

# What does the Bible Say?

## Lesson 6: God's Plan: Jesus, the Word of God

In the last lesson, we learned how God established his relationship with his earliest children, Israel, through a system of just laws and sacrifices as payment for their sins. This plan taught men the concepts of sin, justice, and the death that sin causes in our relationship with God. We learned that even with God's mercy and forgiveness, no payment we make could ever remove our sin or fully repay our holy God for sin committed against him. Only God himself has the power to make up the difference by his grace, and only God has the power to completely take away our sin, make us clean, and give us a new life. In this study, we'll begin learning more about the Seed and Savior of the world, Jesus.

### Jesus as the Word of God

John, the best friend of Jesus, tells us that Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1-14). In John 1, he explains that Jesus was with God in the beginning as God's spoken Word. Through this Word, God created the universe: <sup>1</sup>"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup>Through him all things were made..." (John 1:1-3, NIV). In this verse, the "him" who created the world, is the Word of God, Jesus. John goes on to explain the connection: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling [home] among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.... Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ " (1:14, 17). The writer of Hebrews also tells us that God created the world through Jesus, the Word of God, when he says this: <sup>2</sup>"In these last days [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe... <sup>3</sup>sustaining all things through his powerful word" (Hebrews 1).

In the Bible's creation account found in Genesis 1, we see this same connection as God speaks our world into existence:

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>Now the earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. <sup>3</sup>And **God said**, 'Let there be light, and there was light... <sup>9</sup>Let the waters under the sky be gathered into one place, so that dry land may appear... <sup>11</sup>Let the earth bring forth vegetation... <sup>24</sup>Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds'" (Genesis 1, BSB).

Through God's powerful spoken voice, God created all things. This spoken voice is also called the Word of God, which we know now is Jesus. In John 10, Jesus also teaches us that he and the Father are "one." Through these passages, we can begin to understand how this is possible.

Think about your spoken words. How are your words a part of who you are?

What power does God's words have? How are his words different from ours?

Our spoken words reveal the spirit that lives within us. Through our words, we can communicate our thoughts, opinions, ideas, and emotions. Our words express the spirit within us. Through our words, we can influence others and even cause others to do or not do something. God's spoken words, we can begin to understand his thoughts, opinions, ideas, and emotions. Like us, God's Word expresses the Spirit within him, which unlike us, is always full of truth and grace. His Word can also influence people

and cause things to happen, but unlike us, God's Word has the power to create new things, even the universe! In all this, we can begin to understand how God, his Word, Jesus, and his Spirit are "one." This is why Jesus said, "For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken" (John 12:49).

We learn in Genesis 1, that God also created man in his own image and likeness (1:26–27). We can now begin to understand what this means: God's spoken Word and Spirit are one with God, and God placed his spoken Word into the human body of Jesus. We too have spoken words and a spirit inside our bodies, and we use our words to express who we are in our spirit. Matthew 10 also says that have a soul that will one day live for eternity either with God in heaven or apart from God in hell (10:28), so we are not just physical, we are spiritual. In other words, we all have physical bodies, and yet we have souls that are eternal. In all these ways, we are like God. We are made in his image as his children!

In Genesis 1, we see that Adam and Eve are born into physical bodies, so the Lord gives them food to eat: "Then God said, 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food'" (Genesis 1:29). In Lessons 1 and 2, we learned that many physical concepts in the Old Testament are representations of spiritual concepts we see in the New Testament. In the same way, "food," "seeds," and "fruit" are physical metaphors for spiritual concepts. So, let's go back to Jesus as the promised "Seed." We learned in the last lesson that this Seed, who we now know is Jesus *and* the Word of God, will bring God's grace, freedom, comfort, righteousness, forgiveness, and glory to his children.

How might this idea of food be related to Jesus, the promised Seed and the Word of God? How can this food produce the fruit of grace, freedom, comfort, righteousness, forgiveness, and glory in our lives?

### **Jesus's life, teachings, miracles, forgiveness, and love**

Because Jesus's Words are preserved in the Bible today, we can actually feed ourselves spiritually by reading his Word every day! We can even share this food with others when we speak his words to his children. In the Old Testament, we can read all about the symbols and prophecies that point to Jesus. In the New Testament, we can read about Jesus's life, death, miracles, teachings, forgiveness, power, and promises and receive his words of comfort and encouragement. In this study, we'll explore some of Jesus's teachings and stories to understand more about how Jesus taught and lived.

#### *Jesus's life*

Jesus was born of God through his mother Mary, a virgin, in or around 6 B.C.E. Mary gave birth to Jesus in a manger in Bethlehem because she was traveling with her husband, and there was no place for them in the inns. Jesus's birth was announced by both angels and magi, also known as astrologers and astronomers within a court outside of Judea, the territory of Israel. These magi, likely of Persian origin, had been tracking a star that astrologically announced the birth of a King over the Jews (Luke 2, Matthew 2) and traced its location to Bethlehem. This star was the fulfillment of a prophesy spoken in 1500 B.C.E. through a non-Israelite prophet named Balaam<sup>1</sup> (Numbers 24:17). A magi's declaration of a king was well-respected in the Roman Empire; so when Herod, a Jewish client king of Rome, learned of this star, he considered the child a political threat to his empire and made plans to kill Jesus. Through a dream, God

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<sup>1</sup> Balaam was born in Pethor, likely situated between Syria and Iraq, or southeastern Turkey.

spoke to Joseph warning him of Herod's plan, and the family escaped to Egypt until the death of Herod in 4 B.C.E. At that time, Jesus's family returned to the place they once lived, which was a town called Nazareth. So, Jesus grew up in Nazareth and began his ministry when he was about thirty years old.

### *Jesus's teachings*

Jesus's followers called him "Rabbi," the name for an ordained Jewish teacher or leader, so Jesus likely had formal training in Jewish Law. During Jesus's ministry, he travelled throughout Phoenicia, Galilee, Samaria, and Judea, which would include modern Israel, the West Bank, Syria, the southern border of Lebanon, and Jordan. He taught the people wherever he went: in the countrysides, on mountains, on or near the seas, and in synagogues.

One day, when he was asked which commandment was the greatest, Jesus replied, "<sup>29</sup> 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>30</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' <sup>31</sup> The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these.'" A Jewish man agreed with Jesus saying, "<sup>33</sup> To love him [the Lord] with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.'" At this, Jesus said to the man, "<sup>34</sup> You are not far from the kingdom of God'" (Mark 12:33).

Think back to Adam and Eve and what you learned about how our desires, motives, the choices we make, and Satan's lies that can pull us away from God. Why is Jesus's teaching here so important?

### *Jesus's miracles*

Jesus's teachings of truth and his miracles were proofs that he was the Messiah. A prophecy in Isaiah 53 said this about the Messiah: "'He took up our infirmities [sicknesses] and bore our diseases'" (Isaiah 53:4). And this is what Jesus did. The New Testament writer Matthew reminds us of this prophecy when he records Jesus's miracles (Matthew 8:17). He writes that a man with leprosy came and knelt before Jesus and said, "<sup>2</sup> 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean. <sup>3</sup> [Then] Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy" (8:2-3). Then the crowds brought Jesus "many who were oppressed by demons, and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick" (8:16). When Jesus visited Peter at his house, he saw Peter's mother lying in bed with a fever. Jesus went to her, "touched her hand and the fever left her" (8:15). Then she got up and began serving Jesus. Jesus himself said that his miracles testify that the Father sent him.

Here Jesus heals a man with leprosy (8:2-3), those who are demon-possessed (8:16), and Peter's mother. (8:15). How are the ways Jesus healed them similar and different? What do we learn about Jesus from these stories?

In John 9, Jesus approached a blind man and healed him by spitting on the ground, making mud, and placing it over the man's eyes (vv. 1-6). "'Go,' he told him, 'wash in the Pool of Siloam'... So, the man went and washed, and came home seeing." In John 11, Jesus even raised a man named Lazarus from the dead after the man had been buried in a tomb for three days. We see that Jesus has the power to overcome all sickness, disease, and even death. In the Gospels, he feeds five thousand men, along with women and children, with just five loaves of bread and two fish (Mark 6:33-44). He walks on water and calms violent

storms, demonstrating his power and authority over nature, things only God is able to do (Matthew 14:22-33, 29-39). Jesus still does miracles today and you can watch or read about these miracles, on the Connect the Nations Testify page! (<https://www.connectthenations.com/testify>)

Take a minute to share a miracle you've witnessed or experienced through Jesus.

### *Jesus's forgiveness*

We learned earlier that Jesus is full of grace and truth. In the book of Luke, Jesus pours out his grace over a woman who is filled with love for Jesus. This story takes place at a dinner party among the Pharisees who prayed and worshipped God regularly at the temple, studied the Law of Moses, and judged anyone who didn't obey the Law the way they thought it should be obeyed. Yet, they showed little love for others or for God. Watch how Jesus responds to the love this woman shows him:

<sup>37</sup> A sinful woman in the town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house. So, she brought an [expensive] jar of perfume. <sup>38</sup> She stood at Jesus's feet crying and began to wash his feet with her tears and dried his feet with her hair, kissed them many times and rubbed them with perfume. <sup>39</sup> The Pharisee...thought to himself, "If Jesus were a prophet, he would know that the woman who is touching him is a sinner!"...

<sup>41</sup> Jesus said, "There were two men. Both men owed money to the same banker. One man owed the banker 500 silver coins. The other man owed the banker 50 silver coins. <sup>42</sup> The men had no money; so, they could not pay what they owed. But the banker told the men that they did not have to pay him. Which one of the two men will love the banker more?"

<sup>43</sup> Simon the Pharisee answered, "I think it would be the one who owed him the most money." Jesus said to Simon, "You are right..." <sup>44</sup> Do you see this woman? When I came into your house, you gave me no water for my feet. But she washed my feet with her tears and dried my feet with her hair. <sup>45</sup> You did not kiss me, but she has not stopped kissing my feet since I came in! <sup>46</sup> You did not rub my head with oil, but she rubbed my feet with perfume. <sup>47</sup> I tell you that her many sins are forgiven. This is clear because she showed great love. But the person who has only a little to be forgiven will feel only a little love." <sup>48</sup> Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." (Luke 7:37-50, ERV)

The people in the town describe this woman as a "sinful woman." What sins do you imagine she did?

What adjectives would you use to describe this woman's heart toward Jesus and her sin? Explain.

What adjectives would you use to describe the heart of Simon the Pharisee? (vv. 39, 44) Explain.

How does Jesus respond to the woman and why? Who does he forgive in this story? What do we learn about Jesus? (vv. 41-42, 47-48)

Think about your own heart. Do you feel you need Jesus's forgiveness? Do you ever see yourself as a good person and others as sinners? Explain.

Luke tells another story of a tax collector who is also surrounded by people who think they have God's approval but look down on others. Again, we can see how this man shows love for Jesus and how Jesus responds to him:

<sup>2</sup> In Jericho [JER-ih-ko], there was a man named Zacchaeus [zah-KEE-us]. He was a wealthy, very important tax collector. <sup>3</sup> He wanted to see who Jesus was, but he was too short to see above the crowd. <sup>4</sup> He ran ahead to a place where he knew Jesus would come. He climbed a [tree] so he could see Jesus. <sup>5</sup> When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and saw Zacchaeus in the tree. He said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down! I must stay at your house today.” <sup>6</sup> Zacchaeus came down quickly. He was pleased to have Jesus in his house. <sup>7</sup> All the people saw this and began to complain, “Look at the kind of man Jesus stays with. Zacchaeus is a sinner!” <sup>8</sup> But Zacchaeus said to the Lord, “I will give half of my money to the poor. If I have cheated anyone, I will pay that person back four times more!” <sup>9</sup> Jesus said, “Salvation has come to this house today...” <sup>10</sup> The Son of Man came to find lost people and save them.” (Luke 19:2-10, ICB)

How do the people in this town describe Zacchaeus? What sins do you think he has done?

What adjectives would you use to describe Zacchaeus’s heart toward Jesus and toward his sin? Explain.

How would you describe the heart of the people in the crowd and their reactions?

How does Jesus respond to Zacchaeus and why? Who is forgiven in this story?

Make a list of ways you’ve sinned against God and people. Do you desire reconciliation restoration with the people you’ve sinned against the way Zacchaeus did? Describe.

### *Jesus’s love*

Jesus is eager and willing to save the sinful woman and the tax collector when he sees their humility and desire for his forgiveness. Their actions reflect their hearts and sincerity: the woman bows before Jesus and pours perfume on his feet. Zacchaeus climbs to the treetops to see Jesus and is willing to pay back far more than he cheated from others. We see that both are willing to confess their sins and expose their weaknesses in front of other people. Neither is concerned about what others think about their devotion to Jesus. In fact, they no longer want to live the life they were living. They just want to be with Jesus and follow him. They’re not trying to prove their own righteousness or obey any law; they simply want to do something special for Jesus to express their love for him, their gratitude, and their heart to honor him in any way they can. They show their love for Jesus through their actions, not just their words. When Jesus sees the hearts of these two people, he saves them immediately!

From Jesus’s life, teachings, miracles, forgiveness, and love, we can begin to see how Jesus is the exact representation of God. We can see how he is God’s living Word living. Jesus himself said, “<sup>11</sup>Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves” (John 14, NIV) .

Homework:

- Review your sins from past studies or any that you’ve committed recently. Is there anyone else you need to reconcile with or repay? Is there any other sin you need to renounce? Do that this week.
- Think of a special way you can show Jesus that you love him this week. Go to a special place to pray, worship him at church, serve someone in a special way, or think of other creative ways you can show him love!