

WitnessKit 3
God and Religions
Class 14
Integrating the Worldviews of the
Old and New Testaments,
Guided by the Book
Letter to the Hebrews
in the New Testament

I Thessalonians 5:21



But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.

From *WitnessKit 1*: The Quest to Define the Ultimate Beginning

We learned that **only** monotheism answers the basic questions

- ▣ of existence

- ▣ and purpose

- ▣ and the existence of the human soul.

We determined that monotheism is true, **by the convergence of evidence from many directions.**

Preliminary Conclusions

Only **One God** could be *infinite*—
filling all of heaven and earth.

God

*who is both **infinite***
*and **the source of all that is good***
gives us answers
to the most basic longings of our souls.

We are ready to pursue spiritual truth within
monotheism.

Three Monotheistic Religions



Christianity

Judaism

Islam

All declare that God is One God.

The New Testament marked a turning point in the **history** of religion, based upon the credentials of Jesus Christ. But the New Testament did **not** proclaim a different religion from the Old Testament. The Letter to the Hebrews shows that the God of the Old Testament **is the same God** as the God of the New Testament.

Why is this important?

Ezekiel chapter 14 demonstrates that God **requires** obedience to the first commandment of the Ten Commandments: “**You shall have no other gods before Me.**” He says that no one can expect His guidance if they have other gods in place of Him in their hearts. In fact, He says this is an individual matter not even available for intercessory prayer by anyone else. Each **individual** is responsible to serve **ONLY** the true and living God. So it is of the utmost importance to search for the **TRUE GOD** and to serve Him only.

The Letter to the Hebrews

Integrates Biblical Judaism and Biblical Christianity. It is a treasure for understanding both major parts of the Bible. Its truths help us recognize the True God. Its truths help us understand God's purposes in historical events.

To study the Letter to the Hebrews, you will need these materials.

- ❑ A good translation of the Bible, such as New American Standard, New King James, or New International Version, or one in your heart language, and a notebook.
- ❑ (The third monotheistic religion in the world is Islam. A recommended textbook comparing Biblical Christianity and Islam is *Answering Islam, The Crescent in the Light of the Cross*, by Norman Geisler, et al. It gives a theological overview of Islam while defending the Bible. The first half of that book presents an overview of major topics, and the second half defends Biblical truth. Each overview chapter has a matching defense chapter in the second half of the book, and topics are studied well in that sequence.)



Studying the *Letter to the Hebrews*

Helps us build an integrated worldview for the purpose of Bible study.

Course Organization:

The slides are like a lecture, followed by homework for each lesson.



The homework does not match the slides in time order. Rather, homework “spirals” through the material, so that sometimes you will be working ahead of the slides, and other times you will review the slides in the homework. This method makes learning **EASIER** to remember and use.

The homework includes devotional Bible study, to balance “collecting the facts” with opportunity for personal growth.

- The slides only cover the high points of the study. Please do the homework!

Why do homework?

- ❑ Learning is maximized by TIME ON TASK. Reading, listening, writing, and speaking all reinforce learning. You can test the slides for accuracy by doing the homework. God loves His students' testing for truth. See Acts 17:10-12.
- ❑ God may have planned another test over the materials according to His purpose. He may send someone across your path who has a different worldview.
- ❑ If you put the answers to homework questions in your own words, that effort will help you in future conversations.
- ❑ If you take time to write down answers, that will help you remember the ideas.

A Biblical Worldview

- *Biblical Judaism and Biblical Christianity* both have a Biblical worldview.
- *Traditional Judaism and Traditional Christianity* have **drifted in diverse directions** from that worldview and have **drifted apart**. Going back to the source can help us draw closer to each other.
 - Because the Bible really is **God's Word**, His message to us, we want to see the Biblical faith and ideas we have in common.
 - We will use the Letter to the Hebrews to do that.

A Biblical Worldview

Going back to the Sourcebook—the Bible—gives us insights about each faith.

The Bible is the standard for comparison—not only between religions—but also for comparing **modern** versions of each faith with the **original**.

The Bible contains the truths we hold in common, even when we are from different locations where different denominations are active.

In our first WitnessKit course we already showed that the

the source documents are valid both for Biblical Christianity and Biblical Judaism. We know that the Hebrew Scriptures are valid as communication from God. We know that the Greek Scriptures are valid as communication from God. That means automatically that Biblical Christianity and Biblical Judaism have much in common.

Islam accepts the New Testament ***as holy writing***. Islam does not give the New Testament the same weight as the Qur'an.

However, Islam gives the New Testament more weight

Than the Old Testament. The *Letter to the Hebrews* in the New Testament is an appropriate way for a Muslim to understand the Old Testament. It is a Letter that bridges between ideas, and it is holy according to their own leadership. **So we can all benefit from this study,** whether Christian, or Jewish, or Muslim, or another faith, or even no faith.



In case you have never studied the Bible...

The Old Testament was written, for the most part, in the Hebrew language, and the New Testament was written in Greek. The Hebrew Scriptures center around God's plan for the family of Abraham, and the land of Israel, and the Greek Scriptures expand the core concepts into **God's plan for all people.**

From our earlier WitnessKit classes,
we already know that both the

Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek Scriptures give the same answers to the basic questions of why the universe exists and why people's lives have meaning.

They give the same definitions of the alienation people experience between themselves and God, and between each other.

They have the same belief in the existence and value of the human soul.

Both value human life.

Course Organization: Notice the outline for the lesson.

When you see a slide in the next pattern, it will tell you the direction we will be going in our class.

We can begin to compare Biblical

Biblical Comparison

Christianity and Biblical Judaism from the pages of the Bible.

1. **Ephesians 1 & 2—Substantial Unity**
2. Hebrews 1—Belief in Messiah
3. **The theme of adoption into God's family**
4. The theme of covenants between people and God
5. **Universals and particulars**
6. The necessity to avoid stereotyping God.
7. Individual Justice rather than Group Retaliation.

Begin the Study by reading

Chapter 1 of the ***Letter to the Hebrews*** in the Bible. Then read it **twice more**, to fix the words in mind.

Now go to **Ephesians chapter 1 and 2** and read those chapters once.

The next slides will be clearer if you do this first.

Ephesians 1 and 2: Substantial Unity

Let's read portions of both chapters straight through together.

... ³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ* *⁴ *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,*

* (The word *Christ* means *Messiah*)

Ephesians 1 and 2: Substantial Unity

that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved...

Ephesians 1 and 2: Substantial Unity

⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ ...

¹⁰ that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ(Messiah), both which are in heaven and which are on earth-...

Ephesians 1 and 2: Substantial Unity

¹³ In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 1 and 2: Substantial Unity

- Chapter 2...⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.*
- ¹⁰ *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

Ephesians 1 and 2: Substantial Unity

- ¹¹ *Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles* in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—*
- ¹² *that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*
- ** Gentiles means Non-Jews. Notice that the author says “once.”*

Ephesians 1 and 2: Substantial Unity

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

Ephesians 1 and 2: Substantial Unity

- ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.*
- ¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.*
- ¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,*

Ephesians 1 and 2: Substantial Unity

- ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets,
Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone,*
- 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.*

Big Ideas in these Chapters

- Ephesians chapter 1 sounds specific for Christianity.
- Chapter 2 describes the action of Christ in chapter 1 as ***bringing down the wall*** between Israel and the church. A physical wall in the Herodian Temple compound separated the Gentiles at the time *The Letter to the Hebrews* was written. *Ephesians* uses that wall as a metaphor in this chapter.
- From the first two chapters of Ephesians, God sees the two faiths as an overlapping continuum. We should endeavor to keep the wall down that He brought down. I believe He is disappointed and grieved by human efforts (on all sides) to rebuild that wall. It is easier to see division than unity, but we need to realize our mutual points of agreement.

List some other Big Ideas

You see in Ephesians chapters 1 and 2 in your notebook.

Big Ideas in these Chapters

Early in the New Testament, almost all believers in Jesus were Jewish. They considered themselves both Christians and Jews. I believe it is fine with God for people to choose to be in both faiths at the same time, and we mere humans should not object, because

1. According to the Scriptures, the wall is down, and
2. Biblically, the two are not mutually exclusive, **once Messiah's identity is understood in both Testaments.**
3. The two faiths did not start out as separate.

Overlapping Continuum

That approach resolves some of issues in the Hebrew Scriptures that are

- instructions for Israel in perpetuity,
- but that the Greek Scriptures do not require for Gentile Christians.

Even if that idea is impractical, due to the human tendency to build the wall back, it is a helpful idea for thinking about the issues.

What does Ephesians chapter 2 imply about God's wishes for the two faiths? Does He wish for there to be any enmity between us?

“He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,”

In God's purposes, there should be no hostility between Christians and Jews. We should try **never** to rebuild that wall.

One way to keep that wall down:
Remember ideas we have in common.

A blue square is positioned on the left side of the slide, and a yellow rectangle is positioned to its right, containing the main title text.

The Ideas we hold in common

Give us substantial unity.

We can begin to compare Biblical

Christianity and Biblical Judaism from the pages of the Bible.

1. Ephesians 1 & 2—Substantial Unity
2. Hebrews 1—Belief in Messiah
3. The theme of adoption into God's family
4. The theme of covenants between people and God
5. Universals and particulars
6. The necessity to avoid stereotyping God.
7. Individual Justice rather than Group Retaliation.

Truths Held
by Both
Faiths

Who is Messiah?

- Messiah's identity is tremendously important. Both Biblical Judaism and Christianity believe in the idea of *Messiah*—an ultimate Savior or Deliverer sent from God.
- It is important to God that we learn who the true Messiah is. **God does not want us to believe in false messiahs.** Truth matters to God.
- When Christians and Jews differ about Who Messiah Is—we can stand together on a foundation of searching for truth about Him.

Who is Messiah?

- These first chapters of Hebrews refer to the Hebrew Scriptures extensively (as they were translated into Greek in the Septuagint)—to present their evidence about who Messiah is.
- The Greek Scriptures present Jesus Christ as Messiah. We will look at the quotes to check out that claim. The word *Christ* means *Messiah* in Greek.

Both sets of Scripture

Present both Law and Grace.

I do **not** believe the Old Testament believers were saved from their sins **by** keeping the Law—even though keeping the Law demonstrated believing God's word—because no one can keep the Law of God **perfectly**.

They were saved from their sins by faith, just as God accounted Abraham's faith as righteousness.

God is the only One who can bridge the righteousness gap for us.

Abraham was not a perfect human being, as his biography shows. He **NEEDED** God's righteousness—given to him in response to his faith.

The *Letter to the Hebrews* explains this idea.

Some parts of the New Testament

Seem to say that the Old Testament believers were saved from their sins by keeping the Law, but those passages are actually emphasizing the difficulty of keeping the Law and the need for a better answer than that idea.

- Clearing up this difficulty is one of the benefits of studying *Hebrews*.
- *Faith is a matter of the heart, and so is righteousness.*

Example from Isaiah 50:10-51:2

- *“Who is among you that fears the LORD, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD and rely upon his God....Listen to Me, you who pursue righteousness, who seek the LORD.... Look to Abraham your father....”*
- God reported that Abraham’s faith was accounted to him for righteousness, in Genesis 15:6.

Truth matters. Truth is not always easy to discern.

- ❑ Proper faith will be faith in what is TRUE.
- ❑ Truth matters BECAUSE people matter. Truth matters because part of being created in God's image is being created as eternal souls.
- ❑ Truth needs to be spoken without enmity, in brotherly / sisterly kindness and compassion.
- ❑ Sometimes extreme hurts hinder communication, so that kinship needs to be established.

Hebrews 1:1 (New Testament)

“God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”

Micah 5:2 (Old Testament) *“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrata, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”*

Both Testaments say [Messiah is eternal from eternity past.](#)

The Hebrew Scriptures are valid communication from God.
Messiah's words are also valid communication from God.

Messiah was there at the creation.

Isaiah 48:16 (Old Testament) ***“Come near to Me, listen to this; From the first I have not spoken in secret, from the time it (the founding of the earth and spreading out of the heavens from verse 13) took place, **I was there.** And now, the Lord GOD has sent **Me**, and His Spirit.”***

Hebrews 1:3

“And He (Messiah) is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high; having become as much better than the angels as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.”

Because Jesus Christ came in human flesh, yet without sin, He was able to be the perfect image of God, without the evil brought on by humanity's fall into sin. He was present as Creator, and upholds creation, and He became incarnate (took human form) to begin the healing of creation.

As humanity's fall into sin marred creation,

Messiah's purification of sin began the healing of creation.

That healing begins one human at a time, with an inward transformation.

2 Corinthians 5:17 describes that transformation:
“Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. The old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”

Messiah's Identity

- The next few verses of Hebrews chapter 1 are direct quotations from the Psalms (Old Testament) regarding the identity of Messiah as **above the angels**. We will look at the chapter and the sources for each quote, in two columns.
- It is a good idea to read the verses before and after each source quote.
- (But first, you should have already read all of Hebrews chapter 1.) Then begin the next slides.

Messiah's Identity

- Many passages in the Hebrew Scriptures show that Messiah is more than a mere human.
- The author of the Letter to the Hebrews **rules out the possibility that Messiah would be one of the angels.**
- That leaves Deity for His identity.

It was a valid question as to whether Messiah was The Angel of the LORD.

Some passages in the Old Testament reveal God speaking through The Angel of the LORD, such as **Genesis 18:1-33 and 19:1**, where three angels, one being The Angel of the LORD, appear to Abraham. Another example is found in **Judges 13:1-23**, where The Angel of the LORD appeared to Manoah and his wife (but not in that order). *If the Angel of the LORD is Messiah, remember that angel means messenger in addition to meaning a special form of created beings. If the Angel of the LORD is Messiah, He is not a created being, but has always been alive.*

The passages in the Psalms quoted by the author of Hebrews reveal that Messiah is more than an angel, and different from the special order of created beings called angels.

Hebrews 1:5 & References

*To which of the angels
did He ever say,
“*THOU ART MY
SON, TODAY I
HAVE BEGOTTEN
THEE?” And again,
“**I WILL BE A
FATHER TO HIM,
AND HE SHALL BE
A SON TO ME.”*

*Psalm 2:7—in regard
to Messiah as both
Judge and Refuge

**2 Samuel 7:14—in
regard to the Son of
David, Messiah-King

**Psalm 89:26-27—in
regard to Messiah-
King

Hebrews 1:6 & References

And when He again brings the firstborn into the world He says, “AND LET ALL THE ANGELS OF GOD WORSHIP HIM.”

(Other passages in the Bible report people attempting to worship angels, and the angels **always refuse** to be worshiped. Only God is to be worshiped. So Messiah must be God with us.)

(The word **again** in Hebrews 1:6 shows that the author knew this passage was about Messiah's future return as King.)

Psalm 97:5-7 When Messiah returns to the world and the mountains melt, all the *elohim* or angels are commanded to worship Him. The Greek Septuagint translates the word *elohim* as **angels**. Sometimes it is translated “holy ones.”

Sometimes modern translations use the word *gods* in this passage, but that is not correct. It should be translated *angels* or *holy ones*. The context tells us which translation is proper.

Hebrews 1:7-8 & References

*And of the angels He says,
“*WHO MAKES HIS
ANGELS WINDS, AND
HIS MINISTERS A
FLAME OF FIRE.” But
of the Son He says,
“**THY THRONE, O
GOD, IS FOREVER
AND EVER. THE
RIGHTEOUS SCEPTER
IS THE SCEPTER OF
HIS KINGDOM.”*

*Psalm 104:4,
Messenger-angels,
same root word as
Malachi

*Isaiah 10:17—in regard
to supernatural help for
Israel against Assyria

**Psalm 45:6 in regard to
Messiah as King who
rides to rescue the
honest and meek and
righteous of the earth.

Hebrews 1:9 & References

*THOU HAST LOVED
RIGHTEOUSNESS
AND HATED
LAWLESSNESS;
THEREFORE GOD,
THY GOD, HATH
ANOINTED THEE
WITH THE OIL OF
JOY ABOVE THY
COMPANIONS.*

→ Psalm 45:7 in regard to Messiah as returning King to rescue the meek and honest and righteous of the earth.—Psalm 45:3-4, Isaiah 11:4-5. Messiah is filled with joy.

Hebrews 1:10-12 & References

*And THOU LORD, IN
THE BEGINNING
DIDST LAY THE
FOUNDATION OF
THE EARTH, AND
THE HEAVENS ARE
THE WORK OF THY
HANDS; THEY
WILL PERISH, BUT
THOU REMAINEST;*

Psalm 102:25-27

This passage emphasizes that Messiah is eternal and involved in creation—and that implies His Deity—He is LORD.

Hebrews 1:10-12 & References

□ ***AND THEY ALL
WILL BECOME
OLD AS A
GARMENT, AND
AS A MANTLE
THOU WILT ROLL
THEM UP; AS A
GARMENT THEY
WILL ALSO BE
CHANGED,***

Earlier verses in Psalm 102 emphasize that the LORD will have a time when He is King in Jerusalem-King of all the peoples and nations. That King is Messiah-King. **He will outlast earth itself.**

Hebrews 1:10-12 & References

***BUT THOU ART
THE SAME, AND
THY YEARS WILL
NOT COME TO
AN END.”***

In particular, Verse 16 of Psalm 102 reports that the LORD will appear in His glory at the time of His Kingdom.

Hebrews 1:13 & References

But to which of the angels has He ever said, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND UNTIL I MAKE THINE ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR THY FEET”?

Psalm 110:1 *The LORD says to my (David's) Lord; “Sit at My right hand until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.”*

Messiah is King David's Son (Descendant through Mary's lineage) and also his Lord.

Hebrews 1:14 & Comments

Are they (angels) *not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?*

Here we see that Messiah has a **universal task** of saving the meek and honest and righteous of the earth for eternity, saving them from His enemies, as compared to the **specific tasks** angels accomplish.

Application

- Hebrews 2:1 *“For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.”*
- It is tremendously important to pay close attention to all the Scriptures, in order to understand them correctly. Truth matters. We must cling to truth.
- Matthew 7:13-14—The way is broad that leads to destruction, narrow and difficult **to find** that leads to salvation.

The First Advent of Messiah

Made changes!

Everyone needed to study the Hebrew Scriptures in light of the new knowledge. Suddenly, many passages began to fall into place that had been mysterious and difficult to understand before. The author of Hebrews is quoting some of those passages.

- Hebrews 2:1 *“For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.”*

Is the author of Hebrews saying

To merely focus on the events of the New Testament and forget about the Old Testament?

If a church does that, is it following the directions of Hebrews 2:1?



No.

God wants us to study the entire book, and not drift away from it.

There was a danger

of **drifting away from the Scriptures themselves** if the new knowledge was not put into proper understanding.

The Hebrew Scriptures become **easier** to understand in the light of the Greek Scriptures. There is no need to drift away from them. They make sense.

Whenever churches or synagogues drift away from the scriptures, they also drift apart from each other.

Romans 15:8-9

- *“For I say that Christ (Messiah) has become a servant to the Jewish people on behalf of the truth of God, to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy.”*
- Jesus Christ’s **fulfillment of promises** in the Hebrew Scriptures makes those Scriptures possible to believe today.
- The author of Hebrews treats the Hebrew Scriptures as **true and reliable**. He obviously studied them in great detail.

Benefits

- Belief in the New Testament strengthens belief in the Old Testament.
- Promises about Messiah can be revealed as true promises, which are difficult to understand without Jesus' work as **suffering Messiah**.
- Promises regarding His kingdom are seen as still future, with this additional bonus: **His kingdom begins in human hearts now—if we are willing to receive Him as our own King.**

Application

- *¹ Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ² For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³ how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?* Hebrews 2:1-3 (ESV)
- Finding the truth about all this has implications for eternity. What could be more important than that?

Application

- Consider the picture presented by the **Suffering Messiah**—that **God-with-us, Immanuel**, was willing to **take** all the evil and suffering of humankind upon Himself, and die with it, in order to defeat Evil, and in order to defeat death. **His suffering was real.** (Read Isaiah 53, and Genesis 3 in the Old Testament.)
- Of course, God is righteous to want each of us to receive the atonement He accomplished at such enormous cost. So we must not neglect this matter.
- We must search for the truth about it, and repent of our sins and trust in Him.

We can begin to compare Biblical

Ideas we
have in
common

Christianity and Biblical Judaism from the pages of the Bible.

1. Ephesians 1 & 2—Substantial Unity
2. Hebrews 1—Belief in Messiah
3. The theme of adoption into God's family
4. The theme of covenants between people and God
5. Universals and particulars
6. The necessity to avoid stereotyping God.
7. Individual Justice rather than Group Retaliation.

Besides the Scriptures themselves,

Biblical Christianity and Biblical Judaism have other ideas in common. One idea is **adoption into God's family**. Another is the idea of **a covenant between human beings and God**, initiated by God for our good. Another idea is the existence of **both universal moral ideals and particular commands** that are specific to a particular circumstance. Another idea in common is **the nature of God Himself**. Sometimes people stereotype God as judgmental in the Old Testament and meekly merciful in the New. That is not correct at all. Both sets of Scriptures present the same picture of God.

Adoption into God's Family

Sometimes the Hebrew Scriptures refer to Messiah as God's Son, and also to Israel as God's adopted son.

In Exodus 4:22-23, God instructs Moses: ***"Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I said to you, 'Let My son go that he may serve Me; but you have refused to let him go. Behold, I will kill your son, your first-born.'"***

Clearly, God is seriously concerned about His family!

Adoption into God's Family

Exodus 15:16 Israel is called God's people, whom He has purchased.

Isaiah 63:16 speaks of the remnant—the returning, believing survivors—this way. ***“For Thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not recognize us. Thou, O LORD, art our Father, Our Redeemer from of old is Thy name.”***

The kinsman redeemer adopted the orphans,
orphans who had been sold into slavery.

Adoption into God's Family

- Isaiah 64:8 *"But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father. We are the clay and Thou our potter. And all of us are the work of Thy hand."*
- Jeremiah 31:9 *"With weeping they shall come, and by supplication I will lead them; I will make them walk by streams of waters, on a straight path in which they shall not stumble; For I am a Father to Israel and Ephraim is My first-born."*

Adoption into God's Family

John 1:12-13 *“But as many as received Him (the Word who became flesh=Messiah), to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”*

Adoption into God's Family

- Galatians 3:26 *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”*

Adoption into God's Family

The phrase “*baptized into Christ*” is a transformation of the heart when the Holy Spirit enters the life by invitation. The phrase is not talking about water baptism, which is an outward **symbol** of that inward transformation. The words in the baptism ceremony “baptized into His death and raised with Him to walk in newness of life” are speaking of this **necessary heart transformation=The baptism of the Holy Spirit into Christ.**

A Baptist denominational requirement is that a person give testimony of that inward transformation before receiving water baptism.

Adoption into God's Family

- The promise of adoption into God's family is universal, but not automatic. It is universal because it is for everyone who will receive it—
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
- The covenant relationship is universal, but not automatic.
- The individual must sign the covenant.
- The individual must believe the promise.

Adoption into God's Family

A public profession of faith is in keeping with Romans 10:9-13--*"⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. ¹³ For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved." (NKJV)

Adoption into God's Family

- Galatians 4:4-6 *“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”*
- *And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying ‘Abba, Father!’ Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.”*

God is the Kinsman Redeemer Who Adopts the Orphans.

- God redeemed Israel from slavery in Egypt, thereby adopting Israel as His son.
- Jesus Christ redeems all who will receive Him from slavery to sin, thereby adopting us into God's family.
- We are orphans in this world when we are without God. We need our Kinsman Redeemer.

Christians and Jews can respect and appreciate each other's faith

Ideas in Common

Because of ideas both religions have in common, such as

- Adoption into God's family
- Covenants between God and human individuals
- Universal moral standards
- The Nature of God
- The nature of Justice

Covenant Based on Promise

Over and over in the Hebrew Scriptures, the relationship between God and believing individuals was presented as **a covenant based upon God's promises**. A covenant is a treaty or contract that is binding upon both parties. God created the covenant. People entered into the covenant. They had a choice of commitment to be God's people, or to reject Him, although the penalty for rejection was severe.

The covenant was an **EVERLASTING** covenant.

Covenant Based on Promise

Isaiah 55:3 *“Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, according to the faithful mercies shown to David.”*

Psalm 21 reveals that God answered King David's prayer for life with a promise of eternal life. The faithful mercies shown to David include eternal life. Psalm 133 reveals that David found a source in the Torah for that promise—Deuteronomy 5:29, referenced in the Psalm by Deuteronomy 4:48's mention of Mount Hermon. (Before chapters and verses were used to organize the Bible.)

The words of King David's Prayer

- Psalm 86:1-3 could be the exact words of King David's prayer.
- ¹ **A Prayer of David.** Bow down Your ear, O LORD, hear me; For I *am* poor and needy.
² Preserve my life, for I *am* holy; You are my God; Save Your servant who trusts in You! ³ Be merciful to me, O Lord, For I cry to You all day long. (NKJV)

Psalm 21 tells God's answer.

- **To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David.** The king shall have joy in Your strength, O LORD; And in Your salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! ² You have given him his heart's desire, And have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah³ For You meet him with the blessings of goodness; You set a crown of pure gold upon his head. ⁴ **He asked life from You, and You gave it to him— Length of days forever and ever.** ⁵ His glory *is* great in Your salvation; Psalms 21:1-5 (NKJV)

Psalm 133

- ¹ A song of Ascents. Of David. Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* For brethren to dwell together in unity! ² *It is* like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. ³ *It is* like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; **For there the LORD commanded the blessing-- Life forevermore.**
- Psalms 133:1-3 (NKJV)

Deuteronomy 5:29

- 28 Then the LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me: 'I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They are right *in* all that they have spoken. 29 Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children **forever!** (NKJV)
- Psalm 19:7 7 The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple; (NKJV)

Especially in King David's words

- The Hebrew Scriptures reveal a conversion (transformation) of the soul through recognizing the value of God's law, repentance of sins, trust in God, and prayer—asking for eternal life.
- When we ask God for life, He wants to give us far more than temporary life.
- We can trust God because of His trustworthy character.

Covenant Based on Promise

When good kings, such as King Hezekiah and King Josiah, replaced evil kings in ancient Israel, the good kings would lead the people to make a covenant with the LORD—including a public commitment to walk in His ways and keep His commandments.

King Josiah called the Scriptures the book of the covenant. Moses called them the book of the covenant as well, in Exodus 24:1-8.

This was a central concept in the Old Testament. Even the word *Testament* means *Covenant*.

Covenant Based on Promise

In each instance in the Hebrew Scriptures, the covenant was ratified with a sacrifice. Psalm 50:5-6 defines *the godly ones* as those who have made a covenant with God by sacrifice. *“Gather My godly ones to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice.” And the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is judge.*”

Covenant Based on Promise

Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Joel 2:28-32 each promise a **new** covenant,

- ▣ that would be both for Israel and for all humankind,
- ▣ where God's law would be written on the hearts of all who committed themselves to it.

Christians believe Jesus' laying down His life for us ratified that new covenant. His perfect, infinite, universal sacrifice is the sacrifice of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is the universal Covenant by sacrifice.

Covenant Based on Promise

His Holy Spirit is poured out upon those who commit to His covenant, as described in the Joel 2:28-32 passage, and in Acts chapter 2.

His Holy Spirit teaches each individual, and Messiah's payment for sins enables the forgiveness clause in Jeremiah 31:34.

Covenant Based on Promise

When Bible-believing Christians call for a public profession of faith in Christ, it is an acknowledgment of a private commitment of one's life to Christ that takes place in the heart.

That decision involves repentance of sins, understanding that Christ's sacrifice paid the penalty for sins, and **asking Him** to send His Holy Spirit into one's life to seal the commitment.

Covenant Based on Promise

Prayer was involved in the Hebrew Scriptures' description as well, especially in the Psalms.

In Psalm 21:4, King David asked in prayer for eternal life, and God confirmed it.

In Psalm 61:6-8, King David explains that Messiah's years will be as many generations—abiding before God forever. **Because Messiah will live forever, King David will sing praise to God's name forever.** Messiah's eternity and King David's eternity are cause and effect.

Christians and Jews can respect and appreciate each other's faith

Ideas in Common

Because of ideas both religions have in common, such as

- ❑ Adoption into God's family
- ❑ Covenants between God and human individuals
- ❑ Universal moral standards
- ❑ The Nature of God
- ❑ The nature of justice

Universals and Particulars

The Law in the Hebrew Scriptures has both universals *that apply to all people everywhere* as God's moral requirements, and particulars that are *specific rules for Israel as a nation* during ancient times. In addition, some of the particulars are described as always being required.

The Greek Scriptures separate the universals from the particulars, and show how to apply faith in the true and living God to the world.

Universals and Particulars

The Hebrew Scriptures were directed toward creating an ideal society where God's goodness would be visible in the good laws He gave.

Deuteronomy 4:5-8 *⁵ Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess.
⁶ Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'*

Universals and Particulars

7 For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the LORD our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? 8 And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day? (NKJV)

Universals and Particulars

The Greek Scriptures were directed toward creating little islands of goodness called churches in a vast sea of pagan culture—and reaching out to individuals in that culture at the same time. In the Roman Empire, life was cheap. In the churches, life was valued, forever!

Both sets of Scripture had similar goals, even though different modes of law were used to accomplish those goals.

Universals and Particulars

Moral law is universal—the Ten Commandments, and the law behind the Ten Commandments, found in Deuteronomy 6:4-7, ⁴ *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ⁶ "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷ You 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. (NKJV)*

Universals and Particulars

Dietary laws are particulars for Israel, modified and simplified for the church to be able to reach out to the whole world—and to separate themselves from false religions such as idol worship with associated immorality.

Acts 21:25 ²⁵ But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.” (NKJV)

Universals and Particulars

The sacrifices of the temple system were particulars. They were repeated yearly.

The sacrifice of Messiah is universal—once for all.

Isaiah 53:4-6, ⁴ Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (NKJV)

Universals and Particulars

The sacrifice of Messiah is universal.

Isaiah 52:14-15 ¹⁴ *Just as many were astonished at you, So His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men; ¹⁵ So shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; For what had not been told them they shall see, And what they had not heard they shall consider.* (NKJV)

The sprinkling of the blood of atonement is in view here. So the covenant based on Messiah's sacrifice is universally available—to the nations, to kings, to all who will receive Him.

Universals and Particulars

Just as the Eternal Covenant, made by sacrifice, in the Hebrew Scriptures required individuals to choose it for themselves,

The New Covenant, made available to all through Messiah's sacrifice, ALSO requires that individuals choose it for themselves.

It is Universal but not Automatic. It is universally available to all who will receive it. To receive it, we must come to God on His terms.

Christians and Jews can respect and appreciate each other's faith

Ideas in Common

Because of ideas both religions have in common, such as

- Adoption into God's family
- Covenants between God and human individuals
- Universal moral standards
- The Nature of God
- The nature of justice

What God Is Like

Sometimes people stereotype God as judgmental in the Old Testament and meekly merciful in the New. That is not correct at all. Both sets of Scriptures present the same picture of God. In both Testaments He is both guiding Shepherd who takes care of His sheep and carries the lambs—and totally righteous Judge who hates evil and fights against evil and who loves righteousness.

The same vivid, complicated, amazing picture of God is presented both places.

What God Is Like

In both Testaments, God takes the initiative in reaching down to us, because He loves us. He makes a way for us to communicate with Him and to have eternal life, when it would be impossible for us to reach Him on our own. He lets us know important facts about ourselves—our being created in His image and our having eternal souls, and yet our need to overcome sin that separates us from Him.

What God Is Like

The Old Testament reveals God's righteous wrath against those who violently oppose His people, whether their opposition takes the form of war or of violent idolatry against the innocent.

The New Testament reveals God's righteous wrath against those who violently oppose His people in the end times events described in Revelation. Worldwide persecution of the innocent is followed by His wrath.

What God Is Like

Both Testaments reveal that God attaches great importance to the prayers of the righteous. The New Testament gives an additional window on God's attention to the prayers—even after people have died under persecution. Their prayers are ongoing in Revelation 6:9-11.

Similarly, Psalm 102 predicts God's attention to the prayers of Jewish people who are persecuted to the death in a future generation—and the survival of their descendants and the re-founding of Zion—"time to be gracious to her."

Christians and Jews can respect and appreciate each other's faith

Ideas in Common

Because of ideas both religions have in common, such as

- Adoption into God's family
- Covenants between God and human individuals
- Universal moral standards
- The Nature of God
- The nature of Justice

Both sets of Scriptures have the same idea of Justice.

- Justice is an individual matter before God and before proper human law. If human law fails this test of individual responsibility, it is unjust. Read Ezekiel chapter 18 and Revelation 20:11-14. Even in eternity, this principle of individual accountability stands.
- Fathers shall not be punished for the sins of their sons, and sons shall not be punished for the sins of their fathers, nor shall people-groups or economic classes of people be oppressed. Deuteronomy 24:14-18.

Both sets of Scriptures have the same idea of Justice.

- Tribal retaliation is not justice and is not allowed. Personal revenge is not allowed. Romans 12:17-21. Leviticus 19:13-17. Fear of God is recommended, because God's justice can be severe. Deuteronomy 32:1-43.
- Justice must take place under proper legal restraints. It is not a matter to be taken into one's own hands. Legal restraints are necessary to establish truth and to prevent lies from causing injustice. Deuteronomy 19:15-20, Romans 13:1-10. Those who obey God's moral Law fulfill proper human law. The basis for law is love—for God and for other people.

Human Justice Systems

- Human justice systems need restraints on improper use of power, because all humans are sinners, including those in authority. Ecclesiastes 7:20, Romans 3:23, 2 Chronicles 19:5-11.
- It is as unjust to condemn the righteous as to acquit the guilty. God views injustice as a detestable wickedness. Proverbs 17:15, Proverbs 19:28. Thus, truth is of the utmost importance in seeking justice.
- God prefers mercy to justice, but mercy requires repentance. Mercy is not automatic. Ezekiel 33:11.
- Good laws will support moral universals. Bad laws undermine moral goodness. Romans 13:1-10.

The New Testament

- The New Testament builds on the understanding of Law in the Old Testament. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it. Matthew 5:17-20. Because He fulfilled the moral Law perfectly, He was able to suffer for OUR transgressions and win the ultimate battle against evil and death and hell. Isaiah 53:4-10, Genesis 3:15.
- Psalm 119 and the love of God's Law stand true after Jesus' birth just as that love of His Law stood true before His birth.



Homework

In 3 sets

Homework Class 14 Set 1

- Read Matthew chapter 25, verses 1-46. Oil is often used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. See the symbolism in Zechariah chapter 4. Matthew 5:15-16 says we should allow our light to shine before others—lights at that time required oil—so they will see our good works and glorify God. What do you think the parable of the 10 virgins means?
- The next parable in Matthew 25:14-30, describes the judgment. A Master, representing God, calls His servants to account for the way they used the money He gave them to manage while He was away. One servant was entrusted with a large sum of money – ten talents.

Homework Class 14 Set 1

- Another was entrusted with five and another with one. The first servant invested the ten talents and doubled the money. The second invested the five talents and doubled it. The third servant hid the one talent for fear of losing it, and gained no more.
- The first two servants were rewarded very handsomely, but the third servant was sent into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Homework Class 14 Set 1

- The punch line of the parable is “to everyone who has shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.”
- How does this parable relate to the previous one?
- If the answers to the questions are not obvious, ask God for help as you work. Read them again, and wait for new insights.

Homework Class 14 Set 2

Matthew 25: 31-46 is about the judgment of the Gentiles or Gentile nations. What activity was used as a basis for judgment?

Who were the ones rejected at that judgment?

What does this parable imply about living under grace?

What does this imply about Jesus' presence with the persecuted?

Please note that the judgment of the Gentile nations is mentioned in the Old Testament in Isaiah 2:1-5, just prior to the peaceful kingdom of Messiah.

Homework Class 14 Set 2

Francis Schaeffer, in *The God Who Is There*, brings up the fact that some people reject the gift of eternal life through Jesus' atonement for sins, because they want autonomy—they want to be their own king.

- Read Luke 19:12-27. What is the cost of that decision?
- Why do you think rejecting God's Lordship would warrant the loss of heaven?
- Is a refusal to search for truth about God the same as rejecting **Him**? If someone has rejected God because they think the search is impossible, how can we encourage them to start searching again?

Homework Class 14 Set 2

- Read Job 42:1-2 and Psalm 19. What good things does God's law accomplish?
- Was the Psalmist keeping God's law in his own strength, or seeking God's help?
- Whose purpose are you seeking for your life? Can it be thwarted?

Homework Class 14 Set 3

When we look at other religions, only a few believe in a personal God, and as we have seen, that is the only philosophical answer to human personality.

By *personal*—we mean that He has *Personality and Mind*. He is not an impersonal force. We are **not** saying that He is *whatever subjective idea one might have of Him*. Sometimes we hear a call to receive Jesus as our “Personal” Savior. This is a slightly different use of the term—meaning that we need Him individually for our own lives. Neither of these usages is about *subjectivity*. God is objectively real and knowable as He truly is.

Homework Class 14 Set 3

Human personality is obvious to us, but flawed.

If God exists and is personal, we have a higher Source for our human personality Who gives us meaning. So we can look at the “impersonal beginning” religions, and we can know that they do not answer the basic human need for meaning. That narrows the search for spiritual truth. Josh McDowell’s book, **A READY DEFENSE**, has useful brief information about many of the religions we will not study, for your later reference.

Homework Class 14 Set 3

- We do not look at other religions to criticize as a matter of personal taste. We must look at them as a matter of truth-seeking. Moral relativism says it is not possible to know religious truth. Christianity says it IS possible to know and that we MUST love truth and MUST seek truth.
- When we are satisfied about truth, then it is time to trust.

Homework Class14 Set 3

Reflect on ideas from the class, by reading Hebrews, chapter 1. Read it at least 3 times if you have not already done so.

Bear in mind that the word *Christ* in Greek is a translation of the Hebrew word *Messiah*.

A good cross reference for Hebrews chapter 1 is Psalm 2, in which God calls His Anointed (another way of saying Messiah) His Son.

Homework Class 14 Set 3

Psalm 110 is another Messianic Psalm which makes clear that Messiah is above the angels, and that He combines the offices of King and Priest, yet verse 7 implies incarnation. Incarnation means “taking human form.”

- Paraphrasing Luke 20: 39-44, Jesus asked the question “How is it they say Messiah is David’s son? Why does David call Him Lord, if He is his son?” What is the answer?

Homework Class 14 Set 3

Read Matthew Chapter 20 in its entirety. How does individual responsibility before God appear in the parable of the wedding feast? Which character in the parable is a symbol for God? How does the recommendation to fear God appear in the same parable? Does Jesus describe God in the parable in the same manner as the Old Testament describes Him?

Homework Class 14 Set 3

How is the rule of law presented in the interchange about taxes in Matthew 20:15-22? Did Jesus fall into the Pharisee's trap? What was the trap? What were they trying to accomplish?

Did Jesus respond honestly to their trap? How did the trap reveal their motivations? What word did the passage use to describe their motivations? How did Jesus' answer fit their question and break the trap?

Homework Class 14 Set 3

The Pharisees believed in the passages of the Old Testament about the resurrection of the righteous and the possibility of eternal life. The Sadducees did not believe those passages, and they were pragmatically accommodating to the Roman overlords. They were rewarded with positions of power under the Roman governor. How does Jesus deal with the truthfulness of the Old Testament Scriptures in the Sadducees' test about marriage, Matthew 22:23-34? What did He base His answer upon? What does that have to do with eternal life? What does that have to do with the Old Testament as communication from God?

Homework Class 14 Set 3

Read the rest of Matthew chapter 22. Why do you think the Pharisees and Sadducees were not able to answer Jesus' question, "Why did King David call Messiah his Lord?"

What idea from the Old Testament were they missing or failing to believe? Do you think Jesus was trying to help them believe that idea?

Homework Class 14 Set 3

Do you think the Pharisees had drifted from the Old Testament Scriptures even though they were zealous to obey the laws and commandments and traditions?

What answer does the first chapter of Hebrews give for Jesus' question?

Homework Class 14 Set 3

Read the parable of the sower in Matthew 13:3-23. What (on the human side) hinders remembering a word or an idea from God, according to Matthew 13:19?

We have studied Hebrews chapter 1 with many references from the Old Testament. Do you see that the events of the New Testament would make ideas in the Old Testament more clear when they were studied?

Homework Class 14 Set 3

This phenomenon should increase our respect for those who copied the early manuscripts of the Bible, because they accurately retained details they did not understand.

Their faith in the truth of the word was very strong, since they reported and faithfully copied so much that only became clear many years later.

This should also increase our trust in God's protection of His word for future generations, and His weaving of testable concepts throughout the detailed passages.

Luke 12:31-32

But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.