

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT

JESUS

SAVIOR | LORD | TREASURE

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A Bible study designed to equip the understanding of men and women of God for the purpose of honoring Jesus Christ to the fullest.

Prepared for individual or group study by Links Players International, a ministry desiring to see people of influence in the kingdom of the world transformed by Christ that they may become people of impact in the kingdom of God.

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The lessons in this study are written without specific concern for the length of time applied to each. Some groups may find that one lesson spreads over several sessions of study and discussion.



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INTRODUCTION TO THIS STUDY

I am so pleased that this particular Links Players Bible study came as the direct result of teaching in one of our local Links Fellowships. Often the writing comes first, then the study and response of our Fellowship participants around the country. This time, however, as I taught these lessons audibly, I could see the positive eye contact and hear the interested questions. This was a study that was resonating with the men and women involved. So I have moved it over to a written format, allowing you to study individually or with a group.

“Jesus is my personal Lord and Savior.” This common expression provided the catalyst for this study. For when we are dealing with common expression, we risk falling into (a) using it tritely, and (b) assuming we know what others mean when they use the expression. The sure way to prevent this from happening is to break down the expression, considering each of its words and restoring their depth in our own hearts and minds. You will find, then, that this study guides you through the consideration of four significant words:

- *Personal.* Is it true that Jesus’ saving work was meant for us personally? If so, how deeply does this touch us? Also, is there a universal aspect to His salvation, whereby it is available to anyone who would receive it?
- *Savior.* How do we know we need saving? What makes Jesus the right person for the job? What does He offer to save us unto?
- *Lord.* The Bible uses the expression “Lord” in more ways than one—do all of these apply to Jesus? What does it mean to serve Him as our Lord?
- *Treasure.* At the urging of other teachers, we have at Links Players long included the expression “treasure” in describing our connection to Jesus. What does it mean that Jesus is our treasure? How does that affect the way we interact with Him and those around us?

In some ways, then, this study is foundational. It covers some basic biblical teaching on the nature of Jesus and our relationship with Him. However, because many followers of Jesus have picked up these expressions from other believers, they have never had the chance to consider them in depth and gain an enriched understanding of what the words mean and how remarkable Jesus’ work in us really is. It is my prayer that you will be able to see Jesus richly through these several lessons and that the relationship you enjoy with Him will be greatly advanced by what you learn here.

–Jeff Hopper
Links Players International

ARE WE REALLY TALKING ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS?

A common thread at workshops of Christian teachers in recent years has been to encourage the elimination of the word *relationship* in our communication about how we are connected to Jesus. The reason is singular: the idea of relationships scares men! This may well be true, especially if we start attaching adjectives like *meaningful* or *personal* to it. If you're a guy, visions of chick flicks just started running through your head.

But here's the trouble. Try to find a better word. *Connection* works in some ways, and we'll use it some in this study, but it really is no better. *Association* sounds too clinical, with little potential for depth, and *kinship* sounds quaint, like something out of *Anne of Green Gables*. So you'll often hear people settle on *relationship*, saying things like, "It's not a religion, it's a relationship," and "I have a personal relationship with Jesus."

Probably, then, it would be helpful to make yourself comfortable with the dreaded word. If we say we are *related* to someone, that doesn't normally bother us. When we have had a common experience with someone, we say we can *relate*. Those words are in the same ballpark, so we'll go with it when it comes to *relationship*, proving to those workshop leaders that we can handle it. After all, we're men. Well, some of us are. The women could have skipped this whole discussion. You already get it!

THE 'PERSONAL' SAVIOR

So if someone comes to you and says they have a "personal relationship with Jesus" or that Jesus is their "personal Savior," just what do you think that means? Take a moment to write your initial reaction, now that you have a minute to think about it.

In many ways, religion as a personal matter is still highly regarded in all parts of the world, even where people of faith are marginalized. "As long as you keep it to yourself," the company line goes, "we have no problem with it." We might even suggest that keeping it to itself is what is meant when people say they have a personal relationship with Jesus. But the Bible never really speaks of or models a private faith. People interact. The things that comprise them are going to rub up against one another, even causing tension. Religious belief is one of those things. So where do we draw the line—how much of our faith, if any of it, is personal? Let's look at some Bible passages to give us some insight.

DOES THE BIBLE TEACH A ‘PRIVATE’ SAVIOR?

If we tell others that we have a “personal” relationship with Jesus, we could mean any one of several things in the ears of our hearers:

- He is for me only (and maybe a few others, but not for all people)
- The relationship is a private matter between the two of us
- He is a figment of my personal design, my own “creation”
- I know Him in a personal way, the same as I do many other people in my life

Which, if any, of these meanings line up with Scripture? Let’s take a look.

Read John 1:12-13, John 3:16, Romans 11:25-32, and 2 Peter 3:9

Do these passages express a particular bent in helping us understand whether Jesus came for one individual here and there or for all people? How do these passages help us understand the personal aspect of what God was and is trying to do on behalf of people?

Read Matthew 5:14-16, Matthew 28:18-20, and Romans 10:14-15

Do these passages suggest a private faith in Jesus or a public one? How might one blend the “personal” things that Jesus has done for them with the impetus in these passages to be open with our lives in Him?

There is a strong suggestion, then, from Scripture that Jesus came to do His saving work on behalf of far more than one person over here and another over there. We cannot make a case from the Bible that *personal* is akin to *private* when it comes to our faith. However, there are many evidences of God’s interacting personally with His people. We turn to those pages as we go forward.

DOES THE BIBLE TEACH A 'PERSONAL' SAVIOR?

Certainly, you would describe your marriage—and many of your friendships—as being personal in nature. That is, they have a level of closeness or intimacy that goes beyond incidental interaction or surface conversation. In the same way, the Bible allows for a personal connection between God and individual people.

Read Genesis 3:6-13, Genesis 32:22-32, Exodus 3:1-4:17, and 1 Samuel 3:1-18

How do these passages demonstrate God's personal interaction with individual people? What portions of these conversations especially catch your attention? Do you think it is possible that God still interacts personally with people today?

Read Matthew 1:22-23, John 11:32-36, and John 19:25-27

How do these passages reveal the personal nature of Jesus and His interaction with people? What other incidents in the Gospels are you aware of that show Jesus' personal concern for individuals?

Read Acts 9:1-18

This passage reveals two powerful aspects of Jesus' mode of interaction with us through His Holy Spirit. First, He knows us individually, including our sins and our strengths. Second, He desires to make us new in Him. In what ways would you say this description of Jesus' work in a person fits your relationship with Him?

DEFINITELY PERSONAL

As we reach conclusions in this first lesson, we may state that while Jesus' salvation is not personal in the "exclusive" sense of the word, He is Himself definitely personal in the "involved" sense of the word. Our Savior knows us and wants to know us better. With that in mind, examine these statements (and accompanying Scripture passages) and make any notes that help you connect better with what is said.

I am able to relate to Jesus one-to-one and not only through human liaisons (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

I am personally responsible for my interaction with Jesus (John 21:20-23).

Jesus reaches out to me, saves me, and cultivates a life with me as an individual in the midst of a crowd (Luke 19:1-10).

I individually allow Jesus to invade and change "my person" (Acts 10:1-48).

While Jesus works through His body, the church, I am also individually a conduit of His Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:20-21).

Followers of Jesus relate to God personally in these ways: as children with a father (Matthew 7:11, Ephesians 5:1, 1 John 3:1), and as a bride to a bridegroom (John 3:27-30, Ephesians 5:25-27). These descriptions bear both analogous and actual aspects.

God knows who I am uniquely, cares for my individual circumstances, and does things that have a personal effect on me and on those close to me (Matthew 6:25-34).

‘ARE YOU SAVED?’

The idea of salvation, like many other big ideas in our world, commonly exists at two levels. There is the weighty theological concept, discussed and debated at a level accessed by many but completely understood by virtually no one. And then there is the caricature, where a zealous “Jesus freak” type walks up to a virtual stranger and drops the world’s most loaded question: “Brother, are you saved?” Even when we recognize our through-and-through need to be rescued from the many consequences of our sin, we’re not sure what to do with the whole concept of salvation. It seems so *religious*.

But when Jesus enters the picture, we are able to lay hold of salvation in a more familiar way. All of us have identified with heroes in our lives, whether fictionalized men and women of gallantry or modern on-the-scene champions, like rescue and medical workers in a time of acute crisis such as an act of terrorism or a natural disaster. Along these lines, Jesus as Savior can be grasped as “the hero of our soul,” the One whose life and death purchased a forgiveness we could not earn on our own, as well as access to the presence of God, both now and into eternity.

With this grand idea in mind, then, we will take time in this lesson to evaluate the Bible’s teaching on our need for a Savior, the Savior Himself, and the results of His saving work.

To begin the conversation, consider the following question: How do you know you need a Savior? Why do you think Jesus is qualified for this work?

A KEY PASSAGE

While Scripture speaks of salvation in many places, as we will study, an essential passage comes from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. Look:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:1-10, NIV)

This passage demonstrates the flow of our lesson, which emphasizes that we are both saved *from* (or *out of*) a particular condition and saved *unto* a particular condition. We move from one way of living into a new way of living. But we do not make the move by ourselves; we make it only through the work of “the one mediator between God and mankind, the man Jesus Christ” (1 Timothy 2:5). So let’s now begin our deeper investigation by considering what we are saved *from*.

WHAT WE ARE SAVED FROM

Read and consider the following passages of Scripture, answering the accompanying questions.

Galatians 4:1-5

To what does this passage say we are enslaved? _____

How does this kind of slavery show itself in the life of a person living apart from Jesus?

Romans 8:1-8

What law held us under its thumb before Christ’s rescue? _____

What two opposing lives are presented in this passage?

What are indicators of the grip of the sinful nature over us apart from Jesus?

Romans 6:23 and Hebrews 9:27-28

What is the end result of sin for all people? _____

What entirely different outcome is offered through Jesus’ provision of salvation? How does this hope inspire you in your own walk with Christ?

Jude 1:12-13

What kind of life do the pictures in this passage depict?

Note: Many times Christians will suggest that those without Christ live a purposeless life. While this may be true in an eternal sense, an unsaved person rarely perceives his own life this way. And indeed, many people—believers and non-believers alike—choose paths of exceptional earthly purpose: educational study, foster care, benevolence work, family. All of these help society greatly, so we will normally create contention if we try to convince a non-Christian friend that his life is “without purpose.” However, if we talk openly about the difference between eternal hope and temporal existence, our friend may be moved in his own thinking to desire a lasting pursuit in this life (i.e., “storing up treasures in heaven”).

BACKTRACK

In summary, we are saved from:

1. Slavery to sin
2. The law of sin and death
3. Physical and eternal death as the consequences of our sin
4. Life without lasting purpose

With this list in mind, how would describe your own life before salvation? How does this increase your gratefulness to Jesus for the salvation He provides?

HOW SALVATION WAS AND IS ENACTED

The essence of salvation is found in Paul's words to the Corinthians: "You were bought at a price" (1 Corinthians 6:20). That is, Jesus, though perfect, went to the cross and died an unjust, insulting and torturous death in order for us to be saved. In this section, we will look more closely at the Scriptures that preceded, included, and emerged from the cross where we were "bought."

Salvation Preceded

The Old Testament includes innumerable prophecies pointing to the coming of the Jewish Messiah, or Savior, of the people. We say "innumerable" because, though scholars agree that there are hundreds of such prophecies, they do not all pin the "Messianic prophecy" label on the exact same verses throughout the Old Testament. These prophecies are important in understanding the flow of Scripture's salvation story, because as God spoke through the prophet Amos, "Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan through his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). Moreover, the apostle Paul made common practice of convincing his fellow Jews from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus was the Promised One. Let's take some time, then, to explore a few of these meaningful precursors to the coming of Jesus for the purpose of our salvation.

Read Genesis 3:15

How do these words of God, spoken just after the first sin of Adam and Eve, point to a way of salvation? (For clarity, you may cross-check this passage with Galatians 4:4.)

Read Psalm 22:1-8

What words in this Psalm, written roughly 800 years before Jesus, were spoken at the cross at the time of His crucifixion? (May be cross-checked with Matthew 27:32-46.)

Read Isaiah 52:13-53:12

List phrases from this extended passage that describe the details and act of Jesus' death.

Read Isaiah 61:1-3, a passage Jesus chose to read in description of His own ministry, as recorded in Luke 4:16-21.

In what ways does this specific passage refer to one who would save those in need?

While these four prophetic passages represent only a small portion of those Old Testament Scriptures that point to the coming of the Messiah, they capture the essence of what Jesus' life was meant to do. Other passages point in even greater detail to the authenticity of Jesus as the One, for they note that He would be born in Bethlehem, born of a virgin, enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey, be sold for thirty pieces of silver, and more.

Some have tried to make the case that Jesus, knowing the Scriptures, could have taken it upon Himself to fulfill them, as one would complete a checklist of life goals. However, because a number of the prophecies were outside of any human being's personal control (place of birth, mother's purity, price of betrayal, etc.), such a claim is without merit. Others have claimed that the New and Old Testament Scriptures were written "in cahoots" with one another at a later date. This argument, as well, carries no weight because the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) were codified long before Jesus' birth, as well as held strictly in the memory of every Jewish rabbi—all of whom would have been willing to defend their veracity against false versions of contemporary accounts describing Jesus' life and death.

Before we move to the discussion of why Jesus' life and death had to take the particular course that it did in order to enact salvation, however, we want to take a reminding look at the cross itself and the love that was shown for us there.

Salvation enacted

The accounts of the cross of Calvary are the accounts of our salvation's purchase. We never want to lose sight of what Jesus did for us there. Let us make one stop along the way, however, to peek at how Jesus' closest followers perceived Him in the days ahead of His death.

Read Matthew 16:13-20

What do you think convinced the disciples that Jesus was the Promised One, the Messiah? Why do you think Jesus warned them not to tell others that He was the Messiah?

Read the sentencing and crucifixion accounts in John 19:1-36
What strikes you afresh as you read the details of Jesus' final hours from John's Gospel?

Note that verses 24, 36 and 37 all point to detailed Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled in Jesus' death. While many Jewish leaders at the time of Jesus were anticipating a triumphant political Messiah, these prophecies suggested a much different reality. As we move forward, we will see though that this reality carried a triumph all its own, as Jesus made a way of salvation by His shed blood.

Sacrifice and atonement. In order to fully grasp the work of salvation enacted through Jesus, we must recognize the importance of atoning sacrifice throughout the Bible. When God instituted the forms of worship for His chosen Jewish people in the Old Testament, He included instructions for sacrifice. While the people were restricted from eating the blood of any animal, God told them to use the blood of certain animals as atonement for their sins: "Any Israelite or any foreigner living among them who eats any blood—I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from his people. For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life" (Leviticus 17:10-11).

Although we may in some ways recoil from the practice of animal sacrifice, most of us understand atonement; it is written into our own consciences. When a man provokes his wife and argues with her, causing a rift between them, he knows that flowers or dinner can make up for a lot—they *atone* for his behavior. When a judge assigns a perpetrator to make restitution, we understand that justice is served, both to the victim and to the perpetrator, who is allowed to "pay a debt to society" through his atoning act of restoring what was lost by his crime.

However, we see another important truth in the hierarchy of God's kingdom through the sin of one Old Testament king. *Read 1 Samuel 15:1-23*. What understanding do we gain from this passage regarding obedience and sacrifice?

It is important to recognize that the ultimate king in God's kingdom would be one who not only made the right sacrifices but who was also wholly obedient to God.

Read Hebrews 7:23-28 and 9:22-28

List differences you see here between the atoning sacrifices of old and the atoning sacrifice made by Jesus on our behalf.

This is why Jesus' declaration that He is "the way" and that no one gains access to God but through Jesus has unmatched merit: Jesus alone fulfilled the requirements of the perfect sacrifice necessary for our eternal salvation.

Read Acts 4:12, 1 Timothy 2:5-6, and Hebrews 5:7-10

What words do these passages use to indicate that Jesus is our Savior and that He *alone* is our Savior?

A note about perfection: You may ask how, if Jesus was perfect, He was also "made perfect," as we read in Hebrews 5:9. The Greek for "being perfected" (*teleioō*) means more precisely "being completed" or "brought to an end." Jesus was made complete unto the task God had

established for Him. In the same way, we are being made increasingly complete by the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work in us (even though we, unlike Jesus, are assuredly imperfect with regard to our wholehearted obedience to God's Word for us). This is how we can say that men and women, though still drawn by their sin nature, may in Christ be fit for the work that He gives them.

BACKTRACK

In summary, we have gained the following from this lesson:

1. The Messiah (Savior) was promised throughout the Old Testament prophecies.
2. The Messiah came in the form of Jesus of Nazareth.
3. As the Messiah, Jesus was the perfect, once-for-all sacrifice provided for the atonement of our sins.
4. Salvation is not possible without such a Savior, and the only one who qualifies by His actions is Jesus.

With this list as well as Romans 10:14 in mind, what several things would you propose need to be emphasized when we set forth in sharing with others the salvation that is available to them?

A HELPFUL IMAGE

In our time, many people discount Jesus as the only way to God. Part of this comes from ignorance (be it innocent or determined) of the Scriptures we have studied in this lesson. But most people doubt Jesus because (a) most people doubt Jesus, and (b) most people don't want to contend with the thoughts and choices of their friends. In opening a conversation with such people, however, we may be well-served to discuss with them the approach we all take to a bad diagnosis. If a specialist were to inform us that we have a deadly cancer and prescribe chemotherapy, we would not respond by stating our preference: "Sure, Doc, but I much prefer aspirin—I'll just follow that regime instead." Medical cures are not like jeans styles or ice cream flavors; they require appropriate, accurate solutions. In the same way, if our sin sickness is revealed to us, we would do ourselves no good to pick any old treatment; we must have the one that works. You may then invite your listening friend or acquaintance to consider the unique aspect of Jesus as the sole appropriate Savior in God's universe.

WHAT WE ARE SAVED UNTO

When applied theologically, *salvation* is the term used in the Bible to suggest not just a rescue out of a position of spiritual death before God, as though we are then left in limbo, wondering what our spiritual state is—or, perhaps more significantly, what our state *will be* on the day we stand before God. No, more than this move *out* of sin and death, we are moved *unto* a new life. Let's now explore the traits of that life.

A Better Life Now

As we shall soon see, our best life is yet to come. The Bible describes our eternal existence in Jesus' glorified presence on the new earth as one where sorrow and pain are gone. Our work will be ever-meaningful, pointed in holy worship to the Lord who supplies us with all we need. For now, however, we live in a world tainted by sin and its effects, traced from the first sins of Adam and Eve and Cain, right through to the sins in our own lives, homes, churches and neighborhoods. The world we see around us is a severe misrepresentation of the world as God designed it to be. But this does not mean that our lives are unimproved by Jesus' active role in them; we can, with Jesus, have a better life now.

Read John 10:10

What do you think are some aspects of this “full” (or “abundant”) life Jesus promised? What other blessings besides material blessings make for an abundant life? How can you make a habit of recognizing these blessings in your life?

Read 2 Corinthians 6:2

What great blessing is noted in this passage? How do you keep such a blessing at the forefront of your mind and draw on its wonder as you walk through your day?

Read 1 Peter 2:1-3

What kinds of lives are contrasted here? How might we endeavor to “grow up” in our salvation?

The Best Life Later

The promise of eternal life, as opposed to the eternal condemnation apart from God that is the lot of those who reject His Son, is the beautiful outworking of Jesus’ sacrifice for us. He conquered both sin and death on the cross, so we can anticipate eternal communion with the Triune God. What joy! Let’s explore this life as it is promised in the letters of Paul and Peter.

Read Romans 13:11

If we have already received salvation through faith in Jesus, what could Paul have meant when he wrote that our salvation is “nearer now than when we first believed”?

Read 2 Timothy 2:10

What descriptive tag did Paul add to salvation in Christ here? What do you think it means when it says that eternity includes glory? How might we follow his pattern of laboring to bring this salvation to others?

Read 1 Peter 1:3-5

What wonderful promises are contained in this passage?

How might we rightly use our excitement for eternal life as we move through our days, interacting with God and others?

From these passages, we are pleased to come away with the knowledge that salvation is a work done, still being done, and yet to come. That is, like all of God's work, it spans the scope of time and touches down on each person who reaches for it, wherever and whenever they live.

Freedom in Christ

Jesus' work as Savior also brings to us a freedom in Him. Whereas the Old Testament law became an increasing burden for the people as they added to it both (a) their own stricter interpretations, and (b) the weight of having to get it right in every aspect in order to "appease" God, the saving work of Christ permitted a new understanding: the Good News is that you cannot do it on your own. Because of this, striving for a perfection that pleases God is unnecessary. Rather, what is necessary is a firm belief in Jesus, which then enables us to walk with "a bounce in our step," as they say, not worried that a trip-up here and there will wipe out our "good standing" with God. To affirm this understanding, consider:

Romans 8:1-4

What did the work of Jesus do to our former way of living?

Galatians 5:1

What kind of slavery was Paul speaking of here? How does this kind of slavery keep us from a healthy relationship with Jesus? How might we exercise freedom apart from this slavery?

Still, there is much to wrestle with here, because we do not want to turn our freedom into a sort of “moral anarchy,” ignoring God’s instruction, the very thing Paul warned against in Galatians 5:13 - “You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.” Such service falls under the Lordship of Christ, which we will explore beginning in Lesson Five.

Bond-slavery to Christ

In one of Scripture’s great paradoxes, when we have been saved and reformed in spirit and mind by Christ, we trade one slavery for another. We go from a slavery to sin or legalism to bond-slavery under Jesus’ mastery. In the opening line of the letter to the Romans, Paul referred to himself as a *doulos*, the Greek for “bond-slave.” According to the Old Testament teaching on becoming a bond-slave, men or women who had served the maximum time as a slave, normally having sold themselves into slavery in order to pay off their own bankruptcy, could choose to remain with their master. Such servants had their ear pierced by their master and became bond-slaves, those who worked the rest of their life for their master out of appreciation and love for the master. Paul declared himself to be such a servant under Jesus, giving his whole life in service to the one who had loved him fully.

Read Romans 6:15-18

How does this passage support the idea of exchanging one slavery for another? How can such slavery be worth it?

BACKTRACK

In summary, we have gained the following good news from this lesson:

1. In Jesus, we have been saved unto life abundant, a rich new path in Him.
2. In Jesus, we have been saved unto life eternal, the promise of being in His presence forever.
3. In Jesus, we have been saved unto freedom in Him, no longer slaves to sin or legalism.
4. In Jesus, we have been saved unto bond-slavery under His loving, life-giving mastery.

In what ways have you been “living in salvation” as one saved by Jesus? In what ways do you need to become more regularly aware of the fullness of Jesus’ salvation in your life, so that you are living to consistently honor Him?

SAVIOR AND LORD, GRACE AND WORKS

As we closed our look at what we are saved *unto* when Jesus saves us, we noted with Paul that we have become bond-slaves to Jesus, those who willingly give our lives to His service. In other words, we have placed ourselves under the master's authority. Of greater note is this: the Greek word *kurios* is used alternately in the New Testament for master and lord. That is, when we place ourselves under Jesus' authority, we have declared and allowed Him to be the Lord of our life.

This presents something of a tangle when we cling to our theology over and above of our *theos* (our God). Why? In the theology of salvation, grace and works are held as separate entities. We are saved, as we learned in Ephesians 2:8-9, "by grace and not by works." And yet the one who saves us—the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah—is both Savior and Lord. If heresy comes when we subtract from or add to the person or work of Jesus, then we are indeed in grave error when we suggest that salvation requires works beyond His own at the cross, for we have taken away from the full and unique work of Jesus at the cross. But we find ourselves amidst equally grave error when we suggest that a person may "take" Jesus as Savior but not as Lord, for then we have robbed Him of the fullness of His title and nature.

What's to be done? For one, we must cling to the name God has given to His people: Israel. The very name means "wrestles with God." We cannot toss out a chunk of our God because He does not neatly fit our theology! We must allow for His Word to stand, acknowledging the limitations of our understanding, and take God as He is. Jesus Christ is Savior *and* Lord. Now that He has given us His life to save us, we must give Him our lives, for He is our Lord.

With that in mind, what scares you the most about making Jesus the governing Lord of your life? What are you most afraid He may call you to do?

'THE LORD' DEFINED

As alluded to in the introduction above, Jesus bears the title of *kurios* in the New Testament. By it, He is deemed to be master or lord. But is this the same Lord about whom we read in the Old Testament, when we see the word LORD pointed in the direction of God the Father?

Earthly representation of the Godhead

Notice that the ensuing letters of *LORD* are rendered with small capitals. This is the way that some translators have chosen to designate the name of God. Others throughout the course of Bible translation have instead used Jehovah, Yahweh, or YHWH (representing the Hebrew letters that point to the name of God). Of course, many Jewish people, including Jewish believers in Jesus as Messiah, never fully render the name of God, often writing it instead as G-d, in an effort to avoid potential blasphemy in the care of God's name.

All of this is notable in referring to the Creator of the Universe, but is this what is meant when it is directed toward Jesus? When Jesus was called "Lord" by His contemporaries, was this meant to declare Him God of all? Yes and no. Let's learn more by considering the following passages:

Read Luke 4:16-21

Jesus read from the prophetic book of Isaiah, then applied these words to Himself when He said, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." While the Luke rendering uses the lower-cased *Lord* from the Greek *kurios*, the original from Isaiah employs *LORD*, for the name of God. We read later in the passage (vv. 28-30) that the people's reaction to Jesus was violent. What does this tell us about their inference of Jesus' wording?

Read Luke 6:1-5

We know from other passages, especially the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, that Jesus was deeply respectful of the Old Testament law. Yet in this account in Luke, Jesus placed Himself "above the law." What words did He use to do this? How does this indicate Jesus' authoritative position?

Read Luke 9:57-62

By what title did the speakers in this passage refer to Jesus? What did this indicate in terms of their deference to Jesus? Do you think they saw Him as a common earthly master, or as someone with greater authority?

If Jesus truly was the earthly representation of the Godhead, how do these passages help us secure our understanding of such a lordship, particularly if we know that part of the meaning articulated through *kurios* is “the possessor and disposer of a thing?”

Rabbinical master

In Jesus’ day, there was a typical use of the term *kurios* among the Jewish people. It referred to rabbinical masters—that is, teachers of Scripture that others would follow. Jesus was such a rabbi, followed not only by the typical intellectual or ultrareligious disciples of the day, but by common men and women as well. Matthew left his tax collector’s table to follow Jesus, the Pharisee Nicodemus found Him in the night to ask his academic questions, and Mary the sister of Lazarus sat at His feet, fascinated by His teaching. What more do the Gospels tell us of Jesus’ rabbinical authority? Let’s look:

Read John 13:12-17

How did Jesus refer to Himself on this night with His disciples? Was His teaching here done by words or actions? What encouragement did He give them to follow His lead?

Read Matthew 7:24-29

Verses 25-27 are the conclusion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. In this conclusion, what did He call His hearers to do?

Verses 28-29 are an observation made by the writer Matthew about the impact of Jesus' teaching. What differences do you think Jesus' listeners found between His teaching and that of other rabbis?

Read Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus spoke in this passage of His "yoke." This was a common term for a rabbi's line of teaching. When disciples professed to put on a rabbi's yoke, they meant that they were following his course of instruction from the Scriptures. Jesus adopted this language for Himself. Specifically, what did Jesus say about His yoke? What do you think this means? Does it in any way lessen the fact that Jesus is a master?

Sovereign King

Beyond His place as our personally chosen rabbinical master, however, we recognize that Jesus is the incarnate God, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15; see also Revelation 17:14 and 19:16). That is, He is the ultimate sovereign ruler of the universe. Let's explore this remarkable aspect of Jesus.

Read Matthew 8:23-27

How does this passage demonstrate Jesus' power over physical aspects of the universe? For what purpose(s) did Jesus exercise this authority in this instance?

Read Luke 19:28-34

In this passage, the donkey's owners take no exception to the simple explanation that "the Lord needs it." How does this fit our understanding of how people of Jesus' time deferred to masters or lords? How was this taken a step further in this instance with the disciples simply referring to "the Lord," using the definite article (*the*)?

Read John 11:21-22

What authority did Martha understand Jesus to have here? How does her recognition of Jesus' power confirm her trust in His sovereign work? In what way do biblical accounts like this add to your own knowledge of and faith in Jesus?

BACKTRACK

In summary, we have gained the following from this lesson:

1. To receive and interact with Jesus in His entirety, we must recognize and respond to Him as both our Savior and our Lord.
2. Jesus is Lord in three ways: (a) as the earthly representation of the Triune Godhead, (b) as our rabbinical master, and (c) as sovereign King.

Consider this well-known passage, Romans 10:9: “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” How does this passage confirm the fullness of Jesus, who is to be received as both our Savior and our Lord?

In your own life, which would you say needs to be strengthened more in your mind and in your faith—Jesus as Savior or Jesus as Lord? How might this be done?

JESUS AS LORD IN THE EPISTLES

We can no more *make* Jesus the Lord than we can *make* a man our natural father.

Our natural father is our natural father on the basis of something he did, not on the basis of something we have or could have done. However, many a natural father has spurned the role of a full-fledged father, one who takes responsibility for the physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual development of his children. Sadly, some children never know their biological father because these fathers have run from their duty. Perhaps worse, others have rejected their fathers, because of the neglect these men have shown toward their children.

In the same way, Jesus is Lord not because of something we have done, but on the basis of something He has done. For instance, consider the words of the prologue to the Gospel of John:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
(John 1:1-5)

Jesus—here called “the Word”—has dwelt in eternity with and as God. He is master of the universe, from its creation until now.

No, we cannot make Jesus *the* Lord. But we can take or reject Him as *our* Lord. The apostles, as you might guess, strongly encouraged the taking of Jesus as our Lord, and their letters (often called epistles) challenge us in many places to defer to the Lordship of Jesus. We’ll examine a selection of their writings in this lesson, but first:

Why do you think that many people hesitate to allow Jesus to operate as Lord of their lives? Why is this true even when they say that they love and appreciate Him?

THE LORD OF THE DISCIPLES

At the time of Jesus, a disciple was anyone who chose to follow another's teaching. The Twelve who traveled with Jesus on a daily basis were His closest disciples (and to many, His most well-known), but they were hardly His only followers. Mark—the young man who went on to write the Gospel of that name—was a disciple of Jesus, but not one of the Twelve. Likewise with Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha. In fact, 120 men and women were gathered in the Upper Room, awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus, so we know His disciples numbered that many and more (consider 1 Corinthians 15:6, where the number is 500). And we know, too, that Jesus charged those standing about at His ascension into heaven to “go...and make disciples,” an activity that began immediately after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, when “about three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:41).

For this reason, we can come to our own time and find ourselves to be disciples of Jesus, choosing to follow Him not just by His recorded teachings but as our living Lord. And yet it is for this reason that we do search the Scriptures to find what it means to live under His Lordship. Let's do that now by reading the words of some of those closest disciples, the first century apostles.

Read Romans 10:5-13

A portion of this passage—that we must declare with our mouth that “Jesus is Lord” if we are to be saved—came into our view as we closed the last lesson. Now let's consider more of the passage. Where is Jesus to be found?

According to this passage, what human acts are required to gain the salvation purchased by Jesus on the cross? Why do you think God desires both belief and declaration from us?

From Hebrews 10:1-18, how do we know that Jesus is alone the one who can provide salvation? How did His saving work demonstrate submission to the Lordship of God the Father?

Read Colossians 3:22-24

From verse 22, what is to be the source/motivation of our doing our best work for others?

If we are to work for all men as though our work is done directly for the Lord, what traits should mark the work that we do?

While we cannot argue that every line of work is be permissible under God (i.e., criminal activity), all work that is free for us to pursue is to be pursued unto the Lord. What would working as unto the Lord look like in your own vocation and avocation(s)?

Read Philippians 2:5-11

Jesus did not come chiefly as an example, but as a sacrifice to restore our broken relationship with God. Still, this passage in Paul's letter to the Philippians points to the examples Jesus forged when He gave His life for us.

According to the opening verse, whose attitude should we possess? How would you describe that attitude based on the rest of the passage?

In verse 8, what preceded Jesus' obedience? How might we apply this same trait to our own lives as we submit ourselves to Jesus' lordship?

Consider verses 9-11. How do they demonstrate that Jesus' work secured His everlasting position as Lord?

Read 2 Peter 1:16-18 and 2:1-3

What words in verses 16-18 of chapter 1 affirm the majesty of "our Lord Jesus Christ?"

In chapter 2, verse 1, what is the principal mark of those who spread heresy? How does such a denial serve to lead others astray?

BACKTRACK

In summary, we have gained the following from this lesson:

1. Jesus' Lordship was confirmed throughout the epistles of the New Testament.
2. Jesus' Lordship compels us to serve Him by serving others.
3. Jesus is a majestic Lord, as affirmed by His own work and the confirming words of the Father. However, He is also a contested Lord whose saving work is denied by those who would spread heresy for their own gain.

In the epistles, the title "Savior" is applied to Jesus about 20 times. Meanwhile, the title "Lord" is applied to Him more than 300 times. To what kind of response do you think this should lead us when we see this disparity in designation? What would that response look like?

THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS ENACTED IN OUR LIVES

So Jesus is Lord. That is said easily enough. But it sure goes against the grain for those who have any Protestant bones in their body, because once we talk about Jesus being Lord, we are talking about obeying His command. And once we talk about obeying His command, we are talking about doing good works (feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, showing mercy to widows and orphans—all these come to mind). And once we are talking about good works, we seem to be leaving Jesus' grace and the salvation it gives us behind. What a tangle!

Maybe we can help ourselves move forward to the thrust of this lesson—letting the Lord rule our lives—by lining it out this way: *We are not working for our salvation. But we are working for the Lord of our salvation.* With that in mind, we will explore some passages in the Gospels that help us understand what it will look like when Jesus is in charge.

More than words

Read Jesus' words in Matthew 7:21-23

What do you think will keep these people from entering heaven even though they say they have functioned in the Lord's name?

How have you seen words used among God's people in a way that covered up actions that would not honor God? What can be done to change the heart of one who says one thing but does another?

We must be honest and earnest in our deference to the Lord, precisely because He can see right through us when we are not honest and earnest, and because in the end He will reject those whose lord never really was *the* Lord.

Sin repelled

Read Jesus' words in Matthew 18:7-9

Upon what and whom did Jesus pronounce woe in this passage?

What do the severe images Jesus provides in verses 8-9 tell us about the seriousness with which He views the grip of sin in our lives?

We must understand the power of sin to draw us away from the pursuit of Jesus, even so much that it places our lives in eternal jeopardy. The opposite of the Lordship of Jesus is not simply Jesus not as Lord, but rather other loves and other activities as lord. The Bible frequently calls these other attentions “idols,” and in going after them we are going after the false promises of the enemy, Satan.

The preeminence of Jesus

As you read Jesus' interchange with potential followers in Luke 9:57-62, keep in mind the definition of preeminence, which is: paramount rank, dignity, or importance; superiority.

What place in His followers' lives was Jesus establishing for Himself and His kingdom?

Do you recognize your own sort of hesitations in these potential disciples? What do they say about the willingness of our heart to follow Jesus?

Things that are important in an earthly sense are often not important in an eternal sense. What are some examples of such things of earthly importance?

Though many earthly activities and pursuits should not have preeminent importance in our lives, this does not completely mark them as unnecessary. For instance, in Mark 7:10-12, Jesus emphasized the honoring of one's family, even meeting their needs ahead of giving to God in certain circumstances. But we do need to let God be our guide, rather than tradition or trend.

Sacrifice

We have just seen how following Jesus causes our priorities to change. It will also cause our activities to change, as there are requirements in His kingdom, requirements that often mean sacrifice.

Read Luke 14:25-33

What do you think Jesus was trying to convey—and even provoke—when He said that His followers should “hate” their family members and “carry His cross”? What specific changes would this represent in your own life?

How important is it that we consider what Jesus is calling us to do before make a commitment to Him? How is this idea made plain in Jesus' analogies in verses 28-32 and in the concluding verse, 33?

Many teachers of the Gospel do not emphasize this consideration of the cost of following Jesus when they share the path to salvation. What disservice does this do to those who hear such a message?

To follow Jesus' yoke (Lesson Five) means that I must surrender my own yoke, my own way of doing things. But if we really throw ourselves over to Christ for the sake of the exchanged life—His instead of ours—we become increasingly comfortable with His yoke and increasingly uncomfortable with all competing yokes.

Commitment to growth

Finally, we know from New Testament passages that we are to be growing as following of Jesus, as though we are being increasingly prepared for work in God's kingdom.

Read Hebrews 5:12-14

What is the tone of the writer's words here? What "constant use" (NIV) do you think is implied in the last line of the passage? What excuses to people normally offer up in the face of such a call to disciplined commitment?

Read Matthew 6:33

What did Jesus say we should seek above all things? How do such priorities lead to growth?

How do each of the following practices (both in individual and corporate settings) facilitate growth:

Study (Consider Acts 17:10-12 and Romans 12:2)

Prayer (Consider 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 and James 1:5 and 5:13-18)

Discussion (Consider Proverbs 15:22, Acts 15:1-21, and Colossians 3:15-17)

The foundational response to Jesus' Lordship

Although our flesh (or sinful nature) wants nothing to do with the Lordship of Jesus, clinging instead to a "cheap grace" that is seized upon by those who deliberately continue in sin, it is God's kindness that leads to repentance (Romans 2:4) and our love for Jesus that will cause us to obey Him. Indeed, Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

What do you love most about Jesus? How can this serve as a catalyst to your honoring His Lordship?

BACKTRACK

In review, we have learned in this lesson that when the Lordship of Jesus is enacted:

1. We go beyond words to action in our following of Jesus' will for us.
2. We repel the grip of sin on our lives.
3. We uphold the preeminent place of Jesus.
4. We follow Jesus' example of sacrifice.
5. We commit to activities that promote personal growth in Jesus.
6. We obey the commands of Jesus out of love for Him.

In the beginning, before salvation was enacted because of the Adam's sin, Adam was expected to live a life of righteousness, obeying the simplest command of God—"do not eat from the tree in the middle of the garden—and otherwise enjoying the fullness of God's presence. The Lordship of Jesus, then, fits into the context of God's original plan, that we are led by the precepts of God. Conclude your study of the Jesus as Lord by reading Psalm 119:1-24 and record your reflections below about the relationship between delighting in the authority and instruction of God and obeying His commands as you grow in your relationship with Him.

THE PRIZE WE HAVE IN JESUS

When we considered Jesus as Savior, we found that ultimately we are saved *unto* bond-slavery—that is, a willing, lifelong commitment to His mastery, or Lordship. In other words, Jesus as Savior led us directly to Jesus as Lord. Likewise, Jesus as Lord forges the path to Jesus as Treasure, for it is the things that we prize that have the tightest hold on us.

In American politics, we would say that the President embodies the Presidency. We sometimes speak of the Presidency in its official sense, as an entity above and beyond the officeholder. But the connection persists. In fact, we call it by the officeholder's name: the Clinton Presidency, the Bush Presidency, the Obama Presidency. But this we do not do: stretch the President's embodiment to the ends of the nation. We do not live, say, in "Obamaland"; we live in America.

In God's kingdom, there is an exalted King who embodies that office. His name is Jesus. But more than the office, Jesus embodies the entire kingdom. It does not expand without or beyond Him. The fullness of God's work requires the fullness of God Himself—God in heaven and God incarnate. So not even "the farthest corner" of God's kingdom is out of His reach. Therefore, when Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God, He is speaking of all the work that God is doing, and all the work that God is doing comes from all that God is. This understanding is important as we examine the teachings on the treasure Jesus is to us, for when we treasure who Jesus is, we treasure all that is happening in His kingdom. That is a *very* big idea, but as we shall see from Jesus' own parables about the prized nature of the kingdom, something of great size and worth is exactly the kind of thing we should treasure most!

As we go on, keep this in mind: Jesus as Treasure is the glue between Jesus as Savior and Jesus as Lord. Without treasuring Jesus as Savior, we have little motivation to follow Him as Lord.

Before we begin, take a moment to consider the things you hold close and dear. What things around you do you prize? How do you keep these things in their place beneath the prize you have in Jesus? How difficult is it to keep your prizes in proper order on a daily basis?

COMPETING TREASURES

Read Matthew 6:24

Here Jesus declared that we cannot simultaneously serve two masters. One or the other will have our attention. Indeed, this is another reason the Lordship of Jesus matters: either He is the Lord or something/someone else is. Here, the master specifically mentioned is money. What other “masters” might compete with Jesus for rule of our life?

Now read Mark 10:17-22

What was keeping the young man from eternal life in the kingdom of God? Do you find it disturbing that his dearest prize was competing with his righteous acts? Could Jesus pinpoint an inferior treasure in your life that is hidden by some of the “good things” you do?

Returning to Matthew 6, read verses 19-21

Jesus delineated between earth-bound and heaven-located, eternal treasures. What might be examples of each?

Earth-bound treasures _____

Treasures in heaven _____

Treasures represent our desires, our loves, our gaze, our doting attention. Or we may say that the things we treasure are the things we yearn for, seek, acquire, and protect. For this reason, Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Thus, we do well to make a regular habit of asking ourselves, “Where is my treasure?”

THE INCOMPARABLE TREASURE

Read Jesus' two short parables in Matthew 13:44-46

What similarities do you see between these two parables? What differences?

The question of who the treasure is in these parables leaves biblical commentators offering different opinions:

- Some say that *we* are the treasure and that Christ delighted in us so much that He gave His life for us (John 3:16). While Jesus certainly does love His people, the parables do point to men who turned over something of lesser value for something of greater value. As much as Jesus loves us, we would be hard-pressed to argue that, in our sin, we were an “attractive” prize to Jesus, who enjoyed the intimate and exalted heavenly presence of the Father before He (Jesus) came to earth.
- Perhaps the most common interpretation is that *Jesus and His salvation* are the treasure. We respond with delight, giving up everything of lesser importance to attain Him.
- Less frequently, there are some who say that *something else good* in God's kingdom is the treasure (R.T. Kendall, for instance, suggests that the treasure is the anointing of God on our lives).
- Finally, there are those who detect a dual meaning of the treasure: that we are Jesus' treasure for whom He gave all *and* He is our treasure for whom we give all.

To which of these interpretations does the context of our study lead us?

Read John 3:27-30

While we can in no way buy our salvation, how does this passage support the idea that we are meant to trade (or surrender) the elements of a former kingdom for the wonders of a new one in Jesus?

A contrast between these one-line parables should be noted before we continue:

In the first, an unexpectant man stumbles across the treasure. His discovery of the treasure and his recognition of its worth are simultaneous. He may not even have been aware of his poverty before this moment, but he is instantly smitten and his life is wholly changed in the *exchange*.

In the second, a pearl merchant recognizes his need and desire for something better yet, so he goes on a search to find the great pearl. When he finds it, he is already prepared to give all to get it.

We find a similar difference in people’s own conversion stories—some are bowled over in something of a “love at first sight” scenario, while others are convinced through a methodical “search for meaning.” In both cases, however, the result is joy at the unmatched gain.

Where might your own story of encountering and trusting Jesus fall on this spectrum? How do you draw joy from the salvation you have in Jesus?

PASSING ON OUR WEALTH

The world’s normal definition of treasure is similar to that of wealth. Indeed, when we picture treasure in a chest, that chest is full of gold coins, precious stones, and other precious artifacts. Let’s consider how Scripture encourages us to understand and handle such wealth, particularly as we recognize that this kind of treasure may set itself against the treasure we have in Jesus.

Read Deuteronomy 8:10-14

What does this passage teach us about the danger of wealth and comfort in connection to our appreciation for and relationship with God?

Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19

What instruction did Paul tell Timothy to pass on to those who are wealthy?

How does the willing transference of wealth to those who have need increase our faith in God and help maintain the perspective that Jesus is our ultimate treasure?

What meaning do you draw from the closing phrase of verse 19— “so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life”—in connection with our present discussion of true treasure?

KINGDOM SEEKERS

The idea of seeking treasure in God's promises is not a New Testament concept alone. God's faithful people have always maintained eternal perspective and allowed the treasure of God's kingdom to occupy their gaze.

Knowing that "these people" referred to in this passage were Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Sarah, read Hebrews 11:13-16.

What kind of country were these people looking toward? How did this view of God's eternal time affect the way they lived? In what way(s) could we say that they were like the merchant in Jesus' parable in Matthew 13?

Read Hebrews 12:1-3

How does the writer of Hebrews transfer the faith tradition of these ancient kingdom seekers to us? Where is our own gaze to be fixed? Why?

How would you describe the rewards of treasuring Jesus?

The following list of questions is not original. As a popular Internet presentation, its earthly author is anonymous. But in its representation as the loving words of Jesus, it provides a fitting end to our study here, where we seek to go forward loving Him in return, as we never have before.

If you never felt pain, how would you know that I am a Healer?

If you never had to pray, how would you know that I am a Deliverer?

If you never had a trial, how could you call yourself an overcomer?

If you never felt sadness, how would you know that I am a Comforter?

If you never made a mistake, how would you know that I am a forgiver?

If you knew all, how would you know that I will answer your questions?

If you never were in trouble, how would you know that I will come to your rescue?

If you never were broken, how would you know that I can make you whole?

If you never had a problem, how would you know that I can solve them?

If you never had any suffering, how would you know what I went through?

If you never went through the fire, how would you become pure?

If I gave you all things, how would you appreciate them?

If I never corrected you, how would you know that I love you?

If you had all power, how would you learn to depend on Me?

If your life was perfect, what would you need Me for?

Love, Jesus