

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 repay our holy God fully 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, the one God would one day send to bring God's grace, freedom, comfort, righteousness, forgiveness, and glory to his children and have the power to completely remove our sin forever!

The Seed as the Word of God

John, the best friend of Jesus, declares who Jesus is: the Word of God. 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: "¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made..." (John 1:1-3, NIV). The writer of Hebrews also confirms that God created the world through Jesus, the Word of God, when he says, "²In 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... ³sustaining all things through his powerful word" (Hebrews 1). When we examine this claim against the creation account of Genesis 1 in the Old Testament, we see this same connection as God speaks our world into existence:

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²Now 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. ³And God said, 'Let there be light, and there was light... ⁹Let the waters under the sky be gathered into one place, so that dry land may appear... ¹¹Let the earth bring forth vegetation... ²⁴Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds'" (Genesis 1, BSB).

Through God's spoken voice, all things were created. And when he created man, he made man in his own image when he says, "²⁶Let us make man in our image, after our likeness..." (Genesis 1, NIV) He then gave them every "seed-bearing plant on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit contains seed" (1:29) as food.

John says that the Word, God's spoken words, was God. What does this mean? What kind of power does God's Word have? (John 1:1-3)

Where was God's Spirit at the time of creation? (Genesis 1:2)

In the beginning, God, his Spirit, and his spoken Word were present. From the beginning, we can see God as three and yet One. God made us "in his image." How are we made in the image of God? How are we three and yet one like God?

As we consider how we are made, we might realize that we have a body, and our spoken words reveal the spirit that lives within us. We also have a soul that will one day live for eternity (James 2:26, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Matthew 10:28). In this way, our one being is made up of three parts, and yet we are one being. God, however, can do things with his Word that we cannot. We can place our words in books, emails, and texts and send them out, but God has the power to place his Word inside a person. John explains: “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.” (1:14, NIV). This Word of God embodied into man was Jesus. In this way, Jesus became the “exact representation of God” (Hebrews 1:3) and the carrier of the truth and grace of God (John 1:17) that we might know and understand who God is – that God speaks truth through his commands, but he’s also full of tremendous grace.

Knowing that the Seed that God would one day send us is the Word of God, why do you think God gave Adam and Eve every seed-bearing plant and tree as food? What do you think this symbolizes?

Jesus’s life, teachings, miracles, forgiveness, and love

Because Jesus is the Word of God and we have the Bible today, we can actually feed ourselves from God’s Word daily, just as we consume food every day! In the Old Testament, we can read all about the symbols and prophecies that point to Jesus, and in the New Testament, we can read all about Jesus’s life, death, miracles, teachings, and encouragement to us as his children. Since this study is brief, we’ll dive into a few of Jesus’s teachings and stories to understand more about how he taught and lived. You can read more about him in the books Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, known as the four Gospels, written within the lifetime of his earliest followers.

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 prophecy spoken in 1500 B.C.E. through a non-Israelite prophet named Balaam¹ (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 him a political threat to his empire and made plans to kill Jesus. Through a dream, God 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, they returned to the place they once lived. So, Jesus grew up in the town of Nazareth and began his ministry when he was approximately thirty years old.

Jesus’s teachings

Jesus was called “Rabbi” by his followers, the name for an ordained Jewish teacher or leader, indicating that he may have 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, teaching wherever he went: in the countryside, on mountains, on or near the seas, and in synagogues.

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

One day, when he was asked which commandment was the greatest, Jesus replied, “²⁹ ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’² ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’³ There is no commandment greater than these.” A Jewish man agreed with Jesus saying, “³³ 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, “³⁴ 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 the lies of Satan that can pull us away from God. Why do you think what Jesus and this man said are so important?

Why do you think Jesus encourages this man by saying that he is not far from the kingdom of God?

Jesus's miracles

Jesus's teachings about the truths of God, as well as his ability to do miracles, were ways he proved himself to be the Messiah. Matthew reminds us of this connection when he quotes the Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 53:4, “‘He took up our infirmities [sicknesses] and bore our diseases’” (Matthew 8:17). Matthew records that a man with leprosy came and knelt before Jesus and said, “² ‘Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.’” Then, “³ 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). In the same chapter of Matthew's account, Jesus “drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick” (8:16). In another instance, a man with leprosy came and knelt before Jesus saying, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean” (8:2). When Jesus touched the man and said, “I am willing... Be clean!” (8:3), the man was immediately healed. 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” (Matthew 8:15). Then she got up and began serving Jesus. Jesus himself said that his miracles testify that the Father sent him, and we can read many of his miracles during his life throughout the Gospels.

How are the demon possessed man (Matthew 8:2-3), the man with leprosy (8:3), and Peter's mother (8:15) similar and different in how they approach Jesus?

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). “⁷ ‘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. We see in the Gospels how he feeds four thousand men and later five thousand, along with women and children. He even walks on water and calms violent storms, demonstrating his power and authority even over nature (Matthew 14:22-33, 29-39; Mark 4:35-41; 6:33-44). Jesus still

² Deuteronomy 6:4,5

³ Leviticus 19:18

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:

³⁷ A sinful woman in the town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house. So, she brought an [expensive] jar of perfume. ³⁸ 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. ³⁹ The Pharisee...thought to himself, "If Jesus were a prophet, he would know that the woman who is touching him is a sinner!"...

⁴¹ 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. ⁴² 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?"

⁴³ Simon the Pharisee answered, "I think it would be the one who owed him the most money." Jesus said to Simon, "You are right..." ⁴⁴ 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. ⁴⁵ You did not kiss me, but she has not stopped kissing my feet since I came in! ⁴⁶ You did not rub my head with oil, but she rubbed my feet with perfume. ⁴⁷ 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." ⁴⁸ 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? Explain.

How does Jesus respond to the woman and why? Who does he forgive in this story? What do we learn about Jesus?

Close your eyes and think about your own heart toward your sin. Are you humbled and see your need for Jesus's forgiveness? Do you 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:

² In Jericho [JER-ih-ko], there was a man named Zacchaeus [zeh-KEE-us]. He was a wealthy, very important tax collector. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but he was too short to see above the crowd. ⁴ He ran ahead to a place where he knew Jesus would come. He climbed a [tree] so he could see Jesus. ⁵ 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.” ⁶ Zacchaeus came down quickly. He was pleased to have Jesus in his house. ⁷ All the people saw this and began to complain, “Look at the kind of man Jesus stays with. Zacchaeus is a sinner!” ⁸ 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!” ⁹ Jesus said, “Salvation has come to this house today...” ¹⁰ 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?

Close your eyes and think quietly about how you’ve sinned against God and people. Do you desire reconciliation and 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 Jesus’s feet, while Zacchaeus climbs to the top of a tree to see Jesus and is willing to pay back far more than he may have 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 but simply long 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 and come to believe in him as God’s own Word living inside his Son. For Jesus himself said, “¹¹Believe 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? 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!