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Biblical Doctrines

Is The Bible True? (Bibliology)



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To teach that every verse in the Bible is directly from God, inspired by Him.
- To explain that there are no doctrinal errors in the Bible.
- To provide answers to some serious criticisms that are made against the Bible.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

2 Tim. 3:16; Mt. 5:17-18; Jn. 14:26; 1 Tim. 5:18 (The Bible is Inspired and Inerrant).



MEMORY VERSE

2 Tim. 3:16: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that people are without excuse.



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week.



INTRODUCTION

In the following weeks we'll study some important Bible Doctrines:

- Doctrine of the Bible
- Doctrine of Sin
- Doctrine of Salvation
- Doctrine of Last Things

'Doctrine' is a set of **beliefs**. Over the next two weeks, we'll be looking at what we Christians **believe** about the Bible.

Note to the Facilitator

Doctrine of the Bible is a vast topic covering many different issues. However, we'll deal with only the following aspects in brief:

Primary Level

- Divine Revelation of the Bible—General and Special Revelation
- Divine Origin of the Bible—Bible came from God

Junior Level

- Inspiration of the Bible

- Inerrancy of the Bible
- Canonicity of the Bible

Senior Level

- Composition of the Bible
- Revelation of the Bible
- Interpretation of the Bible



ATTENTION GETTER

Activity: Proof for the Bible

The “Book of Mormon” is considered the Bible of Mormon Christians. According to them, in 1827, Joseph Smith found golden plates hidden in a hill, with strange writings on them. He translated these into English, and this became the Bible of the Mormonites.

- However, most Christians don’t believe this book is really from God.

On the other hand, a majority of Christians strongly believe that the Bible which we use is definitely from God.

How can we be so sure that the Bible is true?

We believe the Bible to be true:

- Because approximately 2000 of the prophecies mentioned in it have already come true ... with no errors.
- Because archaeological discoveries prove that the places and events mentioned in the Bible are real. 32

countries, 54 cities, and 9 islands mentioned in the Bible (totalling 95 different references) truly existed in ancient times.

- Because there's historical proof of 24,000 very ancient copies of the New Testament in existence today, showing that the Bible was not simply invented by somebody in the recent past.

Refer to the Student Workbook:

Picture 1 in the Student Workbook shows the Pool of Bethesda which was discovered by archaeologists in the 19th century.

- The Gospel of John describes the Bethesda Pool as having five porticoes—a puzzling feature suggesting an unusual five-sided pool, which most scholars dismissed as an unhistorical literary creation. Yet when this site was excavated, it revealed a rectangular pool with two basins separated by a wall—thus a five-sided pool—and each side had a portico.

Picture 2 in the Student Workbook shows a piece of a copy of the Gospel of John that dates to 125 A.D.

- Aristotle (a Greek philosopher) lived in the 300s B.C., and the earliest copy we have of anything he wrote is from 1100 A.D. In other words, people kept on copying his writings even after he died, and one such copy was written in 1100 AD. Even though this copy was written 1400 years after Aristotle's death, nobody has any doubts that Aristotle existed, and that this is a copy of his writings.

- On the other hand, Apostle John died around 100 AD. A copy of one his writings was made in 125 AD (just 35 years or so after his death). And the writing in this copy exactly matches the wording in the Bible. Yet people say that Jesus and his disciples were imaginary people who never existed or wrote anything! This is a foolish argument!

Picture 3 in the Student Workbook shows a picture taken in 1947, when it was declared that the State of Israel would be officially formed once again. The Jews in the photo are holding newspapers announcing this great historical event.

- Prophet Jeremiah originally predicted the re-instatement of Israel as a nation in Jeremiah 31. This was thought to be a joke of a prediction until 1948, when the Israeli State was formed again, after almost 2000 years of non-existence.

These are just three of the thousands of proofs available which show that the Bible is absolutely true!



TEACHING CONTENT

THE BIBLE is GOD-BREATHED

Read Aloud:

- **2 Tim. 3:16:** All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

Ask:

What do you think that means, “God-breathed”?

(Ask the children for their opinions)

Explain:

This word is used in the Scriptures only in this particular verse. It is a compound word, combining the words ‘God’ and ‘breath.’

In other words, each word in the Bible has been provided by God ... people didn’t write these words simply because they felt like writing them. For example, Matthew didn’t just sit down and write an account of the life and teachings of Jesus on his own. God, through the Holy Spirit, guided the process.

That’s not to say that God just put all the Bible writers in a trance and made their hands move. It just means that God showed each writer what words to use and how to organize the written content in a particular order.

Are both OLD and NEW TESTAMENTS directly from GOD?

- In Mt. 5:17-18, Christ affirmed that not the smallest letter or stroke would pass from the law until it would be fulfilled. In this rather strong statement, Jesus affirmed the inviolability of the entire Old Testament and thereby affirmed the inspiration of the entire Old Testament.
- In Jn. 14:26 Jesus indicated that the Holy Spirit would remind the apostles of all that He had taught, as they penned the words of Scripture, thus guaranteeing their accuracy.

- In 1 Timothy 5:18, Paul prefaced his remarks with “the Scripture says.” Then he quoted from Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7, thereby ascribing the status of Scripture to both the Old and New Testaments. Paul was saying that the New Testament is as much the inspired Word of God as the Old Testament.
- In 2 Peter 3:16 Peter refers to Paul’s writings and indicates that the false teachers distort Paul’s writings as they do the rest of the Scriptures. In this rather unique statement Peter places Paul’s writings on par with the Old Testament Scriptures.

THE BIBLE is INERRANT

- 2 Tim. 3:16 says that every word in the Bible is directly from God.
- Tit. 1:2 says that God does not lie.

Combined together, these verses declare that there are absolutely no mistakes in the Bible because all the words are from God, and God is always truthful.

Important Facts You should Know

Criticism 1 Answered:

First, critics say that Bible writers contradict each other in their narratives. For example they say that the four synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) give contradictory accounts of the resurrection.

However we discover this isn’t true when we carefully study what each of the four writers said. Different Bible

writers narrate a particular event differently, from different standpoints. But they don't contradict each other.

For instance, "Matthew mentions Mary Magdalene and the other Mary at the burial and as setting out for the tomb. The angel speaks to ` "the women," who "ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them."(27:55f.,61;28:1,5,8f.) If we had only Matthew we should take "the women" and "them" to be the Marys. But complicated movements of five women were apparently involved—Mary Magdalene left before the women entered the tomb, and the notifying of disciples required visits both to John's house and to Bethany. Probably only "the other Mary" was present at every point in the story and "the women" and "them" do not refer precisely to the two mentioned by name. Matthew is giving the detail necessary to convey his message, further elaboration would have been pointless distraction. He could of course have avoided any question by saying at verse 1 'certain women,' but this would have been unnecessarily vague. His mention of Mary Magdalene and Mary of Clopas would have been suitable for three reasons: 1. It was they who set out together from Bethany as described at the beginning of his account. 2. Mary Magdalene was of special importance since she was the first person to see Jesus. 3. Mary of Clopas, however, was the one who was present throughout his whole narrative. Although he leaves out many details, his is a judicious and accurate statement of what happened." (Easter Enigma—Are the Resurrection accounts in conflict? 2nd. ed., John Wenham, Baker: 1992.)

Criticism 2 Answered:

Second, critics say that the New Testament writers frequently made mistakes when writing quotations from the Old Testament. For example, Paul quotes Prophet Isaiah in Rom. 15:12 as follows:

- Rom. 15:12: The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; in Him the Gentiles will hope.

His quotation is very different from the actual quotation in the Book of Isaiah:

- Isa. 11:10: In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to Him, and His resting place will be glorious.

There are three explanations for such differences in the quotations:

- First, the writer had to translate the Hebrew Old Testament verses into Greek (which was spoken by most of the people in New Testament times).
- Second, in making reference to Old Testament texts it would have been impossible to unroll the lengthy scrolls each time to produce a verbatim quote.
- Furthermore, the scrolls were not readily available; hence, the freedom in Old Testament quotes.

The Old Testament was mainly written in Hebrew. This Hebrew Bible was later translated into Greek. We notice that Paul's quotation is more similar to this Greek translation:

- Isaiah 11:10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, and He that shall arise to rule over the Gentiles; in Him shall the Gentiles trust, and His rest shall be glorious (Septuagint Version—Greek Translation of the Hebrew Old Testament).

Criticism 3 Answered:

Third, critics say that there are many mistakes regarding numbers, names of people, etc, in the Bible.

- For example, while Uzziah is called by this name in 2 Chr. 26, he is referred to as Azariah in 2 Kin. 15.
- In the same way, while 1 Chr. 20:4 mentions the place named Gezer, 2 Sam. 21:18 refers to this same place as Gob.
- Likewise, 2 Kin. 8:26 says that Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king. However, 2 Chr. 22:2 says that Ahaziah was forty-two years old when he became king.

The explanation for these differences is simple:

- Most kings had both the names given by their parents, as well as an official name. For example, it's believed that Uzziah's official royal name was Azariah.
- Also, some Bible writers preferred to use more recent names of cities and towns (rather than use the old outdated name). For instance, most people don't refer to Madras anymore; they speak of Chennai.
- Moreover, there were no photocopying machines in those days. So people spent months patiently writing down copies of the original documents.

Sometimes while copying, the copyist made a mistake in mentioning a particular number or name. (However these mistakes were always minor, not affecting Biblical teaching or doctrines). This is probably why the Books of Kings and Chronicles mention different ages for Ahaziah's enthronement.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

What if the Bible was not God-breathed? What difference would that make in our lives, our faith, our difficulties, hope, etc?

If the Bible was not God-breathed, we would not be sure whether the promises made in the Bible are directly from God or not. So we would be unable to claim any Bible promise with confidence.

Moreover, we would not be sure whether the salvation plan mentioned in the Bible is directly from God or not. We would not have confidence that Jesus will take us to heaven.

This is why it's very important for us to have the assurance that every word in the Bible is God-breathed. This gives us the confidence to hold on to the promises in the Bible even when everything seems to be going wrong in our lives.

How can we trust a Bible which contains copyist errors? What if the copyist made serious mistakes while copying from the original document?

It's true that some copyists made a few mistakes while copying from the original documents. However, after carefully studying all the handwritten ancient copies of the Bible that are available, it has been discovered that all the copies are 98.5% textually pure. The 1.5% that is in question is mainly nothing more than spelling errors and occasional word omissions like the words "the," "but," etc. So, none of the copying errors affect doctrinal truths.

Jesus must have been definitely aware that the Books of Kings and Chronicles mention different ages for Ahaziah's enthronement. Yet the Lord said in Mt. 5:18, "For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."

He must have believed that the copyist errors were very minor, because he confidently says that the Law (i.e., the Old Testament) is so accurate that every alphabet of it will come true one day. If Jesus trusted the Bible, we can trust it too.

Some people criticize that the Bible is filled with scientific errors. For example, in Gen. 3:14 God says that the snake will eat dust. Yet this is scientifically wrong. How can we explain things like this?

Jer. 10:12 says, "... God made the earth by His power; He founded the world by His wisdom and stretched out the heavens by His understanding."

According to this verse, it's God who created everything. So obviously He knows science more accurately than even the scientists.

So we can be sure that everything in the Bible is scientifically accurate, because every word of the Bible is God-breathed.

There are simple explanations for some of the scientific anomalies that we see in the Bible:

1. For instance, God cursed the serpent saying that it would crawl and eat dust, and would bruise the heel of the woman's Seed. As we know, the only 'serpent' that bruised the woman's Seed was satan (satan bruised Jesus on the Cross; but Jesus crushed satan's head).
 - So this statement by God was not really a scientific declaration; it was more of a curse on satan's status. We see this same wording in God's curse upon the pagan nations in Micah 7:16-17: "Nations will see and be ashamed ... They will lick dust like a snake, like creatures that crawl on the ground ..."
 - In Micah, God is not making a scientific declaration that the nations will lick dust literally and crawl on the ground. Rather He's talking about the degradation of their status.
2. In the same way, critics protest that Isaiah described the earth as a 'circle' (Isa. 22:18) when it's actually spherical.
 - However, the truth is that Isaiah used the Hebrew word 'chug' to describe the earth in this verse. This word has been used 6 times in the Bible, to describe something encompassing, surrounding or three-dimensional. So the word does NOT describe a flat circle (similar to a chapathi). In other words, Isaiah does not describe the earth as a flat circle.

3. Similarly, critics condemn David for writing that snails melt away (Ps. 58:8).
 - However, David is using poetic language here, as this psalm is a poetic piece. Snails crawl along, leaving a noticeable slimy track behind them. If they don't get hydrated regularly, the body dehydrates and the snail dies. David must have seen many snails lying shriveled up among the rocks in the long heat of the summer, and he describes this natural occurrence in a poetic manner. It's similar to Isaiah describing trees as clapping their hands (Isa. 55:12).



APPLICATION

If the Bible is truly 'God-breathed', then we must boldly claim the promises God has made to us, and enjoy them in our lives. Pick out some specific Bible promises that you'd like to claim for your own life this week.

Similarly, if the Bible is truly 'God-breathed,' then we must take each commandment of God literally. For example, Eph. 4:26 commands, "Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry." So this means that I can't hold a grudge against another person, and keep on brooding over what they have done for a few weeks. God expects me to forgive and forget that day itself!

Pick out some specific Bible Commandments which you sense God wants you to obey in the coming days.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER





Canonicity of The Bible



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explain how the people decided which books should be included in the Bible.
- To provide sufficient proof that exactly the right books were included in the Bible.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Mt. 5:18 (The Bible is Canon).



MEMORY VERSE

2 Pet. 1:21: For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Materials Needed:

- Two decks of cards



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- What do we mean when we say that the Bible is ‘God-breathed’?
- Did you obey any specific God-breathed Commandments this week? Give examples.
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (2 Tim. 3:16).



INTRODUCTION

If the Scriptures are indeed inspired by God then a significant question arises: Which books are inspired? Historically, it was important for the people of God to determine which books God had inspired and which ones were recognized as authoritative.

The word *canon* is used to describe the inspired books, and we will be discussing this in greater detail today.



ATTENTION GETTER

Activity: Card Game

(Taken from Teen Sunday School Place)

Divide the children into two groups. Explain that each group will be given a ‘scattered’ deck of cards. The first group that arranges their cards in the right order (ace through king, in their proper suit) is the winner.

Assign separate spots for each group. Then flip each deck of 52 cards into the air, in the assigned spaces. At the word 'GO' each group can begin to unscramble and line up their cards on the floor.



TEACHING CONTENT

We studied last week that the Bible is directly inspired by God.

- 2 Tim. 3:16: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.
- 2 Pet. 1:20-21: Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Today we'll discuss how the Bible came to be organized. If David wrote a thousand years before Peter, how did their books get put in the same Bible? How did the people decide to arrange the different books? Who did the deciding? We'll try to answer these questions now.

1. WHO

Jewish leaders who were in charge of gathering holy writings, organized the books of the Old Testament. Later, Christians gathered books of the New Testament.

2. WHEN

The Old Testament was compiled by the second century BC. These psalms and prophetic writings were widely used by Jesus' time, and Jesus himself quoted from the Psalms and other prophetic writings.

Later in 90 AD, a group of religious leaders got together during the Council of Jamnia, and officially declared which books should be made part of the Old Testament. They included only those Old Testament books that were being commonly used by the apostles and the early church.

The New Testament, recording events that took place perhaps as late as 80-90 AD, was formed in the same way, over time. The early church began using writings such as the gospels and letters from Paul, even as they were written. Some of the writings were meant to be passed around and shared so that people could benefit from them.

- Around 120-150 AD, false teachers started running around writing stuff that was wrong and putting a fake name on it.
- You would recognize some of these, like the Gospel of Judas from the DaVinci Code and all the controversy surrounding it.

Because of the false writings, church leaders became convinced they needed to compile a list of writings that were true and valid, and combine them, much like what had happened with the Old Testament.

Lots of people had ideas what should be accepted, and many suggested lists that would exclude the false teachings.

It's hard to nail down, but at the Council of Carthage (Africa) in 397, the 27 New Testament books, were declared as the only acceptable Scriptures.

Remember that the books were around and used way before that, but made officially into the Bible by this time at the latest.

3. HOW

Ask:

How did you arrange the cards when you picked them up?
(By number, by suit.)

In the same way you arranged the cards, the Bible was arranged. In the Old Testament the books were mainly arranged based on the 'time' when they were written. Genesis, the first book, happened first, and Malachi, the last book, happened much later.

- However, some books were arranged based on the type of content. For instance, the historical books were arranged next to each other.

In the New Testament, more weight was given to what kind of writing it was, rather than date. Just like the cards have different suits, or styles, so do writings. In the New Testament, there are 4 Gospels, and those come first. Paul's writings are grouped together in one batch, etc.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

We see the names of 22 books mentioned in the Old Testament text, which are not part of the Old Testament:

- Book of Jasher (mentioned in Jos. 10:13)
- Book of Samuel the Seer (mentioned in 1 Chr. 29:29)
- Book of Nathan the Prophet (mentioned in 1 Chr. 29:29), etc.

Why do you think the Jewish leaders didn't include these books in the Old Testament?

Today we have so many wonderful books at the Christian bookstore. Some of these books have been a great blessing to the readers, and many have grown spiritually by reading them.

However, not every word written in these books is directly from God; some of the beliefs mentioned in these books may be the opinion of the authors. So nobody insists that these books should be included in our Bible.

In the same way, even in Biblical times, many helpful books were written. However these books contained the author's personal opinions, not God's own words.

So the Jewish leaders chose only those books which the writers claimed were God's direct Word. The Jewish leaders believed a writer's claim only when his lifestyle, and the prophecies he made, proved that he was speaking (and writing) as directed by God (Deut. 18:21-22. Mt. 7:16).

For instance, Solomon composed more than a thousand songs (1 Kin. 4:32). However, he directed the spiritual leaders of his day to consider only two of his songs as directly from God (Ps. 72 and 127). The rest of the songs

were his own words and thoughts, and are not included in the Old Testament.

So the 22 books mentioned above were not included in the Old Testament, because the Lord did not instruct the spiritual leaders of those times (such as Joshua, Ezra, etc.) to include them.

What are the chances that Joshua misheard what God said, and failed to declare the Book of Jasher as a part of the Old Testament? Do you think he made a mistake?

When speaking of the Old Testament, Jesus declared, "... truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Mt. 5:18).

In those days, the Old Testament was called the Law. The 'Law' was compiled in its final form at least 200 years before the birth of Jesus. Jesus was completely satisfied that this 'Law' was compiled correctly, and He declared that every word written in it would be fulfilled. He didn't feel that any books were missing from this 'Law.'

If Joshua had made a mistake in not including the Book of Jasher, Jesus would not have given His approval to the Old Testament. If Jesus felt that the Old Testament was satisfactory without its inclusion, then we can be satisfied too.

The Catholic Bible includes 12 extra books which are called the 'Apocrypha.' Why don't our Bibles include these books as part of the Scriptures?

Around 200 years before Jesus' birth, the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into the Greek language. The apocryphal books were attached to the end of this translation, because they contained historical information.

However, the Jewish leaders who did the translation never suggested that the apocryphal books should be considered as directly from God. Jesus never quoted from these apocryphal books. The apostles and early church leaders did not regard them as directly from God either.

It was only in 1546 AD that the Roman Catholic Church decided to declare the Apocrypha as being from God. They mainly did so because these apocryphal books supported some of the teachings which they taught, such as purgatory, praying for the dead, and the treasury of merit.

So, the fact is that Jesus and the apostles never regarded the apocryphal books as directly inspired by God. This is why we don't include them in our Bibles.



APPLICATION

The Jewish leaders and early Christians took great care to arrange the books of the Bible in an organized manner.

Studying the Bible becomes easy only when we know the order in which the books are arranged. So take the effort to memorize the order of the Old and New Testament Books.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER





Biblical Doctrines

Doctrine of Sin



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To show that all of us are born with a sinful nature.
- To teach that at the time of salvation, God kills our sinful nature on the Cross.
- To emphasize the importance of renewing our minds if we wish to overcome sin.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Ps. 51:5; Mt. 12:33; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 5:16; Rom. 6:6-7, 12:2 (Overcoming Sin).



MEMORY VERSE

Rom. 6:6: For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Which one of you can recite all the Old and New Testament Books in the right order?
- Why don't our Bibles include the Apocryphal books as part of the Scriptures?
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (2 Pet. 1:21).



INTRODUCTION

Mankind was created without sin, morally upright and inclined to do good (Eccl. 7:29). But sin entered into human experience when Adam and Eve violated the direct command of God by eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:6). Because Adam was the head and representative of the whole human race, his sin affected all future generations (Rom. 5:12-21).

This and other related issues are discussed under the Doctrine of Sin (Hamartiology). So Hamartiology is the study of sin, and deals with how sin originated, how it affects humanity, and what it will result in after death.

Note to the Facilitator

The Doctrine of Sin generally focuses on the foundational concepts of Original Sin, the Christian's conflict with sin, and the Provision that God has made to keep us from the path of sin. We'll deal specifically with the following concepts at each age level:

Primary Level

- Definition of Sin—Missing the Mark
- Three Types of Sin—Lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life
- Overcoming Sin through the Word of God

Junior Level

- Concept of Original Sin
- Crucifixion of Sinful Nature on the Cross
- Overcoming Sin by Renewing our Minds

Senior Level

- Concept of Original Sin
- Strategy to overcome Sin—Submit and Resist
- Spiritual Armour and the Weapons of Warfare



ATTENTION GETTER

Activity: Non-vegetarian Fruit

The Student Workbook contains pictures of three different food products. Explain that one of the food-items is ‘non-vegetarian’ in a sense. Ask the children to guess which of the three it could be.

Explain:

Did you know that some people avoid eating figs because they believe figs contain baby wasp paste!

There are supposed to be male fig trees (**caprifigs**) and female fig trees (edible figs).

Female fig-wasps enter a fig through the narrow opening in the fruit (called the **ostiole**). **If the fig happens to be growing on a male fig tree, the wasp is able to lay eggs inside the male fruit.** But if the fig happens to belong to a female tree, the wasp doesn't find space inside to lay eggs. Unable to re-emerge through the opening, the wasp dies inside the female fig. The fruit then breaks down the wasp's carcass into protein and absorbs it.

It's generally believed that each edible fig contains at least one dissolved fig-wasp. People who find this concept unpleasant prefer to avoid eating figs.

Note: Small insects in agricultural products is not really such a terrible thing. For example, when tomato ketchup qualifies for the highest USDA grade standard possible, it's required to contain no more than 30 fruit fly eggs per every 100 grams (3.5 ounces) [source: North Carolina State University Department of Entomology].

Ask:

How do you feel about this scientific fact that there are “dissolved wasps in figs” and “fruit fly eggs in your tomato ketchup”?

(Ask the children to express their personal opinions. Some may be amused. Others may find the idea repulsive.)

Observe:

Most of us find the thought of insects in our food repulsive. Yet this is a reality. Especially in the summer season, many of us might have seen worms inside mangoes.

These worms don't make holes in the fruit and enter it. They're born inside the fruit itself! And we call mangoes containing such worms as "rotten fruit."

Please observe that the rot doesn't start from outside. The rot starts deep within, in the center of the mango!

We humans are similar to these fruits. When we're born, we too are born with 'rot' deep inside us. The Bible refers to this 'rot' as the 'sinful nature' or 'flesh.'



TEACHING CONTENT

Deep down in their hearts most people sense that God is holy. So they feel guilty about the "sinful rot" in their hearts, and try very hard to make themselves presentable to God.

- Hindus and Sikhs may bathe in the Ganges river to 'cleanse' themselves of their sins.
- People born into the Christian religion may donate lakhs of rupees to churches and charitable organizations to show God how good and holy they are.
- Buddhists may drag themselves up a mountain on their stomachs to win the favor of God.
- Muslims may starve themselves for forty days to show God how committed they are.

But when God looks at them, He sees the ‘rot’ inside, and He finds it repulsive because He hates sin (the same way we find the rot inside a fruit repulsive). So no amount of self-inflicted torture or bathing in holy rivers can make us acceptable to God, because the Lord can see the “sinful rot” inside us.

SINFUL NATURE—THE ‘ROT’ INSIDE US

Ask:

When we look at a juicy golden yellow mango how can we know whether or not it’s rotten? There’s no notice board on the fruit announcing “Beware of Worm.”

(Ask the children for their opinions.)

Usually we realize a fruit is rotten only if we see spots and blotches on the skin. These black spots are an indication that there’s rot inside.

It’s the same with people. When a person loses his temper and spouts dirty language, when a student speaks a lie, when a shopkeeper cheats a customer, these little incidents give us a peek inside the person, and we realize there’s ‘rot’ inside.

Let’s look at some Bible verses that discuss this concept:

(Ask the children to enter the answers in their Student Workbooks.)

According to Ps. 51:5, when does the sinful nature enter a person’s life?

We're born with it:

- Ps. 51:5: Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

According to Ecc. 7:20 and Rom. 3:23, can somebody avoid submitting to their sinful nature and live without committing a single sin?

- Ecc. 7:20 says, "Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins."
- Rom. 3:23: ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

According to Mt. 15:18-19, where is the sinful nature of a person located?

In their hearts:

- Mt. 15:18-19: But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.

Helplessness of Man

These verses show that all of us are born with a sinful nature. And it makes us start sinning from a very young age.

When we sin, the punishment for sin is eternal death in hell.

- Rom. 6:23: For the wages of sin is death ...

So, the FACT is that man is utterly helpless to help himself!
(Ask the children to write down the Facts in their Student Workbooks.)

- Fact 1: When a new-born baby is born, it already contains the sinful nature inside it! (Ps. 51:5).
- Fact 2: Because of the sinful nature inside, the little child begins to sin quite proficiently by the age of three! (Ps. 58:3).
- Fact 3: When the child commits his first sin, he automatically comes under the judgment of Rom. 6:23. From this moment onwards, the child is destined for “hell after physical death”!

Nobody can escape from this terrible chain of events! (Ecc. 7:20).

JESUS—THE ANSWER

Jesus stepped into the world to rescue man from this terrible chain of events.

- First, Jesus died on the Cross to take the punishment for our sins upon Himself.
- Second, when we accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour, He helps us to overcome sin and temptation.

Bad Trees and Good Fruit

Read Aloud:

Mt. 7:18: A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.

Explain:

According to this verse, a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. A person who has the sinful nature in him will not be able

to produce 'holy' fruit. He may be a good man who is kind to people, hardworking and honest. He may regularly give alms to the poor and help those in need.

But God expects perfection, and nobody can be perfect!

- Mt. 5:48: Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.
- 1 Pet. 1:15-16: But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

Bathing in the Ganges river doesn't make us as perfect as the Father, which is the standard that God expects. Donating money to charity does not make us as holy as the Lord, which is the standard that God expects. We all fall short of God's high standards because there is 'sinful rot' inside us.

- Rom. 3:23: ... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

Read Aloud:

Mt. 12:33: Make a tree good and its fruit will be good ...

Explain:

According to this verse, a tree starts bearing good fruit only after it's made into a 'good tree'. In the same way, a person can start producing holy fruit only if God changes him into a new person.

When a person chooses to accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour, God changes his spirit into a "new creation." That day onwards, God begins to work in the person (to help him

change his thinking, speech and behaviour) so that he starts becoming more like Christ.

- 2 Cor. 5:17: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here!
- 1 Jn. 3:6: No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known Him.

So no amount of fasting or self-torture can make us acceptable to a perfectly holy God. We become acceptable to God only after He makes us into good trees—after He changes us into a new creation.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

2 Cor. 5:17 says that God makes us into a new creation when we accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Then why is it that some Christians are so sinful? Why don't they become a "new creation"?

At the time of salvation, our spirit within us becomes a "new creation." In our spirits, we become as holy and pure as Jesus himself.

But our minds don't automatically become a new creation. If my mind enjoyed sinning earlier, it continues to enjoy this even after salvation.

So now the Holy Spirit, who is our teacher and lives inside us (inside our renewed spirit) starts teaching us to do things differently. He gently begins to correct our wrong thoughts,

improper talk and sinful behaviour. When we choose to obey Him, we see ourselves changing into a different person.

Gal. 5:16 says, "... walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."

However some Christians choose to ignore the voice of the Holy Spirit in them. Because they have no desire to obey Him, the Holy Spirit is unable to produce His holy fruit in their lives. As a result, even though they are a new creation, they continue to produce sinful fruit.

So it's very important to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. When we sense Him telling us to do something, we must obey instantly. The more we do this, the more we'll begin to see His fruit appearing in our lives.

The sinful nature is so strong and so difficult to control!

- **It takes less than a second to blow up and lose my temper.**
- **Sometimes lies pop out of my mouth even before I realize it.**

If the sinful nature is that strong (!) how can we ever overcome it? Is it really possible to overcome sinful habits?

Rom. 6:6-7 says, "For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been set free from sin."

According to these verses, at the time of salvation, God not only changes our spirit into a new creation, but He also nails our sinful nature to the cross, killing it!

Those who haven't become believers have the sinful nature in them. But believers don't have it anymore because their sinful nature is dead! This is the truth declared in the Bible.

Most Christians continue to sin because of their un-renewed mind (and NOT because there's a sinful nature inside them, forcing them to sin). Many Bible verses refer to this un-renewed mind as the 'flesh.' It urges Christians to continue believing the wrong things they believed earlier.

So before salvation, if a person believed, "I can come up in my life only by telling lies," then even after salvation, his un-renewed mind continues to believe this lie. So he finds it a struggle to speak the truth ... because his 'fleshly' mind still believes satan's lies.

However, if he chooses to start believing and practicing Isa. 33:15-16, he'll be able to resist the temptation to lie. His strong belief in the truth of Isa. 33:15-16 will help him to resist sin.

- Isa. 33:15-16: Those who walk righteously and speak what is Right ... they are the ones who will dwell on the heights ... Their bread will be supplied, and water will not fail them.

Therefore Rom. 12:2 says, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will."

When we start believing the truths mentioned in the Bible and start practicing them, our minds will become renewed, and we'll be able to resist sin and temptation.

What must we do to renew our minds?

If we spend time everyday studying God’s Word and asking ourselves how to apply it to our personal lives, it changes our thinking.

Simply reading the Bible isn’t enough. We must begin to practice all that we read. When we do this, we begin to discover how “good, pleasing and perfect” God’s will really is! (Rom. 12:2.)



APPLICATION

Let’s summarize all that we have learnt today:

We’re all born with a sinful nature that forces us to sin.

- Because of our sinful nature, we’re destined for eternal punishment in hell.

But Jesus took the punishment for our sins upon Himself.

- So if we accept Him as Lord and Saviour, He’ll forgive all our sins and make us part of His family.
- He’ll also take our sinful nature and kill it on the Cross ... so that it can’t control us anymore.

If we carefully listen to His voice in our hearts, He’ll show us what to do and what to avoid.

- If we obey His voice, and if we believe the truths in His Bible, our minds will become renewed.
- Then we’ll be able to resist sin and temptation successfully.

So there are **three application steps** we need to take:

- **First**, we must be willing to admit that Jesus alone can get rid of our sinful nature and make our spirit into a new creation.
- **Second**, we must start listening to God's voice inside us and obey all that He says.
- **Third**, we must start studying God's Word and believe all the truths mentioned in it.

(Whether or not we practice these truths in our lives will reveal whether or not we really believe these Scriptures are true.)



CLOSE WITH PRAYER





God's Redemption Plan (Soteriology)



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To teach that God's laws are unchanging and cannot be simply ignored.
- To show how Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the Law of Sin and Death.
- To explain the concepts of Substitution, Redemption and Reconciliation.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

- Acts 20:7-12 (Story of Eutychus)
- Ps. 19:7-8; Gen. 2:17; Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 6:23; 8:2, 12-13; Gal. 5:16, 18, 25 (The Two Laws).



MEMORY VERSE

Rom. 8:2: ... through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.



RECAP

What did we learn about last week?

Can the sinful nature inside, force a person to sin after he becomes a believer?

At the time of salvation, the sinful nature is crucified on the Cross. So it can no longer force the Christian to do anything.

If Jesus crucified my sinful nature on the cross, why do I continue sinning even after salvation?

The unrenewed mind is used to having sinful thought-patterns and habits. Unless we consciously teach our mind the truths in the Word and practice them, it'll continue to hold on to old sinful ways.

Recite the Memory Verse for last week (Rom. 6:6).



INTRODUCTION

According to the broadest meaning as used in Scripture, the term *salvation* encompasses the total work of God by which He seeks to rescue man from the ruin, doom, and power of sin and bestows upon him the wealth of His grace encompassing eternal life, provision for abundant life now, and eternal glory (Eph. 1:3-8; 2:4-10; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; Jn. 3:16, 36; 10:10).

Over the next two classes, we'll deal with some basic concepts that form a part of the Doctrine of Salvation, such as Substitution, Reconciliation, Justification, etc.

Note to the Facilitator

Doctrine of Salvation is a vast topic covering many different issues. However, we'll deal with only the following aspects in brief:

Primary Level

- Regeneration
- Eternal security

Junior Level

- God's Redemption Plan
- Concept of Forgiveness

Senior Level

- Process of Salvation (Justification, Sanctification and Glorification)
- Concept of Grace of God



ATTENTION GETTER

Activity: Tough Laws

(Taken from Randomhistory.com)

In the 1800's USA was still developing, and it had some very strange laws. Let's look at some of them:

- According to an Atlanta, Georgia ordinance, "smelly people" are not allowed to ride public streetcars.
- In Kansas, when two trains meet at a crossing, "both shall come to full stop and neither shall start up again until the other has gone."

- In Lander, Wyoming, it is illegal for adults to take a bath more than once a month once the cold weather arrives. Children cannot take a bath at all during the winter.
- It's illegal to ride an ugly horse in Wilbur, Washington.
- Policemen are allowed to bite a dog if they think it will calm the dog down in Paulding, Ohio.

All of these laws have now gone out of date, and have been repealed.

Ask:

Let's assume that a "smelly person" got caught travelling in a public streetcar, in the 1800's. What treatment do you think this poor person deserved?

Should he have been fined, or should he have been shown mercy and excused?

(Ask the children to offer their opinions.)

Observation:

Some laws should probably be more 'bendable.' For instance, if a homeless man lived on the roads, but had to travel by a streetcar on urgent business, should he be fined simply because he couldn't afford a house with a bathroom?

Case Study:

Let us now look at a slightly different type of law.

Let's assume that the parents in a family make a law that their two daughters can attend the school picnic only if they score good grades in their Unit Tests.

What if one of the daughters is careless and neglects her studies? What if she fails in most of her subjects?

Should the parents cancel the Law which they have made? Should they strictly enforce the Law, and not allow her to go on the picnic? Or should they make changes/adjustments to the Law?

What, according to you, should be the parents' decision?

(Ask the children to offer their opinions.)



TEACHING CONTENT

We looked at two types of laws, above:

- Government Laws which sound positively crazy and which have now been cancelled.
- Laws made in our homes by parents (which are sometimes good and sometimes defective).

There is another kind of law which affects our personal lives —God's Law. Let's look at what the Bible says about the Laws of God.

Read Aloud:

Ps. 19:7-8: The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart.

Explain:

The laws made by humans are sometimes defective. (Because humans are imperfect, they make imperfect laws.)

- But the Bible declares that God’s Laws are perfect—Ps. 19:7. There’s absolutely no defect in even one of them.

In the same way, human laws can sometimes be ‘wrong.’ (The laws passed by Hitler were very wrong because they led to the murder of millions of innocent people.)

- But the Bible declares that God’s Laws are ‘right’—Ps. 19:7. They’re never wrong.

So while human laws can be modified or cancelled, we can’t treat God’s laws in the same way.

GOD’S UNCHANGEABLE LAW

When God created the universe, He laid down a set of laws to run the universe:

- For instance, the **Law of Cause and Effect** causes every action to have an equal and opposite reaction.
- *The Law of Gravity causes each object in the universe to attract each body, to the earth etc.*

Because God’s laws are perfect, He doesn’t keep changing them or cancelling them.

We see this in the incident that took place in Acts 20.

Story of Eutychus

Read Aloud:

Acts 20:7-12

(The children can take turns, reading one verse each.)

Explain:

When Eutychus fell asleep on the window-ledge, and began to slip out of the window, God didn't immediately suspend the Law of Gravity. If God had done that, all the planets in space would have lost their alignments and crashed into one another, probably wiping out the earth in the process!

So instead of suddenly cancelling the Law of Gravity and creating havoc in the universe, the Lord allowed Eutychus to fall out of the window and die.

However, please notice that God had created another Law which could help Eutychus—the Law of Faith. Paul exercised this Law, and brought Eutychus back to life.

God's love for us is so great that He has made a provision for every negative thing that happens to us!

LAW of SIN and DEATH vs LAW of the SPIRIT

God doesn't change or modify His laws, because His laws are perfect. Therefore when Adam and Eve sinned against God, He did not cancel the spiritual laws He had laid down.

Read Aloud:

Rom. 6:23: For the wages of sin is death ...

Gen. 2:17: ... but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.

Explain:

As clearly explained in these verses, the consequence for sin was eternal death in hell. So when Adam and Eve sinned, in that very moment their spirit died within them (it became a spiritually dead and sinful spirit).

This spiritual death affected their physical bodies as well, and slowly their bodies began to die out—ultimately leading to physical death.

God did NOT suspend the Law of Sin and Death simply to save Adam and Eve! His laws are perfect and cannot be changed.

Rather, just as in the case of Eutychus, God used a different law to help deliver Adam and Eve.

Law of the Spirit of Life

God sent a **'SUBSTITUTE'** to bear the punishment of the Law of Sin and Death! The Law demanded that the law-breakers should suffer the punishment of death. The Substitute, Jesus Christ, fulfilled this Law by volunteering to take our place on the Cross, and pay the punishment on our behalf. What a loving God we have!

Redemption:

God had created Adam and Eve to have authority over the earth and rule it. Satan tempted Adam and Eve to sin against God so that he could steal this authority from them.

As a result of their foolish act, Adam and Eve became slaves to sin, no longer having the ability to lead a holy life. Satan

took advantage of this, and began to control their lives. In this way satan gained control over the whole human race.

God could not order satan to stop exploiting humans, because the people had voluntarily placed themselves under the Law of Sin and Death by sinning against God. The payment for sin is death, according to Rom. 6:23, and people had to suffer and make this payment.

This is why God finally sent Jesus as a substitute—so that Jesus could make the payment on behalf of humans. The payment for sin is death, according to Rom. 6:23, and Jesus made this payment for us.

Humans had become slaves of sin and were being controlled by satan. But by making a blood payment—by paying with His own life—Jesus was able to buy back all the slaves. This process of buying us back and setting us free is known as **REDEMPTION**. Jesus redeemed us and set us free from satan's control.

We're now RECONCILED with God

God doesn't cancel His laws because they're perfect. So, as long as people choose to continue living in sin, they continue to stay under the Law of Sin and Death; they continue to stay under satan's' control.

But when a person is ashamed of his sinfulness and wishes to stop sinning, he can come to the Lord and seek forgiveness. If the person has truly made a commitment in his heart to follow Jesus and turn his back on sin, then the Lord declares him as a friend.

As long as a person lives under sin he is God's enemy—because God hates sin. But when the person turns his back on sin and submits his life to Jesus' control, then God decides to make a peace treaty with him; He promises not to consider him an enemy anymore. This declaration of peace between God and the person is known as **RECONCILIATION**.

Those who choose to be reconciled with God in this way, are no longer slaves of the Law of Sin and Death. Instead they become slaves of the Law of the Spirit. Under this new law, they're expected to obey the voice and leading of the Holy Spirit on a daily basis. Even as they do this, God begins to change them and make them more and more like Jesus.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

What does 'Substitution' mean? Explain in your own words.

God sent a 'substitute' to bear the punishment of the Law of Sin and Death! The Law demanded that the law-breakers should suffer the punishment of death. The Substitute, Jesus Christ, fulfilled this Law by volunteering to take our place on the Cross, and pay the punishment on our behalf.

What does 'Redemption' mean? Explain in your own words.

Humans had become slaves of sin and were being controlled by satan. But by making a blood payment—by paying with

His own life—Jesus was able to buy back all the slaves. This process of buying us back and setting us free is known as ‘redemption.’ Jesus redeemed us and set us free from Satan’s control.

What does ‘Reconciliation’ mean? Explain in your own words.

As long as a person lives under sin, he is God’s enemy—because God hates sin. But when the person turns his back on sin and submits his life to Jesus’ control, then God makes a peace treaty with him; He promises not to consider him an enemy anymore. This declaration of peace between God and the person is known as ‘reconciliation.’

Adam’s sinfulness placed mankind under the control of Sin and Satan. Jesus redeemed us from this slavery by paying the price for us.

What about all the people before Jesus’ times? Did they get redeemed or not?

Because God is All-Knowing, He knew that Adam and Eve would sin and come under the curse of the Law of Sin and Death. So, even before He created them, He already appointed Jesus as the Substitute who’d bear the punishment for mankind.

- Therefore Rev. 13:8 says, “All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.”

In the Garden of Eden, God slew an animal and covered Adam and Eve with its skin. This was the first animal sacrifice.

Later the Israelites continued to offer animal sacrifices, so that God would look at the blood of the animals and forgive their sins.

God introduced this practice of animal sacrifices because He had already appointed Jesus as the Substitutionary sacrifice. However, Jesus was to come to the earth only in the appointed time (in the fullness of time).

- Gal. 4:4-5: But when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

So before Jesus came, the animal sacrifices represented Jesus and pointed towards Him. As a result, any person who sincerely repented of his sins while making his animal sacrifice at the Jerusalem temple, was forgiven by God. And his name was included in the Lamb's Book of Life.

In this way, even in Old Testament times, people who made a sincere commitment to follow the Lord, were redeemed by Jesus.



APPLICATION

Let's quickly summarize what we have studied today. When Adam and Eve sinned, they brought all mankind under the curse of the Law of Sin and Death.

To rescue us from this terrible fate, the Lord appointed Jesus as our substitute:

- As our **substitute**, Jesus took our place on the Cross, and paid the punishment of death.
- With His blood, He bought us out of our slavery to sin, thereby redeeming us and setting us free.
- Because of what Jesus has done, God is now willing to make peace with us and be reconciled with us.

All those who choose to be reconciled with God, come under the Law of the Spirit of Life.

- Rom. 8:2: ... through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.
- Rom. 8:12-13: Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

According to these verses, if I have placed myself under the Law of the Spirit, **then I need to live according to the Spirit.**

- Gal. 5:16: So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
- Gal. 5:18: But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.
- Gal. 5:25: Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

So, under the Law of the Spirit of Life, I'm expected to:

- Obey the voice of the Holy Spirit in my heart.
- Put to death all my sinful attitudes / habits.

Make a fresh commitment today to follow the leading of the Spirit, and to “put to death” all the sinful things in your life.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER





Forgiveness of God (Soteriology)



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explain the Biblical concept of forgiveness.
- To help children see themselves as 'saints' (not 'sinners').



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Lk. 18:9-14; Mt. 3:2; 1 Jn. 1:8-9; Acts 20:21; Eph. 1:7 (God's Kind of Forgiveness).



MEMORY VERSE

Eph. 1:7: In him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

Materials Needed:

- Four photocopies of the Narrative.



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- What does ‘Redemption’ mean?
- This week did you “walk by the Spirit” in any area of your life? Give examples.
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (Rom. 8:2).



INTRODUCTION

According to the broadest meaning as used in Scripture, the term *salvation* encompasses the total work of God by which He seeks to rescue man from the ruin, doom and power of sin and bestows upon him the wealth of His grace encompassing eternal life, provision for abundant life now, and eternal glory (Eph. 1:3-8; 2:4-10; 1 Pet. 1:3-5; Jn. 3:16, 36; 10:10).

Within a brief duration of two classes, we’re dealing with some basic concepts that form a part of the Doctrine of Salvation, such as Substitution, Justification, Forgiveness, etc.

Note to the Facilitator

Doctrine of the Bible is a vast topic covering many different issues. However, we’ll deal with only the following aspects in brief:

Primary Level

- Regeneration
- Eternal security

Junior Level

- God's Redemption Plan
- Concept of Forgiveness

Senior Level

- Process of Salvation (Justification, Sanctification and Glorification)
- Concept of Grace of God

**ATTENTION GETTER****Activity: A Prodigal Twist**

There's a Narrative given below. Take four photocopies of the Narrative to the class.

The goal is to read out the narrative (NOT to enact a skit). So choose three children to read out the dialogues of the Father, the Son and the Visitor. (Preferably, pick three children who are comfortable with reading. This makes it easier for the listeners to follow the story-line).

NOTE: *Explain to the children that this Narrative is NOT the Bible Story given in Luke 15.*

SCENE 1

Teacher (Narrator): Once a man had a son whom he loved very much

Prodigal son: Hi Dad.

Father: Yes son.

Son: Is it true that when you die, I will get your money?

Father: Yes son. You will get all my savings.

Son: Well I can't wait until you die. I want the money now.

Father: Why is that son?

Son: I am tired of living around here. I want to go into the world and have fun.

Father: If that is what you really want, here is your share of the money.

Son: Thanks Dad. You are really cool after all!

SCENE 2

Teacher (Narrator): Not long after that, the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a foreign country, where he wasted all his money in wild living. He had spent everything, when a bad famine spread through that whole land. Soon he had nothing to eat.

Son: Oh! What do I do now! I will return to my father. I am no longer worthy to be called his son, but perhaps he will let me work as a servant.

SCENE 3

Teacher (Narrator): The younger son got up and started back to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt sorry for him. He ran to his son and hugged and kissed him.

Son: Father, I have sinned against you and against God. I am not worthy to be called your son.

Father: My son. My son. You have come home. Oh what joy you have given me.

Son: But father, I am not worthy to be called your son.

Father. The only thing that matters is that you have come home. We must have a celebration party to welcome you home ...

Father (calling loudly): Asa... Amon... Come quickly. My beloved son has returned home. Make sure he has everything he needs. Give him the best coat, put a ring on his finger, shoes on his feet, and invite all my friends round for a celebration.

SCENE 4

Teacher (Narrator): The prodigal son couldn't understand why his father was being so kind to him! He deserved to be punished for the evil he had done. But his father was treating him like a king! He simply couldn't understand his father's response!

Father: Son, why are you sitting here in the shed? I was looking for you. Come, let's go to the celebration I've arranged for you!

Son: I don't understand, father! Why are you being nice to me? Shouldn't you make me suffer or something?

Father: Dear son, why would I want to make you suffer! I have forgiven and forgotten the past. Let's not think about it anymore. Come ... let's go for the celebration.

Son: No, father. It's impossible for you to love a person like me! I cannot be with you.

SCENE 4

Teacher (Narrator): The father was very sad. His son refused to believe that he was forgiven; and he refused to wear the beautiful robes he gave him. He even refused to wear the signet ring and become manager of his father's business. One day the father had an important guest, visiting from another country.

Visitor: Thank you for inviting me to your beautiful home for lunch.

Father: I'm honoured to have you here. Let me introduce you to my son ...

Visitor: Your son! This young man told me he is your slave!

Father: He is my son and I love him with all my heart! But he refuses to believe this. I don't know what to do!

Discuss

This narrative is a fictional variation of the Bible parable. What do you think of the prodigal's attitude in this narrative?

Do you think it's right for him to feel so ashamed of himself?
Do you think it's right for him to treat his father this way?
(Ask the children for their opinions.)

Explain:

What the prodigal did in the past was shameful and terrible! So it's right that he should feel ashamed of his past conduct.

But now his father is ready to forgive and forget, and the prodigal should be willing to 'believe' and 'accept' this:

- He should be willing to believe that he is indeed forgiven.
- He should be willing to believe that his father isn't reflecting on his past mistakes anymore.

But the prodigal doesn't trust his father enough to do this!

Many Christians treat their Heavenly Father in the same way. They don't trust God to have forgiven them completely ... in spite of the promises He has made. As a result, they fail to enjoy the full salvation that God wanted us to experience and enjoy.



TEACHING CONTENT

Understanding SALVATION and FORGIVENESS

Look at the two pictures below. According to you, which prayer is correct?

(Ask the children for their opinions.)



(Hint: Depending on the context both prayers could be right and both prayers could be wrong.)

Explain:

To answer the question above, we need to have a clearer understanding of what the Bible says on Salvation and Forgiveness.

Parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector (Lk. 18:9-14):

Jesus told the parable of two men who went to pray at the temple. The Pharisee (who performed many religious rituals) had too much pride.

- He stood up and prayed, “God, I thank you that I am not bad like all the other people. I am glad I am not bad like robbers and cheaters. I am glad I am not bad like that tax collector over there.”
- Then the Pharisee continued praying, “Lord, I am so good. I give lots of money and I pray a lot. I am really good.”

On the other hand, a tax collector (who used to cheat people of their money) was humble.

- He did not stand up in front of everyone. He stood off at a distance and he prayed, “God, you are so good. I am sorry that I have done wrong. Please help me to be better.”

The tax collector asked God to have mercy on him because he was a sinner.

Jesus concluded the parable by saying, “I tell you that [the tax collector], rather than the [Pharisee], went home justified before God” (Lk. 18:14).

Why was the Tax Collector Justified?

While on this earth, Jesus preached again and again that we should REPENT of our sins:

- Mt. 3:2: Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven has come near.

However the Pharisees didn't think they needed to repent. They thought they were extremely righteous and good. So Jesus spoke this parable to them, to show them that they too have defects, and they too need to confess their sins.

- Lk. 18:9: To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable.
- 1 Jn. 1:8-9 : If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

SALVATION is given ONLY to those who CONFESS THEIR SINS and REPENT

Acts 20:21: I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus.



So, if you wish to receive salvation, then this is definitely the prayer you must pray:–

Jesus said that if you confess your sins and repent, **then you will “ [go] home JUSTIFIED before God” (Lk. 18:14).**

Justification

Justification takes place the moment the individual has faith in Christ (Rom. 4:2; 5:1).

Justification involves two main aspects:

- It involves the pardon and removal of all sins and the end of separation from God (Acts 13:39; Rom. 4:6–7; 5:9–11; 2 Cor. 5:19).
- It also involves God clothing us with His righteousness, and declaring that we’re now entitled to “all the blessings promised to the just.”

We must ‘believe’ these two truths:

- At the moment of salvation, God forgives ALL our sins —past, present, and future!
- At the moment of salvation, God declares us righteous and gives us access to a whole lot of blessings.

Those who BELIEVE they’re justified, see themselves as ‘SAINTS’ not ‘SINNERS’

If I believe that God has really forgiven and forgotten my sins, I won’t pray to Him like an unforgiven sinner anymore. I will instead pray with the confidence of a child requesting his father for his needs.

God’s Kind of Forgiveness

Read Aloud:

Eph. 1:7: In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace.

In this verse, the Greek word used for ‘forgiveness’ is ‘aphesin.’ This word literally means “to let go, release” or “send away.” The noun form is used in Ephesians 1:7 where it stresses the believer’s sins have been forgiven or sent away because of the riches of God’s grace as revealed in the death of Christ.

If we refuse to believe that we’re completely forgiven, it would mean that we think:

- That God is lying.
- That God is constantly thinking about the sinful things we’ve done in the past, and of the sins that we’re going to commit in the future.

- That God’s grace is not big enough, or rich enough, to be able to forgive and forget what we’ve done.

We must choose to believe that God has forgiven and forgotten our sins.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

At the time of salvation, does God forgive only the sins we have committed up to that time? Or does He forgive even future sins?

Col. 2:13 explains that God forgives all our sins—including past, present and future sins.

- Col. 2:13: When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us **all** our sins ...

1 Jn. 1:8-9: “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

If all my sins are already forgiven, then why am I told to regularly confess my sins to God?

At the time of salvation, God forgave all my sins because Jesus paid the punishment for my sins. On that day, God forgave me and declared me righteous. So my salvation is secure.

However, even after salvation, I sometimes end up sinning against God. Sin contaminates me and ‘distracts’ me away from God.

- For instance, if I’ve lied to my parents, I won’t be able to hear clearly from God until I have repented of my sin.
- If I’m holding a grudge against a classmate, I’ll not be able to experience God’s love fully until I change my attitude.
- If I watch something sinful on TV, I won’t feel comfortable spending time with God until I’ve repented.

In this way, sin blocks me from enjoying closeness with God. Confessing my sins daily, helps me to get rid of all such blockages and maintain a close friendship with God.

So I don’t confess my sins daily to preserve my salvation (It’s already secured). I do it simply to maintain a close fellowship with God.

- It’s like two friends clearing up the differences between them, so that they can enjoy a closer friendship.

If I think of myself as a sinner (instead of a saint), doesn’t that make me a more humble person? Doesn’t it make me like the Tax Collector whom Jesus praised?

At the time of salvation, it’s important to admit that I’m a sinful person who cannot save myself, and that I need Jesus to take pity on me and forgive me of my sins. This is exactly what the sinful tax collector did.

However after salvation if I continue to call myself a ‘sinner’, it means that I think:

- That God didn’t really forgive me (and so I’m not really righteous).
- That His mercy and grace is not big enough to cover sins as big as mine ... In other words, God is too small and narrow-minded to be able to forgive me.
- That God doesn’t think of me as His righteous child, but as a sinful heathen.

If we believe these lies, it doesn’t show that we’re humble. It simply shows that we think God is a liar!



APPLICATION

Failure to believe in God’s total forgiveness, harms us in two ways:

- First, we can’t approach God confidently.
- Second, we’re not able to exercise the great spiritual authority given to us.

1. Approach God Confidently

- We don’t need to be scared of God, like sinners who cannot be sure whether their prayers will be answered or not.
- We can go to God confidently, fully believing that we’re “God’s favourite child,” and he’ll give us the best!

Remember:

- God just wants true repentance.

- If we truly make a commitment to turn our back on a particular sin and not repeat it, God forgives us—even if it’s the worst sin on earth.

In other words, the next time we go to the Lord in prayer, He looks at us as if we have never sinned!

2. Exercise Spiritual Authority

Satan reminds us of past sins to keep us feeling like failures. As long as we feel this way, we’re unable to exercise our God-given spiritual authority to overcome obstacles and fulfill God’s purposes for our lives.

On the other hand:

- If I truly believe that I’m forgiven, I can command sickness to leave my mind, in Jesus’ Name ... and it will leave.
- When I’m confident that I’ve been forgiven, I can boldly speak to the ‘mountains’ in my life ... and see all my problems resolved.
- If I know I’m forgiven, it gives me the confidence to withstand temptation and successfully overcome it.

Those who see themselves as sinful failures are unable to confidently exercise their spiritual authority.

Reflect on these truths and apply them to your own life this week.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER





Biblical Doctrines

Life After Death (Doctrine of Eschatology)



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To teach what the Bible says about Heaven and Hell.
- To urge children to check whether their decision for Christ was genuine or not.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Lam. 4:19; Deut. 10:14; 1 Kin. 8:27; Mt. 17:3-4; Mk. 9:43; Lk. 12:47-48, 16:23-24; Jn. 14:2; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 2 Cor. 12:2, 1 Thes. 4:13, Heb. 12:1; 2 Pet. 2:4, Rev. 20:2-3, 13-15 (Heaven and Hell)



MEMORY VERSE

Jn. 14:2: My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?

Materials Needed:

- Two signs depicting "HEAVEN" and "HELL" and an arrow sign.
- A clear large glass (it must be round).
- A jug of water.
- A dish cloth.



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Failure to believe in God's total forgiveness, harms us in two ways. What are they?
- Did you exercise your spiritual authority this week? Give examples.
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (Eph. 1:7)



INTRODUCTION

The word Eschatology literally means "Study of Last Things":

- It studies the intermediate and ultimate state of both the righteous and the wicked, and
- It studies the various events that lead up to the final establishment of the Kingdom of God (including Christ's second coming, the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, etc).

In this session, we'll specifically study about man's ultimate dwelling place—heaven or hell.

Note to the Facilitator

Doctrine of Eschatology is a vast and complex topic, filled with many controversies. Therefore, we'll deal with only the following aspects in brief:

Primary Level

- Heaven, Hell and the New Jerusalem
- Two stages of the Second Coming—Rapture and Rule on Earth
 - Resurrection of Believers and Unbelievers
 - Judgment of Believers and Unbelievers
 - How to prepare ourselves for Jesus' Return

Junior Level

- Detailed description of Heaven / Hell
(Including Third Heaven, Temporary and Permanent Hell)
- Brief Outline of End Time events
(From the Creation of Israel State—the latter part of the Tribulation)
 - Preparing ourselves for Jesus' Return

Senior Level

- Preparing for the Second Coming (Parable of Unprepared Servant)
 - Judgment Seat of Christ and Great White Throne Judgment

- Levels of Rewards for Believers
- Levels of Punishment for Unbelievers
- Brief Outline of End Time events
(From the latter part of the Tribulation—the creation of a New Heaven and Earth)
- Preparing ourselves to rule in the Millennial Kingdom
(Parable of Talents)



ATTENTION GETTER

Activity: The Arrow

(Taken from Kids Bibleland.)

Set up the signs, arrow, water and empty glass as shown in the picture below.

Explain:

As Christians, we believe that the purpose of our lives is to choose to live with Jesus in Heaven for all eternity. However, if you look at the signs that I have on the table, you will see there is a



problem. *(Display the two signs and the arrow pointing to Hell).* You see, the arrow is pointing in the wrong direction. This is because we all have sin in our lives and Romans 3:23 tells us, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is death, which is to be eternally separated from God. If we do not turn away from our sin, and go God's way, we could eventually find ourselves in Hell. Fortunately, the above verse goes on to tell us, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I'm going to show you what happens in a person's life, the moment they ask Jesus to be their Lord. God wants our lives to be clean vessels, like this glass. (*Hold up the glass and inspect it for cleanliness*). I will place this glass in front of the arrow. As you can see, the arrow still points toward "HELL." (*Place the empty glass just in front of the arrow sign*).

Cleaning our lives doesn't get us to heaven

Maybe if I clean the glass it will help me get to Heaven. (*Clean the glass with a dish cloth.*) I can do that in my own life by going to church, reading my Bible and by being real good! That should get me to Heaven, shouldn't it? Look, I'm putting the glass back in front of the sign. (*Place the empty glass in front of the arrow sign again.*)

Oh no! The arrow still points to hell and I don't want to go there! It seems that no matter how 'clear and clean' our lives are, without Jesus in our lives we are not only empty inside, but we are headed for an eternity in Hell. The Bible says that none of our good deeds can please God and earn us Salvation!

Only Jesus 'in' Us can make the difference

The water in this jug represents Jesus, because it is pure and clean. (*Hold up the water jug.*) Let's see what happens when we pray and ask Jesus to forgive



all our sins and come into our lives. (*Pour water into the glass until it is full.*)

Look, the direction of the arrow has changed to point toward Heaven! This illusion shows us a truth that can change our lives forever. If we ask Jesus to forgive our sins, 1 John 1:9 says, " ... He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

Jesus forgives our sin and grants us eternal life. He writes our names in His Book of Life and changes our eternal destination in an instant.

Explanatory Note: This illusion is based on the principle of refraction where light is "bent" through a lens. When water is added to the round bottle, we make the bottle into a lens. The light rays from the arrow are bent and so we see a reversed image of the arrow, and this is the effect that we see.

Today we'll look into what the Bible says about Heaven and Hell.



TEACHING CONTENT

HEAVEN

Some people teach that heaven has many layers. And depending on how spiritual we are, we'll be sent to the different layers. But this is a wrong teaching!

This wrong teaching mistakenly started with 2 Cor. 12:2 where Paul said that he was "caught up to the third heaven." The correct Biblical teaching about heaven is as follows:

Atmospheric Heaven: Lam. 4:19 says, "Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles of the heavens." This verse is simply referring to the atmosphere surrounding the earth; it refers to the sky in which eagles fly. It does NOT refer to the heaven where God's children will live after death.

Celestial Heaven: In the Bible, *Heaven* is also used to describe the celestial realm—the realm of sun, moon, stars, and planets. God created the universe (Gen. 1:1; Ps. 33:6), placing these lights in the heaven (Gen. 1:14).

Dwelling Place of God: Finally, *Heaven* is used to describe the place where God's throne dwells. In the Old Testament, people used words like "highest heaven" (Deut. 10:14) and "heaven of heavens" (1 Kin. 8:27) to describe this third heaven.

Paul on the other hand simply used the term "third heaven." He was trying to explain that he wasn't just taken into the sky (first heaven) or into outer space (second heaven). Rather, God took him into heaven itself to show him secret things.

Our Dwelling Place

God will prepare a place for us in the third heaven, so that we can live with Him forever.

Jn. 14:2: My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?

The eternal dwelling places in the Father's house are taken from the imagery of Jewish family life. When a son married, he added an apartment to his father's house, and the son and his bride took up residence in the father's household. Believers will enjoy that same family fellowship in the Father's household in heaven.

HELL

It's very important to know that God never created hell for people. It was created for satan and his demons.

- Mt. 25:41: Then He will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

However, through their sinfulness, people choose to share hell with the demons. God wants people to repent and turn to Jesus, so that they don't have to suffer in a hell which was originally created for demons.

The original Bible, which was written in Greek, uses five different words to refer to hell. We'll study all these five words, so that we can gain a clearer picture of hell.

1. Hades: ('Sheol' in Hebrew)

In the Bible, the most common word used to describe hell is 'Hades'.

- Lk. 16:23: In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.

This is the place that the rich man went to after death. All those who reject God go to Hades.

On Judgment Day, God will order all the people in Hades to come and stand before Him to be judged. Some will be assigned more severe punishments than others.

- Lk. 12:47-48: The servant who knows the master's will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows.

After judgment is passed, Hades itself, and all the people belonging to it, will be thrown into the Lake of Fire.

- Rev. 20:13-15: The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.

In other words, Hades is a temporary hell—it's a holding place where God is holding the unrighteous for future

judgment. Once this judgment is passed, people will be thrown into the permanent hell, which is the Lake of Fire.

2. Gehenna (Lake of Fire):

So, the Lake of Fire is the ultimate destination of the unrighteous. They will have to suffer there forever and ever. In some places, Jesus used the word 'gehenna' to describe this permanent hell.

- Mk. 9:43: If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into [gehenna], where the fire never goes out.

3. Abyss (Tartarus):

The deepest part of the Lake of Fire is called the Abyss or Tartarus.

Currently, there's a huge demonic army living in the abyss, where they have been imprisoned.

- 2 Pet. 2:4: For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to [Tartarus], putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment ...

Satan too will be locked away in this place for a while

- Rev. 20:2-3: He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand

years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

Satan and his demons will be temporarily released from the abyss for a short duration, so that they can fight a battle against God and be utterly defeated. After this, they will be returned to the Lake of Fire, where they will be tormented forever and ever (Rev. 20:10).



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: *All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.*

Will each believer be given a big bungalow in heaven?

This belief shows how worldly Christians are in their thinking!

- Jn. 14:2 says, “My Father’s house has many rooms (Greek word—monai) ...”
- Jn. 14:23 says, “My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home (Greek word—monen) with them.”

The Greek word ‘mone’ simply means “dwelling place.”

Jesus said that the Father will love me so deeply that He’ll be willing to make His dwelling-place inside my life! God is not interested in building a big bungalow inside my heart ... His focus is on being close to me. What an amazing thing that God should want me that much!

Jesus expects us to be equally eager about being close to Him. So He promises that in heaven, our dwelling place will

be with him. He is NOT talking about big bungalows. He believes we'll be more excited about being with Him rather than with living in a big bungalow.

To conclude, the word 'mone' simply talks about a dwelling place which could either be a room or a small apartment. The focus of these two verses is not on the 'size' and 'status' of the house ... the focus is on getting as close to a person as possible.

It's like two sisters who love each other so much that they decide to build houses right next to each other. The size and status of the houses doesn't matter ... it's enough for them that they can be right next to each other.

Do you think we'll be able to recognize family members and friends in heaven?

In Luke 16:19-31, Abraham, Lazarus and the rich man were all recognizable after death. At the transfiguration, Moses and Elijah were recognizable (Matthew 17:3-4). In these examples, the Bible does seem to indicate that we will be recognizable after death.

1 Thes. 4:13 says, " ... we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death ... "

1 Cor. 15:51-52 says, " ... We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed ... For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed."

Are these verses saying that dead people will go into a deep sleep, and wake up only at Christ's Second Coming?

In 2 Cor. 5:8 Paul says that he “... would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.” Paul doesn’t suggest that he’ll go into a deep sleep after dying.

Similarly, in Lk. 16:24, Jesus described the rich man as suffering in agony in hell. He was not in a deep sleep, waiting for judgment day.

So it’s only the physical dead body that ‘sleeps’—not the spirit of the person. At Christ’s Second Coming, the sleeping physical body of the believer will be transformed into a glorified body.

Heb. 12:1 says, “... since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles ...

Does this mean people in heaven are looking down and watching us all the time?

Hebrews chapter 11 records many people whom God commended for their faith. It is these people who are the “cloud of witnesses.” They are “witnesses” not in that they are watching us, but rather in that they have set an example for us. They are witnesses for Christ and God and truth. There is no verse in the Bible indicating that people are watching us from heaven.



APPLICATION

A simple decision that we make here on earth determines where we’ll be for the rest of eternity. This is why so many people are eager to put up their hands when an Altar Call is given.

However, the decision to simply repeat a salvation prayer does not take us to heaven. It's the decision to trust in Jesus, take up the Cross and follow Him, that takes us to heaven. So a salvation prayer is valid only if it involves a child-like trust in Jesus, choosing to obey Him and follow Him wherever He takes them.

Jesus did not go from town to town crying, "Say the Salvation Prayer." He went about preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Mt. 4:17).

A person saying the salvation prayer with a repentant heart will not be rejected by Jesus. To be repentant is simply to decide that I don't wish to sin against God anymore. So I ask Jesus to forgive me and help me start afresh—that through Him I can start living a holy and clean life.

Reflect on the decision that you have made.

Were you repentant about your sinfulness?

Did you wish to leave your sinful past behind and live for Jesus alone?

If this was your attitude when you said the salvation prayer, your name is definitely in the Lamb's Book of Life!

Share with others the Good News (of Jesus' forgiveness and promise of a new life) so that they too can join you in heaven.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER





Biblical Doctrines

The Rapture and Tribulation



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To explain the concept of the Rapture to children.
- To briefly outline the events of the Tribulation Period.



SCRIPTURE PORTION

Gen. 5:18-27; Jer. 30:3; 1 Thes. 4:17; 2 Thes. 2:6-7; Dan. 9:27; Rev. 6-12 (The End Times).



MEMORY VERSE

Mt. 24:44: So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him.



RECAP

- What did we learn about last week?
- Why did Paul use the term “third heaven”? Are there really three heavens?

- This week, were you able to share the Salvation Message of Jesus with anyone?
- Recite the Memory Verse for last week (Jn. 14:2).



INTRODUCTION

There is much debate on the End Times in Christian circles. Some believe that Christ's return will be immediately followed by the resurrection of all people and the judgment. Others believe that Christ's return will be followed by a 1000 year rule on earth, which is then followed by judgment. And then there are further variations of these two basic outlooks.

We at All Peoples Church (APC) believe that the Second Coming of Jesus takes place in two stages—including the Rapture and the Establishment of the Millennial Rule on earth (Kindly refer to the APC Statement of Faith—Points 12 and 13).



ATTENTION GETTER

Activity: The 'NOT' People

Read Aloud:

(The children can take turns reading one verse each.)

Gen. 5:18-27: Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and begot Enoch. After he begot Enoch, Jared lived eight hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Jared were nine hundred and sixty-two years; and he died.

Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Enoch were three hundred and sixty-five years. And Enoch walked with God; and he *was* not, for God took him.

Methuselah lived one hundred and eighty-seven years, and begot Lamech. After he begot Lamech, Methuselah lived seven hundred and eighty-two years, and had sons and daughters. So all the days of Methuselah were nine hundred and sixty-nine years; and he died.

Jared ‘begot’ (gave birth to) whom? Name the son of Jared (v.18).

Enoch

What happened to Jared after he became 962 years old (v.20)?

He died

Enoch ‘begot’ (gave birth to) whom? Name the son of Enoch (v.21).

Methuselah

Methuselah was the oldest man who ever lived. How old was he when he died? (v.27)?

969 years!

What happened to Methuselah after he became 969 years old (v.27)?

He died

Methuselah’s father was Enoch. What happened to Enoch after he became 365 years old (v.23-24)?

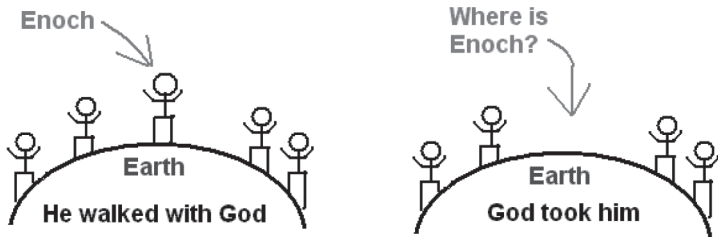
Verse 24 simply says, “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him”.

Why do you think the Bible says, “He was not, for God took him.” Why doesn’t it simply say, “He died, and so God took him”?

Enoch didn’t die. He simply disappeared from the earth when God took him. This is why we don’t see the word ‘died’ mentioned.

A church in the USA depicted Enoch’s disappearance in this way:

(Middle Town Bible Church Sunday School Materials)



First he was there then he was not!



TEACHING CONTENT

Whatever happened to Enoch long ago, will happen once again to a whole lot of people. At the time of Jesus’ Second Coming, if you and I are still alive on the earth, it’ll happen even to us.

Today we’ll briefly look at some of the major events that the Bible has prophesied will take place in the end days.

1. FORMATION of the STATE of ISRAEL

One of the most important signs showing we have entered the End Times is the formation of Israel as an independent country.

- Jer. 30:3: “The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their ancestors to possess,” says the Lord.

This promise of God was fulfilled when Israel miraculously defeated 7 stronger nations and established its independence in 1973.

2. RAPTURE

The next major event that’s still due is the Rapture. Jesus Christ will come in the clouds soon, to collect all believers from the earth.

- 1 Thes. 4:17: After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Jesus will remove the believers from the earth, mainly to protect them from the terrible judgment which will follow over the next seven years.

(The tragedy is that many will put their trust in Jesus after they see the Rapture is real. These people will have to unnecessarily endure the terrible suffering of the seven years of judgment. This is why it makes more sense to accept Jesus as Savior right now, before the Rapture.)

3. FIRST HALF of the TRIBULATION

Once the presence of believers—and the presence of the Holy Spirit who lives in them—leaves the earth, things will deteriorate very rapidly.

- The post-rapture believers will not have the Holy Spirit living in them on a permanent basis, the way He does with us right now. He'll only watch over them from the outside, as in the Old Testament times.

The world is bearable right now, because the restraining presence of the Holy Spirit is still here. Once He leaves with the believers, there will be utter havoc! Countries will turn against one another, and the danger of a nuclear war will become very real.

- 2 Thes. 2:6-7: And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.

One nuclear bomb has the capacity to wipe out an entire country. So people will live every moment in deep fear, anxious over what the future holds for them.

The Antichrist

In the midst of this great danger, one leader will emerge from the Middle East, with the ability and power to restore peace. He will help establish a World Peace Treaty and help create a Worldwide Government.

He will receive the full backing and support of a powerful country in launching his new reforms. Some say that the powerful nation backing him up will be the USA, but this is mere speculation. The Bible simply refers to this powerful country as “Babylon the Great.”

- Rev. 18:2: With a mighty voice he shouted: Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!

The world will praise this leader for his great achievements, and he’ll probably be awarded the Nobel Peace prize as well! But in reality he will be the Antichrist!

- Dan. 9:27: He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven’.
- Rev. 6:1-2: I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, “Come!” I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.

The False Prophet

Approximately around this time, another man will come to the forefront as a great spiritual leader, respected and admired by everyone. He’ll probably get appointed as the Pope and work towards uniting all religions to create one world religion. Later on, in the second half of the Tribulation, he’ll be revealed as the False Prophet.

- Rev. 13:11: Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon.

God's 'Seal Judgments'

Shortly after the Antichrist and False Prophet come to power on earth (pretending to be noble deliverers), up in heaven Jesus will take a scroll into His hands and begin opening the seals that are sealing it. Even as the first four seals are opened, God's judgment will be unleashed upon the earth, bringing large scale destruction and death.

- Rev. 6:7-8: When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

The remaining two seals will be opened during the second half of the tribulation

Two Witnesses

While the four seal judgments are being unleashed upon the earth, God will also simultaneously raise up 'two witnesses' in Jerusalem to deliver people from the judgment! God enjoys saving people far more than He does judging them. What a loving God we have!

The main mission of these two witnesses will be to inform people that the judgment taking place is directly from God, and anyone who chooses to follow Jesus will be saved from a greater judgment in hell. The two witnesses will perform extraordinary miracles to prove they're from God, and due to their witnessing, many Jews and Gentiles will accept Jesus as Lord.

- Rev. 11:5-6: If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. They have power to shut up the heavens so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

Persecution of Christians

The World Government, as mentioned earlier, will be run by a coalition group of powerful world leaders, including the Antichrist. The Antichrist will use his influence to persecute the new Christians for their faith in Christ, and many of the believers will face intense persecution and die horrible deaths.

- Rev. 6:9-11: When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, “How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?” Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.

The Two Witnesses Martyred

The Antichrist will personally kill the Two Witnesses, leaving their dead bodies in the streets of Jerusalem—just so that

he can dishonor them by denying them a burial. People all over the world, who hated them for the plagues they sent against the wicked, will be glad that these men are finally dead. So the world will celebrate, and people will exchange gifts when the bodies of the dead Witnesses are broadcast on TV.

However, after three and a half days, the breath of life from God will enter them, and they'll stand on their feet, causing terror in all those seeing. Then a loud voice from heaven will say to them, "Come up here." And they will go up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies look on.

- Rev. 11:11-12: But after the three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

Earthquake in Jerusalem

A few minutes after the Witnesses leave the earth, a major earthquake will strike Jerusalem, killing 7000 people. **Those who survive this terrible earthquake will finally admit that God exists and that He Himself sent the earthquake.** But they will refuse to repent and turn to Him!

- Rev. 11:13: At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Satan thrown down to the Earth

Soon after the major earthquake in Jerusalem, satan will gather his demonic army and declare war against God. Michael the archangel will lead the heavenly host into battle against him, and then satan and his demons will be cast out of heaven onto the earth.

- Rev. 12:9: The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

4. SECOND HALF of the TRIBULATION

Opening of the Sixth Seal

The Second Half of the Tribulation will begin with the opening of the sixth seal in heaven, causing a massive earthquake to rip across the earth, and shift entire islands and mountains from their original positions. Simultaneously, the sun will be temporarily darkened and the moon will turn red. Large meteors will crash onto the earth, changing the topography of the earth.

- Rev. 6:12-14: I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

Again, just as in the case of the Jerusalem earthquake which kills 7000 people, **everybody will realize that God himself is unleashing this judgment.** World leaders will be filled with fear and long to escape from the hands of this great God of Judgment.

- Rev. 6:15-17: Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty and everyone else, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?”

Satan indwells the Antichrist

Satan will use this opportunity to present the world with a leader who can supposedly deliver them from the Judgment of God. He will take possession of the Antichrist’s body and start controlling world affairs through him.

- Rev. 13:2: The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority.

Antichrist destroys Babylon the Great

If you remember, in the first half of the Tribulation, the Antichrist fully cooperated with the powerful nation that was supporting him and his World Government. But now, with satan indwelling him, the Antichrist will declare war against this nation, (which is symbolically called ‘Babylon’ in the Bible), and will successfully destroy it.

- Rev. 18:10: Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: “Woe! Woe to you, great city, you mighty city of Babylon! In one hour your doom has come!”

Antichrist declares himself God

Once he is free from the control of ‘Babylon’, the satan-possessed Antichrist will proceed with his ultimate plan. He will march into the Jerusalem temple (which will be rebuilt by this time) and declare himself as the real God. So the world headquarters will now shift to Jerusalem.

- Dan. 9:27: In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And at the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

Antichrist has a “near-death-experience” after being Assassinated

Many people, including the Jews, will be angry when the Antichrist declares himself God and takes over the Jerusalem temple. As a result, someone will attempt to assassinate the Antichrist.

The Antichrist will be declared dead; but in reality he will simply have a “near-death-experience”... (there are many documented cases of people coming back to life after their heart stops beating for a few hours).

During the assassination attempt, the Antichrist’s body will be damaged beyond recovery; but satan will heal him using his evil powers. The whole world will be amazed at this incredible miracle and begin to worship him as god ...

thereby rejecting the God who sent the earthquakes upon them

- Rev. 13:3: One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was filled with wonder and followed the beast.

Idol of Antichrist Created

The False Prophet will support the Antichrist's claims of Godhood. He'll begin to teach that both the Antichrist and the Being that indwells him should be worshipped. He'll perform great miracles, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. Because of these incredible miracles, the people will believe the False Prophet's teaching that the Antichrist is indeed the true God.

- Rev. 13:13-14: And it performed great signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to the earth in full view of the people. Because of the signs it was given power to perform on behalf of the first beast, it deceived the inhabitants of the earth ...

Next, he will set up an image of the Antichrist and order the whole world to worship it. This image will have the magical power to speak, and it'll even kill those who refuse to worship it.

- Rev. 13:14-15: ... It ordered them to set up an image in honour of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived. The second beast was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that

the image could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed.

Mark of the Beast

The False Prophet will also order everyone to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, pledging their allegiance to worship only the Antichrist and the Being that indwells him. He will declare that only those bearing the mark will be allowed to purchase food and other basic commodities. As a result, almost everybody will take on the Mark of the Beast.

- Rev. 13:16-17: It also forced all people, great and small, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hands or on their foreheads, so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name.

Warning not to receive the Mark

At this time, God will send out messengers to all parts of the world, warning people not to take the mark of the beast. The messengers will explain that all those who take the mark will be condemned to hell forever and ever.

- Rev. 14:9-10: A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: "If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives its mark on their forehead or on their hand, they, too, will drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of His wrath. They will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb."

144,000 Jews Sealed

Those who listen to the messengers of God, and refuse to take the mark, will be persecuted and killed. At this time, God will place a seal of protection on the foreheads of 144,000 Jewish believers. The Antichrist will not be able to harm these Jews in any way! They'll escape to a safe place, where God will shield them for the next three and a half years.

- Rev. 12:14: The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach.

Note: The rest of the End Times Events will be covered at the Senior Level.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Note: All discussion questions must be answered by the children, and NOT by the teacher. The guidelines given here are only meant to assist the teacher during the discussion.

Jer. 30:3: “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their ancestors to possess,” says the Lord.

What do you think we can learn from this Old Testament promise of God?

In 70 AD, the Romans destroyed the Jerusalem temple, and the fleeing Jews were scattered all over the world. But they held on to the promise that God had given Jeremiah.

However after hundreds of years, when nothing happened, many began to think that God had forgotten His promise. But true to His Word, when the right time came, God helped a weak bunch of Israelites to come together and fight with the powerful Arab Nations, to re-establish Israel as an independent country. They miraculously defeated 7 stronger nations to gain independence in 1973!

When the world saw this miracle, they realized that the End Times had finally started, and that soon, all of the other prophecies would be fulfilled too.

The lesson we can learn from this is that God always keeps His promises—even if the circumstances seem impossible. 2500 years after Jeremiah gave the prophecy, Israel was reinstated exactly as predicted.

2 Thes. 2:6-7: And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.

According to what we studied today, what are these verses talking about?

Today the Holy Spirit lives inside each person who accepts Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Due to His presence inside us, we believers act as salt and light in this dark world. Through our life-choices and our exercise of spiritual authority, we restrict satan's actions.

But after the Rapture, the Holy Spirit will return to heaven along with the believers. Once His presence is

removed, satan will gain the freedom to wreak havoc on the earth. Violence will become so common that people will be afraid to sit outdoors in the evenings. Immorality will be praised and worshipped by almost everyone. And the courts and police will stop providing justice.

Those will be terrible days to live on the earth. This is why people will eagerly place their hope in the Antichrist, thinking that he will restore order to the world.

When God begins to judge the world with the Seal Judgment, He also sends Two Witnesses to preach about Him. Why do you think God does this?

God enjoys saving people far more than He does judging them. So even though He begins judging the world, He still hopes that some will turn to Him and escape further judgment. So He sends the Two Witnesses to preach and encourage people to escape from God's judgments. This reveals the loving character of our God.



APPLICATION

If the Rapture takes place tonight, will you be caught up to heaven with the rest of the believers? Or will you get left behind, to face the terrible tribulation?

Make sure where you're personally headed. And make a commitment to tell other people about Jesus, so that they won't have to suffer through the tribulation either.



CLOSE WITH PRAYER

