

HOME BIBLE STUDY

LESSON FOUR

GOD'S PEOPLE

In previous lessons we learned about the Bible as a book of books and that it contains the plan of God for redeeming mankind from the curse of sin. We noted the development of the plan and the promises of the prophets who, hundreds of years before Christ, foretold of Christ and the wonderful blessings he would bring. We also noticed the promise to Abraham and how it was fulfilled in Christ having transcended the *Law of Moses*. We learned that this law was temporary and that it too was fulfilled by Christ having been nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). In this lesson we will first consider God's people in the *Patriarchal Age*. Then we will look at *Israel*, God's people under the law of Moses and the nation through whom Christ was to come. Lastly we will study the *church built by Christ* in which are all the saved of all nations.

GOD'S PEOPLE DURING THE AGE OF THE PATRIARCHS

The list of patriarchs begins with Adam and goes through Moses. Many good and many bad examples are contained in their stories. In the New Testament Abraham and Moses are referenced often. In the account of the patriarchs we see God's plan revealed through his promises which always come to pass. We see his guiding hand as events are unfolded in the developing history. Melchizedek is a striking example of the revelation of God's plan. He is spoken of in only four verses, Genesis 14:18-20 and Psalms 110:4. Melchizedek is, however, spoken of in detail in Hebrews chapters five through seven. The writer of Hebrews declares that Christ is High Priest after the order of Melchizedek instead of the tribe of Levi which the law of Moses would have demanded.

To further look at the revelation of the plan during this age, we will consider only two characters, Abel and Noah.

ABEL

Abel's history is short; however, he is listed as one of the examples of faith in Hebrews chapter eleven, a highly notable passage dealing with faith. The account of Abel in Genesis 4:1-16 records how Abel offered from the best of his flock and how Cain offered from the fruit of the earth. God had respect for Abel's offering but did not accept Cain's offering.

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Cain killed Abel and was made a fugitive and a vagabond on the earth as punishment by God. Consider two other passages of scripture concerning Abel and his offering. In Hebrews 11:4 we find:

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

Romans 10:17 says:

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Understanding that the offering was by faith increases our appreciation of Abel's offering and lets us know why God was displeased with Cain's offering. Since Abel acted through faith we know that God must have instructed him. Genesis 4:7 tells us that Cain also knew what was right. The Lord speaking to Cain asks: "*If you do well, will you not be accepted?*"

Another passage which is important regarding faith is Romans 14:23 which says:

But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin.

Since whatever is not from faith is sin, and since faith comes by hearing, we know that to act by faith in God, we must have God's word. We sin if we try to serve God without knowing his word because without his word we cannot have faith.

A VALUABLE LESSON

We learn then from Genesis that God was pleased with Abel's offering and displeased with Cain's. Just reading Genesis, we might wonder why. However, we find in Hebrews that Abel acted by faith and in Romans that faith comes from hearing God's word. We must conclude then that God was pleased with Abel because he heard, believed and did as God told him to.

NOAH

Noah was another man of faith. The writer of Hebrews records:

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. - Hebrews 11:7

Peter was also familiar with Noah and refers to him in both of his epistles.

¹⁸For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, ²⁰who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. ²¹There is also an antitype which now saves us -- baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 3:18-21

⁴For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell (Tartarus), and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; ⁵and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly.

2 Peter 2:4-5

BIBLE STUDY

Read the story of Noah in Genesis 6:5-22 and consider the following.

- { Why was God grieved in his heart?
- { How was God to deal with the problem of sinful people?
- { Could Noah have used any kind of wood other than gopherwood to build the ark?
- { How many windows did the ark have?
- { Of all the people on the earth, who was allowed to enter the ark?
- { Could others in Noah's time have been pleasing to God?
- { Why did Noah find grace in the eyes of God?
- { Was Noah saved by water or the ark?

CONCLUSIONS

The Scriptures relating to Abel and Noah in Hebrews and I and II Peter really broaden our understanding of the account in Genesis. The following truths are illustrated.

1. God provides the instruction necessary to do what he expects.
2. Sin is a problem and sinners must bear the consequences.
3. The righteous are obedient and are those who find grace in God's eyes.

Thought question:

Read Romans 3:23. Did Noah, Adam, Abraham and the other Patriarchs sin?

GOD'S PEOPLE UNDER THE MOSAICAL LAW

THE ISRAELITES

You will recall the Israelites were the children of Jacob whose name was changed to Israel. Moses led the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage and gave them the Law. As a nation and as God's people, this law is what they were directed to follow from the time of Moses until the coming of the promised Messiah, Christ, when a new law would be established. In this section we will consider David, the second king of Israel, and how after David the nation of Israel committed great sins. We will also consider that the Israelites when born were under the law of Moses and that the promised New Law would be for a people who would *choose* to obey God.

DAVID -- A MAN AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will."

Acts 13:21-22

David became the standard or comparisons for the other kings. Good kings such as Asa in I Kings chapter 15 were spoken of as being like their father David. Wicked kings were spoken of like Abijam, David's great-grandson. The writer of I Kings records:

Speaking of Abijam:

And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him; his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. -- I Kings 15:3

Speaking of Asa:

Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did his father David.

1 Kings 15:11

The wickedness of the nation of Israel is a matter of record. Reading through the books of Kings and Chronicles, and noting the warnings of the prophets clearly reveal their sinful state. You may remember from past lessons that the kingdom divided into two kingdoms after the death of David's son, Solomon. Both kingdoms were wicked, and because of their wickedness were carried into captivity. Some of the Israelites from the southern kingdom, or Judah, according to God's plan, were allowed to return from Babylonian captivity to rebuild the Temple and Jerusalem.

THE LAW OF MOSES HAD TO BE TAUGHT TO THE CHILDREN

⁶And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

This excerpt from Moses' law shows the way the law was passed on from generation to generation. At least this happened during the rare periods that the Israelites were faithful. During periods of unfaithfulness the law was not well known. On one occasion, during the reign of Josiah, a good king like David, it was a great event when the High Priest found the book of the law. (II Kings 22)

THE PROMISE OF A NEW COVENANT

Prophets like Jeremiah promised a new way, better times, and a new law. Through them, we can see a very significant contrast. People would no longer need to be taught "*know the Lord*" for they would already know him. This new law "*written on the hearts*" would be for those who would choose to serve God -- a response from the heart. This is the law we follow as Christians; it was promised by the prophets who lived under the Mosaic law.

There is a big difference -- God's people under the Mosaic law were physically born into their status of being God's children. Christians, however, choose to be born into God's family, so all Christians "know the Lord". After all he forgives their iniquities.

³¹ "Behold, the days are coming", says the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, ³²"not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them," says the LORD. ³³ "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days," says the LORD: "I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man

his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," says the LORD. "For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." -- Jeremiah 31:31-34

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

-- Galatians 3:26-29

GOD'S PEOPLE OF THE NEW COVENANT

THE CHURCH BUILT BY JESUS

In Matthew 16:18 we have the promise from Jesus to build his church and we find the fulfillment in Acts, chapter two. In the New Testament there is mention of only one body of believers.

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling.

Ephesians 4:4

That body is also referenced as "the church". Note another passage from the book of Ephesians.

...which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. ²²And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 1:20-23

BIBLE STUDY

Read Matthew 16:16-20 and Acts 2:29-39 and consider the following.

{ Who was to build a church for himself?

{ On what was the church built?

(Note: The church was built on the fact or truth of Peter's statement. It was not built on Peter. Simple logic should tell us that a divine building would not be built on a human being. It is true that the name of Peter means rock; however, that rock "*Petro*" is masculine in gender. The greek word "*petra*" on which Jesus said he would build his church is feminine in gender.)

{ What would not stop the building of the church?

{ Who is speaking in Acts 2:29? (see verse 14)

{ Where did Jesus go and return from?

{ According to Acts 2:47, what group of people make up the church we read about in the New Testament?

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST

Jesus often spoke of the kingdom of heaven. Indeed, the Jewish nation greatly anticipated a coming kingdom. Notice a passage from the book of John.

¹⁴ Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world."

¹⁵ Therefore when Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.

-- John 6:14-15

Of course Jesus did not come to set up an earthly kingdom but rather a heavenly kingdom. In the New Testament, before the second chapter of Acts, the kingdom is spoken of as coming. After Acts 2 we find the kingdom in existence. Those who serve Jesus are in his kingdom. The apostle Paul says:

¹³ He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,... -- Colossians 1:13

BIBLE STUDY

Read II Samuel 7:4-17, Acts 2:22-32 and Colossians 1:12-14 and consider the following.

- { How long will the throne of David last?
- { Is Christ a king?
- { Concerning those in the kingdom, from what have they been delivered? What do they have? Of what are they to be partakers?
- { Who established the throne of the everlasting kingdom?

THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH

The church is built on the teachings of the apostles and prophets. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would be sent to them so they would know what to teach. That work of the Holy Spirit began on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts chapter 2 and it is witnessed by all the inspired writings of the New Testament. Notice the teaching in the following passages.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

-- John 14:26

Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. -- Ephesians 2:19-22

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.-- 1 Corinthians 3:11

BIRTH INTO THE KINGDOM NOT A PHYSICAL BIRTH

In John 3:1-15 we have a discourse between Jesus and a ruler named Nicodemus, who came to him at night. Jesus explained to Nicodemus that to be born again was to be born of the water and Spirit and was necessary to enter into the kingdom of God. Nicodemus probably did not understand all that Jesus told him on that occasion; however, he remained a disciple. Later, when Jesus was crucified, he came with myrrh and aloes and assisted in the burial. (John 19:38-39)

BIBLE STUDY

Read I Peter 1:1-5 & 18-25 and consider the following:

- { Considering the term "elect" in verse 2, was this epistle written to Christians or to those who were not Christians?
- { By what is one begotten? -- verse 3
- { How lasting is the inheritance?
- { What gives redemption?
- { How old is God's plan?
- { Is obedience required?
- { Through what is one born again?

HEBREWS CHAPTERS 11 AND 12

PATRIARCHAL

ADAM TO MOSES
HEBREWS 11:4-23

THE FATHERS OF FAITH
BELIEVED THE PROMISES

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Hebrews 11:13

MOSAICAL

MOSES TO CHRIST
HEBREWS 11:24-40

GREAT MEN DID GREAT DEEDS
OF FAITH BUT DID NOT
RECEIVE THE PROMISE

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵ choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. Hebrews 11:24

CHRISTIAN

CHRIST
HEBREWS CHAPTER 12

JESUS BUILT HIS CHURCH --
THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM.

...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, ²³ to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. Hebrews 12:22

SUMMARY

In this lesson we considered God's people in the three periods of Bible history. We noted that God, having provided the necessary instructions, expects obedience and that, as in the case of King David, he respects the heart that seeks to serve him. In the historical record of the nation of Israel and the calamities which came upon them, it is very clear that God expects his people to be faithful to him. We considered differences in the covenants and that a new covenant was promised to Israel. The new covenant, which came by Christ Jesus, is for those who serve God from their hearts. The people under the new covenant are those in the Church which Jesus built, his kingdom. Those in the kingdom of Christ are those who choose to be his servants by their obedience.

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? ¹⁷But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Romans 6:16-18

QUESTIONS

LESSON FOUR

NAME _____

MULTIPLE CHOICE (mark the correct answer)

- The promise to Abraham was:
 - fulfilled by Christ.
 - fulfilled by the Law of Moses.
 - foretold by the prophet Isaiah.
 - never fulfilled.
- A passage of scripture which directly states that Abel acted by faith is found in:
 - Psalms chapter 110.
 - Genesis chapter 4.
 - Hebrews chapter 11.
 - Romans chapter 3.
- Peter declares that Noah was a:
 - "man after God's own heart."
 - "preacher of righteousness."
 - "man of faith."
 - none of the above.
- The Israelites:
 - were to follow the law of Moses.
 - knew what God wanted them to do because each one received special revelations.
 - were to follow God by doing what the king said.
 - all of the above
- David:
 - was the first king of Israel.
 - was the son of Saul.
 - was a man after God's own heart.
 - all of the above
- One thing that would have helped Israel be more faithful was:
 - parents teaching the law of Moses to their children.
 - not dividing into two kingdoms.
 - having a stronger army to fight those who did not serve God.
 - none of the above.
- A big difference between Christians and Israelites is:
 - Israel had a king, Christians do not.
 - the manner in which one is born into God's family.
 - Christians do not have the sins of idolatry to lead them astray.
 - none of the above.
- The church of Christ:
 - came into existence after Christ died.
 - refers to the same group of people as those in the household of God.
 - was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.
 - all of the above.

TRUE OR FALSE (Answer **true** or **false** to the following statements.)

- _____ 1. Melchizedek was a member of the tribe of Levi, one of Jacob's sons.
- _____ 2. Cain did not offer the right sacrifice because he was a farmer not a herdsman.
- _____ 3. Faith is an unexplainable feeling we have inside of us when we do right.
- _____ 4. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.
- _____ 5. Noah was saved through water.
- _____ 6. As long as our heart is right, we do not have to do what the Bible says.
- _____ 7. Parents today need not teach their children about God, because we are not under Moses' law.
- _____ 8. Jesus himself is the foundation of his church.
- _____ 9. The foundation laid by Paul, the writer of I Corinthians, was Jesus Christ.
- _____ 10. To be born again, one must be born of water and the spirit.

NUMBER IN ORDER OF OCCURRENCE

- _____ Jesus promised to build his church.
- _____ David was king of Israel.
- _____ The apostles laid the foundation of the church.
- _____ Cain killed Abel.
- _____ Jeremiah promised a new covenant.
- _____ Jesus was crucified.
- _____ Noah built an ark so he could be saved through water.

ANSWER IN A FEW WORDS

- 1. How did Abel know what to offer? _____

- 2. Why were Noah and his family the only ones saved? _____

- 3. Must one obey the teaching of the new covenant (New Testament) to be a Christian? _____

- 4. If Noah was saved through water, what was the ark for? _____

- 5. Why did the ark have only one window? _____

- 6. Paul tells God's words concerning David in Acts 13:22. What is the description of the "man after God's own heart?" _____

- 7. According to Romans 6:16-18, how were those in the church there "set free from sin?" _____
