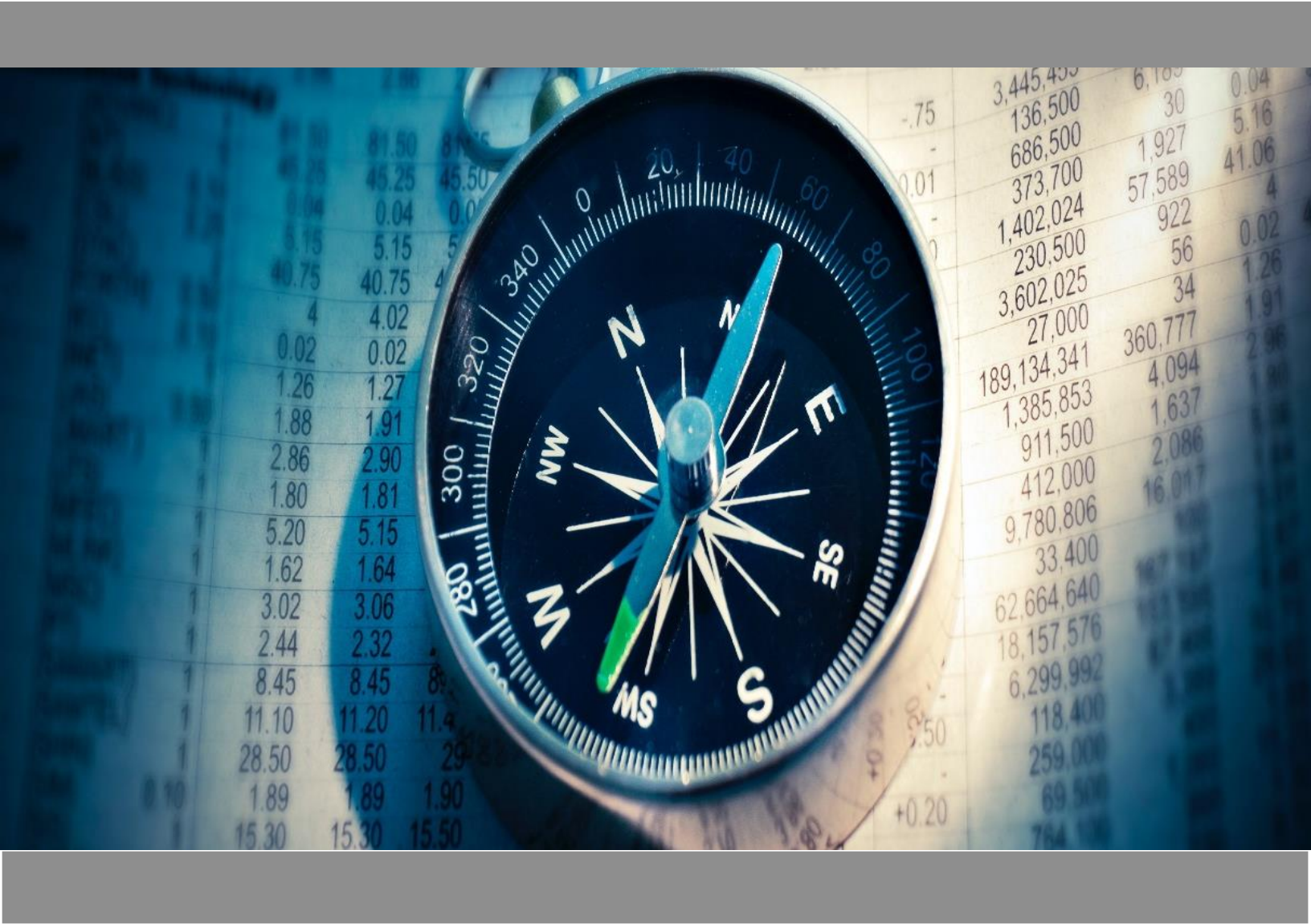


Jesus Is The Way

Lesson 4: Jesus Is The Way To Victory Over Sin And Death



Discovering God's Word

Bible Study Series

Jesus Is The Way

Lesson 4: Jesus Is The Way To Victory Over Sin And Death

Learn how sin and death are your greatest enemies and how Jesus provides victory over them

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Discovering God's Word Bible Study Series

Study Number: DGW198

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My plea: It is my hope and prayer that you are searching for the truth that is contained in God's word, the Bible. My desire is to help you understand and obey these truths God has revealed in the pages of His word. It is to that end that I write this material. Please observe all of the Scripture references and evaluate whether the conclusions I have drawn are in harmony with God's word. If they are, I ask that you make honest application of those truths to your life and obey God's instructions.

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Jesus Is The Way

Lesson 4: Jesus Is The Way To Victory Over Sin And Death

Jesus is the way to everything that is important and worthwhile. As we have already seen, Jesus is the way to truth. Now, we need to recognize that Jesus is the way to victory over sin and death. In John 14:6, Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

You see, there are consequences for refusing to follow God’s word of truth He has revealed through Jesus (as we studied in the previous lesson). As we discussed then, the consequence is sin. And, there are serious consequences attached to sinning against God!

This is all the work of the devil. Through his deceptions, he has ruined the paradise God has created on this earth so that we now experience evil, suffering, and death. And, as he tries to deceive us, he does so to pull us away from God so that we sin against Him.

Now, while many people joke about sin as though it is insignificant (sometimes saying, “The devil made me do it”), the consequences of sin are devastating! Not only does sin have a devastating impact on people physically, but even more so spiritually. In fact, of all the terrible plagues and

diseases that have affected humanity throughout history, sin is (by far) the worst of them all!

One common trait of sin and death that makes them the two greatest enemies we have is that we cannot overcome them by ourselves. For, death happens to everyone and those who die do not have any power over death. Then, whenever people choose to sin, they have no ability to undo the sin (or the consequences of the sin) they have committed. So, we need someone to rescue us from these things and provide the victory for us. Thankfully, someone did exactly that! His name is Jesus.

In this fourth lesson, we want to consider the fact that Jesus is the way to victory over sin and death. We will consider how sin and death entered the world. We will consider sin and death as enemies today. We will consider Jesus’ sacrifice and resurrection. And, we will consider the victory that is in Jesus. So, no matter where you are right now, you must recognize that Jesus is the way to victory over sin and death!

Sin And Death Enter The World

If we are going to understand that Jesus is the way to victory over sin and death, we need to back up and first understand where sin and death came from. Certainly, we must recognize that God is *not* the one who desired or designed for either to be in the world. Thankfully, the Bible explains the origin of both.

How God created the world

Genesis chapters 1 and 2 describe God’s creation of the world. Genesis 1:1 begins by saying, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” From there, Genesis 1 details God’s creation on each of the six days God was involved in creating the world. When He was finished with His work, Genesis 1:31 says, “God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed....” Then, God rested on the seventh day.

Genesis chapter 2 describes how God planted a garden in Eden for the man He had created. In this place, Genesis 2:9 says, “The Lord God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Later, God also created the woman and gave her to the man as they would live in this wonderful place.

This was a true paradise on earth! There was no evil being done on the earth. There was no suffering being experienced by anyone or anything on earth. And, death had never been experienced by anyone or anything on earth. For, they had access to the tree of life and live forever (Genesis 3:22). Then, in addition to the wonderful physical blessings in this place, the man and woman enjoyed a wonderful relationship with God.

But, when God created the man and woman and put them in this wonderful garden, He also gave them free will so they could choose between right and wrong. He did not create mindless robots who were forced to obey God against their will. So, He gave them a law to obey and warned them about what would happen if they did not obey.

Genesis 2:16-17 says, “And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree of the garden, but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.’” This was the one law to test whether they would live for God or not. With all the other sources of food God had given them, they did not need anything from this tree. And, God did not hide the consequences of disobedience.

The temptation and sin

Now, as we are about to see Satan enter the Bible story, we need to pause for just a moment and consider where he came from. Although the Bible does not give us the complete information about Satan’s origin, we do know that he is *not* equal with God. So, he is *not* eternal. Therefore, he must have been created by God. Yet, we also know that God did not create anything evil.

The conclusions we must reach are that Satan was a created spiritual being who was given free will.

Then, sometime prior to Genesis 3, Satan exercised his free will and sinned against God (see John 8:44; 1 Timothy 3:6; 1 John 3:8). Afterward, he had the ability to deceive people on this earth – and made turning people away from God his mission.

We can see Satan’s work to deceive Eve in Genesis 3:1-5. “Now the serpent was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God really say, ‘You can’t eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat the fruit from the trees in the garden. But about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God said, “You must not eat it or touch it, or you will die.”’ ‘No! You will not die,’ the serpent said to the woman. ‘In fact, God knows that when you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”

You can see how Satan attacked God’s words of truth. First, he tried to get Eve (the woman God had made) to question whether God really said what He said. But, Eve knew what God said. So, Satan claimed God’s words were not true. He said, essentially, that God was lying when He promised death as a consequence. Instead, he claimed God was trying to keep them away from something that was actually desirable and useful to them!

After hearing Satan’s deception, Eve looked at the tree differently and made her decision. Listen to Genesis 3:6. “The woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.”

Sin was now in the world. As we discussed in the previous lesson, sin occurs anytime a person violates God’s word of truth. So, when God told them *not* to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (and not even to touch it) and they did eat from the tree, they sinned against God.

The consequences of sin

Now that sin entered the world, we watch the Genesis record to see if God kept His promise regarding the consequences for eating of the tree. Remember, God promised them, “on the day you eat

Sin And Death As Enemies Today

from it, you will certainly die” (Genesis 2:17). And, this is exactly what happened – among other things!

Immediately after they sinned against God, you can see the loss of innocence and guilt entering the world. Genesis 3:7 explains that “the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.” Then, Genesis 3:8 shows that when they heard the sound of God walking in the garden, “they hid from the Lord God among the trees.”

As God spoke with them about the sin they had committed, there were many consequences given – to the serpent, to the woman, and to the man (Genesis 3:14-19). Among these were pain in childbirth for the woman and painful labor for the man when he would work the ground for food. So, we can see the introduction of suffering to the world.

Then, God said, “‘Since the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not reach out, take from the tree of life, eat, and live forever.’ So the Lord God sent him away from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life” (Genesis 3:22-24).

The dying process had begun. Evil, suffering, and death had entered the world. This is even demonstrated in the next chapter of Genesis (chapter 4) when Adam and Eve’s oldest son (Cain) murdered his brother (Abel). Later, Genesis 5:5 records Adam’s death.

But, as bad as these physical consequences for sin and death are, the worst consequence for sin was the spiritual death they experienced. Remember, God did not say they would die eventually after they ate from the tree. Instead, He said they would die “on the day” they ate of it (Genesis 2:17). And, they did – spiritually. That is, they were separated from the wonderful relationship they enjoyed with God that day and they were now in need of something they had never needed before. They now needed to be forgiven and be saved!

Now that you have seen how sin and death entered the world, you should continue thinking about them as enemies today. For, neither one stopped with Adam and Eve. Instead, they have continued to plague people throughout every age – and continue today. In fact, these are the two greatest enemies you face today. But, why are they so great of enemies for you? Let’s consider.

The enemy of sin

Everyone who reaches an age at which they are morally accountable for themselves (having the ability to know right from wrong and make decisions for themselves) decides to sin against God. Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” So, sin does not hold back against anyone. And, everyone Satan has ever attacked with his deceptions has chosen to live for themselves rather than for God at some point – except for Jesus!

You see, Satan appeals to your physical desires so that you choose to please yourself rather than God. James 1:14-15 explains the process of sin. “But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death.”

So, while Satan (just like he did with Eve) is trying to get you to focus on your own earthly pleasures and desires, he does not tell you what the outcome of your actions will actually be. Instead, he just wants you to focus on feeling good now, getting what you want, and pleasing yourself. But, when you act on these desires in a way that goes against God’s laws, you sin and bring consequences on yourself.

Of course, Satan does not tell you about the physical consequences of your sin. For, many times, sin does have physical consequences. These include (but are not limited to) early death, diseases, jail time, broken relationships, guilt, shame, regret, and many other things.

Then, he certainly does not want you to think about the spiritual consequences of your sin. For, the spiritual consequences of your sin are *far* more devastating than the physical ones! Remember, James 1:15 said that “when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death.” This is separation from God.

So, when you sin, you separate yourself from all the spiritual blessings God has made available to you. This is how the Bible can talk about someone who “is self-indulgent” as being “dead even while she lives” (1 Timothy 5:6). This one is alive physically, but dead spiritually.

Then, the Bible warns about the consequences of dying physically while you are in your sin. Listen to Revelation 21:8. “But the cowards, faithless, detestable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars – their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.” So, those whose lives end while they are still guilty of sin have an eternal punishment waiting for them that is terrible beyond any ability to comprehend in a place that is called Hell!

As you think about all of this, you should recognize that you have been guilty of sinning against God by living to please yourself rather than God and have brought this consequence on yourself. It is no one’s fault other than your own! Even though Satan deceived you, you are still the one who had the ability to choose!

Now, you must consider how you can escape this horrible reality you have created for yourself by refusing to listen to God. Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death...” So, this is what you have earned. You cannot go back in time and undo what you have done. And, you cannot earn your way back into God’s good favor. Therefore, if there was no answer to the problem of sin, you would be hopelessly separated from God and headed for an eternity in Hell!

The enemy of death

Although sin is not passed down from Adam and Eve (as each person makes his/her own choice to sin), physical death is one of the ongoing consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin (since we no

longer live in the paradise of the garden of Eden). Genesis chapter 5 makes this point effectively, as it shows the genealogy from Adam to Noah and shows how everyone experienced the common fate of physical death.

The Bible continues to promise that all people will continue to experience physical death. Hebrews 9:27 says, “And just as it is appointed for people to die once – and after this, judgment.” James 4:13-16 helps to put your physical life into perspective. “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit.’ Yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring – what your life will be! For you are like vapor that appears for a little while, then vanishes. Instead, you should say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’ But as it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.”

So, while you might want to accomplish many things during your earthly life, death can happen at any time and put a stop to all these plans. And, when death does hit, it ends every earthly endeavor you have made. For, you will not take any physical thing with you when you die.

Furthermore, not only is death a great enemy of humanity because it affects everyone, but also because it cannot be beaten or overcome by anyone (of themselves). As many people have sought to find the secret to youth and fight against the aging and dying process, everyone has failed. Death eventually comes to everyone – and there is no person on earth who has the power to escape or rescue anyone from it! Think about it. The rich, the poor; the young, the old; the powerful, the powerless; the king, the servant – they all die!

Jesus’ Sacrifice And Resurrection

Having an understanding of the great enemies of sin and death, we need to consider Jesus. For, He has done the only thing that could possibly

rescue anyone from these powerful enemies. But, it cost Him dearly.

Jesus left Heaven to come to earth

Jesus was with the Father in Heaven. Now, just pause to think about the place He left. He was in the place where the streets are said to be paved with gold, the walls made of precious stones, the gates made of pearls, and the place that does not even need the sun or the moon to shine in it. He was in the place where nothing evil can enter. He was in the place where there is no pain, suffering, or death. So, He was in the place we should all desire to go!

Yet, Jesus left that place to come here. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: Though he was rich, for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.” So, He came here for you (and for everyone). He wanted you to be able to go to Heaven. But, He knew the only way that could be possible (because of sin) was to give Himself as the ransom sacrifice.

Then, as you continue thinking about what this means, you should recognize that He knew exactly what was going to happen to Him when He came to this earth. He knew He was coming to sacrifice Himself. He knew He was going to be severely flogged. He knew He was going to be blasphemed and mistreated. Yet, He came anyways!

Whenever John the baptist saw Jesus coming toward him in John 1, he said, “Here is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). So, Jesus was sent to this earth as God’s sacrificial Lamb to provide the only sacrifice that could be made to remove sin (a perfect and sinless sacrifice). Through Jesus, God would demonstrate both His justice in demanding payment for sin and His mercy in providing the ransom through Jesus that you could never provide for yourself!

As He lived and taught on this earth, Jesus was mistreated throughout His life. As people hated Him and the lessons He taught, they often desired to kill Him. Then, when the time had come, Jesus was betrayed by one of His apostles and delivered to His enemies to be arrested. Another of His closest followers denied Him and all the apostles fled. After

being put through two rigged and unfair trials, Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion.

Jesus gave His life on the cross

After receiving this death sentence, Jesus was “flogged” (Matthew 27:26). The Roman practice of flogging (scourging) was brutal. The prisoner would be stripped of his clothing and made to stretch over a frame, exposing the backside. Then, the soldier would use a whip that had strands of leather at the end. Interwoven in those strands would often be pieces of bone or metal. So, every time the soldier struck the prisoner, the bone or metal would grab and tear deep into the flesh, resulting in severe blood loss and pain – and sometimes death.

Matthew 27:27-31 then describes the mockery Jesus was put through after this. “Then the governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the governor’s residence and gathered the whole company around him. They stripped him and dressed him in a scarlet robe. They twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on his head, and placed a staff in his right hand. And they knelt down before him and mocked him: ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ Then they spat on him, took the staff, and kept hitting him on the head. After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him.”

Crucifixion was considered to be the most horrible form of death and was reserved for the worst criminals. The individual being crucified would be stripped of his clothing and laid upon the cross. His hands were fastened to the cross by having nail-like spikes driven through them. His feet would be fastened to the cross in the same way. The process was full of agony and humiliation and was intended to be prolonged torture rather than a quick execution.

Finally, after all of His suffering, Jesus died on the cross. His sacrifice had been made. When the soldiers came to speed up the deaths of the prisoners (as there were two others being crucified next to Jesus), they found that Jesus was already dead. So, the soldier pierced His side with a spear, and blood and water came out of His body. After this, Jesus’ body was taken down from the cross and secured inside a tomb.

Jesus rose from the dead

Thankfully, Jesus' story does not end there. After Jesus' burial, the Jewish leaders went to the Roman governor because they were concerned that Jesus' followers would steal His body away and claim that He had risen from the dead. For, Jesus had said that He would raise from the dead on the third day (Matthew 16:21). So, the governor told them to make the tomb as secure as they knew how by setting a seal on the stone and placing the guard at the tomb (Matthew 27:66).

Yet, none of this stopped what would happen next. Matthew 28:1-10 says, "After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb. There was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they became like dead men.

"The angel told the women, 'Don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has risen from the dead and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there.'" Listen, I have told you."

"So, departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to tell his disciples the news. Just then Jesus met them and said, 'Greetings!' They came up, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus told them, 'Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.'"

Jesus had risen from the dead by the power of God! And, after He rose, He did not disappear, never to be seen again. Instead, He left no room for doubt about His resurrection by allowing many people to see Him and recognize Him as the resurrected Christ! Listen to 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.

The apostle Paul wrote, "For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. Then he appeared to over five hundred brothers and sisters at one time; most of them are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one born at the wrong time, he also appeared to me."

Victory In Jesus!

As you come back to thinking directly about your struggles against the enemies of sin and death, you must recognize the importance of everything Jesus has done. Without a way to overcome sin and death, your life is hopeless! But, because of Jesus, your life has been given a new opportunity to hope. For, He has provided the victory over sin and death through His sacrifice and resurrection from the dead.

Victory over death

While Jesus was on this earth, one of His dear friends died (a man named Lazarus). Now, Jesus was going to prove His miraculous power over death by raising the man from the dead (which He did, as you can read in John 11:38-44). But, this was only a temporary resurrection, since Lazarus would die again. However, in the process, He taught people a powerful lesson about the future victory over death He would provide. He said, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even if he dies, will live. Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26).

Although people do experience physical death, Jesus knew that the souls continue to exist and that there will be a day on which all the dead will be raised – and those who truly believed in Him so as to live for Him and keep His commandments will be welcomed into eternal life in Heaven! In John 5:28-29, Jesus said, "Do not be amazed at this, because a time is coming when all who are in the graves will hear his voice and come out – those who have done good things, to the resurrection of life, but those who

have done wicked things, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

Physical death is not the end – for anyone! But, this is only possible for two reasons. First, God has created people in His image (Genesis 1:26-27). Second, Jesus Christ defeated death by raising from the dead. Through Jesus’ resurrection, God demonstrated that death has no power over Him!

1 Corinthians 15:12-18 explains the connection between Jesus’ resurrection and the hope His followers have for the future resurrection (note that those who do not follow Christ have no hope in their resurrection – as they will be sentenced to eternal punishment in Hell at that time). “Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say, ‘There is no resurrection of the dead’? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation is in vain, and so is your faith. Moreover, we are found to be false witnesses about God, because we have testified wrongly about God that he raised up Christ – whom he did not raise up, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Those, then, who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. If we have put our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone.”

So, Jesus has emerged victorious over death and brought victory over death to all those who will believe and obey Him! Hebrews 2:14-15 says, “Now since the children have flesh and blood in common, Jesus also shared in these, so that through his death he might destroy the one holding the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who were held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death.” Now, those who follow Jesus can eagerly anticipate their deaths, being assured of the victory that will follow (see Philippians 1:21-24 and Revelation 14:13)!

1 Corinthians 15:54-57 says, “When this corruptible body is clothed with incorruptibility, and this mortal body is clothed with immortality, then the saying that is written will take place: Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, death, is your victory? Where, death, is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!”

Victory over sin

As we have seen, everyone who has reached a point of spiritual maturity and accountability has sinned against God and earned spiritual death – and eternal punishment in Hell! So, this victory over death through the promise of a future resurrection would not give you any hope if there was no way to be forgiven of your sin. For, you would only be able to anticipate a future and eternal punishment in Hell (see John 5:28-29).

Let’s listen to Romans 6:23. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Through Jesus, God has provided victory over sin by giving a way to be forgiven of all your past sins. John 3:16 says, “For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

Romans 5:6-11 further explains. “For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. For rarely will someone die for a just person – though for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. How much more then, since we have now been declared righteous by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation.”

So, although you have earned eternal punishment in Hell, Jesus Christ has provided the ransom sacrifice that was needed in order for you to escape the wrath of God you deserve to experience. Now, by Jesus’ blood, you can be forgiven of your sins. And, by His life, you can have eternal life in Heaven! For, Jesus has bought us back from slavery to sin through the blood He shed – if you will believe and obey Him.

Then, you must recognize, as we discussed in lesson two, that you must obey the conditions God has placed on your salvation in order to be saved. He has required you to hear His word (Romans 10:17), believe in Jesus as His Son (John 8:24), repent of your sins (Acts 17:30), confess Jesus Christ (Romans 10:9-10), and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38). Then, you must remain faithful to Christ throughout your life (Revelation 2:10). If you do these things, He promises that He will save you!

Conclusion

Jesus is the way to victory over sin and death! Sin and death are in the world today. Death comes to everyone. Sin is committed by everyone who becomes accountable to God. These are the greatest enemies you can ever face. But, through Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection, you can experience victory over sin and death if you will believe and obey Him!

Study Questions

How are sin and death your two greatest enemies?

1. Sin And Death Enter The World

How did God create the world?

How did Satan tempt Eve? How did Eve (and later Adam) respond?

What were the consequences of sin?

2. Sin And Death As Enemies Today

Why is sin an enemy?

Why is death an enemy?

3. Jesus' Sacrifice And Resurrection

What did Jesus do in leaving Heaven to come to earth?

What did Jesus do in giving His life on the cross?

What did Jesus do in raising from the dead?

4. Victory In Jesus!

How has Jesus made victory over death possible?

How has Jesus made victory over sin possible?