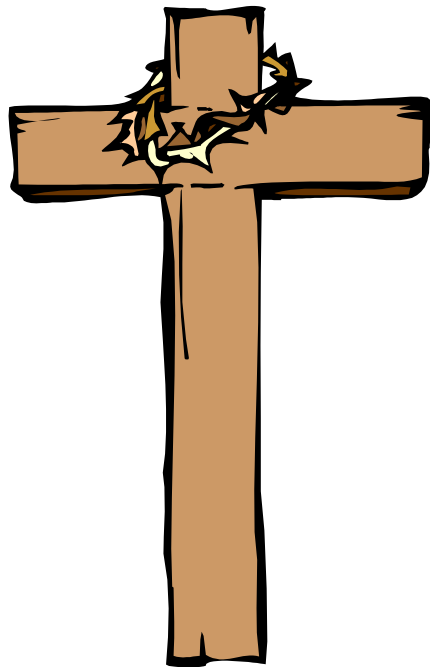


Appendix A
BIBLE STUDY
Salvation



Verse 1

*I heard an old, old story,
how a Savior came from Glory,
How He gave His life on Calvary,
to save a wretch like me.*

*I heard about His groaning,
of His precious blood's atoning
Then I repented of my sins
and won the victory.*

*I heard an old, old story,
how a Savior came from Glory,*

KEY VERSE: (John 3:13 NIV) No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven--the Son of Man.

BIBLE STUDY: (John 1:1-5; 11-14 NIV) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. {2} He was with God in the beginning. {3} Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. {4} In him was life, and that life was the light of men. {5} The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

{11} He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. {12} Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- {13} children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. {14} The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Old Testament is full of prophecies about the coming of Christ, and the New Testament shows the fulfillment of these promises. At Christmas we celebrate Christ's birth as a human baby on earth. This is called "the incarnation," or God becoming man. But the story started long before this birth event. It started "in the beginning."



For thought or discussion: What is the furthest back event you can remember? Have you ever tried to think about a word like "eternity"?



Digging in the Word: Who was "with God" in the beginning? (v. 1)

Which verse shows us that "the Word" is Jesus Christ?

In general, was the Word accepted or rejected? (v.11)



Life application: What right do those who receive Him have? (v. 12) How does it affect the way you look at yourself when you realize this?

How He gave His life on Calvary, to save a wretch like me.

KEY VERSES: (John 15:13-14 NIV) Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. {14} You are my friends if you do what I command.

BIBLE STUDY: (Rom 1:18-20, 29-32 NIV) The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, {19} since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. {20} For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. {29} They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, {30} slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; {31} they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. {32} Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. (Rom 2:1 NIV) You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

It was because of our sin that Jesus came. Many people argue, "I'm not so bad," or "I'm a better person than my neighbor." But when we reach the end of life and face judgment, it won't matter how we compared to someone else. We will be compared to God's righteousness, and we won't measure up.



For thought or discussion: What kinds of actions do you regard as wicked or sinful?



Digging in the Word: What kinds of actions and attitudes does God label as wicked in this passage?

What do people who do such things deserve? (v. 32)

Are there any degrees of wickedness in this passage? Any sins worse than others?

Will there be any excuses for our sin? (1:20; 2:1)



Life application: When you measure yourself against the goodness of God, how do you measure up?

I heard about His groaning, of His precious blood's atoning

KEY VERSE: (Heb 9:22 NIV) Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

BIBLE STUDY: (Isa 53: 5-11 NIV) {5} But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. {6} We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. {7} He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. {8} By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. {9} He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. {10} Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. {11} After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied ; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection has made it possible for us to be forgiven and delivered from the power of sin and death (Rom. 8:2). From Old Testament times, God showed His people Israel through the system of animal sacrifices that sin was serious—it always led to death! The shedding of blood was necessary for forgiveness. This system remained in place until Jesus' perfect sacrifice on the cross. Once this perfect, sinless one died for us, no more animal sacrifices were needed. Over 750 years BEFORE Christ's crucifixion, Isaiah wrote about it!



For thought or discussion: How difficult is it for you not to fight back or defend yourself when wrongly accused?



Digging into the Word: How many times do the words “our,” “we,” and “us” occur from verses 4 to 6?

What kind of offering is this suffering servant's life? (v. 10) What does this suffering servant bear on himself? (v. 11)



Life application: Has any other person ever done so much for you? (suffered wrongly without complaint; carried the wrong things you've done on himself; died in your place?)

Then I repented of my sins and won the victory.

KEY VERSE: (Luke 15:7 NIV) ... there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

BIBLE STUDY: (Luke 15:11-24 NIV) Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. {12} The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. {13} "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. {14} After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. {15} So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. {16} He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. {17} "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! {18} I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. {19} I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' {20} So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. {21} "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' {22} "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. {23} Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. {24} For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

Repentance is a very rich word, full of meaning. Some people think repentance just means being sorry for something they've done wrong. And some people are only sorry when they get caught! Repentance is really much more: it is a godly kind of sorry. It is a TURNING AWAY from something and a TURNING TO something. Christian repentance means turning away from our old sinful life and turning to Christ and His life.



For thought or discussion: What events do you throw a party for?



Digging into the Word: After this youngest son got himself into a sinful mess, what happened in verse 17?

After speaking to himself, what did the younger son do in the first part of verse 20 to make thing right?

Who does the father in the parable represent? How does God feel when we repent and come back to Him?



Life Application: Do you think the young man wanted to go back to eating with the pigs after he returned to the father? Should you leave your "pig slop" days behind also?

Questions for reflection...

Describe your life without God (past or present.)

What has Christ done for you?

What must you do to be called a child of God?

What old sins will you/have you left behind to follow Christ?

Bible Study

Victorious Living



Chorus

*Oh, victory in Jesus,
my Savior forever
He sought me, and He bought me with His redeeming blood
He loved me ere I knew Him and all my love is due Him
He plunged me to victory
beneath the cleansing flood.*

Oh, victory in Jesus, my Savior forever

KEY VERSE: (John 16:33 NIV) I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

BIBLE STUDY: (Rom 8:31-39 NIV) What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? {32} He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? {33} Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. {34} Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. {35} Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? {36} As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." {37} No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. {38} For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, {39} neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Some people have the mistaken idea that giving their hearts to Jesus will make all their problems go away. While becoming a Christian does not remove anybody from this world or its problems, it does, however, give us the power to overcome sin and triumph over the difficulties of life. This is because we do not face any of these things alone. We have Jesus "interceding for us," or pleading our case, much as a lawyer or a patient advocate would stand up for us, humanly speaking. Only no human advocate can do for us what Jesus can!



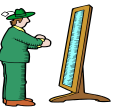
For thought or discussion: If you had a magic wand that you could wave and make any problem disappear, what problem or situation would you remove?



Digging in the Word: How do we know that "God is for us"? (v. 32)

What is Jesus doing for us "at the right hand of God"? (v. 34) What does this mean?

What things cannot separate us from God's love? (v. 35-39)



Life application: God is "for you." Jesus is "interceding for you." Should there be anything in life that defeats you? What past defeats can God turn into victory for you?

He sought me, and He bought me with His redeeming blood

KEY VERSE: (Eph 1:7 NIV) In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

BIBLE STUDY: (Hosea 1:2 NIV) When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD."

(Hosea 2:19-23 NIV) I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. {20} I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD. {21} "In that day I will respond," declares the LORD-- "I will respond to the skies, and they will respond to the earth; {22} and the earth will respond to the grain, the new wine and oil, and they will respond to Jezreel. {23} I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one. ' I will say to those called 'Not my people, ' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'"

(Hosea 3:1-3 NIV) The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes." {2} So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. {3} Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you."

Redeem is a very old Bible word used in relation to buying and selling. Redemption was often used to purchase the release of a convicted criminal. It is also related to the custom of buying something back which formerly belonged to the purchaser but had passed into the ownership of another. There is no better picture of what God has done for us through Christ! We were sinners, unfaithful to Him, but He purchased us through the blood of Christ. He shows us lived-out redemption through the Old Testament prophet, Hosea, and his unfaithful wife, Gomer.



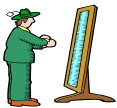
For thought or discussion: Have you ever pawned something and then bought it back from pawn? How is this similar to redemption? How is it different?



Digging in the Word: To what does God compare the sin of idolatry, or worshipping other gods? (1:2)

Does God desire the redemption of His sinful people?(2:19-23) What words in this passage show God's feelings?

What does Hosea do to redeem his unfaithful wife? (3:1-3)



Life application: Hosea bought back Gomer with some silver and some grain. With what did God buy you back? Take some time to reflect on this very expensive purchase. How much must God have loved you!

He loved me ere I knew Him and all my love is due Him

KEY VERSE: (Rom 5:8 NIV) But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

BIBLE STUDY: (John 14:15-21 NIV) If you love me, you will obey what I command. {16} And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- {17} the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. {18} I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. {19} Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. {20} On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. {21} Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.

(John 14: 25-27) All this I have spoken while still with you. {26} But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. {27} Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Before, or “ere”, we knew Him, God loved us. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. While redemption was a free gift for us, it was not cheap—it cost Christ everything. We owe Christ a debt of love and obedience in return. The good news is that we don’t have to love, obey, and serve Him in our own strength and power. He has given us a very special power to help us live this life victoriously for Him.



For thought or discussion: How do you think a parent feels when his or her child says, “I love you” in one breath and then disobeys a moment later? Has this ever happened to you?



Digging into the Word: How many times in this passage does Jesus connect “love” and “obedience”?

Jesus says the Father will send us a “Counselor” to help us. What other names does He call the Counselor? (v. 17, 26)

What will this Counselor do for us? (v. 26)



Life application: Christ expects His children to love and obey Him, but He did not leave us orphans. He sent us the Holy Spirit. What are some areas in your life where the Holy Spirit can help you have victory?

*He plunged me to victory
beneath the cleansing flood.*

KEY VERSE: (1 Cor 15:57 NIV) But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

BIBLE STUDY: (Rom 6:4-11 NIV) We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. {5} If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. {6} For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- {7} because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. {8} Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. {9} For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. {10} The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. {11} In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

This part of the song contains pictures of baptism, through words like “plunge,” and “cleansing flood.” Baptism in the New Testament has several meanings. Water symbolizes cleansing, and water baptism, a spiritual cleansing and a changed life. Baptism is also symbolic of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and in some sense being “buried” and “raised” with Him. (Colossians 2:12). Just as Christ was victorious even over death, we will also be as we identify fully with Him!



For thought or discussion: Compare the way you feel before and after a bath. How long do you feel so fresh and clean?



Digging into the Word: Is the kind of baptism that is written about here supposed to be a temporary kind of change, (like a bath) or a permanent one? (v. 4-7)

How many times are “death” words used in this passage? (buried, crucified, sin, death, dead, died)

How many times are “life” words used in this passage? (raised, resurrection, live, life, alive)



Life Application: What kind of words best describe you— death words or life words? Is Christ able to give you real, victorious life?

Questions for reflection...

From this study, reflect on the way God feels about you?

Who can you go to for help when you are struggling to obey Christ?

What kinds of things try to pull you away from your new life back to the way of sin and death?

Which of our Bible study scriptures in this section could you memorize to help you in times of need? Choose a whole passage or part of one and work on it this week.

Bible Study

Healing



Verse 2

*I heard about His healing,
of His cleansing power revealing
How He made the lame to walk again
and caused the blind to see
And then I cried, Dear Jesus
come and heal my broken spirit
And somehow Jesus came and brought
to me the victory.*

I heard about His healing, of His cleansing power revealing

KEY VERSE: (Mat 8:16-17 NIV) When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. {17} This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases."

BIBLE STUDY: (Mark 2:3-12 NIV) Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. {4} Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. {5} When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." {6} Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, {7} "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" {8} Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? {9} Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? {10} But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins" He said to the paralytic, {11} "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." {12} He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Needy people are blessed—it's easier for them to recognize their need. When life is going well and people think they are doing fine, they may fail to get their real needs met. Desperation drives people to find help, and Jesus is the best helper there is! If you need healing, whether it be physical, spiritual, or emotional, then rejoice! The help you need is available in Christ.



For thought or discussion: Which type of needs (physical, spiritual, or emotional) seem to be the most pressing to people in general? To you?



Digging in the Word: What action in this passage shows desperation?

What did Jesus say to the paralyzed man in verse 5? What do you think people expected him to say?

Who were the “good” people who did not like what Jesus said? Did they verbalize their disapproval out loud?

Why did Jesus say “your sins are forgiven” instead of “take your mat and walk”? (v. 10)



Life application: This passage connects healing, forgiving of sins, and revealing what is in men's hearts. How important is being honest with God when you need His healing touch?

How He made the lame to walk again and caused the blind to see

KEY VERSE: (Mat 15:30 NIV) Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them.

BIBLE STUDY: (Luke 4:16-21 NIV) He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. {17} The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: {18} "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, {19} to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." {20} Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, {21} and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus is for us! This is a wonderful truth to think about. He really cares about the needs of people. Some seem to have the idea that only spiritual needs are truly important. After all, this body is only temporary, and this world is not really our home, we're "just passing through," as the old song says. But Jesus is interested in the here and now and the pressing needs of our lives. We can count on Him to show us the same compassion that He showed to people when He walked this earth.



For thought or discussion: Are there things in your life that you think might be too small or unimportant to bother Jesus with?



Digging in the Word: What Old Testament prophet did Jesus quote from? (v. 17)

What five things does Jesus say He has been sent to do, in fulfillment of prophecy? (v. 18-19)



Life application: Which of these five prophetic activities speaks to you the most at this time in your life?

And then I cried, Dear Jesus come and heal my broken spirit

KEY VERSE: (Mat 12:20 NIV) A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory.

BIBLE STUDY: (Mat 11:25-30 NIV) At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. {26} Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure. {27} "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. {28} "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. {29} Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. {30} For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Some people are afraid to go to God when they are hurting, when they are burdened, or when they have sinned. They have the mistaken idea that God is just waiting for them to mess up so He can take pleasure in punishing them. That's the opposite of the real truth: God is tender-hearted and merciful to His children. His desire is to restore them without wounding them. He is not a "taskmaster," but a loving father.



For thought or discussion: What was your own father like? All human fathers have failings. Have you ever unknowingly thought of your Heavenly Father as having your earthly father's faults?



Digging into the Word: What does God want us to be like? (v. 25)

What does Jesus desire to give to His weary and burdened children? (v. 28)

What do you think this "rest for you souls" (v. 29) really is?



Life application: A "yoke" is attached to a farm animal for the purpose of pulling a load. Will Jesus give you a larger load than you are able to pull with His help? (v. 30)

*And somehow Jesus came and brought
to me the victory.*

KEY VERSE: (Mark 1:41 NIV) Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"

BIBLE STUDY: (Mat 14:22-33 NIV) Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. {23} After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, {24} but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. {25} During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. {26} When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. {27} But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." {28} "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." {29} "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. {30} But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" {31} Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" {32} And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. {33} Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Sometimes it is hard to define the ways Jesus brings us victory. Sometimes it's a peace that comes in the midst of turmoil. Sometimes it's a truly miraculous deliverance from danger or disease. Sometimes He uses His Word, the Bible. Sometimes He uses someone else as His instrument of help, healing, and victory. No matter what method He uses, He always reaches down for us when we call up to Him.



For thought or discussion: What words come to mind when you think about the word "drowning?"



Digging into the Word: How did the disciples feel when they saw someone walking on the water? Do you think they momentarily forgot about the storm?

Who had bold faith in the passage? Was that faith rewarded? What happened when fear crept in?

Did Jesus let Peter sink because his faith wavered? What did Jesus do? (v. 31)



Life Application: Do you have to exercise perfect faith in order for Jesus to help you in your time of need?

Questions for reflection...

What small or unimportant needs should you be bringing to Jesus?

What big needs are pressing on you right now in your life?

What might God be asking you to do to show that you trust Him with your life and your needs?

Do you think Jesus is able to “bring the victory?”

Bible Study

Hope



Verse 3

*I heard about a mansion
He has built for me in glory
And I heard about the streets of gold
Beyond the crystal sea.
About the angels singing
And the old redemption story
And some sweet day I'll sing up there
The song of victory.*

I heard about a mansion He has built for me in glory

KEY VERSE: (John 14:2 KJV) In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

BIBLE STUDY: (2 Cor 4:16-18 NIV) Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. {17} For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. {18} So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

(2 Cor 5:1-5 NIV) Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. {2} Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, {3} because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. {4} For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. {5} Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

We don't know for sure what our heavenly dwelling place will be like. The songwriter uses the term "mansion," from John 14:2. Other places in scripture assure us that the best part of our heavenly home will be that we are with God in His dwelling place, and that even our spirits will have a new home, a heavenly body as well. This is the hope we have as Christians: God is preparing glorious things for us, things we can't even imagine.



For thought or discussion: What kinds of things tend to make you discouraged, or lose heart?



Digging in the Word: What words does the scripture writer use to describe our troubles? (4:17)

What "outweighs" all these troubles? (4:17) On what should we fix our eyes? (4:18)

(5:1-4) What does the scripture writer call our physical bodies?

What has God given to us as a "guarantee" of what is to come? (5:5)



Life application: When you are in physical pain, when life is tough, does it help you to remember that these things are temporary and God has glorious things in store?

*And I heard about the streets of gold
Beyond the crystal sea.*

KEY VERSE: (Rev 21:21 NIV) The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.

BIBLE STUDY: (Rev 21:27 NIV) Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

(Rev 22:1-5 NIV) Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb {2} down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. {3} No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. {4} They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. {5} There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

It is impossible for us to grasp the reality of Heaven. No words, no matter how descriptive, could truly capture what Heaven will be like. But as limited as we human beings are, this passage in Revelation gives a glorious peek at just a bit of Heaven. What will be there? Beautiful sights; loved ones who served God and went before us; but most of all the throne of God!



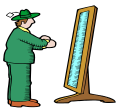
For thought or discussion: Have you ever said, “the first thing I want to do when I get to heaven is...?” What did you say on that occasion? Do you still feel that way?



Digging in the Word: Will everyone be in heaven? Who will be allowed to enter? (21:27)

List some of the things John, the writer, tells us about Heaven?

Compare this passage to Genesis chapters 1-3. Do you see any similarities?



Life application: Which of these facts about Heaven is most meaningful to you personally? Why?

About the angels singing And the old redemption story

KEY VERSE: (Heb 12:22 NIV) But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly

BIBLE STUDY: (Rev 5 1-2 NIV) Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. {2} And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?"

(Rev 5: 6-12) Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. {7} He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. {8} And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. {9} And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. {10} You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." {11} Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. {12} In a loud voice they sang: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

We hear a lot about angels. They seem to be popular. In fact, some people even worship them! But that is completely contrary to their function. They were created to worship, not to be worshipped. This is true for us as well as for angels: we were made to worship and serve God, and we're never truly happy until we fulfill our purpose. In heaven we'll be continually praising. Right here, on earth, we get to practice!



For thought or discussion: When you hear the word "worship," what do you think of?



Digging into the Word: Revelation uses many pictures, some unfamiliar to us. What might the sealed scroll with writing on both sides be? (5:1)

What "creature" was worthy to open the scroll? (5:6-9) Who does this represent? How do we know? (5:9)



Life application: Try to imagine the scene: people from every tribe and language and nation, plus "thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand" angels. Will you be in that crowd?

*And some sweet day I'll sing up there
The song of victory.*

KEY VERSE: (1 Cor 15:57-58 NIV) But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. {58} Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

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

(Rev 7:13-17 NIV) Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?" {14} I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. {15} Therefore, "they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. {16} Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. {17} For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

When we are tempted to give up; when we think temptations are too great; when we think the enemy, Satan, fights too hard; when we think physical pain is unbearable—stand firm! The Bible says, "Your labor in the Lord is not in vain." Remember the things that God has prepared for you, eternal things rather than only temporary. Our hope will be rewarded, and God will "give us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."



For thought or discussion: What does hope mean to you?



Digging into the Word: What were the multitudes wearing? What were they holding? (7:9)
What do you think these represent?

What will God spread over His redeemed ones? (7:15) What might this represent? (7:16)

What will God wipe away? (7:17)



Life Application: Do you intend to be in this victorious scene?

Questions for reflection...

What does “Christian hope” mean to you”

Do you know other people who need this hope in their lives?

How might you share this hope with others?

Bible Study

Worshiping God



Psalm 33:1-3

Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him.

Praise the LORD with the harp; make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.

Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.

*We were created to render **WORSHIP** to God alone.*

KEY VERSES: (Deuteronomy 6:13) Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name.
(Exodus 20:3) “You shall have no other gods before me.”

BIBLE STUDY: (Romans 1:18-22) ²¹ For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵ They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

*We were created for the purpose of worshiping God, and our priority is to be Him alone. The scriptures tell us that God is a jealous God. He wants all of us or none of us. One way we show Him our devotion is through **WORSHIP**.*



For thought or discussion: How would it make you feel if that special person in your life was always noticing the opposite sex, and making appreciative remarks about someone other than you?



Digging in the Word: In Romans, for what was God’s glory exchanged? (1:23)

What was exchanged for the truth? (1:25)

What happened with their worship for God? (1:25)



Life application: What kinds of things can we find ourselves placing before God?

How do we perform worship?

KEY VERSE: John 4: ²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.

BIBLE STUDY: (Psalms 47)

¹ Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.

² How awesome is the LORD Most High, the great King over all the earth!

³ He subdued nations under us, peoples under our feet.

⁴ He chose our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob, whom he loved. *Selah*

⁵ God has ascended amid shouts of joy, the LORD amid the sounding of trumpets

⁶ Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises.

⁷ For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise

⁸ God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne

⁹ The nobles of the nations assemble as the people of the God of Abraham, for the kings of the earth belong to God; he is greatly exalted.

We can worship in many ways: testimonies, scripture reading and scripture praying, instrumental music, special songs, proclamation of the Word, giving of tithes and offerings, and even dance as the Psalmist did. Still others worship through meditation on His Word and through prayer. There is corporate worship and private worship time. Each of these have their place and some will appeal to you more than others. What matters most is that we are loving God from our hearts.



For thought or discussion: How do you feel when someone important to you (your boss, your teacher, your parent) tells you that you've done a good job?



Digging in the Word: What are some reasons from this Psalm that we should praise God?

What ways are we told to praise God in Psalms 47?



Life application: Which of these ways would you feel comfortable using to praise God?

Worshipping God Leads to Victory

KEY VERSE: (Joshua 6:16) The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpet blast, Joshua commanded the people, Shout! For the Lord has given you the city!

BIBLE STUDY: (Act 16:19-34) ¹⁹ When the owners of the slave girl realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities. ²⁰ They brought them before the magistrates and said, “These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar ²¹ by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.” ²² The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. ²³ After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. ²⁴ Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. ²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody’s chains came loose. ²⁷ The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. ²⁸ But Paul shouted, “Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!” ²⁹ The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

Many times in the Old Testament, the children of Israel would be led into battle by the choir and band. They would go into battle with worship leading the way, praising God for all He’s done and for the victory He is about to give. Shouts of praise brought down the walls of Jericho. Praise is our number one offensive weapon in spiritual battle.



For thought or discussion: Do you have a favorite song that lifts your load when you’re having a bad day?



Digging in the Word: Even in the middle of their despair and physical pain what did Paul and Silas do?

What happened to Paul and Silas because of their worship and praise meeting?

What happened to the jailer because of their worship and praise meeting?



Life application: How might worship lead the way to victory in your life situations?

What happens when we WORSHIP God ?

KEY VERSE: (Isaiah 6:3) ³ And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

BIBLE STUDY: (Psalms 29:1-11) ¹ Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. ² Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness. ³ The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD thunders over the mighty waters. ⁴ The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic. ⁵ The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. ⁶ He makes Lebanon skip like a calf, Sirion like a young wild ox. ⁷ The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning. ⁸ The voice of the LORD shakes the desert; the LORD shakes the Desert of Kadesh. ⁹ The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare. And in his temple all cry, “Glory!” ¹⁰ The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever. ¹¹ The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.

Other Scripture to read: (I Chronicles 16:29-34)

Worship is powerful, when directed to the one who has all power! When we worship through testimonies, scripture, musicals, special songs, proclaiming the Word and giving of our tithes and offerings, we are actually doing it to an audience of one: God alone. When we worship God we are offering Him an invitation to join us. Our worship, in whatever form, helps to lead others to the throne of God by focusing on HIM and not ourselves. Worship takes our full focus.

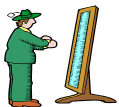


For thought or discussion: Ascribe means to give credit or praise where it is due. Have you ever taken the credit or praise that belonged to someone else? Has anyone ever done this to you?



Digging in the Word: How many times are we told to “ascribe” glory/praise to God?

What happened because the people were giving God the glory and praise that was rightfully due Him?



Life application: What are some things God might do in your life if you gave priority to worshipping Him daily?



Study Notes



Study Notes



Study Notes