

THE BIBLE—THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson One

Crucial Points Concerning the Bible

Scripture Reading: 2 Pet. 1:3; John 5:39-40; 6:63; Eph. 5:32

- I. The Bible is God's personal letter to us, His children; our Father, only tells us the things related to us—2 Pet. 1:3:**
 - A. God tells us all the things that are related to us and profitable to us; whatever is not related to us He does not tell us—2 Pet. 1:3.
 - B. Do not fall into the trap and try to come up with answers to all the questions; learn to say, "I do not know."
- II. The Bible is a divine, spiritual book, a book of life, teaching us spiritual lessons—John 5:39-40:**
 - A. In the Bible there are many topics covered including science, philosophy, history, literature, ethics, and law but the Bible is not a book of that; the Bible is a book of life:
 1. The Bible contains science but is not a book of science—cf. Isaiah. 45:18; 40:22; Job 26:7; 38:14.
 2. There is history in the Bible, but the Bible is not a book of history—cf. Matt. 1:1-17.
 3. There are prophecies in the Bible, but the Bible is not a book of prophecies—cf. Dan. 9:24-27.
 - B. There are discrepancies in the Bible but in every case there are deep spiritual lessons conveyed in the discrepancy—cf. Eph. 2:8-9; James 2:14, 17; 1 Kings 6:1; Acts 13:18-22.
- III. The four crucial elements of the Bible are Christ, the Spirit, life, and the church—Eph. 5:32; John 6:63; Rev. 22:17; cf. Gen. 1:9-13; 2:21-24.**
- IV. The Bible changes people inwardly—no other book has had such a positive effect on people or is able to change people subjectively as the Bible—Eph. 2:1-6; Isaiah. 55:11; cf. Jer.13:23; Isa. 11:6:**
 - A. Negatively, the Catholic Church closed the Bible to the common people resulting in what history calls the Dark Ages.
 - B. For the Bible to have such a positive effect on the young people, we have to help them have a personal relationship and contact with the Lord through the Word—Eph. 6:17-18.
- V. The Bible has passed the test of time—it has never been revised, updated or corrected, therefore, we should have faith in the Bible and never doubt the Bible.**
- VI. We need to read the whole Bible—every verse in the Bible needs the whole Bible to interpret it and understand it in full.**

FOCUS:

The burden of our first lesson is to impress the young people with the preciousness of the Word of God. These six points as an introduction to this lesson series should impress them with the effectiveness of the Bible in the lives of so many believers throughout the centuries. The burden of this series of lessons should also equip the young people in three ways: 1) We need to prepare our young people to face the difficult situations that they confront in their schools. 2) Today's society and culture attacks the Bible and undermines the faith of the young people. 3) We need to help the young people to see the central thought and the governing vision of the Bible, which is the most important truth in the Bible.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

The Bible—The Word of God, lesson 23

Questions

1. How can we accept, agree, and believe in the Bible?
2. Why do we need to know the truth in the Bible?
3. How do we apply the truth in the Bible to our daily Christian life? to the church life?
4. Should we believe absolutely everything the Bible says?
5. Why do we need to be constituted with the truth?
6. How can we be constituted with the truth?

Memory Verses**2 Timothy 3:15-17**

- 15 And that from a babe you have known the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise unto salvation through the faith which is in Christ Jesus.
- 16 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,
- 17 That the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work.

2 Peter 1:21

For no prophecy was ever borne by the will of man, but men spoke from God while being borne by the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 1:1-2

- 1 God, having spoken of old in many portions and in many ways to the fathers in the prophets,
- 2 Has at the last of these days spoken to us in the Son, whom He appointed Heir of all things, through whom also He made the universe.

THE BIBLE—THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Two

The Bible

Scripture Reading: 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Sam. 23:2; Heb. 1:1-2; John 16:13; 6:63; 5:39;
1 Pet. 1:23; 2:2; Matt. 4:4

- I. The spiritual inheritances God has given us are the Spirit which cannot be seen and the Bible which can be seen; Christian must be fully balanced in both respects—the Bible without and the Spirit within.**
- II. For a person to know the Bible one must be trained in the mind; he must also be exercised in the spirit—2 Tim. 3:15-17.**
- III. The origin of the Bible:**
 - A. The Scripture is God-breathed; this tells us that the Scripture did not come out of man's thought, man's mind, but rather, it is God's breathing His thought and His word through His Spirit into and out of the writers—2 Tim. 3:16.
 - B. Since the Scripture is God's breathing His word out from men through His Spirit, no word of the Scripture can be of man's will; rather, men were borne by the Spirit and spoke out of God—2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Sam. 23:2.
 - C. The Old Testament is God's speaking in the prophets; the New Testament is God's speaking in the Son, our Lord Jesus—Heb. 1:1-2.
 - D. After the Spirit's descension, what His disciples spoke and wrote was disclosed to them by the Spirit; hence, after His ascension, all the books of the New Testament, written by His disciples, were of the Spirit's revelation and their divine authority was acknowledged by Him—John 16:13.
- IV. God is Spirit; however, this is very abstract and hard for man to touch or understand; but the Bible is the embodiment of this Spirit—John 6:63:**
 - A. The Bible is the embodiment of God the Spirit; it is also the expression of God the Spirit; God the Spirit is expressed through the Bible as the embodiment—John 5:39.
 - B. God the Spirit resides in His word; when we read the Bible, we touch God the Spirit because the Bible is the dwelling place of God the Spirit.
 - C. The Bible is the means of God the Spirit; whatever God does toward us and whatever God wants us to do are done through His word—cf. 1 Pet. 1:23; 2:2; Matt. 4:4.

FOCUS:

The burden in this lesson is to show that we must be balanced when we come to the Word of God. We need both a strong and exercised spirit and a sober and clear mind. God has given us two precious things: the Holy Spirit within us and the Holy Bible in our hands. We need to impress the young people that all of their experiences of God, Christ, the Spirit, and life are in oneness with the Bible as the Word of God. We want to help them with these two sides in order to be very balanced.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

The Bible—The Word of God, lesson 1, Roman I. – IV.

Questions and Exercises

1. Why do we need to be balanced by the Spirit within and the Bible without? What happens if we are not balanced in this way?
2. What do we need to know from the Bible? Why?
3. Briefly state the origin of the Bible.
4. Why do we say that the Bible is the embodiment of God?
5. Why do we need the Bible? What is its function?
6. How should we read the Bible?
7. Tell your companions what you have gained from this lesson. What points impressed you the most?

Memory Verses

John 16:13

But when He, the Spirit of reality, comes, He will guide you into all the reality; for He will not speak from Himself, but what He hears He will speak; and He will declare to you the things that are coming.

John 6:63

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

1 Peter 1:23

Having been regenerated not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, through the living and abiding word of God.

1 Peter 2:2

As newborn babes, long for the guileless milk of the word in order that by it you may grow unto salvation.

Matthew 4:4

But He answered and said, It is written, “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out through the mouth of God.”

Romans 15:4

For the things that were written previously were written for our instruction, in order that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

THE BIBLE—THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Three

The Way to Enjoy the Bible—By Letting the Word of Christ Dwell in Us Richly

Scripture Reading: Deut. 11:18; Psa. 119:47, 130; Isa. 59:21; Jer. 15:16; Acts 4:31; 5:42;
Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 4:13; Eph. 5:18-19; 6:16-19; Col. 3:16; 4:3-4; 1 Tim. 4:6; 5:17b;
2 Tim. 2:15; 3:15-17; 4:2; 1 Pet. 2:2; Rev. 12:11

- I. We need to read the Bible sequentially from cover to cover; by reading the Bible in this way, we can better understand it—Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:15; Psa. 119:11, 130.**
- II. Another simple, spiritual, and most beneficial way to read the Bible is pray-reading; take the Bible text as prayer and pray-read with it—Eph. 6:17b-18.**
- III. We also need to study the Bible to grasp the depth of the truth in the word—1 Tim. 5:17b; 2 Tim. 2:15:**
 - A. We need to read and study the Word of God to know the basic facts of the Bible.
 - B. In order to study the Word of God properly we need these helpful materials:
 1. We need a good translation of the Bible, such as the Recovery Version; which includes the outlines, the footnotes, and the cross references.
 2. The *Life-study Messages* open the Word further to us; they explain in the way of a life-study the verses in the Bible.
 3. There are lesson books which teach us the truth step by step in a progressive way; for example, there are the *Life Lessons* and the *Truth Lessons*.
 - C. We need to see an example of a way to use a *Life-study message* to study the Bible.
 - D. It may be more enjoyable to study with several companions; pray with your companions and encourage one another to pursue the truth—2 Tim. 2:22.
 - E. It is necessary to be definite; set up a definite time and day for studying the truth; determine what materials you will use and your rate of progress.
- IV. It is very beneficial to memorize some of the key verses in the Bible—Psa. 119:11; Col. 3:16; 1 Tim. 6:20.**
- V. After getting filled with the word of God, we must speak the word to others; we must speak in order to be healthy—Eph. 5:18-19b; Col. 3:16:**
 - A. Now is the time for the Lord to carry out His up-to-date move; we all have to speak Christ in our daily life because we owe the gospel to our friends—Rom. 1:14.
 - B. Paul charged Timothy to be ready “in season and out of season,” to preach the word—2 Tim. 4:2; 3:15-17.
 - C. Another place to speak is in the meetings of the church; we need to see that the most important part of our meeting is the prophesying, which is to speak for the Lord, to speak Him forth, and to speak the Lord into people—1 Cor. 14:1, 3-4.
 - D. The more we are filled with the word of God, the more we like to speak and the more we have to speak; the more we speak, the more we are filled in spirit—Eph. 5:18-19; 2 Cor. 4:13
- VI. Another way to be filled with the Spirit is to sing with the Word—Eph. 5:19.**

VII. By putting into practice all the points of this lesson we will be filled and constituted with the Word of God.

FOCUS:

The burden of this lesson is to help the young people into the enjoyment of the Word through many ways. We especially want to help them to enter into the practice of pray-reading in a proper and normal way. We also want to impress them of the need to be equipped with the Word of God in order to speak the gospel to their friends and relatives.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

The Bible—The Word of God, lesson 24

Questions and Exercises

1. What do we get when we read the Word? Pray-read it?
2. What materials are available to help us study the Word?
3. Why must we speak the word of God?
4. What must we do to be constituted with the Word?
5. What does it mean to be definite in studying the truth?

Memory Verses

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to God.

Ephesians 6:17-18

- 17 And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God,
- 18 By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints.

2 Timothy 4:2

Proclaim the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and teaching.

Ephesians 1:17

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him.

Psalms 119:11

In my heart I have treasured up Your word / That I might not sin against You.

THE BIBLE—THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Four

The Writing of the Bible and the Translations of the Bible

Scripture Reading: Eph. 3:9-11; Gen. 1:1, 26; Ezek. 28:15-18; Isa. 14:13-14; Gen. 3:1-6, 15; John 1:29; 10:10; 2:19; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:32; 2 Cor. 11:2; Luke 24:14; John 1:1; 5:39; Rev. 19:13

- I. The subject of the Bible is contained in four statements: God planned and created, Satan rebelled and damaged, man fell and was lost, and Christ redeemed and built; within this subject there are four persons: God, Satan, man, and Christ—Gen. 1:1, 26; Ezek. 28:15-18; Gen. 3:1-6; John 1:29; 10:10; 2:19; Matt. 16:18:**
 - A. The subject of the Old Testament is that God created, Satan damaged, man fell, and God promised the coming of Christ for redemption.
 - B. The subject of the New Testament is Christ coming to redeem sinners and to build up the church according to God's plan—Eph. 3:9-11.
- II. The central thought of the Bible is Christ and the church; the Bible not only reveals Christ Himself; it also reveals the bride and the Body of Christ, which is the church—Eph. 5:32:**
 - A. The central thought of the Old Testament—The Old Testament leads man to Christ that man would be redeemed by Him.
 - B. The central thought of the New Testament—The New Testament shows us how the church is redeemed and built up in Christ.
- III. The best way to subdivide the Bible is according to spiritual experience and is in three categories in both the Old and New Testaments:**
 - A. The Old Testament:
 1. History: From Genesis to Esther there are seventeen books on history.
 2. Experience: There are the five books of poetry: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs.
 3. Prophecy: From Isaiah to Malachi there are seventeen books
 - B. The New Testament:
 1. History: The four Gospels plus the Acts are five books on history.
 2. Experience: These are the twenty-one Epistles from Romans to Jude.
 3. Prophecy: There is only one book, the book of Revelation.
- IV. Most of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew and most of the New Testament was written in Greek; the written content of the Bible is crucial to us, therefore the translation of the Bible is also important to us:**
 - A. *The Septuagint Version*—Seventy scholars in Alexandria of Egypt translated the whole Old Testament into Greek around 277 B.C.; because there were seventy translators, this translation is called the Septuagint.
 - B. *The Vulgate Version*—The Vulgate Version was translated during the fourth century in North Africa; Vulgate means popular or common.
 - C. *The Authorized (King James) Version*— In A.D. 1611, fifty-four scholars translated the Old Testament and New Testament into the best English version of that time; because this version was directed by King James I, it was called the Authorized Version (aka. King James Version).

- D. *The Revised Version*—From 1870 to 1885, about one hundred scholars from England and America revised the Authorized Version and called it the Revised Version.
- E. *The American Standard Version*—in America, the American scholars revised the Revised Version, and called it the American Standard Version.
- F. Many other versions—The Bible has been translated into many languages, and many versions have been written; the Bible has been translated into 1,946 languages and there are about fifty English versions.
- G. Paraphrased versions of the Bible—There are some versions of the Bible that are mostly paraphrased
- H. Brother Witness Lee and his co-workers condensed the best of the Bible studies from the past two thousand years and integrated them into the *Recovery Version*.
 - 1. Accuracy—*The Recovery Version* is the most accurate translation.
 - 2. Readability—*The Recovery Version* is one of the most readable translations.
 - 3. Outlines—The Recovery Version provides an outline for every book.
 - 4. Footnotes—*The Recovery Version* also includes footnotes that explain many hard-to-understand portions.
 - 5. References—*The Recovery Version* gives many references in the margins to help readers find supporting verses for their study.
 - 6. *The Life-study Messages* are an accompanying set of study aids for the Bible; this set of messages opens up every verse of the entire Bible.

FOCUS:

The burden of this lesson is to help the young people understand the subject and central thought of the whole Bible including how to subdivide the Bible according to spiritual experience; it also touches the translations of the Bible and how precious the Recovery Version of the Bible is. We have to exercise ourselves to be able to present all these points in an inspiring and clear way. Again, we want to stress that the way to enjoy the Word of God as life is by pray-reading.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

The Bible—The Word of God, lessons 3-4

Questions and Exercises

1. What is the subject of the Bible in the Old and New Testaments?
2. What is the central thought of the Bible? How is the Bible related to Christ?
3. Briefly trace the history of the translations of the Bible up to its first English version.
4. Name a few versions of the Bible. Which one is best? Why?
5. Look up 2 Timothy 3:16 in the Recovery Version of the New Testament and also in three other versions of the Bible. Compare the translations. Look to see how many footnotes or references are provided. Discuss the results with your companions.

Memory Verses

John 1:29

The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

John 10:10

The thief does not come except to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and may have it abundantly.

Galatians 3:24

So then the law has become our child-conductor unto Christ that we might be justified out of faith.

Hebrews 8:6, 13

- 6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry inasmuch as He is also the Mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted upon better promises.
- 13 In saying, A new covenant, He has made the first old. But that which is becoming old and growing decrepit is near to disappearing.

Ephesians 5:32

This mystery is great, but I speak with regard to Christ and the church.

2 Corinthians 11:2

For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present you as a pure virgin to Christ.

THE BIBLE—THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Five

The Functions of the Bible

Scripture Reading: John 5:39-40; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 1 Pet. 1:23; 2:2; 1 Cor. 3:2; Matt. 4:4

- I. The first function of the Bible is to testify concerning the Lord Jesus; the Lord Jesus is the subject and contents of the Bible; the Bible is the explanation and expression of the Lord Jesus—John 5:39.**
- II. For fallen man, the function of the Bible is to make us wise unto salvation; it reveals to us how God saves men in Christ, and how men may be saved by faith, so that we may know the way of salvation—2 Tim. 3:15.**
- III. In our experience practicality, the Bible causes us to be regenerated—1 Pet. 1:23**
- IV. After being regenerated the Scriptures are like milk that can nourish us and make us grow in our spiritual life—1 Pet. 2:2; 1 Cor. 3:2.**
- V. The word of the Scriptures is also our spiritual bread of life; just as our physical life needs nourishment, so also our spiritual life needs nourishment—Matt. 4:4; Jer. 15:16; Job 23:12b; Heb. 5:13-14.**
- VI. For our perfecting, the Bible is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that we, the men of God, may be complete—2 Tim. 3:16-17.**

FOCUS:

The burden in this lesson is to help the young people see the functions of the Bible in a practical way. In all these lessons we want to inspire, encourage, and prepare them to pursue the Word of God for all the benefits. We also want to prepare and equip them to face opposition, answer challenges, preach the gospel, and prophesy for the building up of the church.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

The Bible—The Word of God, lesson 1, Roman V.

Questions and Exercises

1. Why do we need the Bible? What are the functions?
2. How should we read the Bible?
3. Tell your companions what you have gained from this lesson. What points impressed you the most?

Memory Verses

John 5:39-40

- 39 You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that testify concerning Me.
40 Yet you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

2 Corinthians 13:14

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

John 1:14, 18

- 14 And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only Begotten from the Father), full of grace and reality.
18 No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

Isaiah 9:6

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

John 10:30

I and the Father are one.

2 Corinthians 3:17

And the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

THE BIBLE—THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Six

The Proof of the Bible Being the Word of God

Scripture Reading: Isa. 55:11; Eph. 2:1-6; Psa. 119:103; Job 23:12; 26:7; 38:14;
Isa. 40:22; Jer. 33:22

I. The proof by logic:

- A. Authorship—There are only three books that claim divine authorship—the Bible, the Koran, and the Book of Mormon; the Bible states more than two thousand times that it is spoken by the Lord God; this eliminates all the other books.
- B. Moral tone—Only the Bible has the highest standard of morality; this standard exceeds that of any other book on earth.
- C. Content—Only the Bible tells us about God, His purpose, His reason for creation, man, man's problem, solutions to man's problem, and the destiny of creation and man.
- D. Availability—The Bible is readily available to man; it has been translated into approximately two thousand languages.

II. The proof by its completion:

- A. The writers—The way the Bible was completed proves that the Bible is the Word of God; the Bible took nearly 1,600 years to complete, and it was written by over forty people.
- B. Ivinpanin, a famous mathematician in Russia, knew that every character in Hebrew represents a number; he added up the numbers of every word in the Old Testament and discovered that the sum of every word is divisible by seven; only God could have caused the Bible to be written in such a way.
- C. Truthfulness—The truthfulness of the Bible also proves that the Bible is the Word of God.
- D. The perfect law—The perfectness of the law also proves that the Bible is the Word of God; there is no country throughout human history that has ever had a set of laws as good as the set given in the Bible.

III. Prophecies are the strongest proof of the authenticity of the Bible as the Word of God:

- A. Concerning Christ—There were many prophecies concerning Christ; except for His second coming, all the other prophecies concerning Christ were fulfilled about two thousand years ago.
- B. Concerning Israel—There were many prophecies concerning the children of Israel and the nation of Israel, many have been fulfilled and still some need fulfillment.
- C. Concerning Tyre—The Lord prophesied at around 600 B.C. in Ezekiel 26 concerning Tyre; the fulfillment of this prophecy took place in three different stages beginning in 587 B.C. and concluding several hundred years later.
- D. Concerning Sidon—The Lord prophesied in Ezekiel 28 concerning Sidon; Sidon has historically been a war-torn city; thus, the prophecy in Ezekiel was fulfilled.

- E. Concerning Babylon—The Lord prophesied in Isaiah 13 concerning Babylon, that it will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, it will no more be inhabited forever; it will not be dwelt in from generation to generation; this is still true today.

IV. There is no other book on earth that can positively change people as dramatically as the Bible can; only the Bible dispositionally changes people in a positive way—Eph. 2:1-6; Isa. 55:11:

- A. In gospel preaching—Wherever the gospel went, the brokenhearted were healed, drunkards became sober, prodigal sons and daughters returned home, and evil people turned to God.
- B. No other writings have been so effective in changing lives and behavior.
- C. In sensitizing the conscience—The Bible has the power to change people's lives by educating man's conscience according to God—John 15:22.

V. The proof by people's love toward the Bible—Christians love the Bible; some love it so much that they would even die for it—Psa. 119:103; Job 23:12b:

- A. Persecution by the Roman Empire—Within three hundred years of the Lord's walk on this earth, the emperors of the Roman Empire tried their best to destroy the Bible and everyone who read and believed the Bible.
- B. Persecution by the Roman Catholic Church—The Roman Catholic Church also persecuted the readers of the Bible; people loved the Bible more than their own lives; how much we should treasure the Bible while we can read it freely!

VI. The scientific proof—The Bible is scientifically correct:

- A. The round and rotating earth—Just over five hundred years ago, it was generally believed that the earth was flat; the Bible revealed that the earth was round over 2,500 years ago—Job 26:7; 38:14; Isa. 40:22.
- B. The unlimited number of stars—Jeremiah 33:22 says, "The host of heaven (stars) cannot be numbered."

VII. The proof by the history of the Jewish people—The history of the Jewish people also proves that the Bible is the Word of God; because the Bible and the people of God are tied together, their history and existence today proves to us that the Bible is truly the Word of God

- A. Chosen by God
- B. Becoming a great nation
- C. Being led by the judges
- D. The height of their experience
- E. Degradation
- F. Being tossed to and fro
- G. The recovery of the temple and the city of Jerusalem
- H. The Lord's first coming to them
 - I. The destruction of the temple and the city; their being scattered again
- J. Their being kept as a people
- K. The restoration of the nation of Israel

VIII. The proof by its indestructibility—During the course of human history, there has not been a book that has been attacked as much as the Bible; every attack has failed; the Bible has never been destroyed.

IX. The proof by its spread during persecution—the spreading of the Bible under persecution proves that the Bible is the Word of God:

- A. The example of a Bible hidden inside a chair
- B. The example of a Bible baked inside a loaf of bread

X. The proof by the word of the Lord and other writers of the Bible—We can use what was written in the New Testament to prove that the Old Testament is the Word of God.

XI. The proof by ancient documents—there are manuscripts, documents, and letters from ancient times that tell us that the Bible we have today is accurate:

- A. Three main ancient manuscripts—The Codex Vaticanus, or the Vatican Manuscript, is stored in the Vatican Library, Vatican City, Italy; the Codex Sinaiticus, or Sinaitic Manuscript, was copied on over one hundred sheep skins, probably in the fourth century; the Codex Alexandrinus, or Alexandrian Manuscript, is kept in the National Library of the British Museum.
- B. Books and letters of early believers—By comparing the ancient manuscripts, the letters, and the books of the ancient believers, we can see that today's Bible is the same as the ancient Bible.

XII. The proof by archaeology:

- A. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls—The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947; they were stored in eleven caves northwest of the Dead Sea, fifteen miles from Jerusalem; it is estimated that the Dead Sea Scrolls were copied in 100 B.C.
- B. The discovery of clay tablets—Seventeen thousand clay tablets, dated from 2300 to 2500 B.C., were discovered in the northern part of Syria; these clay tablets recorded human history as far back as 2900 B.C.
- C. The discovery of Nineveh—Nineveh was destroyed during a war; it was buried under sand for thousands of years and eventually discovered last century; the archaeologists found writings concerning many things recorded in the Bible that had not yet been recorded in history books.

FOCUS:

The burden in this lesson is to equip the young people to face the opposition and attack from their school teachers and college professors. We need to infuse them with these twelve proofs to help the young people be strengthened in their faith and confidence that the Bible is truly the Word of God. These proofs should be a real shepherding of the souls of the young people to affirm and confirm that the bible has withstood every test and is truly the Word of God.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

The Bible—The Word of God, lessons 5-6

Questions and Exercises

1. Using the arguments from this lesson, take turns with your companions to prove that the Bible is the Word of God.
2. How does the history of the Jewish people prove to us that the Bible is the Word of God?
3. Has the Bible ever been completely destroyed?
4. Why did people love the Bible so much that they would risk their lives by keeping a copy?
5. What did the writers of the Bible think about each other? What does this tell us?
6. How do we know that today's Bible is accurate?
7. Practice proving to your companions that the Bible is inspired by God.

Memory Verses

Job 26:7

He stretches out the north over the void; / He hangs the earth upon nothing.

Jeremiah 33:22

As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the seed of David My servant and the Levites who minister to Me.

Isaiah 45:18

For thus says Jehovah, / Who created the heavens — / He is the God / Who formed the earth and made it; / He established it; / He did not create it waste, / But He formed it to be inhabited: / I am Jehovah and there is no one else.

John 15:22

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.

Isaiah 55:11

So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; / It will not return to Me vainly, / But it will accomplish what I delight in, / And it will prosper in the matter to which I have sent it.

Psalms 119:103

How sweet are Your words to my taste! / Sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Job 23:12

As for the commandment of His lips, I have not turned back from it; / I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my apportioned food.

THE BIBLE—THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Seven

Key Topics of the Bible (1)

The Triune God and the Cross of Christ

Scripture Reading: Col. 1:17-18; 1 Cor. 8:4; Matt. 28:19; John 14:9-10, 16-17, 20, 23; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Cor. 15:45; Matt. 1:16, 21, 23; Col. 1:15; Acts 1:8; John 15:26; Gal. 3:13; 6:14; 1 Pet. 2:24

I. God—God is the foremost item revealed in the Bible because He is the beginning of all things; everything in the universe originated from Him and began with Him, thus, we should know Him first—Gen. 1:1:

- A. Both in the Old Testament and in the New, there are many passages which clearly and definitely tell us that God is only one—1 Cor. 8:4; Isaiah. 45:5:
 - 1. *Elohim* is the first divine title used in the Bible to reveal God, and it means the faithful mighty One—Gen. 1:1.
 - 2. The name *Jehovah* is the second main divine title used by the Bible in revealing God; it means the self-existing and ever-existing I Am, the I Am who was, who is and who is to come—Exo. 3:14.
- B. The Bible reveals that God is triune; God is uniquely one, and His name is Jehovah; yet this God is also triune—He is the Father, Son, and Spirit—Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14:
 - 1. Though the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three, yet the name is one—Matt. 28:19
 - 2. The Scriptures clearly reveal to us that all Three—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—are God—1 Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1:17; Heb. 1:8; John 1:1; Rom. 9:5; Acts 5:3-4.
 - 3. The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, and the Spirit also is eternal—Isa. 9:6; Heb. 1:12; 7:3; Heb. 9:14.
 - 4. The Three—Father, Son, and Spirit—are eternal and co-existent—John 14:16-17; Eph. 3:14-17; 2 Cor. 13:14.
 - 5. The relationship among the Father, the Son, and the Spirit of the Trinity is not only that they simultaneously coexist, but, even more, that they indwell one another mutually, They coinhere—John 14:9-10; 6:46; 8:29; 14:26; 15:26; Luke 4:1.
 - 6. Just as the child and the mighty God are one, so also the Son and the eternal Father are one; the Son is the eternal Father; They are one—Isaiah. 9:6; 1 Cor. 15:45b.
 - 7. The whole Triune God is triune for the purpose of dispensing Himself into us; He is triune for our enjoyment and experience—2 Cor. 13:14.

II. Christ—Christ is the subject and center of the Bible and is the main content of the Bible from beginning to end:

- A. Jesus and Christ were names given by God; when men discovered that He was God, they called Him Emmanuel, which means God with us—Matt. 1:21, 16, 23.
- B. The titles of Christ:
 - 1. *The Christ*—The Christ, referring to the anointed One of God, speaks of the Lord's commission—Matt. 16:16; Acts 2:33

2. *The Son of the living God*—The Son refers to the Second of the Triune God, speaks of His person. His commission is to accomplish God's eternal purpose through His crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and second coming, whereas His person embodies the Father and consummates in the Spirit for a full expression of the Triune God.
- C. The person of Christ:
1. God—Romans 9:5 simply and strongly declares that Christ is God, who is over all, the complete God blessed forever.
 2. The Son of God—Christ is also the Son of God, that is, God the Son—John 20:31.
 3. Man— Christ is not only God, He is also man; He is the complete God who became a genuine and perfect man—1 Tim. 2:5.
 4. The Creator—Heb. 1:10 reveals that He is the Creator.
 5. The Firstborn of all creation—Christ is also a creature, even the Firstborn among the creatures—Col. 1:13, 15.
- D. The work of Christ—In being anointed by God to be God's anointed One to fulfill His eternal plan, Christ accomplished and will accomplish the following great things:
1. The first great thing Christ did was to create the heavens and the earth, all things, and man—Heb. 1:10
 2. The second great thing accomplished by Christ, was that He as God became flesh—John 1:14; Rom. 8:3.
 3. The third great thing He did, He went to the cross to be crucified to accomplish the redemption in God's eternal plan.
 4. The fourth great thing He did was His resurrection which accomplished justification, resurrection, and regeneration for us—John 10:17-18; Rom. 4:24-25; Eph. 2:5-6.
 5. After Christ rose from among the dead, He ascended into the heavens; this is the fifth great thing done by Him—Eph. 4:8; 2:6.
 6. Upon His ascension into heaven, Christ proceeded to accomplish His heavenly ministry—Matt. 26:28; Heb. 8:6, 1-2; 4:14; 7:24-26; 1 John 2:1-2.
 7. When Christ completes His heavenly ministry, He will come back—1 Thes. 4:16-17; Rom. 11:26.
 8. After Christ cleans up the earth at His coming, He will set up the millennial kingdom and will reign with His overcoming believers in it for a thousand years—Rev. 20:4, 6.
 9. At the end of the millennial kingdom, Christ will be the center of eternity in the New Jerusalem in the new heaven and new earth to come—Rev. 21:23.

III. The Holy Spirit

- A. In the divine Trinity, the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of God, is listed last, showing that He is the ultimate expression of the Triune God—Matt. 28:19.
- B. The Holy Spirit is the Triune God entering into the believers; when He enters into us, the Father and the Son enter into us—John 14:16-17, 23.
- C. He is the all-inclusive and consummated Spirit as the ultimate expression of the Triune God as the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Jehovah, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Spirit of life, the life-giving

Spirit, and The Spirit, and, the seven Spirits—Gen. 1:2; 2:7; Luke 1:35; Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9, 2; Phil. 1:19; 1 Cor. 15:45b; John 7:39; Rev. 1:4.

- D. In the New Testament, there are two aspects of the Holy Spirit: He is the Spirit of life in us to be the essential Spirit of God and He is the Spirit of power upon us to be the economical Spirit of God—John 14:7; Acts 1:8.
- E. The work of the Holy Spirit—The Holy Spirit did and is still doing many wonderful things for us to bring us fully into God's economy.

IV. The cross of Christ

- A. In the Old Testament, God prophesied in the judgments of the Law that Christ would be hung on a tree, that is, hung on the cross—Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13.
- B. Not long before the Lord was put to death by the Roman governor, the Roman Empire had adopted crucifixion as the form of execution; thus, when the Jews sought to kill the Lord, they crucified Him through the hands of the Roman governor—John 19:15; Deut. 22:24.
- C. Christ was crucified beginning at nine o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon, a total of six hours—Mark 15:25; Matt. 27:45.
- D. Christ accomplished eleven matters on the cross; we can participate in God's economy because of His various accomplishments.
- E. The apostle Paul, being gained by Christ, did not boast in anything but the cross of Christ—Gal. 6:14.

FOCUS:

The burden in this lesson is to show the young people that the key topics in the Bible reveal God as the One who planned, Christ is the One who accomplished, and the Spirit is the One who applies. The Spirit brings to us the reality of what God is, what Christ has accomplished on the cross, and what Christ went through, obtained, and attained. These lessons serve as a review of all the six Summer School of the Truth lesson series and can equip them for their gospel preaching. Impress them that the reason God is Triune is for His dispensing Himself into man to produce and build up the Body of Christ. Also show them that the heavenly ministry of Christ today is to carry out His economy in and through them.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

The Bible—The Word of God, lesson 7

Questions and Exercises

1. Tell your companions about this unique true God.
2. How many titles of Christ do you know? Name them.
3. What is the difference between Christ as our High Priest and Christ as our Advocate?
4. In Galatians 6:14, Paul says, "But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Why does he say this?

Memory Verses

Isaiah 45:5

I am Jehovah and there is no one else; / Besides Me there is no God; / I girded you, although you do not know Me.

Matthew 28:19

Go therefore and disciple all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

1 Timothy 2:5

For there is one God and one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus.

John 7:37-39

37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.

38 He who believes into Me, as the Scripture said, out of his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.

39 But this He said concerning the Spirit, whom those who believed into Him were about to receive; for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Galatians 6:14

But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

THE BIBLE—THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Eight

Key Topics of the Bible—Man and Salvation

Scripture Reading: Rev. 13:8; Gen. 3:15; 1 John 3:8; Gal. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Cor. 3:6-7; Rom. 12:2; Rev. 14:15; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 1:2; Heb. 7:16; 1 Tim. 6:12; Matt. 28:19; John 3:5-6; 2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:5-11; Rom. 15:16

I. Man:

A. The creation of man:

1. Man not only possesses the highest created life, but he is also made in God's image and after God's likeness; image refers to the inward parts and likeness refers to the outward body which constitutes the tangible man—Gen. 1:26-27:
 - a. The main purpose of God's creation of man, a corporate man, is to express God—vv. 26-27.
 - b. The word dominion includes more than just authority; dominion means having a kingdom as a sphere in which to exercise authority.
2. After God created man, He did not put the divine life into man; instead, He gave man a free will to choose; He placed man in front of the tree of life because He wanted man to choose Him, to take Him as life—2:9.

B. The fall of man:

1. After God made man, He placed man in front of the tree of life, but before man could contact the tree of life, Satan took the opportunity to come first tempting man to contact the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and causing man to enter an illegal union with him; this became the first step of man's fall.
 - a. The cause
 - (1) Through his temptation, Satan caused man to doubt God's word and His heart.
 - (2) Another cause of man's fall was the woman's assuming the headship—Gen. 3:2-3, 6.
 - b. The first step in the process of the fall was man's failure to use his spirit; the second step was the exercising of his soul and the third step was the action of the body—3:2, 3, 6.
 - c. The result—Through Adam's transgression sin entered into the world and death through sin; death reigns over all men; thus, in Adam all die—Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:22.
2. The Devil caused man to fall further—Cain presented an offering to God according to his own concept, became jealous and killed his brother, created his own religion, and his descendants inventing a culture without God—Gen. 4:11-14, 17-22.
3. Then the enemy took another step, causing man to fall even further; the sons of God, the fallen angels, married the daughters of men; this illegal marriage produced the flesh; this fall resulted in the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from man and the total destruction of all flesh except Noah and his family—Gen. 6:3; 7:21.
4. The fourth step of the fall of man instigated by Satan was the open rebellion against God and His authority collectively; when man reached the fourth step

of the fall, he had fallen to the uttermost, so that even God could not do anything to recover the fallen race—11:3-4.

II. Salvation:

- A. Redemption was planned beforehand and foreordained by God; hence, before redemption came, in the Old Testament God promised it many times, clearly foretelling the different aspects of His redemption:
 - 1. After man sinned and fell, God came in immediately to promise man that the seed of the woman (Christ) would come and bruise Satan's head—Gen. 3:15.
 - 2. Christ is not only the seed of the woman, but also the seed of Abraham, as typified by Isaac—Gen. 13:15; 17:8; Gal. 3:16.
- B. The full salvation of the Triune God comprises many items in three stages:
 - 1. The first stage, the initial stage, is the stage of regeneration; composed of redemption, sanctification (positional), justification, reconciliation, and regeneration—Rom. 3:24-26; 1 Pet. 1:2; 1 Cor. 6:11; John 3:3-6.
 - 2. The second stage of salvation, the progressing stage, is the stage of transformation; composed of freedom from sin, sanctification (mainly dispositional), growth in life, transformation, building up, and maturing—Rom. 6:6-7; 7:16-20; 8:2; 6:19, 22; 1 Cor. 3:6-7; 2 Cor. 3:6, 17-18; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23; 1 Pet. 2:5; Eph. 2:22; Rev. 14:15.
 - 3. The third stage, the completing stage, is the stage of consummation. This stage is composed of the redemption (transfiguration) of our body, conformity to the Lord, glorification, inheritance of God's kingdom, participation in Christ's kingship, and the topmost enjoyment of the Lord—Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:21; Rom. 8:29-30; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:4, 6; 2:26-27; 12:5.

FOCUS:

The burden in this lesson is to review and remind the young people of the preciousness of man in God's creation as a vessel in the image and likeness of God with the freedom to choose. We may want to illustrate the creation of man in three parts in a three-dimensional way and also show the effects of the fall on their being of three parts the same way. We also need to rehearse with the young people the process of the four falls of man and God's salvation in a living and practical way. This lesson will equip them for their preaching the gospel and sharing the Lord with their friends.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

The Bible—The Word of God, lesson 8, Roman I. & II.

Questions and Exercises

- 1. What makes human beings so special among God's creation?
- 2. What were the four steps of the fall, and what caused each step? What was man's condition after the fall?
- 3. What promise(s) did God make to fallen man?
- 4. What are the three stages of salvation? Give examples of each.

Memory Verses

Genesis 1:26-27

- 26 And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of heaven and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.
- 27 And God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 2:9

And out of the ground Jehovah God caused to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, as well as the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity / Between you and the woman / And between your seed and her seed; / He will bruise you on the head, / But you will bruise him on the heel.

Romans 5:10, 12

- 10 For if we, being enemies, were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more we will be saved in His life, having been reconciled.
- 12 Therefore just as through one man sin entered into the world, and through sin, death; and thus death passed on to all men because all have sinned.

John 3:36

He who believes into the Son has eternal life; but he who disobeys the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him.

THE BIBLE—THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Nine

Key Topics of the Bible—The Eternal Life and the Believers

Scripture Reading: Eph. 4:18; Heb. 7:16; 2 Tim. 1:10; John 3:16, 36; 1 John 1:2; 1 Tim. 6:12; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 4:12, 16; Matt. 28:19; John 1:12-13; 3:5-6; Rom. 8:29-30; John 15:16

I. Eternal life:

- A. The eternal life is the uncreated life of God, the indestructible life, and the incorruptible life—Eph. 4:18; Heb. 7:16; 2 Tim. 1:10:
 - 1. The eternal life is the life that is not only everlasting but eternal both in time and in nature—John 3:16, 36; 1 John 1:2.
 - 2. To be regenerated is simply to receive God into us as our life, to receive a life that is divine, a life other than our human life—John 1:12-13.
 - 3. The eternal life is the life that is in the Son of God and that is the Son of God—1 John 5:11-12; 1:2; John 14:6
- B. The apostle Paul charged us to lay hold on this eternal life—1 Tim. 6:12:
 - 1. The New Testament teaches us that the eternal life has three stages in three ages—the present age, the church age; the coming age, the kingdom age; and the eternal age, in the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem as the center:
 - a. In the first age, the church age, we receive the eternal life; thus, it becomes our life, and we enjoy this life and live by it; in the church age it is a matter of receiving the eternal life—Rom. 6:23; John 3:16.
 - b. But in the next age, the age of the kingdom, the eternal life is not for people to receive, but for people to enter into—Matt. 25:46.
 - c. Then, in the eternal age, that is, in the new heaven and the new earth with the New Jerusalem as the center, the eternal life will eventually be the consummated gift for all God's redeemed people to manifest the Triune God for eternity—Rev. 21:2.
 - 2. It is by this eternal life and in this eternal life that the believers have been brought forth; the eternal life is crucial for the producing of the believers and for the building up of the organic Body of Christ—Eph. 4:12, 16.

II. Believers:

- A. The believers are regenerated in their spirit by the Spirit with the divine life, which is Christ, to be the children of God, having the divine nature, and to be the members of Christ in the union of the divine life—John 3:5-6; Col. 3:4a; John 1:12-13; 2 Pet. 1:4b; Rom. 12:5.
- B. The believers have been baptized into the Triune God to have an organic union with the processed Triune God—Matt. 28:19; Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 12:13; Gal. 3:27.
- C. Although the believers have been regenerated in their spirit, their soul and body remain old and need to be saved in the Lord's life—Rom. 5:10:
 - 1. The believers are being sanctified dispositionally by the Spirit—Rom. 15:16; 6:19, 22.
 - 2. The believers are being renewed in their mind and transformed in their soul—Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18.

3. The believers are being conformed to the image of the Firstborn Son of God—Rom. 8:29.
 4. Eventually, the believers will be glorified in their body in the glory of the processed Triune God—Rom. 8:30, 17-18.
- D. The believers needing to function as the branches of Christ in the vine tree, the organism of the Triune God, to express the processed Triune God in bearing fruit for the increase of Christ—John 15:1-5, 8, 16.

FOCUS:

The burden in this lesson is to review with the young people the crucial matters and key topics of life and the believers as a review of the truth to equip them for their preaching the gospel and leading men to Christ. The young people need a fresh understanding and fresh light on these subjects so they can speak them clearly to others. May we labor with the Lord to present these precious truths in the most fresh and inspiring way.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

The Bible—The Word of God, lesson 8, Roman III. & IV.

Questions and Exercises

1. What are the three stages of eternal life?
2. Discuss with your companions the difference(s) between the believers and fallen man in general. What is the difference between these two lines in the Bible?
3. What are the steps of God's organic salvation from regeneration to glorification?
4. What is the primary function of the believers as branches in the vine?

Memory Verses

Hebrews 7:16

Who has been appointed not according to the law of a fleshy commandment but according to the power of an indestructible life.

John 1:12-13

- 12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become children of God, to those who believe into His name,
- 13 Who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

1 Timothy 6:12

Fight the good fight of the faith; lay hold on the eternal life, to which you were called and have confessed the good confession before many witnesses.

Romans 8:29-30

29 Because those whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brothers;
30 And those whom He predestinated, these He also called; and those whom He called, these He also justified; and those whom He justified, these He also glorified.

John 15:16

You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you.

THE BIBLE—THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Ten

Key Topics of the Bible—The Church

Scripture Reading: Eph. 1:9-10; 3:9-11; Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25; 2:19, 22; Col. 3:10-11; 1 Cor. 1:2; Matt. 16:18; 18:17; Acts 8:1; 13:1; 1 Cor. 1:10; Rev. 1:4, 11

I. The church—The church is the goal God wants to obtain in His eternal economy; each one of us who is saved participates in this goal, that God may obtain His heart's desire according to His good pleasure—Eph. 1:9-10; 3:9-11.

II. The statuses of the church in God's economy:

- A. The term “church” is *ekklesia* in Greek, which means the *called out assembly* indicating that the church is a congregation called out of the world by God—Matt. 16:18.
- B. The church is the House of God; this house refers to God's dwelling place and also refers to God's family, God's household; God's household is the very house for God's dwelling—Eph. 2:19, 22; 1 Tim. 3:15.
- C. The church is the Body of Christ with Christ as the Head; it is constituted for Christ in His life and Spirit with all those who have believed into Him; it is a living organism—Eph. 1:22-23.
- D. The church is the new man, a corporate man; in the new man, there are no persons of the old creation belonging to any race, religion, culture, or class; only Christ is all the constituents of this new man and is in all its constituents—Eph. 2:14-15; Col. 3:10-11.
- E. The church is also Christ's counterpart as His Bride; as the counterpart of Christ, the church receives His love for the satisfaction of His heart's desire; this is a matter of love—Eph. 5:25, 29-30.

III. The church is constituted with all those who have believed into Christ and who possess His life—1 Cor. 1:2:

- A. Any person who has not believed into Christ and has not been saved cannot become a constituent of the church.
- B. Only after they are saved and have the Lord's life to become saints are they constituents of the church.

IV. There are two aspects of the church, the universal church and the local church—Matt. 16:18; 18:17:

- A. The church in the universal aspect is unique, including all who have believed into Him in the universe through all the ages and in every place—Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22
- B. According to the local aspect, the church appears in every locality; each local church includes those who have believed into Christ in that place—Acts 8:1; 13:1; cf. Matt. 18:17.

V. The designation of the church:

- A. The church is unique and has no need of special names; the church is the church; there should not be kinds of churches that are denominated according to their kind—1 Cor. 1:10.

- B. We may use the name of the locality in which a local church is to designate that church, such as the church in Jerusalem, the church in Antioch, and the seven local churches in the province of Asia—Acts 8:1; 13:1; Rev. 1:4, 11.

FOCUS:

The vision of the church cannot be repeated enough. The burden in this lesson is to remind the young people of the crucial truths related to the church in God's economy. These reviews should inspire and equip the young people in a fresh way concerning all the revelations and crucial truths in the Lord's recovery in a practical and living way. They themselves need to be in the church in a practical way and need to be burdened to bring their friends to the church life too.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

The Bible—The Word of God, lesson 9, Roman I.

Questions and Exercises

1. What does the Greek word for “church” mean?
2. What is the church to God? How does He feel about the church?
3. Suppose a friend asked you what church you go to. How would you answer?

Memory Verses

Ephesians 3:9-11

- 9 And to enlighten all that they may see what the economy of the mystery is, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things,
- 10 In order that now to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenlies the multifarious wisdom of God might be made known through the church,
- 11 According to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 16:18

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

1 Corinthians 1:10

Now I beseech you, brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be attuned in the same mind and in the same opinion.

Acts 8:1

And Saul approved of his killing. And there occurred in that day a great persecution against the church which was in Jerusalem; and all were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Revelation 1:4

John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne.

THE BIBLE—THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Eleven

Key Topics of the Bible—The Kingdom and the Dispensations

Scripture Reading: Gen. 1:26; 12:1-2; Matt. 3:2; 13:3-23; John 3:3, 5; Matt. 12:28; 5:3; Rom. 14:17; 5:20; Rev. 11:15

I. The Bible reveals that the central, primary, and most important goal of the gospel of God is to save us into the kingdom of God—Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15:

- A. In the beginning of Genesis we see God's intention for man to have His eternal life within him so that he could exercise dominion for God and bring in His kingdom—Gen. 1:26; 2:9; Matt. 6:10:
 - 1. God's placing man in front of the tree of life indicates that God wants man to receive Him as man's life by eating Him—Gen. 2:9; John 6:35, 57.
 - 2. In order for man to touch God's reign and bring God's authority to the earth, he must receive God's life inwardly; if man does not have God's life, he will have no way to bring in God's kingdom—3:3, 5, 15.
 - 3. It is necessary for us to grasp this point—that if man is to represent God and to exercise dominion on the earth, then man must possess God's life; man cannot possibly bear so lofty a responsibility in the strength of his own natural life—cf. Matt. 19:26.
- B. After the created race failed, God chose Abraham with the intention of having a kingdom—Gen. 12:1-2.
- C. The kingdom in the New Testament:
 - 1. We must repent for the sake of the kingdom of God—Matt. 3:2; 4:17
 - 2. In John 3 the kingdom of God refers more to the species of God than to the reign of God; to be the species of God means to have the life of God—vv. 3, 5:
 - a. The Lord Jesus came to be the kingdom of God by sowing Himself as the seed of the kingdom into God's chosen people—Luke 17:20-21; Matt. 13:3-23.
 - b. After this seed has been sown into the believers, it will grow and develop within them into the kingdom of God; this indicates that the establishing of the kingdom is absolutely a matter of the growth in life, not of our work—1 Pet. 1:23; 1 John 3:9; Matt. 13:4-8; Mark 4:3, 26-29
 - 3. When we were saved, we were put into the position of a king in order to reign in life—1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 5:10.
 - 4. To reign in life in practice means to be under the ruling of the divine life, to be obedient and submissive to the Lord—Col. 2:19; cf. Matt. 8:9.
- D. The kingdom of God is the ruling, the reigning, of God with all its blessing and enjoyment—Col. 1:13; Rev. 22:1-2:
 - 1. *The kingdom of God* (Matt. 12:28) is a general term that refers to God's reign (Matt. 6:10, 13b; Dan. 6:25b); its scope is unlimited, comprising eternity past, the patriarchs, the nation of Israel in the Old Testament (Matt. 21:43), the church in the New Testament (Rom. 14:17), the coming millennium (Rev. 20:4, 6), and the new heaven and new earth without end for eternity.
 - 2. *The kingdom of the heavens* (Matt. 5:3), a term used exclusively by Matthew, is a specific section within the kingdom of God, a section composed only of the

church today and the heavenly part of the coming millennial kingdom; it began on the day of Pentecost when Christ poured out the Holy Spirit and established His church (Acts 2) and it will continue until the end of the millennium (Rev. 20:7).

- E. Some Bible teachers claim that the kingdom was suspended, but when the apostles preached the gospel, they preached the gospel of the kingdom of God indicating that the kingdom was not suspended—Matt. 21:43; Acts 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; Rom. 14:17.
- F. The kingdom in Matthew is revealed in three aspects: the reality of the kingdom of the heavens (the inward content of the kingdom in its heavenly and spiritual nature), the appearance of the kingdom of the heavens (the outward condition of the kingdom), and the manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens (the practical coming of the kingdom in power)—Matt. 5–7; 13; 24–25:
 - 1. The reality of the kingdom is an exercise and a discipline to us today and the manifestation of the kingdom will be a reward to us in the coming age—Matt. 5:3-12; 1 Tim. 4:7-8; 2 Tim. 4:8, 18; Matt. 25:21.
 - 2. The appearance of the kingdom of the heavens is the outward condition of the kingdom; the parable of the tares, the great tree, and the woman who put the leaven, reveal the false constituents, the abnormal development, and the inward corruption of the kingdom of the heavens—cf. Matt. 13.
 - 3. The manifestation of the kingdom of the heavens is the practical coming of the kingdom of the heavens in power—Matt. 24–25.

II. After God created all things and mankind according to His eternal plan, His economy, He uses four distinct dispensations to do His work of the new creation on the man whom He created in order to accomplish the purpose of His eternal economy:

- A. The dispensation of the patriarchs was from the creation of Adam to the giving of the law by Moses—Rom. 5:14.
- B. Because the fallen man did not know his weakness and corruption, God initiated another dispensation, the dispensation of law, which extended from Moses to Christ—John 10:10; Gal. 3:24; Luke 2:25-26, 36-38; 3:15; 7:19; Rom. 5:20; Gal. 3:19.
- C. The third dispensation is the dispensation of grace, or known as the dispensation of the church and the age of mystery; God obtains all those who believe into Christ in the New Testament to be the third part of the new race in God's new creation.
- D. After the conclusion of the dispensation of grace, God will change for the last time the way of His work of the new creation on the man of the old creation; He will set up His kingdom on the earth to carry out His administration that He may accomplish His work of the new creation in the old creation—Rev. 11:15; 20:4, 6.

FOCUS:

The burden in this lesson is to bring the young people into a clear understanding of what the kingdom of God is to the believers. God needs a realm for Him to carry out His purpose. For this we need to be those who submit to His throne and allow Him to reign over us. For this we need to let the seed of life grow in us into this ruling realm. We also need to be clear of the four dispensations, or ways, in which God deals with the old creation for the accomplishment of His purpose.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

The Bible—The Word of God, lesson 9, Roman II and lesson 10, Roman II.

Questions and Exercises

1. What is the kingdom? Is it different from the church? Explain.
2. What are the three aspects of the kingdom of the heavens? Can we experience the kingdom now? Explain.
3. What are the dispensations? Which one are we in now? How long will it last? What is it for?

Memory Verses

Matthew 3:2

And saying, Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.

John 3:3, 5

- 3 Jesus answered and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
- 5 Jesus answered, Truly, truly, I say to you, Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Matthew 12:28

But if I, by the Spirit of God, cast out the demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Matthew 5:3

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

Romans 14:17

For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Romans 5:20

And the law entered in alongside that the offense might abound; but where sin abounded, grace has superabounded.

Revelation 11:15

And the seventh angel trumpeted; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever.

THE BIBLE—THE WORD OF GOD

Lesson Twelve

Key Topics of the Bible—The New Jerusalem

Scripture Reading: Rev. 1:1; 21:1-2, 10-12, 14, 27; 22:1-2

- I. The New Jerusalem cannot be a physical city, as commonly believed by Christians, for the following reasons—Rev. 21:1-2, 10:**
 - A. First, the New Jerusalem is the crystallized product of God's work in the old creation throughout the generations.
 - B. Second, the New Jerusalem is the consummation of the entire divine revelation in the Bible.
 - C. Third, the revelation of the entire book of Revelation is mainly made known to us by signs (Rev. 1:1) symbolizing the important persons and things—Rev. 1:1, 12, 16; 17:5; 19:7.
- II. This is the crystallized product and masterpiece of God's work of the new creation throughout the generations:**
 - A. After God finished the creation of all things and man, He used different ways in the different dispensations in the old heaven and old earth to carry out His work in man.
 - B. By choosing, redeeming, renewing, transforming, and glorifying them, He perfects them according to His desire and builds them up to be His eternal habitation, which is the New Jerusalem.
- III. The New Jerusalem is a composition of all the redeemed and perfected saints in both the Old and New Testaments throughout the generations—21:27:**
 - A. The names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel are inscribed on the gates of the New Jerusalem, indicating that the Old Testament saints are the components of the New Jerusalem—Rev. 21:12.
 - B. The names of the twelve apostles are on the foundations of the wall of the New Jerusalem, indicating that the New Testament believers are also the constituents of the New Jerusalem—Rev. 21:14.
- IV. The New Jerusalem is the bride, the wife of the Lamb; in the whole Bible God repeatedly likens His chosen people to a spouse for His satisfaction in love—Isa. 54:6; Jer. 3:1; Ezek. 16:8; Hosea 2:19; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:31-32.**
- V. The New Jerusalem is mysterious, divine, glorious, and holy; its revelation is the conclusion and consummation of the whole Bible, including both the Old and New Testaments:**
 - A. The Bible is a record and a revelation of God's two great works, the first being God's work of the old creation, and the second, God's work of the new creation; God's work of the old creation is a preparation for His work of the new creation.
 - B. The New Jerusalem is the ultimate consummation of His two great works; it is the masterpiece of His divine work and the crystallized product of His works of the old creation and the new creation.

FOCUS:

The burden in this lesson is bring the young people into the conclusion of the Bible in the clear revelation of the New Jerusalem. We need to help the young people into the application of the interpretation of the New Jerusalem and apply the various significances to their living today. Our burden is to make them beings of the New Jerusalem by bringing them up level by level and step by step through all the processes of God's organic salvation.

READING ASSIGNMENT:

The Bible—The Word of God, lesson 9, Roman III.

Questions and Exercises

1. Briefly explain what the Bible means by "New Jerusalem." Is it a physical city? How do we know?

Memory Verses**Revelation 21:1-2**

- 1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no more.
- 2 And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 21:10-12

- 10 And he carried me away in spirit onto a great and high mountain and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,
- 11 Having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, as clear as crystal.
- 12 It had a great and high wall and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.

Revelation 22:1-2

- 1 And he showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street.
- 2 And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life, producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.