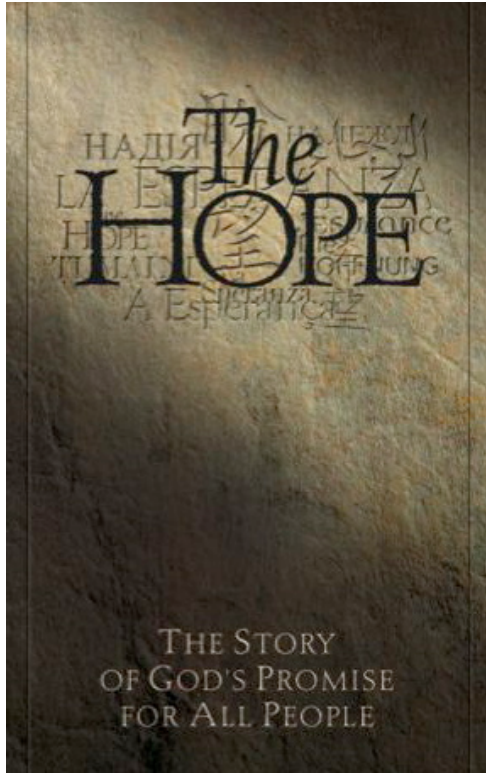




A Study Guide

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Reformed University Fellowship
Georgia Tech University



The HOPE presents a summary of the events of the Bible. The Bible is the source of hope and help for millions of people around the world. The Bible is unique: it is the most quoted, published, and translated book in history.

The Bible was written by more than 40 different people. They came from different walks of life and lived over a period of 1,500 years. Yet, as if they were guided by an unseen hand, the Bible tells one, dramatic, unified series of events. From beginning to end, the Bible's history traces a promise that is fulfilled in on one extraordinary person. That person promised to deliver the world from pain and death.

The HOPE was produced in cooperation with motion picture producers and distributors from around the world.

Each week, we will watch a short video. Then we will use this Study Guide. First, enjoy a dramatic survey of the whole Bible. Then get a good, basic understanding of the Bible's incredible promise of HOPE.

You can download this Study Guide at this web address: www.internationalbuzz.org/downloads/TheHOPE/

Week 1: Introduction. We will watch the complete video presentation of The HOPE. In just eighty minutes, you will get a "rapid overview" of the whole Bible from its beginning to the end.

Weeks 2-12: During each of these weeks, we will divide the whole Bible history into chapters. Each week, we will view a short video segment (approximately 5-12 minutes) from The HOPE. Next, we will discuss a short section from that part of the Bible in small groups. We will end each week with a teacher's summary of what we have discovered and discussed.

Here is the **Course Outline:**

Introduction	View the complete movie, The HOPE
Chapter 1	In the Beginning
Chapters 2-3	The Choice and The Deadly Disease
Chapter 4	Prelude to the Promise
Chapter 5	Blessed to be a Blessing
Chapter 6	People of the Promise
Chapter 7	Called to Walk in the Ways of God
Chapter 8	The Promised One
Chapter 9	The Ministry of Jesus
Chapter 10	God's Love and Justice Intersect
Chapter 11	He has Risen
Chapter 12	His Followers - Yesterday, Today, and Forever A Personal Invitation

In the Beginning

Chapter Preview



Chapter 1 explains how God and eternity relate to time and life. The universe reveals vastness, complexity, and beauty. Does this well-ordered universe suggest that a powerful Creator exists? Does our human nature reflect the character of a God who is limitless and unmeasurable in power, knowledge, goodness, and love?



View Movie

Events One - Two: the Question - the Voice
Events Three - Four: the Story begins with God – What is God Like? - Creation reflects God



Bible Study

Genesis 1:1 - 2:3: ¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning – the first day. ⁶ And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." ⁷ So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning – the second day. ⁹ And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good. ¹¹ Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning – the third day. ¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ God made two great lights – the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the expanse of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening, and there was morning – the fourth day. ²⁰ And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the sky." ²¹ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living and moving thing with which the water teems, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." ²³ And there was evening, and there was morning – the fifth day. ²⁴ And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that move along the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." ²⁹ Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground – everything that has the breath of life in it – I give every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning – the sixth day. ^{2:1} Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. ² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Notes:

All world cultures have ancient myths (or, "cosmologies") that try to explain how an orderly world came out of unmeasurable space and unformed matter.

How did an orderly universe come out of the chaos (disorder and confusion)?

If the Bible is one of many ancient stories, does that mean that it is untrue?

Or, is the Bible the one true Story that can offer to us both dignity and hope?

J.R.R. Tolkien (wrote The Lord of the Rings) said to his skeptical friend, the scholar C. S. Lewis, that the Bible is the world's "one True myth."

Tolkien believed that the Bible was the only book that preserved the whole truth about life. All other ancient stories had only some fragments of the truth.

Notes:

Scientists and engineers point out that the Bible does not seem very scientific when it describes how God created the universe. But look closely at this Story and you will discover artistic and literary word structures designed to offer us meaning and not methods from God.

God's creation began in a state of total disorder. The "days" of creation seem to be in pairs: for "forming" and "filling."

On days 1-3, God solves "formlessness."

On days 4-6 God solves "emptiness" in creation:

FORMS:	FILLS:
DAY 1 → DAY 4	
light and darkness	sun and moon

DAY 2 → DAY 5	
skies and sea	birds and fish

DAY 3 → DAY 6	
dry land and vegetation	humans and food

Discuss



1. Are there any words that you do not understand?
2. Which came first ... the chicken or the egg?
Think about it!
3. What theories have you been taught about the origin of life? Where do these theories come from?
4. Look at Genesis 1:1. What are the first words in the Bible? Why are these words significant?
5. Does the Bible try to prove that God exists? Do you think that anyone can prove God's existence?
6. Look at verse 2. What words are used to describe the earth?
7. In verse 2, how was God present and active?
8. What set of words (a short phrase) describes how God brings order out of chaos in verses 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, and 29?
9. How does God give value to everything in the universe? (Look at the word repeated by God in verses 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, and 31)
10. Look at verse 27. How does God give humans special value and dignity? Look at verse 31. What does God add to what he says about his creation?
11. If the Bible is really true - and we were made to reflect God as his "image" - how does this make humans different than the animals? How could this truth help you when you feel worthless or bad about yourself?
12. If we were made to bear God's image, how should we treat other people?
13. Why would a Being with unmeasurable energy need to "rest" from work? How would it benefit you to reserve one day each week to reflect and rest?

Chapter Summary

Each week, one of the class leaders will sum up what we discussed in our groups. You can use this section for your notes.



The Choice and The Deadly Disease

Chapter Preview



Chapter 2 introduces the question of evil. If a good and all-powerful God created all things, then where did evil come from? The Bible teaches that evil is real and dangerous. But evil is not ultimate (absolute) or eternal. Evil did not start with God. Evil is the result of free and unwise choices made by created beings who rebelled against God. And God has promised to defeat evil.

View Movie



Event Five: the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge
Event Six: the Rebellion of Satan and the Creation of Hell
Event Seven: the Deception and the Fall of Man
Event Eight: A Spiritual Disease Enters the World
Event Nine: The First Promise of a Deliverer



Bible Study

Genesis 3:1-24: ¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" ⁴ "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

¹⁰ He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." ¹¹ And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" ¹² The man said, "The woman you put here with me — she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." ¹³ Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

¹⁴ So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

¹⁶ To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

¹⁷ To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

²⁰ Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

²¹ The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. ²² And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." ²³ So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. ²⁴ After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Notes:

PROBLEM OF EVIL:

Is evil equal and opposite to God?

Is evil not real? Was God not powerful or good enough to prevent evil?

Those answers have all been suggested by various religions and philosophies.

The Bible does not solve all mysteries about the existence of evil. But the Bible does give us hope.

God has promised to destroy all that is evil in the world.

LOVE IS A CHOICE:

God made humans to give and receive love. Real love is never forced, but is freely chosen.

The problem was not an attraction to forbidden fruit (the Bible does not tell us what the fruit was).

The main point is that God wanted his highest creatures to:
1) Honor God as God (not attempt to act like gods) and
2) Love God as the One who provides us with all we need.

To prove (or test) the sincerity of human love and respect, God set one limit: all was provided and only one thing was forbidden.

Would humans, God's most noble creatures, freely choose to return his love and goodness?

The Choice and The Deadly Disease

Notes:

A TALKING SERPENT?

This may seem foolish to you. But try to remember these points:

1. The Bible book of Genesis uses literary structures to make its points.
2. A powerful created spirit-being (Lucifer = Satan = devil) rebelled against God before time, prior to humans' disobedience.
3. So, the snake (or, serpent) was a tool or instrument of an unseen, powerful evil one - the devil.
4. God made humans in his image. God gave to man royal authority to rule over all the other creatures for God's honor.

Why did the devil use the lowest creature to attack God's "rulers" (humans)? Satan planned to overthrow God's order and to distort the reflection of God's glory in the creation.

THE DEVIL'S TRAP:

Satan began with a SUGGESTION:
"Did God say?"

He then DISTORTS God's word: "You must not eat from any tree?"

Finally, the devil CONTRADICTS the Word of God: "You will not die."

Discuss



1. Are there any words that you do not understand?
2. During your childhood, what kinds of behavior got you into big trouble with your parents?
3. Look at verse 1. What disguise did Satan use to attack the humans? Why do you think Satan attacked humans who bear God's image?
4. Compare God's words in Genesis 2:16-17 (below) with Satan's words in Genesis 3:1-5. What has Satan done with God's words?

Genesis 2:16-17: ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."
5. Look at verse 5. What does the serpent promise? Why does that seem desirable? How do people today try to "be like God"?
6. The Bible never blames the woman for evil coming into the world. Look at the end of verse 6: why is the man also guilty? The class leader will explain more about this during the Chapter Summary.
7. In verses 7-10, what were some of the results of human disobedience? How do people still try to "run" from God and "cover up" today?
8. In verses 12-13, does the man take responsibility? Who does the man blame? Who does the woman blame?
9. How do people in your home culture try to avoid blame and shame?
10. How difficult is it to admit that you are wrong, and say "I am sorry"?
11. Look at how God speaks to the serpent in verse 15. How do God's words give humans hope for the future? (Note: "enmity" = "hostility")
12. Look at verse 21. How does God provide for the humans?

Chapter Summary

Each week, one of the class leaders will sum up what was discussed in our groups. You can use this section for your notes.



Prelude to the Promise



Chapter Preview

Chapter 4 shows how The HOPE was introduced to a world filled with HOPELESSNESS. As the Prelude (introduction) to God's Promise, the Bible is placed in a world-wide setting. God's Story is set in the middle of all nations. Human pride, sin, and wickedness cause divisions and strife between all peoples. Before God showed grace, God was grieved.



View Movie

Event Ten: God was Grieved - the Great Flood
Event Eleven: The Beginning of the Nations - The Tower of Babel



Bible Study

THE GREAT FLOOD: Genesis 6:5-22: ⁵ The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. ⁶ The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. ⁷ So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth – men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air – for I am grieved that I have made them." ⁸ But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. ⁹ This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. ¹⁰ Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. ¹¹ Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. ¹² God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. ¹³ So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. ¹⁴ So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out...¹⁷ I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth ... Everything on earth will perish. ¹⁸ But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark – you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. ¹⁹ You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. ²⁰ Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. ²¹ You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them." ²² Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

AFTER NOAH AND HIS FAMILY WERE SAVED:

Genesis 9:1: Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth."

Genesis 9:11-13 ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth." ¹² And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: ¹³ I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

THE TOWER OF BABEL: Genesis 10:32-11:9: ³² These are the clans of Noah's sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood. ^{11:1} Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. ² As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

³ They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth."

⁵ But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. ⁶ The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."

⁸ So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. ⁹ That is why it was called Babel – because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

Notes:

A massive FLOOD? In ancient literature from many world cultures, there are stories of a massive flood and people who survived it. These stories have many similarities. Is this a coincidence? Beyond the Bible, stories of a massive flood are found in the Quran and the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh. A sixth century BC Indian myth tells of Manu, a hero advised by a fish to build a ship to escape a flood. One Chinese word for ship, "chuan," can be divided into characters meaning "8 people together in the water" - the number of people on Noah's ark.

Was the tower of Babel a ZIGGURAT? Ziggurats are cone-shaped temples found in Sumeria, Babylonia and Assyria. They were also built by the Mayan Indians. They date from 3,000 B.C. People always worship on their "high places." What do modern people worship? What are some of our modern "high places?"

Prelude to the Promise

Notes:

CAN GOD REALLY HAVE A "HEART"?

According to the Bible, God is infinite Spirit. God is not a physical Being.

But we must describe God with human words, including words that show feelings and concern.

One Bible scholar, Dr. Bruce Waltke, comments that, "the unchanging God is always pained by sin."

WILL GOD REUNITE ALL THE NATIONS?

When we try to honor and glorify ourselves, God is grieved. God scatters and divides us.

But thousands of years after Babel, on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), God gave the earliest Christians an ability to speak other languages. People from all nations were amazed, "We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

What was different between Babel and Pentecost? We will study this more in a later class.

Discuss



1. Are there any words that you do not understand?
2. Have you ever experienced a natural disaster?
3. Is there a "flood story" in the ancient literature of your culture?
4. What do you think is bad about the world today? What do you see in the world that disturbs or grieves you the most?
5. In verses 5 and 11-12, what did God observe about people on earth?
6. Look at verse 5. How is human wickedness more than bad behavior? Look at the words "every ... only ... all the time." What do these words tell you about what God observed?
7. According to verse 6, how did God react to human sinfulness?
8. In verse 7, what does the LORD plan to do? According to verse 8, how did God look at Noah in a different way?
9. Do the words "find favor" in verse 8 mean that Noah was a better person than other people? The class leader will explain more about the idea of "God's favor (grace)" during the Chapter Summary.
10. Look at verse 18. What did God establish with Noah and his family? The class leader will explain this Bible term in the Chapter Summary.
11. Now look at the story of the great Tower. In Genesis 11:4, what were 2 reasons why the people decided to build a Tower?
12. Compare what God said to Noah in Genesis 9:1 and what the people said in Genesis 11:4. How did the people disobey God?
13. Look at Genesis 11:7. How did God divide and scatter the nations?
14. What divides the nations and different cultures today? What makes you feel "scattered and confused" in your own life?

Chapter Summary

Each week, one of the class leaders will sum up what was discussed in our groups. You can use this section for your notes.



Blessed to be a Blessing

Chapter Preview



Chapter 5 shows the way that God spreads The HOPE to all the nations of the world. God's original purpose never changed. God will fill the earth with his glory and blessing. But the whole world has turned away from God. The LORD chooses and calls Abraham - to bless all nations through his family. But Abraham and his wife are old and childless. God's blessing comes through the promise of a miracle Son. Must that Son be sacrificed?



View Movie

Event Twelve: The Calling of Abraham
Event Thirteen: Abraham offers His Son - God Provides a Substitute



Bible Study

GOD CALLS ABRAHAM: Genesis 12:1-3: ¹ The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. ² "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

GOD'S PROMISE TO ABRAHAM: Genesis 15:3-6: ³ And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir." ⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir." ⁵ He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars - if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." ⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

GOD PROMISES A SON: Genesis 17:1-5 ¹ When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless. ² I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." ³ Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, ⁴ "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. ⁵ No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

THE LORD PROVIDES A LAMB: Genesis 22:1-18: ¹ Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. ² Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

³ Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, ⁷ Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

⁸ Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. ⁹ When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. ¹¹ But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

¹² "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." ¹³ Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

¹⁵ The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time ¹⁶ and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, ¹⁸ and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Notes:

The life of Abraham is recorded in the Old Testament part of the Bible: Genesis 12:1 - 25:11.

The LORD called Abraham to give up everything dear to him - his family, land, and household gods - to follow the one true God.

Abraham believed and obeyed God. The New Testament part of the Bible calls him "the father of all who believe."

Blessed to be a Blessing

Notes:

COVENANT: The Bible calls the promise God made with Abraham a "covenant."

But God's covenant is more than a promise.

God totally commits himself to fulfill all that He has promised to do. The fulfillment does not depend on our human performance, but on what God does.

If you break a business contract, you must pay the penalty. But God promises to pay the expense of our broken promises.

"The Lord will provide" is clear in Genesis 22: he provides a sacrifice as the substitute for the life of Abraham's only son Isaac.

Discuss



1. Are there any words that you do not understand?
2. Where is your home city? Can you show it to our group on a map? When did you first leave your home? Who - or what - did you have to leave behind?
3. What was the most difficult part of leaving your home country? What has been the hardest thing about coming to a foreign country?
4. Look at Genesis 12:1-3. What did God ask Abram to leave behind? Do you think it was easy or hard for him to believe and follow God?
5. What did God promise to Abraham? Would this happen soon?
6. Look at Genesis 15:3-6. What worry does Abraham express to God? How does the LORD answer Abraham's doubts?
7. Look at 15:6. How did Abraham become "right with God"?
8. In Genesis chapter 17, Abram is 99 years old. But he still has no son. How does God describe his "covenant" with Abram? (The Note on the left explains the meaning of "covenant")
9. In Genesis 22, how did God "test" Abraham's faith?
10. Look at Genesis 22:2. In this verse, how is Abraham's relationship with Isaac described?
11. How does the LORD provide for Abraham and his family?
12. At this time in your life, what is it that makes you the most afraid? What worries you the most about your future?
13. If God spoke directly to you, and promised to protect and reward you - how would you respond? Would this solve all your worries?

Chapter Summary

Each week, one of the class leaders will sum up what was discussed in our groups. You can use this section for your notes.



People of the Promise

Chapter Preview



Chapter 6 shows how the family of Abraham became the Hebrews. The video gives a quick overview (just 8+ minutes) of the family history. God promised to Abraham his son Isaac. God's Promise continued through Abraham's grandson. Isaac named him Jacob, but God renamed him "Israel." Abraham's great-grandsons became "The Twelve Tribes of Israel." One great-grandson was Joseph. He provided food for the people of Israel in Egypt. When the Hebrews became slaves in Egypt, God prepared Moses to become their deliverer.



View Movie

Event Fourteen: Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph - God's Promise Lives
 Event Fifteen: God Prepares Moses to Lead the Hebrew People
 Event Sixteen: God Brings the Hebrew People Out of Slavery



Bible Study

JOSEPH WAS REJECTED BY HIS BROTHERS: Genesis 37:3-8: ³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than any of his other sons, because he had been born to him in his old age; and he made a richly ornamented robe for him. ⁴ When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than any of them, they hated him and could not speak a kind word to him. ⁵ Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him all the more. ⁶ He said to them, "Listen to this dream I had: ⁷ We were binding sheaves of grain out in the field when suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright, while your sheaves gathered around mine and bowed down to it." ⁸ His brothers said to him, "Do you intend to reign over us? Will you actually rule us?" And they hated him all the more because of his dream and what he had said."

JOSEPH FORGIVES AND PROVIDES BREAD FOR HIS FAMILY: Genesis 45:4-8 and 50:18-21: ^{45:4} Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! ⁵ Now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. ⁶ For two years now there has been famine in the land and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. ⁷ But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. ⁸ "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.

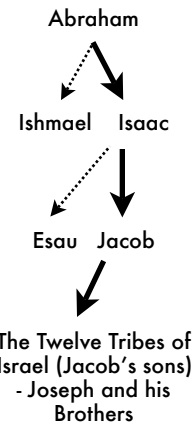
^{50:18} His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. "We are your slaves," they said. ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? ²⁰ You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. ²¹ So then, don't be afraid. I will provide for you and your children." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

GOD APPEARS TO MOSES: Exodus 3:1-10: ¹ Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law ... and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³ So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight - why the bush does not burn up." ⁴ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." ⁵ "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." ⁶ Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. ⁷ The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey ... ¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

THE LORD SPARES ISRAEL: THE SACRIFICE OF A LAMB: Exodus 12:1-3,12-13: ¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, ² "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. ³ Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household ... ¹² "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn - both men and animals - and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will PASS OVER you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt."

Notes:

Here is the "family tree" of Abraham. Notice that not all of his natural children inherited God's Promise. Two of his firstborn sons (Ishmael, Esau) were not heirs as expected. God's Promise does not follow tradition.



Joseph's life has a meaningful pattern. He was rejected by his brothers. But he was promoted to the ruler's right hand. And he became the savior of all nations.

You will see this same pattern in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus was rejected by the sons of Israel. But he provides the "bread of life" to all people in the world, including his own family who thought that he was dead.

People of the Promise

Notes:

PASSOVER is the most holy festival in Israel, even among the Jews today. It is the first day of the Hebrew year.

"Passover" comes from the Bible story. Death "passed over" Hebrew families in Egypt.

The blood of a spotless lamb was sprinkled over the Hebrew homes. The blood of a lamb was the substitute for the death of Israel's sons - like the lamb that substituted for Isaac.

We will see how this pattern is fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ.

Christian people do not kill lambs or celebrate the Passover because "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us."

HUMAN SIN AND GOD'S PLAN.

In these passages, we see human injustice but also God's plans.

Though he was their family member, Joseph was rejected by his brothers. Though Moses was a prince, Pharaoh treated him like an enemy.

God has a plan above all human injustice and wrong-doing. We will later see this pattern in the New Testament.

The first Christians declared: "Let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Discuss



1. Are there any words that you do not understand?
2. What is the greatest gift you have received from your parents? Were you ever jealous of what another person received? How did that make you feel or act?
3. Look at Genesis 37:3-8. What were some reasons why Joseph's brothers hated and rejected him?
4. According to verse 7, what did Joseph dream? What is a "sheaf"? How did Joseph's brothers interpret his dream?
5. Look at Genesis 45:4-8 and 50:18-21. In Egypt, Joseph meets his brothers after many years. How has Joseph's dream come true?
6. Joseph's brothers did great wrong to him. But Joseph forgives them. What does Joseph say to his brothers in 45:5 and 50:20?
7. What is the worst thing that has happened to you? What difference would it make in your life, if you believed God has a bigger plan for you - to bring good things out of bad things? Can you believe that?
8. Moses ran away from Egypt. Moses was no longer a prince, but a shepherd in the desert. According to Exodus 3:3-4, why did he go to the bush? Do you think God only speaks to people who investigate?
9. According to Exodus 3:5-8 how did Moses respond to the LORD? How did the LORD relate to Israel? What must Moses do now?
10. Look at Exodus 12:1-3,12-13. What must the Hebrew people do? What will God do? Why is the sacrifice of a lamb so important?

Chapter Summary

Each week, one of the class leaders will sum up what was discussed in our groups. You can use this section for your notes.



Chapter Seven

Called to Walk in the Ways of God

Chapter Preview



Chapter 7 tells how the Hebrews became a nation. God told Israel to be his holy people. Israel should represent and reflect the one true God among all the nations in the world. God had spared his people, and sprinkled blood over their homes. God delivered them from slavery. With thanks to God their Savior, Israel must look to God as their true King. They should follow God's laws. But sinful people will disobey God. God provided blood sacrifices to cover their sins. But they cry out for the coming of God's Promised Deliverer.



View Movie

Event Seventeen: God Gives the Hebrew People the Law
Event Eighteen: The Need for a Deliverer



Bible Study

GOD BRINGS THE PEOPLE TO MOUNT SINAI: Exodus 19:3-8: ³ Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: ⁴ 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵ Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, ⁶ you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." ⁷ So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak. ⁸ The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD.

GOD'S MORAL LAW: Exodus 20:1-17: ¹ And God spoke all these words: ² "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³ "You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴ "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. ⁷ "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. ⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. ¹² "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. ¹³ "You shall not murder. ¹⁴ "You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵ "You shall not steal. ¹⁶ "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. ¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

PRAYER AT GOD'S TEMPLE: 1 Kings 8:41-50: ⁴¹ "As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name — ⁴² for men will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm — when he comes and prays toward this temple, ⁴³ then hear from heaven, your dwelling place ... so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel..."

⁴⁴ "When your people go to war against their enemies, wherever you send them, and when they pray to the LORD toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name, ⁴⁵ then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause. ⁴⁶ "When they sin against you — for there is no one who does not sin — and you become angry with them and give them over to the enemy, who takes them captive to his own land ... ⁴⁷ if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their conquerors and say, 'We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly'; ⁴⁸ and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to you toward the land you gave their fathers, toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name; ⁴⁹ then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause. ⁵⁰ And forgive your people..."

Notes:

In most religions, you obey God to get his blessings. So, God's laws are your way to come to God for favor. God's goodness depends on your good deeds or religious rituals.

Obedying God's laws is not a way to get approval or to earn acceptance from God.

The Bible teaches that obeying God's laws is a way for God's people to show thanks to God for his love and kindness.

What **GOD DOES** for us

恩惠

What **WE DO** for God

If you are thankful that the LORD GOD is your SAVIOR, then you will love GOD and obey him as your KING.

Called to Walk in the Ways of God

Notes:

The traditional Chinese character for "HOLY" illustrates very well what the Bible teaches about obedience.

Ear Mouth

King

Holy people are those who HEAR the words of God's MOUTH and follow the ways of their SAVIOR and KING.

God's holy people are citizens of his Kingdom. They are to reflect and represent God by what they DO and what they SAY in this world.

Discuss



1. Are there any words that you do not understand?
2. Who made the rules in your childhood home? How did you try to get around keeping the rules?
3. What happened if you broke the rules? Did you receive your parents' love because you obeyed their rules?
4. Why should you obey rules? To win approval? To avoid punishment? To show love and respect? What is the right motivation for obeying?
5. Look at Exodus 19:3-8. What has the LORD done for his people? How should the people of Israel respond?
6. In 19:8, what do the people promise? Do you think they can do this?
7. In Exodus 19:5-6, what does God promise if his people will obey him?
8. In Exodus 20:1-17, the LORD gave Israel "Ten Commandments" that summarize God's Moral Standards. See if you can "number" each commandment 1 - 2 through 10. How would you explain each of God's Commandments in your own words?
9. The Temple became the place where God's people offered sacrifices for sin as well as their prayers to the LORD (represented by incense). 1 Kings 8:41-50 give part of the prayer that dedicated the Temple.
10. How does 1 Kings 8:41-43 show how God wanted his people Israel to represent his Kingdom in all the world?
11. Why do all people need forgiveness, according to 1 Kings 8:46-50?
12. What do you do when you break the rules? Did you know that Jesus Christ came into the world to offer forgiveness for our disobeying and dishonoring God? Could you accept God's love and forgiveness?

Chapter Summary

Each week, one of the class leaders will sum up what was discussed in our groups. You can use this section for your notes.



Chapter Preview



Chapter 8 tells of the birth of God's promised Deliverer, Jesus Christ. We have seen in an earlier class that God promised to send the "offspring" of a woman to "crush" the head of the evil one (Genesis 3:15). Since all humans are sinners, it was necessary that God's Promised One be free from sin. So Jesus was miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit. He is not only the son of Mary. He is also the Son of God. When Jesus was baptized, he was publicly introduced to Israel. The work of Jesus must be: 1) To fulfill all righteousness (only Jesus can perfectly obey God), 2) to take the place of sinners (Jesus was baptized, even though he is pure and did not need to be washed from any sin like we do), and 3) Jesus will defeat every attack of Satan.

View Movie



Event Nineteen: The Birth of the Promised Deliverer
Event Twenty: Jesus as a Child
Event Twenty-one: The Baptism of Jesus
Event Twenty-two: The Temptation of Jesus



Bible Study

JESUS IS BORN: Matthew 1:18-25: ¹⁸ This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about:

His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ²³ "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" – which means, "God with us." ²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. ²⁵ But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

JESUS IS BAPTIZED: Mark 1:4-13: ⁴ And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶ John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷ And this was his message: "After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸ I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." ¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, ¹³ and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

JESUS IS TEMPTED: Luke 4:1-13: ¹ Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, ² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. ³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." ⁴ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'"

⁵ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷ So if you worship me, it will all be yours." ⁸ Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

⁹ The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰ For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; ¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" ¹² Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

¹³ When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Notes:

The coming of Jesus as God's Promised One fulfilled many ancient prophecies. Just a few of them predicted that:

He would be "the offspring of the woman" (Genesis 3:15) who would defeat the devil.

The Deliverer would be conceived and born of a virgin: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:13)

The Promised One would also be God: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end." (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Notes:

Do you remember how Satan tempted the first humans? He twisted God's words so he could deceive them. (see this Study Guide, pages 4-5)

The temptation of Jesus (his "proof by trial") repeats old patterns:

1. Satan again tries to twist and distort God's words - this time God's words to Jesus.

2. Jesus defeats Satan by quoting from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy - that book describes the "testing" of the people of Israel in the desert.

In order to "fulfill all righteousness," Jesus had to succeed where all humans sin and fail.

The victory of Jesus over the devil includes his perfect obedience.

Jesus never doubted God's goodness like Adam and Eve did.

Over 40 years in the desert of Sinai, the people of Israel turned away from God. Over 40 days in the desert of Judea, Jesus trusted God.

Jesus perfectly obeys where we fail to walk in the ways of God.

Discuss



1. Are there any words that you do not understand?
2. Who can you trust to keep a promise?
3. When did someone not keep their word but broke a promise to you? How did you respond when this happens?
4. Look at Matthew 1:18-19. Why did Joseph consider a "quiet divorce" from Mary? In what ways was Mary at risk of public shame?
5. How did the angel give Joseph courage in Matthew 1:20? What did Joseph learn from the angel? Whose son was in Mary's womb?
6. In verse 21, what name was Joseph to give to Mary's son? What was the meaning and significance of that name?
7. Look at verse 23. What did the LORD (through the prophet Isaiah) call the One who was to be born?
8. Now look at the baptism of Jesus in Mark 1:4-13. The Deliverer received both a human name (Jesus) and a divine name (Immanuel).
9. How did Jesus reveal his human work at his baptism? How did God the Father reveal Jesus' divine identity?
10. Look at the temptation of Jesus in Luke 4:1-13. In two of the three attacks on Jesus, what was the devil's challenge to him?
11. How did Satan twist or distort the words God had spoken to Jesus?
12. Describe each of the three temptations in your own words. How did Jesus defeat Satan, and "pass" each test?
13. Is there a temptation that you need to resist? How will you find the strength to resist? Do you think you need the power of Jesus?

Chapter Summary

Each week, one of the class leaders will sum up what was discussed in our groups. You can use this section for your notes.



Chapter Nine

The Ministry of Jesus

Chapter Preview



Chapter 9 describes how Jesus began his public career (his "ministry") in the power of God's Spirit. As one Bible verse summarizes the career of Jesus: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power ... he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him." (Acts 10:38) Jesus began to gather followers around him. He selected twelve "disciples." Jesus taught God's Word with great power. And he also did miraculous signs. He healed the sick, fed thousands, and even forgave sins. His signs and claims began to offend the religious leaders.



View Movie

Event Twenty-three: Jesus calls His Disciples
Event Twenty-four: The Ministry of Jesus
Event Twenty-five: Jesus Offends the Religious Leaders



Bible Study

HOW JESUS BEGAN HIS MINISTRY: Matthew 4:17-25: ¹⁷ From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." ¹⁸ As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ At once they left their nets and followed him. ²¹ Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴ News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them. ²⁵ Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him.

SIGNS OF GOD'S KINGDOM: Mark 2:1-17: ¹ A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ² So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

⁶ Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷ "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

⁸ Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? ⁹ Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?" ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins ..." He said to the paralytic, ¹¹ "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ¹² He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

¹³ Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.

¹⁴ As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

¹⁵ While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶ When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?"

¹⁷ On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Notes:

DISCIPLE: a person who is a learner; an apprentice or an understudy. In many cultures, you train by studying under the authority of a master-teacher.

If you are chosen to study with a master, it is a great honor. Selection means that you must be a bright and talented future leader or teacher.

But Jesus chose disciples who were common, ordinary people. And today, the followers of Jesus realize that they were chosen by Jesus' goodness, and not their own abilities or potential

There are some unfamiliar **PLACE NAMES** in this part of the Bible:

GALILEE: region of north Palestine, area of Christ's boyhood and early ministry. It was a border area, so it was also called "Galilee of the nations."

JUDEA: the proper "Jewish" province. The capital, the city of Jerusalem, was located in Judea.

SYRIA: this Roman province surrounded Galilee.

CAPERNAUM: the nearest village to the Jordan river on the NW shores of the Sea of Galilee.

DECAPOLIS: a large territory south of the Sea of Galilee and east of Jordan river. This word means the "Ten (deca) Cities."

Notes:

TAX COLLECTORS: people who collected taxes or customs for the Romans. They had bad reputations. The tax system was corrupt and the tax collectors worked with the hated Roman rulers who occupied Palestine.

Jesus seemed to go out of his way to show God's love and mercy to the social outcasts, the immoral, the sick, and the poor.

How do you see God's "good news for the poor" in BOTH the WORDS and the DEEDS of Jesus?

Discuss

1. Are there any words that you do not understand?
2. In the ancient traditions of your culture, how were you educated?
3. How many of you came here to study because of a professor's work or reputation? What does it mean to be chosen by a great teacher?
4. When was a time you have been very sick? How did you recover? Did you need to go to a doctor to get well again?
5. Look at Matthew 4:17. What was Jesus' message? How did Jesus want people to respond to his message? What does "repent" mean?
6. In Matthew 4:18-22, who did Jesus select to be his followers? What changes happened in their lives? What did Jesus promise them?
7. Look at Matthew 4:23-25. What was Jesus was doing at this point? What was the result of the activities of Jesus?
8. Now look at Mark 2:1-17. In verses 2-4, what problem did the four men have? How did they solve this problem?
9. What did they expect Jesus to do for their friend? What did Jesus do?
10. In Mark 2:6-7, why were the religious teachers angry?
11. How would you answer the question that Jesus asked in Mark 2:9? According to verses 10-12, why did Jesus heal the paralyzed man?
12. In Mark 2:13-14, Jesus calls someone else to follow him as a disciple. Who was this man? What was his career? (see the note on the left)
13. In Mark 2:15-16, why did the religious teachers complain when Jesus went to a dinner party in Levi's home? In verse 17, how did Jesus answer their complaint?
14. Why do people go to a medical doctor? Why do you think people accept the invitation of Jesus to follow him?
15. In what way is sin like paralysis? Is there some way that you need to hear Jesus promise to forgive you from spiritual paralysis?

Chapter Summary

Each week, one of the class leaders will sum up what was discussed in our groups. You can use this section for your notes.

Chapter Ten

God's Love and Justice Intersect

Chapter Preview

Chapter 10 describes how Jesus was rejected by the leaders and teachers of his own people. Jesus was betrayed, arrested, and turned over to Pilate, the Roman governor. Jesus was put on trial because he claimed to be the Son of God. Pilate wanted to set Jesus free - and he offered to release one prisoner. But the people chose a condemned thief instead of Jesus. The crowds demanded that Pilate execute Jesus. The death of Jesus on the cross paid in full God's justice (our sins deserve God's just punishment) and also fulfilled God's love (God's sin-less Son was willing to take our punishment in our place). Like the Passover lamb sacrificed for sins, Jesus is "the Lamb of God," the spotless One who was put to death for the sins of others.



View Movie



Event Twenty-six: Jesus States His Mission
Event Twenty-seven: Jesus Confronts the Religious leaders
Event Twenty-eight: Jesus' Final Hours with His Disciples
Event Twenty-nine: The "Trial" of Jesus
Event Thirty: The Crucifixion of Jesus

Bible Study



JESUS CELEBRATES PASSOVER: Matthew 26:18-30: ¹⁸ "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'" ¹⁹ So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

²⁰ When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹ And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." ²² They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?"

²³ Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴ The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." ²⁵ Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you."

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." ²⁷ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom." ³⁰ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

THE LEADERS REJECT JESUS: John 11:47-53: ⁴⁷ Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. "What are we accomplishing?" they asked. "Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."

⁴⁹ Then one of them, named Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, "You know nothing at all! ⁵⁰ You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." ⁵¹ He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, ⁵² and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one. ⁵³ So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

GOD'S SON IS THE PASSOVER LAMB: 1 Peter 1:17-21: ¹⁷ Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. ¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. ²⁰ He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. ²¹ Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

Notes:

PASSOVER was the most important holy day for the Jews.

This festival was celebrated with the killing, roasting, and eating of a Lamb.

In this way, the people remembered how God set them free: lamb's blood was sprinkled over their homes. So God's judgment of death "passed over" the Hebrews.

In a dramatic way, Jesus claims that He is the Passover Lamb ("This is my body ... this is my blood")

God's Love and Justice Intersect

Notes:

Jesus began his work when he was baptized by a man named John.

John protested: he needed to be washed (made clean) by Jesus!

Jesus said to John that that it was necessary to fulfill all righteousness.

Jesus was God's sinless Son - who took the place of sinners.

Before Jesus washed anyone, he must take the sinner's place.

The traditional Chinese word for "righteous" is a lovely illustration of Jesus as God's Lamb:



Jesus lived the sinless and honorable life that we cannot live. And Jesus died a death that we all deserve.

If Jesus is God's Lamb provided for me - his blood covers over me. If Jesus is my Passover Lamb, I can have a right relationship with God through him.

Discuss



1. Are there any words that you do not understand?
2. In your culture, what holidays do you celebrate with a meal? How do you prepare for it? Why is that meal meaningful or special to you?
3. Look at Matthew 26:18-19. How does Jesus tell his disciples to prepare for the Passover?
4. What does Jesus tell his disciples at the Passover meal that makes them sad? In what way is a betrayer different than an enemy?
5. How does Jesus describe the Passover Bread? What does he say about the Cup?
6. What does Jesus mean when he says "my blood - the covenant"? What provides "forgiveness of sins" for many?
7. Look at John 11:47-53. What worries the Jewish ruling council? What are these leaders afraid of - that could happen?
8. What plan does the high priest propose? How does this seem like self-protection? How did this political plan fulfill God's plan?
9. What is God's purpose in the death of Jesus?
10. Look at 1 Peter 1:17. How is God the Father's nature described?
11. The word "redeem" means to "purchase freedom for your loved one." Look at 1 Peter 1:19. How did Jesus redeem his people? How is Jesus described in 1 Peter 1:19?
12. How can you and I have a right relationship with God today? Why is it necessary for God's love and justice to be demonstrated?

Chapter Summary



Each week, one of the class leaders will sum up what was discussed in our groups. You can use this section for your notes.

Chapter Eleven

He Has Risen

Chapter Preview



Chapter 11 tells about the most important event in Bible history. Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday. Jesus was buried in a tomb. But Jesus predicted that he would rise from the dead on the third day. So, the authorities rolled a large stone across the tomb of Jesus. The grave was sealed and soldiers were posted to guard it. But, just as Jesus had promised, he rose in victory over death. Over forty days, Jesus again and again appeared to his disciples. He taught them about the kingdom of God. And Jesus commissioned them to be witnesses of his resurrection and ambassadors of God's kingdom.



View Movie

Event Thirty-one: The Burial of Jesus
Event Thirty-two: The Resurrection of Jesus
Event Thirty-three: Post-Resurrection Appearances



Bible Study

THE DAY OF RESURRECTION: Matthew 28:1-15: ¹ After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. ² There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

⁵ The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷ Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you."

⁸ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

¹¹ While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹² When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, ¹³ telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' ¹⁴ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." ¹⁵ So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

DOUBTS ABOUT THE RESURRECTION: John 20:19-22,24-29: ¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

²⁴ Now Thomas (called Didymus - the Twin), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." ²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." ²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION: 1 Corinthians 15:3-8,14-15: ³ For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also... ¹⁴ And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. ¹⁵ More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead.

Notes:

The Bible says that Jesus is alive. And Christians believe that Jesus has won the victory over sin and death.

Jesus' resurrection guarantees that all who trust and follow him will also be raised from the grave when Jesus returns from heaven.

Until today, there has only been one resurrection. Unlike science experiments, the fact of the resurrection cannot be verified by repeating it in a controlled study.

The amazing thing is that faith in Christ depends on unique historical facts.

God's Message of HOPE is based on the facts of HISTORY - that Jesus really did rise from the grave - winning a victory over death.

Notes:

Why should anyone believe that Jesus is alive today - and that the resurrection is true?

* Myths develop over generations. There was only a short time (20-70 years) between the actual events and the writing of the New Testament. Most eye-witnesses were still alive when the New Testament was written.

* Historical research shows an almost instant belief that Jesus was alive. Scholars date an early statement of faith (1 Corinthians 15:3-9) to within 3-7 years of Jesus' resurrection.

* In a short time, many Jews who formerly worshiped God on the 7th day of the week (Saturday) became Christians who began to worship God on the 1st day (Sunday), the day of the resurrection.

* Many saw Jesus alive after he died. Once, 500+ people saw him at the same time.

* Many hope for a life beyond death that cannot be verified by history (rewards in paradise, reincarnation). Christians have lived and died for their claim that Jesus' grave was truly empty.

* The authorities were hostile to the teaching and ministry of Jesus. But they could not discredit the claim that he was alive. If they had produced Jesus' body, it would have stopped the Christian movement.

* The disciples did not expect the resurrection. In fear, they went into hiding. But within days, they were fearless to publicly claim that they had seen Jesus alive.

Discuss



1. Are there any words that you do not understand?
2. How do you react when you receive good news from home?
3. When was a time you told a true story to other people, and they found it hard to believe you?
4. How do you decide when to believe a story, when to wait for proof, or when to reject the story as false?
5. Look at Matthew 28:1-4. Describe the events at dawn on that first day of the week. How did the guards react to what happened? How did the women react?
6. In Matthew 28:5-7, what did the angels say to the women?
7. Look at verse 8? Who did the women see? How did they react? What are they told to do?
8. In verses 11-15, what do the guards report to the religious leaders? Why do the leaders bribe the guards? How could the leaders have proved that Jesus was not raised from the dead?
9. Look at John 20:19-20. How do the disciples feel? How do they act? Do they expect to see Jesus?
10. What does Jesus say, and what does Jesus do, when he appears?
11. What conditions did Thomas set before he will believe Jesus is alive?
12. What did Jesus say in verse 29 about "seeing" and "believing"? Since people do not "see" Jesus alive today, how can you believe?
13. Look at 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. What did the apostle Paul say is of "first importance"?
14. Look at verses 14-15. What happens to Christianity if the resurrection of Jesus is not really true?
15. What kind of hope does the resurrection of Christ offer to you? Could this be an offer too good for you to refuse?

Chapter Summary

Each week, one of the class leaders will sum up what was discussed in our groups. You can use this section for your notes.



Chapter Twelve

His Followers - Yesterday, Today, and Forever

Chapter Preview



Chapter 12 tells about the beginning of the Christian movement - the birth of the church. We have seen how Jesus was baptized and anointed by the Holy Spirit for his mission. Now, as Jesus promised, his followers are baptized and anointed by the same Holy Spirit for their mission. Jesus spread the good news of God's kingdom by words and deeds. Now, his followers spread the good news by words and deeds. The Holy Spirit comes at first with the miraculous gift of languages. God wants to spread this good news of HOPE into all the world - to every language, culture, and nation. Christ's honor will spread in all the world.



View Movie

Event Thirty-four: The Coming of the Spirit
Event Thirty-five: His Followers Through the Ages
His Invitation to You



Bible Study

JESUS PROMISES THE HOLY SPIRIT: John 20:19-22: ¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

WORLD-WIDE MISSION: Acts 1:7-8: ⁷ (Jesus) said: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: Acts 2:1-12, 22- 24, 36-39: ¹ When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

⁵ Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶ When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷ Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸ Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ⁹ Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome ¹¹ (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs — we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" ¹² Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?" ...

²² (The apostle Peter speaks and explains): "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. ²³ This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. ²⁴ But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him ...

³⁶ "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." ³⁷ When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

³⁸ Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call."

THE WORLD-WIDE HARVEST: Revelation 7:9-10: ⁹ I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Notes:

"PENTECOST" is a Hebrew festival that is 50 (the prefix is: "pente") days after the start of Passover. It is also called the "Feast of Harvest" or "Day of First-fruits."

This was 7 weeks after the end of the festival of Passover. Jesus, as God's Passover Lamb, had been sacrificed.

People could now hear "the wonderful deeds of God" in their own native languages.

Those who believed in Jesus on the Day of Pentecost were the "first-fruits" of the great Harvest of all the nations.

His Followers - Yesterday, Today, and Forever

Notes:

THE HOLY SPIRIT REVERSES THE DISEASE OF SIN.

In this Study Guide, (chapter 4, pages 6-7) we looked at the story of the Tower of Babel.

The peoples of the world disobeyed God. They did not go into all the world, as God had commanded them.

They built a city and a tower for two reasons: 1) To make a name for themselves, and 2) So that they would not be scattered.

So God confused their languages, scattering the nations. Without communication, there can be no community.

Notice how the gift of the Holy Spirit reverses the curse of Babel:

1) People now hear, in their own languages, the "wonders of God." God's kingdom is not an empire built for human pride and fame.

2) Jesus' disciples now scatter and go into the world, telling the good news, to gather all the nations around the throne of Jesus Christ.

Did you know that some alphabets were invented by Christians so cultures without a written language can read and hear God's Word? (Two examples are: the Vietnamese and Cyrillic - Russian - alphabets).

Discuss



1. Are there any words that you do not understand?
2. How long did it take for you to become fluent in your second or third language?
3. What was the best gift you have ever received? Why was it so good?
4. Look at John 20:19-22. Describe the way the disciples felt. What were they doing?
5. In verses 19-22, Jesus, risen from the dead, came into a locked room. What does Jesus say to his disciples? What does Jesus show them? Where does Jesus send them?
6. Jesus "breathed on them." (verse 22) Why is this significant? The class leader will explain more about this during the Chapter Summary.
7. Look at Acts 1:7-8. What are we unable to know? For what purpose does God send the Holy Spirit to followers of Jesus? How widely should the testimony (or the "witness") about Jesus Christ spread?
8. Acts 2 describes the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came. What were the physical evidences of the Holy Spirit's coming?
9. Look at Acts 2:4, 2:6, and 2:11. For what purpose were the disciples of Jesus given tongues of fire? What amazed the crowds?
10. In Acts 2:22-24, how did Peter explain what had happened to Jesus?
11. In Acts 2:38-39, what does Peter invited the people to do?
12. Revelation 7:9-10 is a vision of the end of time. Who is gathered around the throne of God? How many people are gathered there?
13. What are the multitudes of people saying? Who is "The Lamb?"
14. Would you like to receive the amazing gift of new life and the Holy Spirit today? You can pray to God for his grace to believe and to receive this gift. You don't want to miss it!

Chapter Summary



Each week, one of the class leaders will sum up what was discussed in our groups. You can use this section for your notes.