

# The **Bible** Unpacked

## **Intermediate Study Series**

The Bible's teaching summarized  
for growing believers

Paul Mallison



# **The Bible Unpacked<sup>TM</sup>**

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The Bible's teaching summarized  
for growing believers

### **Part C. God and the World: Jesus Christ**

Paul Mallison

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## A Quick Word

This series of studies aims to present a compilation of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order. There are eight booklets in the series, based on the eight parts of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Intermediate Edition*. Each booklet has five chapters, with two sections each. These ten sections can be used for ten or more studies.

See *Topics in This Series* towards the end of this booklet for a full listing of all the topics. Note that studying booklets alternatively from the two major sections (*What to Know* and *What to Do*) would add variety.

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who led the Israelites and taught them God's laws;
- David – Israel's greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets – who spoke to the people of Israel on God's behalf; and
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Much care has been taken in order to correctly interpret the verses. Nevertheless, if you encounter a verse that is used to teach something that is contrary to or goes beyond your understanding, assess its use by doing such things as: reading the passage it is from; and considering how its teaching fits in with Scripture as a whole (e.g. interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching).

For more information on *The Bible Unpacked* and free downloads, go to the website: [www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net).

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## Suggestions for Study Groups

### Preliminary matters:

- Beforehand the leader should: check the context of any verses they are not familiar with; and review the questions. If need be, they should compose questions more applicable to the group.
- Each person should have a Bible, for things such as checking a verse's context. It would also be helpful to have Bible commentaries on hand.
- Pray before beginning the study. Ask God for help in understanding the meaning of the verses and to affect your lives through them. Also pray together at the end.

### Doing the study:

- Ideally, read the material and answer the questions prior to the meeting. Then share answers and discuss any issues arising from the material in the meeting.
- Alternatively, read the material and answer the questions in the meeting – reading either aloud as a group or individually (prior to sharing answers). If reading as a group, **try having one person read the headings, another read the verses and another read the comments.** Additionally, a fourth person could read the Bible references.

### General or concluding questions:

If time permits, conclude with one or more of the following questions:

- What is something that you either: **did not know** before; gained **greater insight** into; or **needed reminding** of?
- What verse would be helpful to memorize and bear in mind during the next week?
- In taking the verses seriously, is there anything you should change in:
  - (a) how you relate to God and/or to other people; or
  - (b) any other area of your life (e.g. attitudes, values or behavior)?

If so, are there any specific steps you could take to do this?





# 11. God's Promised Messiah

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## I. The Messiah's Identity

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## I. The Messiah's Identity

The OT Scriptures speak of a leader chosen and sent by God to save his people and to reign forever. This leader is known as the "Christ" or the "Messiah" – which are Greek and Hebrew terms respectively, meaning the "anointed" or the "Anointed One". In NT times the Jews looked forward to the Messiah's coming and many still do today. But the NT provides compelling evidence that this Messiah was in fact Jesus Christ.

### The Promise of a Messiah in OT Scripture

#### The OT Scriptures speak of a coming anointed one of God

[THE ARCHANGEL GABRIEL, TO DANIEL:] So know and understand: From the issuing of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem *until an anointed one, a prince arrives*, there will be a period of seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. [DANIEL 9:25A NET](#)

Regarding the "weeks", many scholars understand the term to denote seven years.

#### The anointed one would have God's Spirit on him

[THE MESSIAH:] *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me* to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ... [ISAIAH 61:1 ESV](#)

These words are prophetically attributed to the Messiah.

#### The Scriptures speak of the coming of a great ruler of Israel

[GOD:] As for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, seemingly insignificant among the clans of Judah – *from you a king will emerge who will rule over Israel on my behalf, one whose origins are in the distant past.*

[MICAH 5:2 NET](#)

#### The ruler would bring salvation to the nations

[GOD, TO THE MESSIAH:] *I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.* [ISAIAH 49:6B ESV](#)

## **The ruler would be a descendant of King David, in accordance with God's promise to David**

*The LORD swore an oath to David. This is a truth he will not take back: "I will set one of your own descendants on your throne. ...<sup>17</sup>There I will make a horn sprout up for David. I will prepare a lamp for my anointed one. <sup>18</sup>I will clothe his enemies with shame, but the crown on my anointed one will shine." PSALMS 132:11, 17–18 GW*

The "horn" and "lamp" (v. 17) speak of the strength and continuation of David's dynasty, and would be embodied by the Messiah.

## **Prophecy of the Messiah's Death for Sins**

### **The OT Scriptures also say that he would suffer and die, for people's sins – but then be raised and exalted**

*He was wounded for our rebellious acts. He was crushed for our sins. He was punished so that we could have peace, and we received healing from his wounds. <sup>6</sup>We have all strayed like sheep. Each one of us has turned to go his own way, and the LORD has laid all our sins on him.*

ISAIAH 53:5–6 GW

*But it was the LORD who decided to crush him and make him suffer. The LORD made his life a penalty offering, but he will still see his descendants and live a long life. He will complete the things the LORD wants him to do. <sup>11</sup>"After his soul suffers many things, he will see life and be satisfied. My good servant will make many people right with God; he will carry away their sins. <sup>12</sup>For this reason I [God] will make him a great man among people, and he will share in all things with those who are strong. He willingly gave his life and was treated like a criminal. But he carried away the sins of many people and asked forgiveness for those who sinned." ISAIAH 53:10–12 NCV™*

These verses speak of God raising his messianic servant to life, following his death. The term "his descendants" (v. 10b) refers to the messianic servant's spiritual descendants – those who would be given life through him. Note that Isaiah 52:13–53:12 has been called "the gospel in the OT" and is quoted in the NT more than any other OT passage.

## Jesus Is the Promised Messiah

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In his first coming, Jesus Christ did not come as an all-conquering ruler. The NT indicates that this aspect of messianic prophecy will be fulfilled on Christ's second coming.

### Jesus Christ is the one chosen by God

[GOD:] *"This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him!"* LUKE 9:35B NET

### Jesus Christ is the one anointed by God, with the Holy Spirit . . .

[PETER:] You know that *God anointed Jesus from Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.* ACTS 10:38A GW

The descending of the Holy Spirit onto Jesus at his baptism (cf. Matthew 3:16–17) was God's anointing of Jesus for his mission. It is also understood to mark Jesus as the Messiah – the "Anointed One" – and fulfilled OT prophecies that God would bestow his Spirit on the Messiah (cf. Isaiah 11:2; 42:1; 61:1).

### . . . Jesus is the Messiah

[PETER, TO A CROWD OF LARGELY JEWS:] Therefore repent and turn back so that your sins may be wiped out, <sup>20</sup>so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and so that he may send *the Messiah appointed for you – that is, Jesus.* ACTS 3:19–20 NET

### The OT Scriptures testify to Jesus being the Messiah, the Christ

For with his strong arguments he [Apollos] defeated the Jews in public debates by *proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah.* ACTS 18:28 GNT

### For the OT Scriptures speak of the sufferings and resurrection of the Christ as fulfilled in Jesus . . .

Paul went to the Jews in the synagogue, as he customarily did, and on three Sabbath days *he addressed them from the scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and to rise from the dead, saying, "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."* ACTS 17:2–3 NET

## **. . . and they speak of the messianic salvation that would come through Jesus Christ**

[ZECHARIAH, SPEAKING OF WHAT GOD HAD DONE:] *He has raised up a mighty Savior for us in the family of his servant David.* <sup>79</sup>*He made this promise through his holy prophets long ago.* LUKE 1:69–70 GW

*About him [Christ] all the prophets testify, that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.* ACTS 10:43 NET

Luke 1:69–70 (above) refers to the messianic salvation prophesied in the writings of the prophets (v. 70) as coming through Jesus, who was from the family line of David (v. 69). Acts 10:43 (immediately above) states that the prophets testify that the forgiveness of sins, a key aspect of this salvation, comes through Jesus Christ.

## **Further Testimony to Jesus Being the Messiah**

### **Jesus' deeds showed that he is the Messiah, the Christ**

*Now Jesus performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not recorded in this book.* <sup>31</sup>*But these are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* JOHN 20:30–31 NET

### **People acknowledged him as the Christ**

*The crowds that went ahead of him [Jesus] and those following kept shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"* MATTHEW 21:9 NET

The crowd was acknowledging Jesus as the Christ, referring to him with messianic expressions in declaring him "the Son of David" and the one "who comes in the name of the Lord".

### **Note: The Christ is understood to be the Son of God**

Simon Peter answered, "You are *the Christ, the Son of the living God.*" MATTHEW 16:16 NET

The understanding that the Christ would be the Son of God appears to be largely based on OT messianic passages where God speaks of the Messiah as his Son (cf. 2 Samuel 7:11b–14a; Psalms 2:6–7; 89:27).

What elements of the gospel message are in the passages from Isaiah 53?

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Why is the assertion that Jesus Christ is the Messiah so significant to the Christian faith?

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What messianic prophecies does Jesus Christ fulfill? (Do not confine your answer to what is mentioned in this study.)

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How could you use Jesus Christ's fulfillment of messianic prophecies in testifying to other people about Jesus Christ?

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What do you find to be the most compelling evidence that Jesus Christ is the Messiah?

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## II. The Messiah's Purpose and Person

Arguably the fundamental assertion of the NT is that God sent the Messiah – Jesus Christ – into the world to save people from sin and its devastating consequences. For this mission, Jesus Christ was born of the Holy Spirit and became fully human – further assertions that are very significant to the Christian faith. In fulfilling the objectives of the mission, Jesus Christ lived a life which was faultless, with his character being both exemplary and inspiring. The following teaching shows the NT's testimony to these crucial matters.

### Jesus Christ's Mission from God

#### God sent Jesus Christ into the world

[JESUS, TO THE JEWS:] But I have a testimony greater than that from John. For *the deeds that the Father has assigned me to complete – the deeds I am now doing – testify about me that the Father has sent me.*

JOHN 5:36 NET

#### God sent Jesus Christ to take away sins . . .

You know that *Christ came to take away sins.* 1 JOHN 3:5A CEV

#### . . . As such, God sent Jesus Christ to save the world

For *God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him.* JOHN 3:17 NET

#### Jesus came to bring truth

[JESUS:] *For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world – to testify to the truth.* Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice. JOHN 18:37B NET

#### Jesus came to enable us to know God

And *we know that the Son of God has come and has given us insight to know him who is true, and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ.* 1 JOHN 5:20A NET

## Jesus Christ's Humanity

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### Jesus Christ became a human being

By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and concerning sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ... [ROMANS 8:3B NET](#)

God sent Jesus Christ "in a human body like ours" (NLT).

### Jesus was born – after being conceived through the Holy Spirit

*Now the birth of Jesus Christ happened this way. While his mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. ... <sup>22</sup>This all happened so that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet would be fulfilled: <sup>23</sup>"Look! The virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they will call him Emmanuel," which means "God with us."* [MATTHEW](#)

1:18, 22–23 NET

### Jesus was a descendant of David

Remember *Jesus Christ*, who was raised from death, *who was a descendant of David*, as is taught in the Good News I preach.

[2 TIMOTHY 2:8 GNT](#)

### Jesus' humanity was vital to his mission to save people

Therefore, *since the children share in flesh and blood, he [Jesus] likewise shared in their humanity, so that through death he could destroy the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil), <sup>15</sup>and set free those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death. ... <sup>17</sup>Therefore he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup>For since he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.* [HEBREWS 2:14–15, 17–18 NET](#)

Jesus needed to share in the humanity of God's people and become like them so as to be identified with them, in a sense being one with them. As such he could die as a substitute and an offering for them. Partaking of their humanity would also be important for him in his ongoing role in helping God's people, as indicated in v. 18 and possibly also in v. 17.



## Jesus Christ's Personality

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### Jesus was loving

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you; remain in my love.* JOHN 15:9 NET

### Jesus was compassionate

*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were bewildered and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.* MATTHEW 9:36 NET

### Jesus was gentle and humble

[JESUS:] *Take my yoke on you and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* MATTHEW 11:29 NET

### Jesus was righteous

*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, ...* 1 PETER 3:18A ESV

## Epilogue: God Works through Jesus Christ

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### God works in all eras through Jesus Christ, impacting all things everywhere

*But now in these last days God has spoken to us through his Son. God has chosen his Son to own all things, and through him he made the world.* HEBREWS 1:2 NCV™

*Through the Son, then, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself. God made peace through his Son's blood on the cross and so brought back to himself all things, both on earth and in heaven.* COLOSSIANS 1:20 GNT

### God fulfills his promises through Jesus Christ

*For all God's promises are "Yes" in him.* 2 CORINTHIANS 1:20A ISV

All God's promises are confirmed or "fulfilled" (NLT) in Jesus Christ.

What does the teaching that God sent Jesus - including the reasons for him doing so - show us about God?

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Why was it necessary for Jesus to become fully human?

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Why is the doctrine of the "virgin birth" important? What does it show about Jesus?

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Choose one of Jesus' personal characteristics that you need to work on imitating. (It does not need to be one listed in this section.) What is a situation where you could show more of this?

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What does the assertion that God works through Jesus Christ show about their relationship?

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# 12. Jesus Christ's Mission

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## I. God's Enablement of Jesus Christ

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## I. God’s Enablement of Jesus Christ

God enabled Jesus Christ to carry out his mission, empowering and directing him. Consequently what Jesus did and said showed that he had been sent and empowered by God. For without God no one could possibly have the extraordinary authority, power and knowledge that Jesus had.

### Jesus Christ’s Power from God

#### God granted Jesus sovereign authority

[JESUS:] *All things have been handed over to me by my Father.*  
MATTHEW 11:27A NET

For you [God] *have given him authority over all humanity* so that he might give eternal life to all those you gave him. JOHN 17:2 ISV

#### God bestowed the Holy Spirit on Jesus, for his mission . . .

After Jesus was baptized, just as he was coming up out of the water, *the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming on him.*<sup>17</sup> And a voice from heaven said, “This is my one dear Son; in him I take great delight.” MATTHEW 3:16–17 NET

As noted earlier, the descending of the Holy Spirit onto Jesus Christ at his baptism is understood to be God’s anointing of Jesus Christ for his mission (cf. Luke 4:18). As such, through the Holy Spirit God empowered Jesus in his mission.

#### . . . The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus in what he said and did

*The man [Jesus] whom God has sent speaks God’s message. After all, God gives him the Spirit without limit.* JOHN 3:34 GW

*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, and he went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with him.* ACTS 10:38 ISV

Presumably the power spoken of was due to the Holy Spirit, the power being given in conjunction with the Holy Spirit. This verse also appears to correlate Jesus having the Holy Spirit with God’s presence being with him.

## As such, Jesus did many miraculous deeds with God's power

*The power of the Lord was present for Jesus to heal the sick.* LUKE 5:17B GNT

One night Nicodemus came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, we know you are a teacher sent from God, because *no one can do the miracles you do unless God is with him.*" JOHN 3:2 NCV™

## Jesus Christ's Knowledge from God

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### God taught Jesus

[JESUS:] I do nothing on my own initiative, but *I speak just what the Father taught me.* JOHN 8:28B NET

[JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] But I have called you friends, because *I have revealed to you everything I heard from my Father.* JOHN 15:15B NET

Jesus taught his disciples everything he learned from God.

### Moreover, Jesus knew everything

[THE DISCIPLES, TO JESUS:] Now *we know that you know everything* and do not need anyone to ask you anything. Because of this we believe that you have come from God. JOHN 16:30 NET

The final statement arguably suggests that Jesus' knowledge of all things was due to God. Jesus' complete knowledge would appear to have been due to both God's teaching of him (as per the previous subsection) and God enabling him to know or perceive all things about people and everything else.

### Jesus was also filled with wisdom

And *the child* [Jesus] *grew and became strong, filled with wisdom,* and the favor of God was upon him. LUKE 2:40 NET

### Nobody could match Jesus' wisdom

[MEN TRYING TO TRICK JESUS:] Is it right for us to pay the tribute tax to Caesar or not?" <sup>23</sup>But *Jesus perceived their deceit and said to them,* <sup>24</sup>"*Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?*" They said, "*Caesar's.*" <sup>25</sup>So he said to them, "*Then give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.*" <sup>26</sup>Thus they

were unable in the presence of the people to trap him with his own words. And stunned by his answer, they fell silent. LUKE 20:22–26 NET

No one could answer him at all, and from that day on no one dared to ask him another question. MATTHEW 22:46 ISV

## Jesus Christ's Direction from God

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### God worked through Jesus . . .

[PETER:] Listen to these words, fellow-Israelites! Jesus of Nazareth was a man whose divine authority was clearly proven to you by *all the miracles and wonders which God performed through him*. You yourselves know this, for it happened here among you. ACTS 2:22 GNT

### . . . Jesus only did what God did

So Jesus answered them, “I tell you the solemn truth, *the Son can do nothing on his own initiative, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise*.” JOHN 5:19 NET

### Jesus carried out God's will, doing the work God had given him

Jesus said to them, “*My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to complete his work*.” JOHN 4:34 NET

In speaking of doing God's will as his “food”, Jesus indicated that it was his prime source of “nourishment” (AMP, NLT). Doing God's work was in a sense what sustained him and was his top priority.

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What is one situation where being more conscious of Jesus Christ's authority would help you? How would it influence you?

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Are there any aspects of God's empowerment of Jesus that have parallels to God's work through Christians?

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What bearing should Jesus Christ's knowledge and wisdom have on your relationship with him (e.g. in trusting him)?

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How or in what sense did God work through Jesus Christ?

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What is one major plan or goal that you have in life? To what degree is it based (as Jesus' life was) on God's will?

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## II. Christ's Ministry, Death and Resurrection

The life Jesus Christ lived has been unparalleled in word and deed. It culminated in his sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection by God. How we respond to the NT's testimony to these events and their significance, will determine our eternal destiny.

### Jesus Christ's Miracles

#### **Jesus performed miraculous deeds that greatly amazed people**

*People were completely astounded and said, "He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.* [MARK 7:37 NET](#)

#### **Jesus delivered people from disease and disorders . . .**

*People brought to him all who suffered with various illnesses and afflictions, those who had seizures, paralytics, and those possessed by demons, and he healed them.* [MATTHEW 4:24B NET](#)

#### **. . . Jesus even raised the dead**

And they began making fun of him, because *they knew that she was dead.* <sup>54</sup>*But Jesus gently took her by the hand and said, "Child, get up."* <sup>55</sup>*Her spirit returned, and she got up immediately.* [LUKE 8:53–55A NET](#)

#### **Jesus exercised control over nature, in helping people**

*Now a great windstorm developed and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was nearly swamped. ...* <sup>39</sup>*So he got up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Be quiet! Calm down!" Then the wind stopped, and it was dead calm.* [MARK 4:37, 39 NET](#)

[ANDREW, TO JESUS:] *Here is a boy who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what good are these for so many people?"* <sup>10</sup>Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." ... So the men sat down, *about five thousand in number.* <sup>11</sup>*Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed the bread to those who were seated. He then did the same with the fish, as much as they wanted.* [JOHN 6:9–11 NET](#)



## Jesus Christ's Teaching

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### Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God

Jesus went throughout all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, *preaching the gospel of the kingdom*, and healing all kinds of disease and sickness among the people. [MATTHEW 4:23](#) NET

The kingdom of God (or the kingdom of heaven) was the most prominent theme in Jesus' teaching.

### Jesus' teaching was from God

[JESUS:] *This teaching that you hear is not really mine; it is from my Father, who sent me.* [JOHN 14:24B](#) NCV™

### Jesus' teaching was amazing – leading people to believe in him

When the crowds heard this, *they were amazed at his teaching.* [MATTHEW 22:33](#) NET

And *many more believed because of the things he said.* <sup>42</sup>They said to the woman, "First we believed in Jesus because of your speech, but now we believe because we heard him ourselves. We know that this man really is the Savior of the world." [JOHN 4:41–42](#) NCV™

## Jesus Christ's Rejection and Death

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### Jesus faced intense opposition, with efforts to kill him

Now *because Jesus was doing these things* [miracles] *on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began persecuting him.* <sup>17</sup>So he told them, "My Father is working until now, and I too am working." <sup>18</sup>For this reason *the Jewish leaders were trying even harder to kill him*, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was also calling God his own Father, thus making himself equal with God. [JOHN 5:16–18](#) NET

### The unjust condemnation of Jesus – who was innocent

Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "*I find no basis for an accusation against this man.*" ... <sup>20</sup>Pilate addressed them once again *because he wanted to release Jesus.* <sup>21</sup>But they kept on shouting,

“Crucify, crucify him!” <sup>22</sup>A third time he said to them, “Why? What wrong has he done? I have found him guilty of no crime deserving death. I will therefore flog him and release him.” <sup>23</sup>But they were insistent, demanding with loud shouts that he be crucified. And their shouts prevailed. <sup>24</sup>So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. LUKE 23:4, 20–24 NET

### The horrific suffering and death of Jesus

Then he [Pilate] released Barabbas for them. But after he had Jesus flogged, he handed him over to be crucified. <sup>27</sup>Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the governor’s residence and gathered the whole cohort around him. <sup>28</sup>They stripped him and put a scarlet robe around him, <sup>29</sup>and after braiding a crown of thorns, they put it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand, and kneeling down before him, they mocked him: “Hail, king of the Jews!” <sup>30</sup>They spat on him and took the staff and struck him repeatedly on the head. <sup>31</sup>When they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. ... <sup>35</sup>When they had crucified him, they divided his clothes by throwing dice. ... <sup>39</sup>Those who passed by defamed him, shaking their heads <sup>40</sup>and saying, “You who can destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are God’s Son, come down from the cross!” ... <sup>45</sup>Now from noon until three, darkness came over all the land. <sup>46</sup>At about three o’clock Jesus shouted with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” ... <sup>50</sup>Then Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his spirit. MATTHEW 27:26–31, 35, 39–40, 45–46, 50 NET

In v. 46, Jesus’ cry (cf. Psalms 22:1) suggests that the intimate relationship between himself and God had in some way or sense been impaired.

### It was God’s will that Jesus die – for everyone

[PETER, TO A CROWD OF LARGELY JEWS:] In accordance with his own plan God had already decided that Jesus would be handed over to you; and you killed him by letting sinful men crucify him. ACTS 2:23 GNT

God didn’t spare his own Son but handed him over to death for all of us. ROMANS 8:32A GW

## Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Ascension

### God raised Jesus from the dead . . .

But *God raised him up, having released him from the pains of death, because it was not possible for him to be held in its power.* ACTS 2:24 NET

### . . . Jesus' body was not found in his tomb

[AN EARLY BELIEVER:] Furthermore, some women of our group amazed us. *They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup>and when they did not find his body, they came back and said they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. <sup>24</sup>Then some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him.* LUKE 24:22–24 NET

### Jesus appeared to people after his resurrection

*To the same apostles also, after his suffering, he presented himself alive with many convincing proofs. He was seen by them over a forty-day period and spoke about matters concerning the kingdom of God.* ACTS 1:3 NET

[PETER, TO A CROWD OF LARGELY JEWS:] *This Jesus God raised up, and we are all witnesses of it.* ACTS 2:32 NET

### Jesus was taken up to God in heaven

After he [Jesus] had said this, while they were watching, *he was lifted up and a cloud hid him from their sight. <sup>10</sup>As they were still staring into the sky while he was going, suddenly two men in white clothing stood near them <sup>11</sup>and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking up into the sky? This same Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come back in the same way you saw him go into heaven."* ACTS 1:9–11 NET

### Because he suffered death, God gave Jesus Christ great glory

*We see him now crowned with glory and honor because of the death he suffered.* HEBREWS 2:9B GNT

How is the power that Jesus displayed relevant to our lives today?

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What things about Jesus' life and teaching set him apart from other great teachers and their teaching?

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What did Jesus mean by saying that "the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matt 4:17)?

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Choose an aspect of Jesus' suffering and death that you find moving or particularly notable, and say why.

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What makes you think Jesus was raised from the dead? (The group could make a list of reasons which could be used in talking to someone who is skeptical about it.)

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# 13. Salvation through Jesus Christ

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## I. Salvation from Sin

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## I. Salvation from Sin

The teachings in this section are at the absolute heart of the NT and the gospel message. It is critical for anyone trying to comprehend the Christian faith to soundly understand them.

### Jesus Christ's Sacrifice for Us

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#### **Jesus gave himself to God, as a sacrifice for our sins**

Live a life of love just as *Christ loved us and gave himself for us as a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God.* [EPHESIANS 5:2](#) NCV™

*Jesus brought the sacrifice for the sins of the people once and for all when he sacrificed himself.* [HEBREWS 7:27B](#) GW

#### **So, Jesus Christ died for us**

But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that *while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* [ROMANS 5:8](#) NET

Christ gave his life as a substitute for our lives. He died in our place to pay the penalty for our sin, so that we would not have to pay it ourselves with everlasting death. Instead we can have everlasting life. This is life which extends beyond physical death. Note that as the Son of God, Christ's life is worth infinitely more than our lives; thus his death was an adequate sacrifice for any number of people.

### Atonement for Sin

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Biblical atonement is where God in his grace accepts an offering or sacrifice of a living being (i.e. its life) as a substitute for the life of a sinner – the person's life otherwise being required for their sin. As such, God accepts the sacrifice as payment for the person's sin. The result is that sin is taken away – and so the sinner is forgiven, pronounced righteous and reconciled to God. In conjunction with this, God's wrath – provoked by sin – is appeased.

In the OT, people who had sinned brought an animal as an offering of a life, for the priests to sacrifice on their behalf to make

atonement for them. Jesus Christ's offering or sacrifice of himself has a number of striking parallels with this OT practice. Furthermore, his death in fact fulfilled this requirement of the OT law once and for all, making such offerings no longer necessary. The atonement made by Jesus Christ's death is central to the Christian faith.

### **Jesus Christ's sacrifice means that our sins can be forgiven . . .**

[JESUS:] For *this is my blood of the new covenant that is being poured out for many people for the forgiveness of sins.* MATTHEW 26:28 ISV

But now, at the end of the ages, *he has appeared once for all to remove sin by his sacrifice.* <sup>27</sup>Indeed, just as people are appointed to die once and after that to be judged, <sup>28</sup>*so the Messiah was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people.* HEBREWS 9:26B–28A ISV

### **. . . and that we can therefore be righteous before God**

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Much more than, because *we have now been declared righteous by his blood,* we will be saved through him from God's wrath. ROMANS 5:9 NET

### **Consequently, through Jesus Christ's death we can be reconciled to God . . .**

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] You used to be far from God. Your thoughts made you his enemies, and you did evil things. <sup>22</sup>*But his Son became a human and died. So God made peace with you, and now he lets you stand in his presence as people who are holy and faultless and innocent.* COLOSSIANS 1:21–22 CEV

### **. . . and so through Jesus Christ we can have peace with God**

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, *we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.* ROMANS 5:1 ESV

### **Thus, Jesus Christ was the atoning sacrifice for sins, saving people from God's wrath**

*It is he who is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world's.* 1 JOHN 2:2 ISV

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] For *God did not destine us for wrath but for gaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 THESSALONIANS 5:9 NET

## Redemption from Sin

To “redeem” someone was to set them free by paying a ransom, a payment of comparable value. Such terminology was often used in NT times in reference to paying the price to free a slave. In the NT Scriptures it is applied to Jesus Christ redeeming or freeing believers from enslavement to sin by giving his life as a ransom.

### Jesus gave himself as a ransom for us, to free us from sin

For there is one God and one intermediary between God and humanity, *Christ Jesus, himself human, <sup>6</sup>who gave himself as a ransom for all*, revealing God’s purpose at his appointed time.

1 TIMOTHY 2:5–6 NET

[JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] To the one who loves us [Christ] and *has set us free from our sins at the cost of his own blood ...* REVELATION 1:5B NET

Christ redeems or frees people from enslavement to sin, through having given his life as a ransom for them (cf. 1 Timothy 2:5–6 ↑). This concept of redemption is complementary to that of atonement.

### Jesus Christ’s death sets us free from sin’s control

*He gave himself for us to set us free from every kind of lawlessness* and to purify for himself a people who are truly his, who are eager to do good. TITUS 2:14 NET

### God’s people have been bought by Jesus Christ’s death

They [heavenly beings] were singing a new song: “You [Christ] are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals because you were killed, and *at the cost of your own blood you have purchased for God persons from every tribe, language, people, and nation.* REVELATION 5:9 NET

An implication of believers being redeemed from sin by Jesus Christ’s death is that they have been bought for God – to whom they are now slaves (as the following subsection indicates).

### As such, they are free from sin and are now slaves to God

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] But now that *you have been freed from sin and have become God’s slaves*, the benefit you reap is sanctification, and the result is eternal life. ROMANS 6:22 ISV



## Jesus Christ's Resurrection and Salvation

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### Jesus Christ's resurrection has a key part in us being saved

[PETER, SPEAKING TO BELIEVERS AND MAKING REFERENCE TO BAPTISM:] It is not the washing away of bodily dirt, but the promise made to God from a good conscience. *It saves you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ...* 1 PETER 3:21 GNT

By what baptism symbolizes (as opposed to the act of baptism) we are saved by Jesus Christ's resurrection – the culmination of his saving work.

### Jesus Christ's resurrection was essential for our resurrection

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is useless; you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Furthermore, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. <sup>19</sup>For if only in this life we have hope in Christ, we should be pitied more than anyone. <sup>20</sup>But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup>For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also came through a man. <sup>22</sup>For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. <sup>23</sup>But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; then when Christ comes, those who belong to him.* 1 CORINTHIANS 15:17–23 NET

The "firstfruits" (vv. 20, 23) alludes to the firstfruits of the harvest which were offered to God. As well as preceding the rest of the harvest, they were seen as a confirmation that the rest would take place. Here the term is applied to Christ, as like the firstfruits of the harvest, his resurrection precedes and is an assurance of the resurrection of all believers.

Pray for the persecuted

The New Testament often refers to Jesus Christ's "blood". What is the significance of his "blood"?

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How does Jesus Christ's death make atonement for sin?

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Explain what the New Testament means by the term "righteousness". As part of your explanation, say how a person can become "righteous".

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In what way/s does Jesus Christ and his death free us from sin?

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Why is it so important that Jesus was raised from the dead? What would be the implications if he only died and did not rise from the dead?

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## II. Salvation for the World

Prior to Jesus Christ's mission, God dealt primarily with Israel, as his people. What Christ accomplished had great implications for all people – notably in making God's salvation, with eternal life, freely available to every person. An associated outcome is that people from all nations can readily become one of God's own people.

### The Savior of the World

#### God provides salvation through Jesus Christ . . .

*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.* JOHN 3:17 ESV

#### . . . Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world

[JOHN:] And we have seen and testify that *the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.* 1 JOHN 4:14 NET

#### We can only be saved through Jesus Christ

*Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us.* ACTS 4:12 GNT

*Jesus replied, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* JOHN 14:6 NET

The first statement may well mean that: Jesus is the way to the Father because he is the truth and the life. The second statement emphatically states that he is the only way to God, one implication of which is that Jesus is the only source of salvation.

### Life through Jesus Christ

#### Jesus Christ brings spiritual life

[JESUS:] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; *I have come so that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.* JOHN 10:10 NET

The "life" spoken of in the NT that Jesus Christ provides is spiritual life. It involves being "alive to God" (Rom 6:11), with God's Holy

Spirit indwelling us, renewing and nourishing us. With this, we have a spiritual consciousness that enables us to live in communion with and in dependence on God. This spiritual life is only attainable through Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished.

### **Through Jesus Christ we can have eternal life rather than death**

For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that *everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ...* <sup>36</sup>*The one who believes in the Son has eternal life. The one who rejects the Son will not see life, but God's wrath remains on him.* JOHN 3:16, 36 NET

Jesus said to her, *"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even if he dies, <sup>26</sup>and the one who lives and believes in me will never die.* Do you believe this?" JOHN 11:25–26 NET

Jesus is the one through whom resurrection and life come (v. 25a). Those who believe in him will live even though they die physically (v. 25b). At a spiritual level they will never die (v. 26a), but live eternally.

## **Salvation for the Gentiles through Jesus Christ**

In OT times it was firstly only the Israelites, then after the Babylonian captivity more specifically the Jews, who were "God's people" and knew of God's salvation. But through Jesus Christ's mission, God has made salvation open to the Gentiles.

### **Jesus Christ died for all people**

But we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, so *that through God's grace he should die for everyone.* HEBREWS 2:9A GNT

Salvation is now open to everyone who will accept it by repentance and faith (cf. *I. Getting Right with God*, Part E).

### **God has made the way of faith in Jesus open also to Gentiles**

*God puts people right through their faith in Jesus Christ. ...* <sup>30</sup>*God is one, and he will put the Jews right with himself on the basis of their faith, and will put the Gentiles right through their faith.* ROMANS 3:22A, 30 GNT

## Jesus Christ has made Jews and Gentiles one

*Jesus was going to die for the Jewish people, <sup>52</sup>and not only for them, but also to bring together into one body all the scattered people of God.* JOHN 11:51B–52 GNT

By dying for all people, Jesus has enabled both Jews and Gentiles to become part of the one people of God.

## Those who believe are the true, spiritual children of Abraham

The Scriptures say the same thing about Abraham: “*Abraham believed God, and God accepted Abraham’s faith, and that faith made him right with God.*” <sup>7</sup>*So you should know that the true children of Abraham are those who have faith.* GALATIANS 3:6–7 NCV™

## Epilogue: Jesus Christ’s Mission and Israel

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### Jesus Christ came foremost to Israel

*And so God chose his Servant and sent him first to you [the Jews], to bless you by making every one of you turn away from your wicked ways.* ACTS 3:26 GNT

### But the Jews largely rejected Jesus Christ

He came to what was his own, but *his own people did not receive him.* JOHN 1:11 NET

### So, God largely rejected the Jews and accepted the Gentiles

*But by their [the people of Israel’s] transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make Israel jealous. ... <sup>15</sup>For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?* ROMANS 11:11B, 15 NET

In v. 11, their “transgression” refers to the Jews’/Israel’s rejection of the gospel, God’s way of righteousness that is by faith in Christ.

### However, God has left a faithful remnant of Israel

*So in the same way at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.* ROMANS 11:5 NET

Explain what Jesus meant in saying: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

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How can simply believing in Jesus Christ bring eternal life?

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How can the death of just one person, Jesus Christ, make amends for the sins of all people?

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What is this "life" that people can have "abundantly" (John 10:10)?

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What is involved in becoming or being a child of Abraham?

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# 14. The New Order

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## I. Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role

In order to be righteous before God, the Israelites had to continually follow the law God had given through Moses, keeping all of its commands – something which they proved incapable of doing. But through Jesus Christ's life and death, God has provided a new way of righteousness, for all people – leading to salvation. As a result of this, the role of the law has been profoundly changed.

### Righteousness by Faith and Grace

#### The Mosaic Law cannot bring perfection

*The law of Moses could not make anything perfect.* [HEBREWS 7:19A](#) NCV™

#### We are not made righteous by obeying the law – but by faith in Jesus Christ

*For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his [God's] sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. <sup>21</sup>But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup>the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.*

[ROMANS 3:20–22A](#) ESV

God's way now for us to be made righteous before him is through having faith in Jesus Christ. This primarily involves believing Jesus Christ to be (with what he has accomplished) the means of righteousness – and accordingly trusting in him for one's own righteousness.

In conjunction with this, faith in Jesus Christ encompasses believing what the Bible says about: who he is; his death and resurrection; and the outcomes of his mission. This is discussed further in *I. Getting Right with God*, Part E.

#### As such, we are justified and made righteous by God's grace, through Jesus Christ – not by law . . .

*But they [people] are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* [ROMANS 3:24](#) NET



[PAUL:] *I do not set aside God's grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!* GALATIANS 2:21 NET

God's grace is his free and undeserved favor to people. By God's grace we are granted righteousness through Jesus Christ's death for us – as opposed to earning righteousness through obeying the law.

### **. . . We are saved by God's grace rather than by works**

*For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; <sup>9</sup>it is not from works, so that no one can boast.* EPHESIANS 2:8–9 NET

Here "works" refers to things done in attempting to work for or earn righteousness and salvation – particularly in trying to fulfill the law.

## **Release from the Law through Jesus Christ**

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### **Jesus Christ fully realized what the law had worked towards**

*For the law possesses a shadow of the good things to come but not the reality itself, and is therefore completely unable, by the same sacrifices offered continually, year after year, to perfect those who come to worship. ... <sup>10</sup>By his will we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* HEBREWS 10:1, 10 NET

The Mosaic Law had primarily worked toward the removal of sin and making God's people holy. But its work really only foreshadowed "the reality" (v. 1) that would be realized through Jesus Christ. For the law's sacrifices for sin were not sufficient to comprehensively deal with sin and make people perfect (v. 1). But with the sacrifice of himself, Jesus Christ fulfilled what the law with its sin offerings in effect pointed towards, by consummately removing sins (cf. v. 12) and making God's people holy (v. 10).

### **Through Christ believers have been released from the law**

*Thus the law had become our guardian until Christ, so that we could be declared righteous by faith. <sup>25</sup>But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.* GALATIANS 3:24–25 NET

The law was only ever to be the authority over God's people until Jesus Christ came, when faith would supersede it as the way for God's people to be righteous.

### **With Jesus Christ’s once and for all sacrifice, there is no longer any need to sacrifice for sin**

*Christ, however, offered one sacrifice for sins, an offering that is effective for ever, and then he sat down at the right-hand side of God. ...* <sup>17</sup>And then *he* [God] says, “*I will not remember their sins and evil deeds any longer.*” <sup>18</sup>*So when these have been forgiven, an offering to take away sins is no longer needed.* [HEBREWS 10:12, 17–18 GNT](#)

### **Instead of being under the law, believers are under grace**

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] For sin will have no mastery over you, because *you are not under law but under grace.* [ROMANS 6:14 NET](#)

Believers are not under the law but “under grace”. By grace righteousness and salvation are not only gained, as discussed earlier, but are also maintained. For in his grace God enables believers to live godly lives and continues to provide for forgiveness when they do sin. Accordingly, believers are to rely on God’s grace both in striving to please God and for forgiveness.

## **The Relevance of the Law**

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### **The main purpose of the law is to make people aware of sin**

For no one is declared righteous before him by the works of the law, for *through the law comes the knowledge of sin.* [ROMANS 3:20 NET](#)

### **The law’s spiritual and moral commands are still to be obeyed**

[JESUS:] I tell you the truth, *until heaven and earth pass away not the smallest letter or stroke of a letter will pass [away] from the law until everything takes place.* <sup>19</sup>*So anyone who breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever obeys them and teaches others to do so will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* [MATTHEW 5:18–19 NET](#)

The spiritual and moral commands of the law basically are the commands pertaining to the believer’s spiritual relationship with God and their relationships with people. Most likely here Jesus had these commands at least primarily in view, with a number of them being the subject of his subsequent teaching (cf. vv. 21–48).

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How does faith in Jesus Christ lead to righteousness?

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How would you explain God's grace to somebody who was not familiar with it?

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In what way did Jesus Christ realize or fulfill the law?

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In what sense have God's people been released from the Old Testament Law?

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How is the Old Testament Law relevant to Christians?

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## II. Key Elements of the New Order

Through Christ's mission God enhanced his relationship with his people and the world. Two defining aspects of this new order are God's new covenant with his own people and the kingdom of God.

As well as having instituted these two things in his mission, Jesus Christ continues to play a key role in both of them. Jesus Christ's role as high priest is arguably the central aspect of God's new covenant with his people. Jesus Christ's reign as Lord of all things involves reigning over the kingdom of God. Additionally, his reign extends to reigning over all things that are as yet to be subjugated to God's kingdom, which awaits consummation.

### God's New Covenant

#### **The first covenant (with its priesthood and law) was inadequate and superseded by the new covenant – through Christ**

*But now Jesus has obtained a superior ministry [to the priests' ministry], since the covenant that he mediates is also better [than the first covenant] and is enacted on better promises. <sup>7</sup>For if that first covenant had been faultless, no one would have looked for a second one. ... <sup>13</sup>When he [God] speaks of a new covenant, he makes the first obsolete. Now what is growing obsolete and aging is about to disappear.*

HEBREWS 8:6–7, 13 NET

The covenant which God made with Israel proved inadequate as Israel could not keep the covenant (by obeying its law) and consequently could not be righteous before God. But God has abolished the old covenant and introduced a superior new covenant – through Jesus Christ and his mission.

#### **Under the new covenant, God's people: have God's laws in them; know him; and are forgiven**

*"For this is the covenant that I will establish with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and I will inscribe them on their hearts. And I will be their God and they will be my people. <sup>11</sup>And there will be no need at all for each one to*

*teach his countryman or each one to teach his brother saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ since they will all know me, from the least to the greatest.* <sup>12</sup>*“For I will be merciful toward their evil deeds, and their sins I will remember no longer.”* [HEBREWS 8:10–12 NET](#)

Under the new covenant God’s laws have become internal principles (v. 10), not just commands from an external source. Moreover, God’s people know him and their sins are truly forgiven (v. 11–12). Bear in mind that the reference to “the house of Israel” (v. 10) is applicable to the new people of God, inclusive of Gentiles.

## Jesus Christ as High Priest

### Jesus Christ is the high priest of God’s people – representing them before God in the superior heavenly sanctuary

[THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] *We have such a high priest, one who sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, <sup>2</sup>a minister in the sanctuary and the true tabernacle that the Lord, not man, set up.* [HEBREWS 8:1B–2 NET](#)

In the replacement of God’s old covenant with Israel by God’s new covenant with all who are now his people, the priesthood of the old covenant has been replaced by Christ’s superior priesthood.

### Jesus Christ sacrificed for sin once and for all

But when *this priest had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time*, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup>where he is now waiting until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet. <sup>14</sup>*For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are made holy.* [HEBREWS 10:12–14 NET](#)

### Jesus Christ intercedes for God’s people

[JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] I am writing this to you, my children, so that you will not sin; but *if anyone does sin, we have someone who pleads with the Father on our behalf—Jesus Christ, the righteous one.* [1 JOHN 2:1 GNT](#)

In his ongoing priestly ministry for God’s people, Christ continues to intercede before God for them, speaking to God on their behalf.

## The Kingdom of God

NT teaching on the kingdom of God (or of heaven) follows on from OT teaching on God's reign (cf. 7. *God's Sovereignty*, Part B). It indicates that Christ's coming inaugurated a more far-reaching, spiritual dimension of God's reign. Its domain is in the hearts and minds of those who submit to God. This kingdom also has both a present and future dimension – existing now, but only being fully consummated at the end of the age. Then God's authority will be fully imposed in all spheres of existence – once and for all.

### The kingdom of God came in Jesus Christ's mission

Now after John was imprisoned, Jesus went into Galilee and proclaimed the gospel of God. <sup>15</sup>*He said, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the gospel!"* MARK 1:14–15 NET

With Jesus' mission, the time had come for the kingdom of God to "come near" (NRSV).

### The kingdom of God is spiritual in its nature

[JESUS:] *"The Kingdom of God does not come in such a way as to be seen. <sup>21</sup>No one will say, 'Look, here it is!' or, 'There it is!'; because the Kingdom of God is within you."* LUKE 17:20B–21 GNT

The final clause of v. 21 probably means that God's kingdom is within the hearts of its people (cf. CEV text note), indicative of its spiritual nature.

### The kingdom of God is dynamic

He [Jesus] also said, *"The kingdom of God is like someone who spreads seed on the ground. <sup>27</sup>He goes to sleep and gets up, night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. <sup>28</sup>By itself the soil produces a crop, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. <sup>29</sup>And when the grain is ripe, he sends in the sickle because the harvest has come."* MARK 4:26–29 NET

The growth of God's kingdom illustrates its dynamism and power. "By itself" (v. 28) indicates that the growth of the kingdom is not brought about simply by human effort. Rather it is in a way that is in fact beyond human comprehension (v. 27b).

## Jesus Christ as Lord of All

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God has made Jesus Christ Lord of all things, to rule over all creation on God's behalf.

The NT speaks of Jesus Christ's lordship as being initiated or affirmed, in him being pronounced Lord of all upon his post-resurrection exaltation to God's right hand. However, note that some verses suggest that in some sense at least he was Lord of all things prior to this, speaking of his prior power or authority over all things.

### God has made Jesus Christ Lord of all

You know the message he [God] sent to the people of Israel, proclaiming the Good News of peace through *Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all*. [ACTS 10:36](#) GNT

As a result [of Jesus being obedient and dying] *God exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow – in heaven and on earth and under the earth – <sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father*. [PHILIPPIANS 2:9–11](#) NET

Note that vv. 10–11 above speak of all people in the future acknowledging Jesus Christ's status as Lord, which itself is a current reality.

### God has given Jesus Christ power over all things

*Jesus knew that the Father had given him power over everything and that he had come from God and was going back to God.* [JOHN 13:3](#) NCV™

### In the end, all Jesus Christ's enemies will be made his footstool – totally conquered

But when this priest [Christ] had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup>where *he is now waiting until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet*. [HEBREWS 10:12–13](#) NET

What is the new covenant that God introduced through Jesus Christ?

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How is the new covenant better than the old covenant?

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What does Jesus Christ do in his role as high priest? How is this encouraging for you?

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Explain what the kingdom of God involves.

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How or to what degree do you think Jesus Christ asserts his sovereign authority today?

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# 15. 'The Last Things'

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## I. Christ's Return and the Final Judgment

The history of the world as we know it will culminate in Jesus Christ's dramatic and awesome return. Associated with this is God's final judgment of all people, through Jesus Christ, in which the eternal destiny of each person will be pronounced.

Note that further events of the end times are discussed in *I. The Persecution of God's People*, Part H. Although they are events that precede Christ's second coming, they are still an aspect of the biblical teachings that are often referred to as 'The Last Things'.

### The Timing of Jesus Christ's Return

#### Jesus Christ will return at an unexpected time, while people are living as usual

You know very well that *the day the Lord comes again will be a surprise, like a thief that comes in the night.* 1 THESSALONIANS 5:2 NCV™

*No one knows when that day or hour will come—not the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father,<sup>37</sup> because just as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be when the Son of Man comes.<sup>38</sup> In those days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage right up to the day when Noah went into the ark.<sup>39</sup> They were unaware of what was happening until the flood came and swept all of them away. That's how it will be when the Son of Man comes.* MATTHEW 24:36–39 ISV

#### Jesus Christ's return will be preceded by distressful events

*And when you hear of wars and rebellions, do not be afraid. For these things must happen first, but the end will not come at once.”<sup>10</sup> Then he [Jesus] said to them, “Nation will rise up in arms against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.<sup>11</sup> There will be great earthquakes, and famines and plagues in various places, and there will be terrifying sights and great signs from heaven.* LUKE 21:9–11 NET

*For that day will not arrive until the rebellion comes and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.<sup>4</sup> He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, and as a result*

*he takes his seat in God's temple, displaying himself as God.*

2 THESSALONIANS 2:3B–4 NET

This "man of lawlessness" (v. 3) appears to be a final antichrist, (cf. Revelation 13), instigating momentous "rebellion" (v. 3) against God.

### **Awesome cosmic events will occur just prior to Christ's return**

Immediately after the suffering of those days, *the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken.* <sup>30</sup>*Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn.* MATTHEW 24:29–30A NET

## **Jesus Christ's Return**

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### **Jesus Christ will return with his angels**

He will do this *when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven with his mighty angels, ...* 2 THESSALONIANS 1:7B GNT

### **Jesus Christ will come in great glory**

Then *they* [people] *will see the Son of Man arriving in a cloud with power and great glory.* LUKE 21:27 NET

### **On Jesus Christ's return his followers will be gathered to him**

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.* <sup>17</sup>*Then we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord.* 1 THESSALONIANS 4:16–17 NET

### **On Jesus Christ's return evil powers will be crushed**

But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; then *when Christ comes, those who belong to him.* <sup>24</sup>*Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when he has brought to an end all rule and all authority and power.* <sup>25</sup>*For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.* 1 CORINTHIANS 15:23–25 NET

## The Final Judgment (I): Its Scope and Outcomes

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### God will judge every person, for all they have done

For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. ROMANS 14:10B NET

But remember that God will judge you for everything you do.

ECCLESIASTES 11:9B NCV™

### The dead will rise to be judged, and either rewarded with eternal life or be condemned

Many of those who sleep in the dusty ground will awake – some to everlasting life, and others to shame and everlasting abhorrence.

DANIEL 12:2 NET

## The Final Judgment (II): The Process

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### God will judge all people through Jesus Christ

[PAUL:] God will judge the secrets of human hearts, according to my gospel through Christ Jesus. ROMANS 2:16B NET

### On his return, Jesus Christ will judge and reward all people according to what they have done

For the Son of Man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.

MATTHEW 16:27 NET

### Those who have believed in Christ will have eternal life . . .

But these [miracles of Jesus] are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. JOHN 20:31 NET

### . . . Those who have rejected Christ will be condemned

But those who don't believe are already condemned because they don't believe in God's only Son. JOHN 3:18B GW

This and the above subsections show that people will be judged according to their deeds and their response to Jesus Christ.

## What people have known will be taken into account

*For all who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.* ROMANS 2:12 NET

Gentiles without knowledge of the Mosaic Law, by nature have a grasp of its requirements (cf. vv. 14–15) and will be judged as such (v. 12a). Those who know the law have a clearer understanding of what God requires, and so they will be judged more strictly (v. 12b).

## The Millennium

### The prophecy of a thousand year reign of Jesus Christ

*They [believers who had been martyred] came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.<sup>5</sup> (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were finished.) This is the first resurrection.*

REVELATION 20:4B–5 NET

Revelation 20:1–6 is critical to the concept of “The Millennium”. Each of verses 2–6 refers to a thousand year period – a millennium. This millennium is also arguably referred to by numerous OT passages (cf. *II. God's Plans for Israel*, Part D) and possibly a few other NT ones.

The two most popular interpretations of this “Millennium” today are the Amillennialist and Premillennialist viewpoints. Amillennialists view the reign of deceased believers with Christ (cf. Revelation 20:4b ↑) to refer to a present reign in heaven. They see this reign as having been introduced by Jesus Christ's first coming, with him being pronounced Lord of all. They believe that Jesus Christ will return, and then the general resurrection will occur, followed by the final judgment. Following this would be the reign of Jesus Christ over the new earth in the afterlife.

Premillennialists believe that Christ's return will be followed by a first resurrection of believers, who will reign with Christ in a literal thousand-year rule of righteousness on earth. This would then be followed by the final resurrection and then the final judgment.

Are there any signs in the world today that Jesus Christ's return may be drawing near?

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How does the teaching about Christ's return motivate and encourage you?

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What do you find most challenging about the Bible's teaching on the final judgment, either in relation to yourself or to other people?

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What factors will be taken into account when each person is judged?

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What is your understanding of "the millennium"? Is there one of the common views that you think is most likely correct?

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## II. The Afterlife

The believer's hope is largely based on God's wonderful promises for his people in the afterlife, the life begun by their resurrection. At the center of these promises is the final, everlasting phase of God's relationship with his people. In contrast to these promises are the teachings about the horrific eternity that the ungodly face.

### The New Creation

#### The present heavens and earth will pass away

[JESUS:] *Heaven and earth will pass away ...* MATTHEW 24:35A NET

#### God will create new heavens and a new earth

[PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] But, according to his [God's] promise, *we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness truly resides.* 2 PETER 3:13 NET

#### God's people will live in the new Jerusalem

[JOHN, DESCRIBING A VISION:] *Then I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, dressed like a bride ready for her husband. ...* <sup>27</sup>*Nothing unclean, no one who does anything detestable, and no liars will ever enter it. Only those whose names are written in the lamb's Book of Life will enter it.* REVELATION 21:2, 27 GW

### Eternal Life

#### As God raised Christ from the dead, God will raise his people

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *Now God indeed raised the Lord and he will raise us by his power.* 1 CORINTHIANS 6:14 NET

#### On Christ's return, their bodies will be made imperishable, glorious and spiritual – like Christ

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] It is the same *with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown* [one's natural body] *is perishable, what is raised is*

*imperishable.* <sup>43</sup>*It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;* <sup>44</sup>*it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. ...* <sup>49</sup>*And just as we have borne the image of the man of dust [Adam], let us also bear the image of the man of heaven [Christ].*  
 1 CORINTHIANS 15:42–44, 49 NET

### **As such, God’s people will be given eternal life**

[JUDE, TO BELIEVERS:] Keep yourselves in God’s love as you *wait for the Lord Jesus Christ with his mercy to give you life forever.* JUDE 1:21 NCV™

## **The Heavenly State of God’s People**

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### **God’s people will enter the kingdom of God**

[PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] All of this shows that God judges fairly and that *he is making you fit to share in his kingdom* for which you are suffering. 2 THESSALONIANS 1:5 CEV

### **God’s people will be made perfect**

[PAUL:] Not that I have already attained this – that is, *I have not already been perfected* – but I strive to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus also laid hold of me. PHILIPPIANS 3:12 NET

Paul implies that believers will be made perfect.

### **God’s people will have glory**

[PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] I make this appeal as a spiritual leader who also witnessed Christ’s sufferings and *will share in the glory that will be revealed.* 1 PETER 5:1B GW

### **God’s people will have great joy**

[JUDE, TO BELIEVERS:] Now to him [God] who is able to keep you from stumbling and *to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, ...* JUDE 1:24 ESV



## Being with God

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### God's people will be with God and Jesus Christ forever

[JOHN, DESCRIBING A VISION:] *Now God's presence is with people, and he will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them and will be their God.* REVELATION 21:3B NCV™

And so we [believers] *will always be with the Lord.* 1 THESSALONIANS 4:17B NET

### God's people will see God

*They will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads.* REVELATION 22:4 NCV™

### God's people will praise God . . .

[JOHN, DESCRIBING A VISION OF BELIEVERS IN HEAVEN:] *Then I heard what seemed to be a large crowd that sounded like a roaring flood and loud thunder all mixed together. They were saying, "Praise the Lord! Our Lord God All-Powerful now rules as king.* REVELATION 19:6 CEV

Presumably such praise of God will continue throughout eternity.

### . . . and God's people will serve God

[JOHN, SPEAKING OF BELIEVERS IN HEAVEN:] *For this reason they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple, and the one seated on the throne will shelter them.* REVELATION 7:15 NET

## The Punishment for the Ungodly

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### The ungodly will be separated from God and Jesus Christ

[JESUS:] *Then I will declare to them [who do not do God's will], 'I never knew you. Go away from me, you lawbreakers!'* MATTHEW 7:23 NET

### The ungodly will be thrown into fire

[JOHN, DESCRIBING A VISION:] *This is the second death – the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup>If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, that person was thrown into the lake of fire.* REVELATION 20:14B–15 NET

Do you think much about eternity? What do you think it will involve for you?

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List three ways in which the new creation will be better than the old. (You do not need to limit your answer to only what is mentioned in the above verses.)

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What do you think that the “glory” that God’s people will have will involve?

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What does the prospect of living with and seeing God mean to you?

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Have you become somewhat indifferent to the teaching about hell? How should we respond to it (e.g. in regard to ourselves or to others)?

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## Topics in This Series

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  - II. God's Pre-Eminence
- 2. God's Character**
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- 3. Jesus Christ**
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- 5. Angels, Satan and Demons**
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*Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.'* Matthew 25:40 NCV



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