the beginning and end), ***Dispenser*** or ***Disseminator*** (of God's will- the one or ones through whom God made His wishes known), and the ***Type of Religion*** (required by God and thus practiced by those faithful to Him). Let's review these relative to all three dispensations before bringing the point to bear.

The Patriarchal Period- It began at ***Creation*** and ended with the giving of the ***Law of Moses*** at Mt. Sinai. The Law of God was *disseminated* through the ***Heads*** of the individual families, called ***Patriarchs***. The *type of religion* thus required and practiced was ***Family Religion*** as each patriarch was responsible to teach and guide his (extended) family according to God's revelations.

The Mosaical Period- It began with the giving of the ***Law*** to Moses on Mt. Sinai and continued through until the first Pentecost after the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. As implied by the previous statements, the Law of God was *disseminated* through God's prophet ***Moses***. As this law was given to the family of Abraham- by that time a nation of some two million in number, the *type of religion* which practiced was ***National Religion***; the religion of the Jews.

And as we studied in our last lesson-

The Christian Period- It began with the giving of the ***Law*** through ***Christ*** by His Apostles on the first Pentecost after His resurrection and ascension (**cf. Heb.1:1-2; 2:1-4; 9:15-17; Acts 1:8 > 2:1-36** and will continue through till the day of Eternity (or Day of His Return / end of the world), **2Pet.3:7-10**. With the advent of Jesus Christ and His fulfillment of the promise made long years before to Abraham that through his ***Seed all nations of the earth would be blessed***, the kingdom was established. Into this sacred relationship all men, both Jew and Gentile (**cf. Gal.3:16,23-29**), could come. It was not then a period dominated by *Family* religion as the Patriarchal had been. Nor would it be a period of *National* religion as the Mosaical had been. But it would be, and indeed is, a period of ***Universal Religion*** because the gospel of Jesus Christ is indeed for all, **Matt.28:19**.

Now, the point: God's methods of communicating with man, and the methods which He required man to employ to worship Him changed from one dispensation to the next. **But, God's requirements of man relative to salvation have always been the same in principle: Faith and Obedience!** (review Chart 1-1) That is, man has always been required by God to *faithfully obey*. It was true of the Patriarchs and their families, it was true of Moses and the Jews to whom he spoke and wrote for God, and it *is* true for all those living under the Christian dispensation. Beginning in approximately 33 A.D., *all men everywhere* were required (**cf. Acts 17:30-31** and **John 12:48**) to believe and obey Jesus Christ and His gospel. The specific requirements of God's law may have and did

change from dispensation to dispensation, but the principle requirement of salvation was constant from the beginning of time to and through the present: *believe and obey!*

II. The Problem: *Which Requirements Are Essential to God's Plan for Saving Man?*

As simple and concise as the above sounds (*believing* and *obeying* God), the difficulty that arises can be frustrating for some people. They look at various passages and one says to do "*this*" for salvation and another appears to say to do "*that*" for salvation. The result is confusion at best, and disobedience to God when one is trying to obey at worst. Further, some wind up 'picking a passage' and claiming that "*it*" is all that is required despite what other texts might say. What is the solution? Let me see if I can help.

III. Basic Misunderstandings Related to God's Plan of Salvation.

A. *Accurate vs. Complete Answers to Questions.*

If you have children, you fully understand the difference between *accurate* and *complete* answers. If you ask a question of them, especially regarding behavior or homework- you likely will get an *accurate* answer. But will it be a *complete* answer? The only way you get *the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth* is if you are very good at asking questions! What they tell may be *true*, but it certainly may not be the *all of the truth* on the subject at hand. For instance, in the matter of belief and its role in salvation, note **Acts 16:31**. Is this one verse an *accurate* answer as to what one was told to do to be saved? Yes! Is it a *complete* answer? **Only** if "*belief*" is further defined and understood in light of **vv.32-33!**

B. *Starting Point vs. Destination.* (in other words, *diagnosis vs. prognosis*)

Someone asks you, "*How do I get to Dallas from here?*" You respond with good directions from point A to Dallas. But if they try those same directions from point B, they likely will never arrive in Dallas based upon your instructions. While your instructions were *accurate* from point A, they are *incomplete* if the starting place is point B. In other words, how you get to where you need to be depends upon from where you are starting. To switch illustrations but make the same point, before a Doctor can give you a *prognosis* (what must be done/where you should go), he or she must first make a *diagnosis* (present condition/where you are). Thus it is also true with salvation and our understanding of what we read. We must accept that *how* individuals were told to go (or what they were to do) was dependent upon where they currently *were* (present state or condition).

IV. General Observations Regarding the Question- "*What must I Do to Be Saved?*"

The question acknowledges a couple of things which are of vital importance to our understanding:

- ❶ The question recognizes the essentiality of *Personal Responsibility*. It does not say, "What must my (wife, husband, parents, friend, etc.) do to be saved?". It rather addresses the proposition relative to individual obligation, Acts 8:36-38 (see also Titus 2:11-12).
- ❷ The question recognizes the importance of *Personal Position*. Perhaps the greatest danger to man's salvation is false security: thinking or feeling that he is saved when he is not. The question, properly posed, recognizes a present lost condition. In other words, it accepts that there is something yet lacking in order to have eternal life. (cf. 1John 2:3).
- ❸ The question recognizes the necessity of *Personal Activity*. It understands that the "something" which is yet lacking in regard to salvation is something to be done, not felt or in some other way "experienced." (Phil.2:12; Acts 2:40)

So if we are at least asking the question in this form, we are on the right track to discovering what it is that God requires and expects of us in the matter of salvation- which is again the point of the whole story.

V. And Now, Finally, the Answer to the Question- *What must I Do to Be Saved?*

Remember, it is vitally important that we have the right *diagnosis* (where you are) connected with the proper *prognosis* (how to get to where you want to be). This is so because this is the way the bible answers the question. That is, **the biblical answers given to this question vary depending upon the current condition/position of those asking the question.** Please note the following examples in that connection:

- Those lacking *Faith*, John 3:1-21; cf. Mark 16:15-16; John 8:23-24 > were told to **Believe**.
- Those having *Faith*, but lacking changed lives, Acts 2:36-38; Luke 13:3 > were told to **Repent**.
- Those having *faith* and exhibiting *repentance*, 1John 4:15; Matt.10:1-5, 32-33; Rom.10:9-10 > were told to **Confess**.

-Those who are *believers* and have demonstrated, by *confession* and willingness to *repent*, their understanding of and desire for salvation, Acts 22:6-16; 2:36-41; 1Pet.3:21 > were and are told to be **Baptized**.

-Those of God's children who fail to walk in the light, Acts 8:13,18-24; 1John 1:5-9 > are told to **Confess their Sins** and **Pray for forgiveness**.

Folks get all confused about the matter of God's requirements (will) regarding salvation because they simply don't consider the position of the individual(s) being addressed. Remember the analogy of getting to Dallas? The first thing to consider is from where you are beginning. The same is true here relative to salvation. Therefore, we are not a liberty to *pick* and *choose* among God's requirements- we must do them all for His loving grace to be applied to us through the blood of Jesus Christ, Luke 6:46; John 14:15; 1John 2:3. See also Chart 5-2 please.

VI. Conclusion:

A. What do you need to do to be saved? It depends upon *where* you are now!

-Do you **Believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God?

-Are you willing to **Repent** from your former life of sin to a life of holiness and devotion to Christ?

-Can you **Confess** Jesus Christ as Lord of your life?

If so, then, "... *why do you delay? Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name.*" Acts 22:16

B. If you have done these things, what else remains?

Acts 2:41-47; Devote yourself, along with other Christians, to *the apostle's teaching, and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

1John 1:5-7; Continue to "*walk in the light*"

Matt.5:16; 2Cor.3:2-3; Be "*lights to the world*" and "*living epistles that can be read of all men*".

Heb.10:24; Give *consideration* (contemplative time) to how to *provoke* (encourage) others to "*love and good deeds*".

2Pet.3:18; Continue to *grow* and *mature* as the *offspring* of God that you may "*bear much fruit*" (John 15:8) and so prove to be His disciples.

Accompanying Charts
for
“What must I Do to Be Saved?”

