

Stay Alive

with Jesus

Lesson 1: He's Coming Back

Through the centuries families have watched husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, sweethearts, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters leave home to fight wars, explore new places or make money. The hope of all those who have stayed home has always been "He'll be back. She'll return." Love causes people to keep looking and longing for the return of the absent ones.

When Jesus left His friends on earth, He gave them a promise, "I will come again." Since that time all who love Him have been looking for Him and their love has kept hope alive in their hearts.

As your love for Jesus grows, your longing to see Him will grow.

JESUS PROMISED TO RETURN

What does Jesus promise? John 14:1-3. (Notice especially verse three)

He's coming back! He promised He would and the Bible speaks of this event 1,518 times!

WHEN WILL JESUS COME?

The disciples wondered when Jesus would return and they asked "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3)

Jesus made it clear that He couldn't give an exact date, ("But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Matthew 24:36) But Jesus answered His disciples' question by telling them of signs, or mileposts, they could observe to know that history was moving toward the great climax of all time - the second coming of Christ.

Let's look at some of these signs that Jesus told His disciples to look for.

SIGNS IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD

What are some signs in the physical world? Matthew 24:7, second part.

1.2 billion people on our planet cannot afford the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter. That's close to one-fourth of the world's population!

Famine is a sign that the world is moving closer to Christ's second coming. When you think of the major earthquakes that have occurred in recent years, you're again reminded that another of the signs of Christ's coming is being fulfilled.

SIGNS IN THE POLITICAL WORLD

You will also see signs in the political world. What are they? Matthew 24:6-7

When you read the daily paper you can see that world governments are in a constant struggle with each other, which is one more evidence that we are approaching the end of time.

SIGNS IN THE INTELLECTUAL WORLD

Daniel is an Old Testament prophet who was given information by God about the time of the end. What did he say about it? Daniel 12:4

Daniel mentioned two things that would earmark the end of time: people hurrying about and an increase of knowledge. Bible scholars interpret this two ways:

1. There would be an increase of knowledge concerning the long-hidden prophecies of Daniel which point to Christ's second coming.
2. An increase in general knowledge and travel

As you think of how humanity has gone from horseback to outer space travel in the last one hundred years, you agree that Daniel's prophecy has been fulfilled! And when Daniel wrote of an increase in knowledge, he couldn't have begun to imagine the "information overload" most of us deal with in today's world. Daniel's prophecies are dramatic evidences that Christ is coming soon, yet there are even more signs to consider.

SIGNS IN THE SOCIAL WORLD

How does 2 Timothy 3:1-5 describe people in the last days?

Besides signs in the physical, intellectual and social world, you'll find signs in the religious world.

SIGNS IN THE RELIGIOUS WORLD

Jesus warned about a deception that would take place prior to His second coming. What is the deception? Matthew 24:4-5,23-24

What do these false prophets and false Christs teach? Matthew 24:23,26

Today there are many people who teach that Jesus is coming secretly or that He has already come.

What did Jesus say you should do when you hear these teaching? Matthew 24:26, last part

Why? Matthew 24:27-30. Revelation 1:7

Jesus describes His coming, not as an obscure happening, but as an event that will demand the attention of the whole world because of its glory and power. "Every eye will see him."

As you look over the signs Christ gave the disciples in Matthew 24, you'll notice that they all lead up to His coming. Matthew 24:6, last part, says "all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet." But there is one sign that Jesus said once it was accomplished, then He would come.

What is it? Matthew 24:14

THE GOSPEL TO ALL THE WORLD

You can measure the nearness of Christ's coming by the progress of the gospel proclamation to the world. This is why the early Christians spread the gospel everywhere. They wanted Jesus to come soon! But during the dark Ages, this emphasis became obscured.



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Lesson 2: When He Comes

If kings, rulers, presidents arrive with parades, television coverage, shiny limousines preceded by bands, soldiers and flags, how do you suppose the King of the universe, Jesus Christ, will return? Out of nowhere, suddenly appearing upon a mountaintop or in a city auditorium? Or on television? Or maybe nobody will see Him at all, but suddenly Christians will be taken to a secret rendezvous with Him?

HOW WILL JESUS COME?

How does the Bible say Jesus will come again?
Psalm 50:3

Matthew 24:27

Mark 13:26

Who will come with Jesus? Matthew 25:31

Jesus came quietly to earth the first time. Not so, the second time. He comes as a king with glory and power. His first coming when He was born as a baby, was unnoticed by most people. How many will see Him when He comes the second time? Revelation 1:7

“Every eye shall see Him.” You will see Him. Your neighbours will see Him. Around the globe, *every eye will be on the returning, victorious King Jesus*. His coming will not be a “secret rapture” known only to a few Christians. It will be an open event. He will not steal upon earth to snatch away the righteous without anyone else knowing of it. In fact, Christ warned against the teaching that He would come secretly. What did He say? Matthew 24:23-26

The apostles clung to the hope of Christ’s coming and believed they’d actually see Him return. Over and over again they used the words “appear” or “appearing” when they wrote about the second advent of Christ. (Titus 2:13, Colossians 3:4, 1 Peter 5:4, 1 John 2:28, Hebrews 9:28)

You needn’t worry about missing the second coming of Jesus. You’ll see Him when He comes!

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN HE COMES?

The second coming of Christ will affect every person who has ever lived on earth. Everyone will fit into one of four groups of people:

1. Christians who are alive
2. Christians who have died
3. Non-Christians who are alive
4. Non-Christians who are dead

Each group will be affected in a different way by the return of Jesus.

Christians who are alive when Jesus comes

What happens to Christians who are living when Jesus comes? 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (especially verse 17)

Christians who have died before Jesus comes

What happens to Christians who have died? 1 Thessalonians 4:16

The Bible says that all Christians will get a new body, one that will *not* be subject to death. (1 Corinthians 15:42)

What will these bodies be like? Philippians 3:20-21

Christ will give all His followers a perfect body like His resurrected body. What was His resurrected body like? Luke 24:39

You will not be just a spirit. You will also have a body; however, your body will be perfect and sinless. No disease or death will every destroy it.

Non-Christians who are alive when Jesus comes

What will be the experience of those who have chosen not to follow Christ? Revelation 6:15-17

People who do not love Christ, will not want to see Him when He comes. The Bible indicates that the brightness and power of Christ's coming will destroy the unsaved.

What happens to the wicked?
2 Thessalonians 1:7-10

People who do not want to see Jesus when He comes again, will receive the result of their choice; they will be shut out from the presence of God forever. The destruction of the wicked is not God's choice. He says "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked," (Ezekiel 33:11) yet they will be destroyed. This is a subject often misunderstood and there's not space in this lesson to cover it adequately. Please refer to lesson 6.

Non-Christians who have died before Jesus comes

The Bible mentions no change in the status of the wicked who are dead. Apparently they stay dead.

WHY IS JESUS COMING AGAIN?

Why is Jesus coming? Matthew 24:31

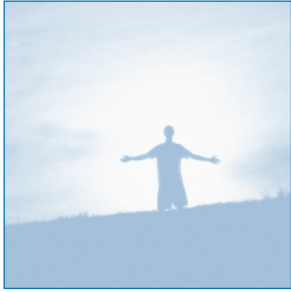
John 14:3 reminds us that He wants you to be with Him; that's why He's coming back! Love is the reason for His return.

Besides a place with Him forever, what else will Jesus bring when He comes again?
2 Timothy 4:8

A crown of righteousness is a symbol of the complete victory over sin which will be yours, not because you defeated the enemy but because Christ did. The battle with sin will be over. You'll never be tempted again. You'll wear the victor's crown! Unbelievable, isn't it, that Jesus loves you so much that:

- He took your place on the cross so you could have a place in His kingdom with Him
- He takes your defeat and gives you His victory over sin
- He takes your punishment for your sins and gives you eternity with Him with no sin, no sickness, no death!

Doesn't it make you feel like shouting "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"! (Revelation 22:20)



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Lesson 3: Your first thousand years with Jesus

Suppose you'd been living a thousand years. That means you would have been born a couple hundred years before the Magna Carta was written, four hundred years before the printing press was invented at about the time Leif Eriksson reached America. Think of all the history you would experience in a thousand years! Everything from the sailing of Columbus to men exploring space!

Imagine the people who would be your contemporaries. Ghengis Khan, Marco Polo, Leonardo de Vinci, Beethoven, George Washington, Adolph Hitler, Martin Luther King, Mikhail Gorbachev and on and on! What do you suppose you'd pick as the most significant events during a lifetime that long? The establishment of the Mongol dynasty, the tearing down of the Berlin Wall or the discovery of a polio vaccine?

It's hard to imagine living a thousand years. Yet the Bible talks about the first thousand years with Jesus after He comes again. It devotes a whole chapter, Revelation 20, to describing the first thousand years of our eternal life with God.

THE BEGINNING OF THE 1000 YEARS

What event marks the beginning of the thousand years? 1 Thessalonians 4:16 (first part)

Don't you like those words, "The Lord Himself will descend"? The visible personal presence of Jesus marks the beginning of eternity.

In a previous Bible lesson, you learned about several events that take place at Christ's second coming:

- a) The righteous dead are resurrected. 1 Thessalonians 4:16, last phrase.
- b) The living righteous are caught up in the air and go to heaven with Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; John 14:3.
- c) The bodies of all the righteous are changed. Philippians 3:20-21.
- d) The living wicked are killed by the power of His coming. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Revelation 6:15-17

There is one more event which you haven't studied before in these lessons. What is it? Revelation 20:1-3

Satan is bound. What does that mean? If the righteous are all in heaven with Christ and the wicked are all dead, what is there for Satan to do? There is nobody to tempt, the earth is desolate and he's imprisoned in solitude. He's bound by circumstances.

DURING THE 1,000 YEARS

What will the earth be like during the 1,000 years? Jeremiah 4:23

Revelation 20:3 describes the desolation of the earth as a "bottomless pit" or "abyss."

Where will the wicked be? Revelation 20:5 (first part) and Jeremiah 25:33

What will Satan be doing? Revelation 20:2-3

What will you, and all the righteous, be doing? Revelation 20:4-6

You'll be in partnership with Christ, reigning and judging with Him. But what does it mean to be judging?

Hasn't everybody's case already been decided and the reward of heaven given to the righteous and the reward of death given to the wicked?

Even in today's courts there are two kinds of judging; judging to determine guilt or innocence, and judging to give out the sentence. Because only God can read hearts, He decides (judges) before His second coming, who gets eternal life and who gets eternal death. But He lets you join Him in looking over the books. This will be your opportunity to see that He has made no mistakes. He has been fair.

What will you learn about God? 2 Peter 3:9

What else will you learn about Him? Psalm 89:14

As you live and reign with Christ for the first thousand years of eternity, you'll be able to study the leading of God throughout history as He worked to save people. What will be the conclusion you and all the righteous will reach concerning God's dealings with people? Revelation 15:3

THE ENDING OF THE 1,000 YEARS

What events mark the close of your first thousand years with Christ?

1. Revelation 20:5

2. Revelation 20:3,7

3. Revelation 20:8

4. Revelation 21:2

5. Revelation 20:8-9

6. Revelation 20:9-10,14-15

7. Revelation 21:1

After your first thousand years with Jesus, there stretches an eternity with Him! What will you do all that time? The next lesson uncovers Bible clues on what heaven will be like.

THE ONE THOUSAND YEARS OF REVELATION 20

Beginning Events

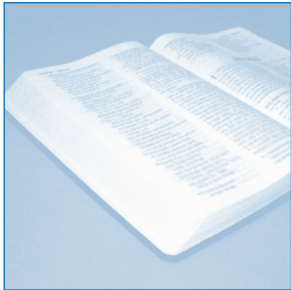
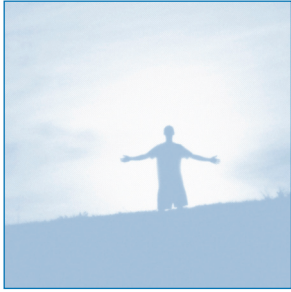
- Christ comes
- Righteous dead resurrected
- Living righteous taken to heaven
- Bodies of righteous changed
- Living wicked killed
- Satan bound to earth

Events During the 1000 Years

- Earth desolate - bottomless pit
- Wicked all dead on earth
- Satan confined to earth
- Saints reigning and judging with God in Heaven

Ending Events

- Wicked resurrected
- Satan loosed
- Satan deceived nations
- Holy City descends to earth
- Wicked surround city
- Wicked destroyed by fire
- New Earth created



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Lesson 4: God's new earth for you

"I don't want to go to heaven,": a young man stated. Surprised, his Christian friend asked, "Why?"

It sounds boring, sitting around all the time on a cloud with nothing to do but play a harp."

Unfortunately, many people share this young man's thinking. But is this what heaven is like? Is this what you have to look forward to?

When you accept Jesus as your Saviour and invited Him into your life, He promised to give you eternal life. But where will you spend this eternal life and what will you do? Will you enjoy it or get bored after the first thousand years? What will you be like? Will you have a body your friends will recognise or will you be an invisible spirit?

It staggers the mind to consider living for hundreds of years, never dying, and you wonder - what will heaven be like? The Bible says that the heaven He gives to His people will be here, on this earth, but it will be a New Earth.

NEW EARTH

God says, "Behold, I make all things new."
Revelation 21:5.

What does God do before He makes things new?
2 Peter 3:10-13

At the close of your first thousand years with Jesus, the earth is destroyed and cleansed by fire, then God shapes our planet into a new and perfect place. How does the Bible describe the New Earth?

Isaiah 35:1-2,7

Isaiah 51:3

The New Earth will not be like our present earth. The whole order of nature will be changed; even the animals will have new natures. What will they be like? Isaiah 11:6-9

NEW GOVERNMENT

Read Revelation 21 and 22 for a description of the new government that God is going to establish on earth. You'll find details about the capital city, the New Jerusalem, which are interesting. But the best news about the New

Earth is that there will be no bad news. What will not be there? Revelation 21:4,8,27; Revelation 22:15

Can you imagine a place without pain, without sorrow, without sickness, without death, without crime, without violence, without injustice? It seems too good to be true! What does the Bible say about the streets? Zechariah 8:5

God's New Earth will be a place where the streets are safe to play in, where there will be no criminals or law-breakers. All the citizens will live together peaceably and harmoniously.

Doesn't it make you feel like you can hardly wait to get there? That was John's reaction. What did he say as he finished writing? Revelation 22:20, last part

NEW BODIES

What will you and the other redeemed people be like in the New Earth? 1 John 3:2

You'll be "like Him" and what kind of body did Jesus have after His resurrection? Luke 24:36-43

Will your friends recognise you? 1 Corinthians 13:12

You won't be just a spirit, but you'll have a perfect, sinless body. What else does the Bible promise you about your body and your health? Revelation 21:4

Isaiah 33:24

Isaiah 35:5-6

Getting a new body means you won't get sick or old or ever die.

NEW LIFESTYLE

What kind of life will you lead in the New Earth? What will you do? Isaiah 65:21-23

You'll get to build your own home and garden and never be moved away from it. In fact, one big bonus in the New Earth will be that people can finish the work they begin. You'll never be interrupted by fatigue, illness or death.

Will there be children? Isaiah 11:6-8; Zechariah 8:5

The happiest thought of all is that you can personally be with Jesus. As one little boy put it, "where Jesus is, that's heaven." Where does God say He will be? Revelation 21:3

There will be regular worship services when all the redeemed will gather together to praise God. When will these times be? Isaiah 66:22-23

WHO WILL BE IN THE NEW EARTH?

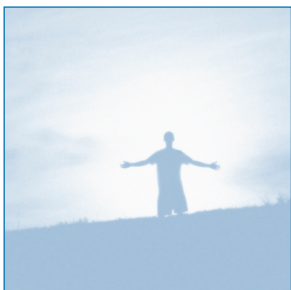
Revelation 21:27, last phrase

Revelation 22:14

Revelation 21:7

WHO WILL NOT BE THERE?

Revelation 21:8,27



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Lesson 5:

Where are you after you die?

Louis XIV of France looked out his palace window one day and saw a building he hadn't noticed before. "What is that building?" he asked a courtier. "The church of St Denis," the man replied, "all your royal ancestors lie buried there."

When the king realised that this would be his final resting place, he ordered another palace built that would hide the church from his view.

Nobody likes to think about death, but you can't hide from it any more than Louis XIV could. In previous lessons, you studied about the second coming of Jesus and the glorious eternity you'll spend with Him. Signs of His coming are everywhere and you feel He'll return very soon.

But what if you die before He comes, what happens to you then? Centuries ago, a man named Job raised a similar question. He asked "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job 14:14)

What is the answer to Job's question? John 5:25-29

When does the resurrection of the righteous take place? 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

The Bible makes it clear that the righteous dead will be raised when Christ comes again; then, together with the righteous living, all will be taken to heaven to be with the Lord at the same time.

But what happens between the time of death and the resurrection? Does the spirit or soul go to heaven or some other place while the body stays in the grave? Or is the whole person in the grave? To understand what happens at death, we need to look at the components God used to create people in the beginning.

How does Genesis 2:7 describe human creation?

Dust and air is what God used to create the first human being! You could write it as a formula and it would look like this:

Dust + Breath = Living Being / Soul

The word for "living being" and "soul" is the same in the Bible. Read Genesis 2:7 in the King James version and also in a New International Version and you'll see the word translated both ways.

Chemists who have analysed the human body tell us that the body is 80% oxygen and 10% hydrogen. The rest is composed of elements such as carbon, calcium, phosphorus, potassium, etc. We are a combination of dust and air! But what happens to "living beings" when they die?

BODY

What happens to the body at death? Ecclesiastes 3:19-20; Genesis 3:19

BREATH (SPIRIT)

When people die, what happens to their breath? To answer this question, you need to understand a little bit about the meaning of the word "breath" in the Bible. It is used interchangeably with the word "spirit." So you could ask the question this way: what happens to the spirit when people die? Ecclesiastes 12:7

According to the original usage of the words "breath" and "spirit" in the Bible you could just as easily read this text in Ecclesiastes like this: "the breath will return to God who gave it." If "breath" and "spirit" are synonymous, the creation formula would be written:

Dust + Breath (Spirit) = Living Being

LIVING BEING (SOUL)

As we have already seen, the words "living being" in Genesis 2:7 are also translated "living soul." The word "soul" in the Bible means the total entity of a person. Or, as our formula reads, Dust + Breath (Spirit) = Living Being (Soul). You can see that the soul is simply the sum of

the other two. Take away one part, such as the breath, and what do you have?

Dust - Breath (Spirit) = No Living Soul

This is precisely what the Bible teaches. When the breath of life is taken away, life ceases to exist. "The Hebrew and Greek words from which we translate our English words soul and spirit are found some 1,700 times in the Bible... In not one of the 1,700 appearances of these original words for soul and spirit is either of them said to be immortal, never dying, imperishable, indestructible, everlasting, eternal, or in possession of immortality. Nor are the dead represented to be capable of a conscious existence apart from the body."

(Arthur G Lickey, God Speaks to Modern Man. Washington DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assn, 1952, p 489)

Instead of telling us that the spirit or soul lives on after death, the Bible describes death in different terms. What does it say? Ecclesiastes 9:5-6,10

Psalm 146:4

DEATH: LIKE SLEEP?

The Bible is clear on the fact that dead people don't know anything, that it makes more than 50 comparisons to death being like unconscious sleep. Jesus used this comparison in John 11:1-45. What did He say about Lazarus? John 11:11-14

Jesus called Lazarus from the grave and He'll call all the righteous from their graves. When will this take place? 1 Corinthians 15:22-23

BUT WHY DO PEOPLE DIE?

- Because Adam and Eve sinned. (Genesis 3:1-6)
- Sin is separation from God. (Isaiah 59:2)
- God only has immortality. (1 Timothy 1:17) "Immortal" means "imperishable; everlasting, exempt from liability to die."
- People die because they are separated by sin from God who is the only source of eternal life.

If, according to the Bible, death is like unconscious sleep, where did the idea originate the life continues after death? Genesis 3:4

But what did God say? Genesis 2:16-17

God said "you shall surely die." Satan said the opposite: "you shall not surely die." Satan has sprung many false ideas about death. "Your spirit lives on" ... "your soul goes to heaven"... "you'll be reincarnated"... "you'll go to the spirit world." These are all expressions based on the lie that "you shall not surely die." The practice of channelling and all attempts to get in touch with people who have died, are based on Satan's first lie.

What does God say about people trying to make contact with the dead? Isaiah 8:19-20

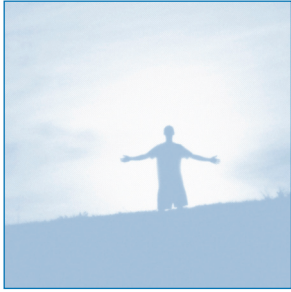
God wants to protect us from evil forces. It is Satan's cruel hoax to disguise himself as someone from the dead and thus communicate his messages. God doesn't want us to hear Satan's messages, so He has told us plainly that dead people don't talk. "The dead know not anything."

Yet God has provided a way out of the grave. What is it? John 11:25

Jesus is the way out of the grave! His resurrection is tangible proof that you, too, can live again, if you have accepted Him as your Saviour.

ASK YOURSELF

Have I accepted Jesus as my Saviour and the giver of eternal life?



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Lesson 6: Destruction of the wicked

During a lunch break, a Christian woman tried to talk to a coworker about God. “Look, the younger woman said, “I don’t want to hear about God. How can God be loving like you say He is and then torture people in hell-fire forever and ever? If that’s what God is like, then I want nothing to do with Him.”

“Well, I’m glad to tell you,” the older woman answered, “that God is not like that;” and she proceeded to explain to her listener how God has been given bad publicity and the subject of hell-fire has been greatly misunderstood.

What is God like? 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4

God says He doesn't want anyone to die, but wants all to be saved. Yet, what happens to people who sin? Romans 6:23; Ezekiel 18:20

Even though people may choose to live a sinful life, how does God feel about their death? Ezekiel 33:11

When and where will the destruction of the wicked take place? Matthew 13:40-42; Revelation 20:7-10; 13-15

Hell is not going on now. The destruction of the wicked takes place at the end of the thousand years and it occurs on this earth.

How does Malachi 4:1-3 describe the time of final destruction?

What will happen to Satan? Ezekiel 28:18-19; Revelation 20:10

When the Bible talks about the final destruction of the wicked, it uses phrases like burned up, devoured, consumed and ashes. And it says that Satan will be no more forever. These phrases all sound pretty final. What is burned up will not continue to burn, but will be destroyed. What happens to fire when the matter it is feeding on is gone? It goes out.

Evidently, hell-fire goes out, too. It is not going to burn forever.

But what about those texts in the Bible which use the words "*forever and ever*" or "*everlasting*" in connection with hell? Is the Bible contradicting itself or what does it mean? A brief study of some Biblical words will help to clear up these common misunderstandings about hell.

First of all, the word "hell" is used 55 in the Bible and in only 12 cases does it refer to a "place of burning."

In the Old Testament, the word for hell is "sheol," which is used 31 times and means as "unseen state or grave." In the New Testament the Greek word, "Hades," is used 11 times and means "the nether world or grave."

One time in the New Testament, the Greek word, "tartarus" is used which means "a dark abyss;" and 12 times the Greek word "Gehenna" is used which means "a place of burning." "Gehenna" is the name they gave the burning refuse pile outside the city of Jerusalem and it did not burn forever.

From the weight of evidence, it seems that the Bible words for "*hell*" simply refer to death or grave, not an unending fire. But there are texts that sound like hell lasts forever. What does Revelation 14:11 say?

First of all, notice that it is the smoke that ascends forever which is simply another way of saying that the effects of hell-fire are forever. Sinners will not live again once they are destroyed.

It is also important to understand the Biblical usage of the word “*forever*.” Its use depends on what it is describing. When it is used in connection with God, it means unending. When it is used in connection with people, it means for as long as they live or until they die.

How long did Hannah say she gave her son to the Lord? 1 Samuel 1:22

How long was “forever” in this case? 1 Samuel 1:28

By applying the understanding of the word “forever” to the wicked, you find that they burn only as long as life lasts. What does the Bible say about them? Psalm 37:20; Malachi 4:1

Again, notice the words “perish,” “vanish away into smoke,” “be burned up.” This is final and complete destruction. The wicked are not going to be punished forever, but their punishment will last forever. What about the “everlasting” or “eternal fire” mentioned in Matthew 25:41? What terms does the Bible use to describe the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah? Jude 7

These cities are not burning today, yet the Bible uses the term “eternal fire.” Again, we see that it

is the effects of the fire that are everlasting, but not the fire itself.

In addition to sin and sinners being destroyed at the end of the thousand years, what else will be burned up? 2 Peter 3:10

What does God do with the earth after it has been cleansed by fire? 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1

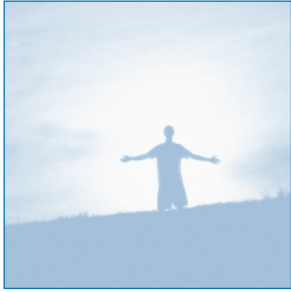
God is going to make a sin-free new earth! Don't you want to be part of it? How can you be sure you will be? John 3:16-17

Jesus is the only way to eternal life and the only way out of eternal destruction. His life and death and resurrection is proof that God truly loves sinners and is “not willing that any should perish.” Aren't you thankful for a God who loves so much?

TO CONSIDER

1. According to the Bible, hell takes place on this earth, at the end of the 1000 years; after which God creates a new earth. How could the new earth exist in the same place where hell-fire burns unendingly?

2. The Bible uses phrases like “burned up,” “destroyed” and “be no more” to describe the complete destruction of Satan and his followers. Isn't it inconsistent to say that the wicked keep on living in hell-fire when the Bible uses



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Lesson 7:

Only one way to heaven

When you read what the Bible says about heaven, or the New Earth, you quickly realise it is going to be an exciting place. It sounds almost “too good to be true.” It will be a perfect, sinless place with perfect, sinless people. And you may wonder, “I don’t know if I’m good enough to go there. How can I be sure I’ll really make it?”

That’s where the Bible has good news. You don’t have to be “good enough” to go, you simply have to know the right person to get in. And that person is Jesus. He’s the one and only ticket to heaven.

A man may go to heaven
Without health
Without wealth
Without fame
Without a great name
Without learning
Without big earning
Without culture
Without friends
Without a thousand other things
But he can never go to heaven
Without Christ

-Selected-

Continuing this same thought, someone once said, "There is but one ladder to heaven - the cross." But what are the steps up that ladder? How can you make sure you know Jesus?

STEP ONE TO HEAVEN

See Your Need of Jesus

What does the Bible say about people's ability to be good? Isaiah 64:6

How hard is it for people to be good? Jeremiah 13:23

The Bible doesn't say it's hard for people to be good. It says it's *impossible!*

Yet God loves you and wants you to enjoy heaven with Him, so what did He do? John 3:16

STEP TWO TO HEAVEN

Believe in Jesus

Once you see your need of Jesus, what should you do? John 3:16, second phrase; Acts 16:31.

Who is the Jesus you are to believe in?
Colossians 1:16

According to the Bible, He is your Creator. Since He has creative power, you can be sure that He is God. You can also be sure He loves the people He created. What did He come to do? Matthew 1:21, 1 Peter 2:24

The Bible is also clear that He is your Saviour. His perfect life on earth and his death on the cross saves you from the death penalty of sin and the rule of sin. He is the only way out of sin and into heaven.

Besides being your Creator and Saviour, what else is Jesus called? John 20:27-28

Jesus is also your Lord and God. Since He loved you enough to die for you, it seems logical that you could trust Him to lead, guide and direct your life. So you accept Him as your senior partner, your mentor, your guide, your CEO, your ruler, your king!

STEP THREE TO HEAVEN

Come to Jesus

Once you believe in Jesus, what is the next step?
Matthew 11:28; Revelation 3:19

STEP FOUR TO HEAVEN

Repent of your sins

When you come to Jesus, what do you do about
your sins? Acts 3:19; 1 John 1:9

STEP FIVE TO HEAVEN

Receive adoption and inheritance

When you come to Jesus, repent of your sins and
receive Him into your life, what does He give
you? John 1:12

As a member of God's family, what is your
inheritance? Matthew 25:34

Can you be really sure you'll get into God's
kingdom? 1 John 5:11

Jesus is truly the only way to heaven and if you
accept Him, you can be sure you'll have eternal
life. You can know you'll make it into heaven.



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Lesson 8:

Baptism: Is it necessary?

Everybody loves a wedding. It's a joyful celebration and symbol of a commitment that a man and woman make with each other. It marks the end of each of their single lives and the beginning of their married life as a couple.

There is a similar celebration and symbol of your new life in Christ. It, too, symbolises a change from your life alone and apart from God to one in union and partnership with Him. The celebration and symbol of your commitment to Jesus is called baptism.

BAPTISM - A BEGINNING

What did Peter say people should do after they hear about Jesus and repent of their sins? Acts 2:38

Is baptism important? Mark 16:16

Baptism is important because it is a public demonstration that you have become a member of the family of God. It doesn't, however, guarantee salvation. It is only the outward sign of an inward change that has already taken place.

PREREQUISITES FOR BAPTISM

Is there anything you need to do before you are baptized? Acts 8:12

You must believe that Jesus, the Son of God, died to save you. But before you can believe, you must learn. What did Jesus instruct His followers to do when He sent them into the world to witness for Him? Matthew 28:19-20

What precedes baptism in Acts 8:35-38

Now read the story in Acts 16:30-33, what precedes baptism?

What else do you do before you are baptized? Acts 2:38

What does it mean to repent of your sins? Matthew 3:6

When you're really sorry for your sins and confess them to the Lord, what does He promise you? 1 John 1:9

Repentance and confession involve turning from your sins and turning to Jesus for forgiveness and power to resist temptation.

HOW SHOULD YOU BE BAPTIZED?

How will you be baptized? Jesus left an example of how to be baptized. Where was He baptized? Matthew 3:13-17

Look at the story of Philip and the eunuch again. How was the eunuch baptized? Acts 8:36-38

Notice that Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan and the eunuch was also baptized in a place where there was enough water for both him and Philip to go "down into the water."

The word "baptize" comes from the Greek

“*baptizo*” meaning “to dip, to immerse, to plunge.” Neither Jesus nor the eunuch was baptized by sprinkling or pouring. They were immersed. How many ways of baptism are recognised in the Bible? Ephesians 4:5

BAPTISM - A SYMBOL

Baptism is a symbol of your inward change of life. What does it primarily represent? Acts 22:16

What washes away your sins? Revelation 1:5, last part

Baptism is a symbol of Christ’s sacrifice for sin. What three things does baptism point back to? Romans 6:3-4

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

When you’re baptized, you show that you believe and accept Jesus, who:

- Died for your sins
- Buried your past, sinful life
- Rose with a new life for you

Does being baptized and receiving this new life mean you’ll have no more temptation to sin? What happened to Jesus right after His baptism? Matthew 4:1

Baptism is not an inoculation against temptation. As long as you live on sinful earth, you’ll be tempted; but you’ll have the power of God to help you. What does He promise? Jude 1:24

Your Lord has the power to change you and keep you changed. But you must let Him work in you day by day.

Is it ever necessary to be re-baptized? Acts 19:1-5

Paul’s experience at Ephesus indicates there is a need for rebaptism when believers learn additional truth.

Another time that rebaptism might be necessary is when a Christian completely divorces himself from God for a period of time, then repents and comes back to Jesus. Rebaptism would signify his desire to become a member of God’s family once more.

BAPTISM - ADOPTION INTO A FAMILY

The Bible says that when we accept Christ, we are adopted into His family.

Who is this family? John 1:12



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Lesson 9:

The Lord will be your lawyer

“Get a good lawyer” is advice you often hear in today’s culture where lawsuits, counter-suits and legal entanglements flourish like land mines in a no-man’s zone.

Anybody who has to appear in court wants a lawyer who will win, but there are never any guarantees on the outcome of a trial. The best lawyers in the world can’t promise to win every case they handle.

Yet there is a lawyer who makes those kinds of promises. He has never lost a case and He never will. If you had to go to court, wouldn’t you want a lawyer like that?

JESUS AS A LAWYER

The Bible says that your Lord and Saviour is also your lawyer. What is he called? 1 John 2:1

According to the dictionary, an advocate is “a person who pleads the cause of another, as before a court.” In other words, an advocate is a defense attorney.

What is Jesus, your advocate or lawyer, doing right now in heaven? Hebrews 7:25; Hebrews 9:24

Intercession means “to make a petition or entreaty on behalf of another person.” Why is it necessary to have Jesus interceding for you, working as your lawyer? 2 Corinthians 5:10

A COURT TRIAL IN HEAVEN

The Bible says there is a judgment going on. How is it described? Daniel 7:9-10

WHEN DOES THE JUDGMENT TAKE PLACE?

a) Revelation 14:6-7

These verses talk about an “hour” of God’s judgment and links it with three angels preaching the gospel while the earth is inhabited with people prior to Christ’s second coming.

b) Daniel 7:7-10

This chapter of the Bible is Daniel’s vision about world history portrayed in animal symbols. It talks about four kingdoms (beasts) splintering into ten governments with one of them gaining great power and persecuting God’s people. This is followed by a judgment scene (“the court was seated”) which is followed by God setting up His kingdom for His people.

From these verses we get this chronology:

- a. Four world empires
- b. 10 kingdoms
- c. One very powerful kingdom
- d. Judgment begins. God sets up his kingdom (second coming of Jesus)

Comparing Daniel’s version with world history, Bible scholars placed the beginning of the judgment in the early 1800’s. There is not space in this lesson to consider all the evidence for this conclusion.

(For further information, see God Cares, Vol. 1, pp 195-249, by C Mervyn Maxwell; Pacific Press Publishing Assoc, 1981)

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE EARLY 1800’s?

There was a general religious awakening all over the world based on the message “Christ is coming in 1844.” Of course, we know Jesus didn’t come then. People had made a mistake on what was to take place, but they were correct on when it would take place. The event was not Christ’s second coming. It was the beginning of

the judgment which takes place before Christ's coming as the chronology of Daniel 7 tells us. The judgment is going on in heaven at this time.

Yet, in the lesson on the thousand years, you learned about a judgment going on after Christ's second coming during the first thousand years of eternity. Does the Bible contradict itself? No; it simply sees the judgment in three phases, much like we do in our judicial system today. It's like this:

1. Judgment of Investigation

This is like a preliminary hearing to decide if there is a case against us. This began in 1844 and continues until Christ comes the second time.

2. Judgment of Review

There is a jury review to establish the degree of guilt and prescribe the punishment. This takes place during the thousand years.

3. Judgment Pronounced

This is the "sentencing" phase of the judgment and it occurs at the end of the thousand years.

Note: The rest of this lesson will deal only with the first phase of the judgment.

During the preliminary hearing, (the judgment going on in heaven now) the "books were opened." What is written in these books? Luke 10:20; Revelation 21:27

Only names are written in the book of life. If our names are found in the book of life, there is no case. How else does God judge people? Ecclesiastes 12:14; James 2:14

The Bible makes it clear that God keeps a record of our thoughts, words, motives and actions and that the standard for behaviour is His law. What is law-breaking or lawlessness called? 1 John 3:4

What happens to people who sin? Exodus 32:33; Romans 6:23

Sound's pretty hopeless, doesn't it? The people who get to heaven are the ones whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Yet, if you sin, your name is blotted out. And the Bible says "all have sinned." (Romans 3:23) How can anyone make it through the judgment? Acts 3:19; Isaiah 43:25

You can choose to have your sins blotted out rather than having your name blotted out!

How does Zechariah describe the time of judgment? Zechariah 3:1-5

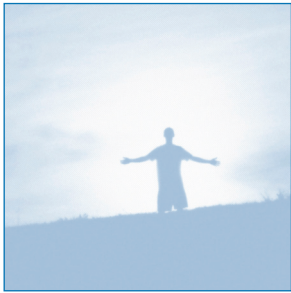
In this story, you see Satan, the accuser. You see Joshua, the accused. But you see the Lord, working as Joshua's Saviour and lawyer. Because Joshua allowed the Lord to take away his filthy clothes (sins) and cover him with clean clothes (Christ's sinless life), Satan could no longer accuse Joshua of being a sinner. Robed in Christ's sinlessness, there was no case against Joshua!

There'll be no case against you, either, if you let Jesus cleanse you. What does He promise to do?
1 John 1:9

ASK YOURSELF

Have I accepted Christ as my Saviour so that I can ask Him to be my lawyer in the judgment?

Isn't it thrilling to know you don't need to worry about the judgment because you have a lawyer who has never lost a case? Why not take a minute to write down your thanks to Him?



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Lesson 10: Directions for living

It's exciting to buy a new car. New cars look beautiful, drive well, sound good and even smell nice! With every new car comes a special book - the owner's manual. This little book tells you all about the various features of your new automobile, and it also gives important information on how to care for your car so it will run well. What kind of fuel, how much air pressure for the tires and how often to change the oil are a few of the things covered in a new car owner's manual.

Of course, you can choose to treat your new car anyway you wish, since you own it; but if you're wise, you'll follow the manufacturer's guidelines. After all, the people who made it ought to know best how to care for it.

There is an even more important owner's manual that you need to know about. It covers all you need to know about running your life and it comes from the creator of life.

What is the guidebook for running a successful life and what will it do for you? 2 Timothy 3:16-17

What did Jesus say people needed to do to have eternal life? Luke 18:18-22

Jesus emphasised two things that are essential to having eternal life; obeying the commandments and following Him. These two things are the earmarks of God's people at the end of time, too. How does the Bible describe God's last-day people? Revelation 12:17 (last part)

Two things will always distinguish true Christians; complete dedication to Jesus and obedience to His Word. In other words, Christians will love their Creator and follow His manual for their lives. Yet, sometimes you hear people say that the law has been done away with, that Christians no longer need to keep it. They say it was "nailed to the cross," and there is a text that sounds like that. It is Colossians 2:13-17.

What was nailed to the cross? Colossians 2:13-17

It sounds like some laws or regulations were done away with, yet what did Jesus say? Matthew 5:17-18

It seems like Paul, the writer of Colossians, and Jesus disagree. Paul talks about requirements that were nailed to the cross, yet Jesus said He didn't come to destroy the law but to fulfil it. How can we make sense out of this?

By understanding what the Bible means when it talks about laws and regulations.

To the Jews living at Christ's time, the word "Law," meant not only the ten commandments, but the Old Testament Scriptures (Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) dealing with the requirements given to Israel. The word also meant the specific ten commandments, so how do we know when the Bible is talking about which?

FOUR SETS OF LAWS

We can understand it when we realise the various laws can be divided into four categories. What is the first law? Exodus 20:1-17

The first law is the moral law of God, His standard of living for His people. What is another category of law? Exodus 21, 22. Scan these chapters quickly just to get an idea of what they are about.

These are civil laws, or an amplification and application of the ten commandments laws. They're like a lot of laws we have today. In fact, someone estimated that we have about 35 million laws just to enforce the Ten Commandments.

What is another category of law? Leviticus 11-15. Read the headings of these chapters to get an idea of what it is about.

These are health laws. They resemble principles and guidelines taught in hospitals and health education centers around the world.

What is the last category of laws? Leviticus 16-27. Quickly look at the chapter's headings and subheadings to get an idea of what it is about.

These are ceremonial laws, regulations on how to conduct the temple service which was set up by God as a way for Israelites to take care of their sins.

To summarise, we find four kinds of laws in the Bible:

The Moral Law

God's Ten Commandment standard for living

The Civil Laws

Application of the Ten Commandments

The Health Laws

Sanitation and health regulations

The Ceremonial Laws

Instructions on worship and how to take care of sin

The question is which of these sets of laws were "nailed to the cross"? The Ten Commandments? Hardly, as our judicial system is still based on

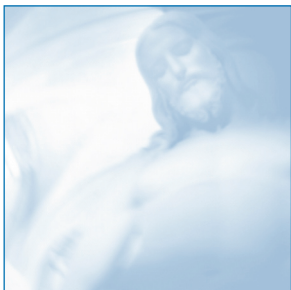
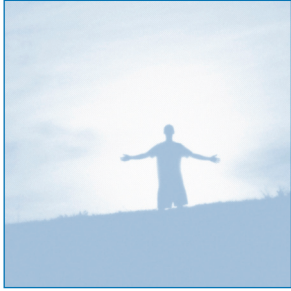
them. The civil laws? Not if they are simply an expansion of the ten commandments. Civil laws are changed and modified to fit various societies, but they still exist. What about health laws? We don't have the same kind of laws, but we definitely have laws to protect our health.

This leaves only the ceremonial laws as the ones that have been done away with. And certainly this makes sense, because all those ceremonies were established for one reason only; to point forward to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who would take care of the sins of the world. When He died, people no longer needed to bring a lamb to the temple. They could now trust in Jesus as their sin-bearer.

Go back to Colossians 2:13-17 and notice especially verse 17 where it says these things were a "shadow of things to come." What law is a shadow? Hebrews 10:1

It is the ceremonial laws that were a "shadow of things to come" and which were done away with. We no longer need to sacrifice a lamb. We can trust in Jesus. In previous lessons, we've discussed how we are all sinners, all law-breakers. Yet Jesus became our lamb-sacrifice for sin. When we accept Him, our sins are forgiven. Once forgiven, do we ignore his law and go on sinning? Romans 6:1-2

What will motivate you to obey God's commandments? John 14:15



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Lesson 11: Lord of your time

How would you like to be more productive in the workplace, have a more satisfying family life and a 50% better chance that your kids will reject illicit drugs? You can, by doing what 100 million people in America do every week - attend church regularly. These are the findings of a recent survey* which shows that regular worshippers not only benefit their communities, (churches and synagogues lead the list of the top 24 organizations regarded as improving urban life) but they help themselves to a better life.

This better life includes the best stress-reducer known to humanity - taking a day off, every week, from the pressures of living and working in a fast-track society. Again, God knows what people need to function at their peak and He provided for it when He created the world.

**Associated Press Article, The Press Enterprise, (Riverside, California.) April 21,1990*

GOD CREATED REST

What did God do at the end of six days of creation? Genesis 2:3

God created rest! He deliberately established the seventh day for rest. The principle of working six days and resting one, is so important that He made it part of the Ten Commandments. What does He say people should do in six days of the week? What are they to do on the seventh? Exodus 20:8-10

What blessings does God promise if you rest on the Sabbath? Isaiah 58:13-14

Here is God's blessing for people who follow his work/rest principle. Thousands of years after He made these promises, statistics prove that the people who live by His plan reap great results!

GOD IS THE CREATOR

Why is it important to follow God's work/rest principle? Exodus 20:11

When you follow God's plan of work and rest, you are following His own example at creation

and you are also verifying that you believe He is the creator of the world.

Who is this Creator-God? Hebrews 1:2

Your Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, is the Creator-God of this earth! It's because He made the world, that He cares enough to save the world.

GOD IS THE SAVIOUR

What does God call the Sabbath and why does He call it this? Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12-20

When you rest on the Sabbath, what is it a sign of? Hebrews 4:9-10

By resting on the seventh day of the week you show that you believe you cannot be saved by works but only by resting or trusting in God.

How are you saved from sin? Ephesians 2:8-9

The Sabbath is just one more sign God has given you to remind you that you cannot save yourself.

What relationship did Jesus say He had to the Sabbath? Mark 2:28

Since Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath and Lord of your life, He has given instructions on how to “remember His day to keep it holy.”

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO ON THE SABBATH?

Leviticus 23:3; Exodus 20:8-11

Nehemiah 13:15-19

Isaiah 58:13

Luke 4:16; Hebrews 10:25

Matthew 12:11-13

“The Sabbath is not intended to be a period of useless activity. The law forbids secular labour on the rest day of the Lord; the toil that gains a livelihood must cease: no labour for worldly pleasure or profit is lawful upon that day; but as God ceased His labour of creating, and rested upon the Sabbath and blessed it, so man is to leave the occupations of his daily life, and devote these sacred hours to healthful rest, to worship, and to holy deeds.” (Ellen white, The Desire of Ages, Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assos. P 207)

When does the Sabbath begin and end? Leviticus 23:32, last part; Mark 1:32

The seventh-day Sabbath begins at sundown, Friday and ends at sundown, Saturday. This is God’s way of measuring days. Notice Genesis 1:5,8,13,19,23,31

In order for the Sabbath to be a time devoted completely to communion with your Lord, the Bible teaches that all secular work and plans be laid aside. To be sure you’ll be ready for your weekly appointment with Him, God suggests a preparation day for the Sabbath. Which day is this? Exodus 16:23-30; Mark 15:42

Throughout history, God’s people have kept the Sabbath as a sign of His creating and saving power. Did Jesus keep the Sabbath? Luke 4:16

Did the disciples keep it? Luke 23:54-56

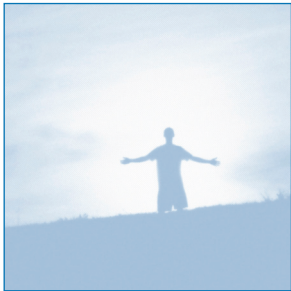
Did Paul keep it? Acts 17:2

You will keep it, too, if you’ve asked Jesus, who is Lord of the Sabbath, to be Lord of your life.

Even in the New Earth, you will remember His day. What will you do? Isaiah 66:22-23

From the creation of the world to the re-creation of the New World, the Sabbath is in effect as a reminder of three things:

- a. Your body, mind and emotions need regular rest.
- b. Your Lord is the Creator and you express



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Lesson 12:

Why do so many worship on Sunday?

Robert Whiteside, a community leader, prosperous business man and talented public speaker of the last century, faced a startling discovery. In a few days he must participate in a public debate about worship and his assignment was to defend Sunday-keeping. He had never doubted the authenticity of worship on the first day of the week. He felt sure there were texts about it because he'd always heard that Jesus changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. But when he began to study the subject, he could find nothing in the Bible to support his hitherto unquestioned belief!

Perhaps you can empathise with Robert Whiteside. Maybe you, too, have been startled to learn that the Bible teaches people to worship on the seventh day and you're wondering why so many people worship on Sunday? What has happened?

FIRST DAY TEXTS

There are eight texts in the New Testament that mention the first day of the week. You'll find six of them in the first four books of the New Testament. Perhaps you'd like to look them up:

- Matthew 28:1
- Mark 16:1-2
- Mark 16:9
- Luke 24:1
- John 20:1
- John 20:19

These six texts all speak of Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week but do not mention anything about worshipping on the first day.

The seventh New Testament text that mentions the first day of the week is found in Acts 20:7-8.

Why were people assembled on the first day of the week? Acts 20:7-8

"Luke (the writer of Acts) recorded 84 Sabbath services (after Christ's ascension) and only on first-day meeting, referred to in the text above."

(Arthur G. Lickey, God Speaks to Modern Man. Washington DC.: Review & Herald Publishing Assn., 1952, p 430)

This meeting was not a regular weekly worship service, but a meeting to bid Paul farewell. The fact that they "broke bread" didn't make it a holy day, because in Acts 2:46, we read that believers were "breaking bread from house to house, daily." 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 is the eighth and last of the first-day texts in the New Testament. What did Paul ask the people to do on the first day of the week? 1 Corinthians 16:1-2

The Revised Standard Version reads "Put something aside and save." Paul was collecting money for the poor in Jerusalem and asked that people take a weekly inventory on the first day of each week, and save some of their earnings for this collection.

As you can see, none of these eight texts prove that the first day of the week had become the worship day for the apostles. In fact, nowhere in the Bible can you find authorization for the sanctification of the first day of the week.

The apostles didn't change the day of worship and neither did Jesus. What did He say about changing the Law? Matthew 5:17-18

Then where and how did the change from Sabbath-keeping to Sunday-keeping come about?

A BRIEF LOOK AT HISTORY

1. In the first century AD there is no evidence of Christians worshipping on Sunday. The New Testament says that Jesus and the apostles worshipped on the seventh day.

2. During the second century, some Christians in Rome and Alexandria began worshipping on Sunday along with Sabbath observance.

3. From the second to fifth centuries, Sabbath was still observed throughout the Roman empire, but gradually many Christians started worshipping on both Saturday and Sunday. Why?

- a.** Anti-Semitism, especially in Rome, caused Christians to distinguish themselves from Jews by discontinuing practices that looked "Jewish."

b. The influence of sun worship among the pagan Romans contributed to the growing acceptance of Sunday as a day of worship.

4. The first known Sunday law was passed by the Roman emperor, Constantine in AD 321 and legislated that people rest on Sunday.

5. In AD 364, the Council of Trent issued the first ecclesiastical Sunday law. This law asked that people work on Saturday and rest on Sunday. By 535, and even more severe law concerning Sunday worship was passed by the church.

As you can see, the change was gradual and subtle and caused by many factors. The Catholic Church, however, claims the change from Sabbath to Sunday-keeping as one of the marks of her authority. The 1977 edition of The Convert's Catechism says this:

Question:

Which is the Sabbath day?

Answer:

Saturday is the Sabbath day.

Question:

Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

Answer:

We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic church, transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.

(Peter Geiermann, The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine; Rockford, IL: Tan Books and Publishers, 1977, p 50)

Centuries ago, God, through the prophet Daniel, predicted that a power would attempt to change God's laws. What was this prophecy? Daniel 7:25

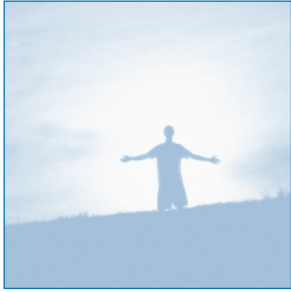
Paul predicted a deception would take place before Christ returned the second time. What did he tell the Thessalonians? 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4

Behind the governments and powers of earth a "man of sin" has been at work trying to "change times and laws." This deceptive force is none other than Satan. What has been his goal? Isaiah 14:13-14 (especially last part of verse 14)

What was one of Satan's temptations to Jesus? Matthew 4:9

Satan wants to "be like the Most High." He desires worship. By substituting another day for God's true worship day, he has hoped to get worship and allegiance through deception. Jesus unmasked Satan's' deception. What was His answer? Matthew 4:10

Do you feel as startled by these findings as Robert Whiteside did more than a century ago? Robert struggled with the decision to change his life-time beliefs and habits, but finally he decided to follow God's word. He became a minister and preached Bible truths for more than half a century.



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Lesson 13: Lord of your things

She snuck into the party. It didn't matter to her that she hadn't been invited. All that mattered was that she get close to the honoured guest. She had a gift for him, a treasure way beyond her budget, but that didn't matter, either. All that mattered was that she give her gift to the honoured guest. So she tiptoed past all the guests and at last, came to him. She wouldn't bother him, just pour out her gift upon him. But she had neglected to think that the scent of the perfume she unbottled would give her away.

The guests turned to her with scowling faces. The host humiliated her with a public insult about her past reputation. But the honoured guest said, "Leave her alone. She has done a beautiful thing to me. Wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will be told in memory of her." (Mark 14:6-9)

And so, today, we still have the unusual story of Mary and her expensive gift to Jesus - a story told in all four of the gospels.

GIVING GROWS OUT OF LOVING

What was the motive for Mary's gift? Luke 7:47

When you stop and think about it, all of us who have been forgiven, should be as grateful as Mary was. Yet, how do most humans operate? Luke 17:11-19

It is because we are often neglectful and unthankful, that God has to continually remind us to express our love to him in tangible ways. So He provided a way for us to learn to be generous and thankful.

TITHE

What is God's plan to help His people learn generosity? Leviticus 27:30

What is tithe? Genesis 28:22; Leviticus 27:32

Tithe is one-tenth of the increase or profit of what a person earns. God says it "belongs" to Him. We don't own it at all. It is what we return to Him as our Senior Partner.

What is tithe used for? Numbers 18:20-24; Deuteronomy 26:12

How did Paul say the church should support its workers? 1 Corinthians 9:13-14

According to Paul, those who dedicate their lives to ministering for God should be supported by tithe like the priests in Old Testament times were supported.

What does the lord promise those who return tithe to Him?

Malachi 3:10-12

Proverbs 3:9-10

Philippians 4:19

Over and over again, God promises to take care of His people. Because of God's faithfulness, what attitude did Jesus say His people should have? Matthew 6:25-34

Jesus gives two important principles:

- a. Put His kingdom first
- b. Don't worry

Giving gifts to God will help you remember to keep His kingdom first in your life; and when you do that, He can bless you by providing your necessities and you can live a worry-free life! What does God say about those who do not bring their tithes to Him? Malachi 3:8-9

What should you remember about your possessions?

Haggai 2:8

Deuteronomy 8:17-18

Psalms 24:1

Psalms 50:10

Your Lord is the owner of everything! In the beginning He made the earth and put Adam and Eve in charge of it. It is still His plan to let His followers be His managers. All He asks is that His managers recognise and honour Him as the owner by returning the tithe to Him.

What else does the Lord say about giving?
Exodus 25:2

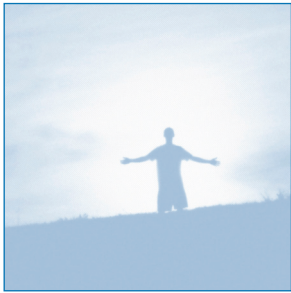
Apparently, God calls anything beyond tithe, an offering. Tithing is returning to God what is already His. Giving offerings is an extra token of love.

Without love, tithing and giving offerings is a ritual. What did Jesus say about people who pay tithes without having love? Matthew 23:23

Love makes all the difference! Without love, tithing and giving offerings is a burden. With love, it is a joy! Mary had the correct attitude. Because Jesus had forgiven her and done so much to change her life, it was easy for her to give Him an expensive gift.

Jesus has done the same for you. He has forgiven you and given you a new life in Him. When you think about His love for you, you can't help but respond with love-gifts to Him. Where does Jesus recommend you deposit your treasures? Matthew 6:19-21

Putting your treasures in heaven, means giving them to God to use in His work of saving people for heaven.



Stay Alive

with Jesus

Lesson 14: Lord of your body

If you heard of a statistically proven method of extending your life by seven to nine years, would you be interested? You're probably nodding your head affirmatively, but wondering "what's the catch?" There is no catch.

According to recent research, that was done by National Geographic, Seventh-day Adventists outlive their American counterparts by up to 10 years

By far the most surprising fact is that Seventh-day Adventists are the only culture that are not losing their longevity. It appears that their positive healthy behavior is playing a major part. There are a number of factors seem to play a significant role in their longevity. (National Geographic Magazine, November 2005)

Looking at longevity research, one scientist said, "It appears that the best insurance one can take out today is to follow the lifestyle of Adventists."

What is this lifestyle? It is one based on Biblical principles. Most Adventists live by God's "owner's manual" and they reap the benefits of better health and longer lives.

JESUS IS LORD OF YOUR BODY

What does the Bible teach about your body? 1 Corinthians 6:19

What are two reasons your Lord claims ownership of your body?

Psalm 139:13,14

1 Corinthians 6:20

Your Lord claims ownership of your body because He created you and He bought you with His own blood.

When you ask Jesus to be Lord of your life, what will be your attitude about your body?

Romans 12:1

1 Corinthians 10:31

What is your Lord's wish for your body? 3 John 2

Does your Lord have any specific directions about the care of your body? Yes. Go back to 1 Corinthians 6:13-18. What is one area of our physical lives that God says He is Lord?

God cares about your sexual relationships. He wants to be Lord of this part of your life; not to stifle your enjoyment but to enhance it through healthy practices.

FOOD

God also cares about your diet. When He created people in the beginning, what kind of diet did he provide? Genesis 1:29

This original diet consisted of fruits, nuts and grains. After the flood, God allowed people to eat flesh food. What does God say about the blood in flesh food? Genesis 9:1-4

Though God allowed people to eat flesh after the Flood, in Genesis 7:2 He was particular about what animals should be eaten. Then in Leviticus 11 God clarifies between "clean" and "unclean" meats. What is the standard for "clean" animals. Leviticus 11:3

What specific animals does the Lord label as "unclean" because they meet only half the standard? Leviticus 11:4-8

a. _____

- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

How do you know what seafoods are “clean”?
Leviticus 11:9-12

What about birds? Leviticus 11:13-19

Did you notice that it is the scavengers of the earth (hawks, crabs, pigs etc) that the Lord asks you not to eat?

Besides dietary laws, God gave His people health standards which are still applicable today. He instructed Israel about hygiene. They were to quarantine infectious diseases; (Numbers 5:2) contaminated articles were to be destroyed; (Leviticus 7:19) meat left over more than three days was to be burned. (Leviticus 7:17) Remember, they had no refrigeration.

How wonderful that God gave His people detailed instructions so they could enjoy good health!

What blessings did He promise Israel if they served Him and followed His instructions?
Exodus 23:25

Did He keep His promise? Psalm 105:37 (last part)

DRINK

What does your Lord say about what you drink?
Proverbs 20:1

How does the Bible describe those who drink intoxicating liquors? Proverbs 23:29-35

It sounds like people know about the bad effects of alcohol even back in Bible times. In our day we have scientific research that warns of the mind and body-destroying dangers of alcohol and drugs.

Though the Bible doesn’t contain scientific statistics, the people who have lived by its principles even when they didn’t understand all the reasons behind the rules, have benefited.

Believing that their bodies belong to God, Seventh-day Adventists have followed a lifestyle devoid of alcoholic beverages, cigarettes and drugs, and it is this kind of lifestyle that has given them the leading edge.

The Bible also talks about what we put on our bodies.

CLOTHING

What is the Bible principle about what you wear? 1 Peter 3:3-7

God is more interested in what is on the inside rather than what is on the outside, but nowhere in His Word does He say that His followers need to wear outward ornaments.

What did He advise His people to do with their clothing and ornaments when He wanted them to come especially close to Him? Genesis 35:1-4; Exodus 33:1-6



Stay Alive

with Jesus

Lesson 15: He'll guide you to His church

A member of a luncheon club received congratulations for working for a company which had been doing business for a hundred years.

When the applause died down, the chairman asked whether there was anyone present who worked for an older concern. At that a minister stood up. Everyone laughed until the truth of his action suddenly struck home: the church of Christ is the oldest going concern on earth. It was founded by the Lord Jesus Himself and has been an organized and active operation for over 2000 years!

THE LORD'S CHURCH

What are the origins of the Christian church?
Matthew 16:13-19

Some people have interpreted these verses to mean that Peter was the foundation rock of the church, but other Bible verses (1 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 2:20) make it clear that Jesus is the Rock. It was Peter's statement of belief in the divinity of Christ that was to be the basis or foundation of the church, not Peter himself.

Believing in Jesus is still the entry point into the church. What does the Bible say that people did as soon as they accepted Christ? Acts 2:41,47

The King James Version of the Bible reads that they were "added to the church daily." The New International Version reads that the new Christians were "added to their number daily." Either way it reads, you get the idea that people who accepted Christ immediately affiliated with a group of believers. There was an organized church for them to join.

Where did the early Christians meet? Romans 16:5

Colossians 4:15

1 Corinthians 16:19

Phileman 1:1-3

Homes, or house churches were the primary gathering place for Sabbath worship.

What is the Lord's attitude toward the church?
Ephesians 5:25-27

Jesus said He loves the church like a husband loves his wife. He also made it clear that He is the head of the church household. (Ephesians 5:23). The Bible also compares the church to a body, with Jesus as the head; (1 Corinthians 12:12-27) to a building with Jesus as the cornerstone; (Ephesians 2:19-22) and to a flock (Acts 20:28) with Jesus as the chief shepherd (John 10:14).

In all these illustrations, you notice that Jesus is number one! So if you're looking for a church, make sure that it places Jesus over all. Any denomination that questions the divinity or lordship of Christ, is not part of His true church.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LORD'S CHURCH

You can recognise God's church by the following characteristics.

1. Jesus is given first place.

What does Colossians 1:18 say about His position?

2. The church is a place of fellowship and love.

How does Acts 2:42-46 describe the church?

Notice that verse 42 puts fellowship equal with teaching, or doctrine!

What does Jesus say about the relationship that should exist between believers? John 13:35; 17:21-23

Love and unity among the members in the church is one of the ways the world will be drawn to Christ! But love and unity cannot be developed if there is no fellowship.

In the fellowship, or body, of Christians, God places people with various gifts so that the church can function well. What are some of the gifts? 1 Corinthians 12:28

You'll find many kinds of people with many different gifts and personalities in the Lord's church, but they will be bound together in love and fellowship.

3. The church will obey God's commandments.

Revelation 12:17 gives two characteristics of the last-day church. What is the first characteristic mentioned in Revelation 12:17?

If God's true church is a commandment-keeping church, how and when will the members worship? Exodus 20:8-11

4. The church will have the testimony of Jesus.

What is the second characteristic of the last-day church? Revelation 12:17 (last part)

This means the members will tell others about Jesus. Their goal will be to tell the whole world about Him. What were Jesus' last instructions to His disciples? Matthew 28:19-20

The Bible gives an additional definition of "the testimony of Jesus." What is it? Revelation 19:10

The Lord's church will believe in prophecy such as the prophecies you've studied about His coming. His church will also teach these prophecies to others.

5. The people in God's church will remain faithful to Jesus.

What does the Bible say about them? Revelation 14:12 (last part)

No matter what difficulties face them, God's people will not give up their faith in Jesus.

What is Christ's ultimate goal for His church? Ephesians 5:25-27

