



# WEEKLY

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## BIBLE STUDIES

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# “THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD”

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Lesson 1 ■ For week ending January 4, 2020

Most of us are familiar with Psalm 23. Obviously David, in this Psalm, is speaking not as the shepherd, though he was one, but as the sheep—one of the flock. He spoke with a strong sense of pride, devotion, and admiration. It was as though he literally boasted aloud, “Look at who my shepherd is—my owner—my manager! The Lord is!” Let’s take a closer look at this beloved Psalm.

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**KEY TEXT: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1).**

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## **1. Who is the Lord? What is His character? Does He have adequate credentials to be my shepherd—my manager—my owner?**

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- » To whom does the Psalmist David refer to as “my Shepherd”?
- » He is talking about Yahweh God, Jehovah, the Lord God of Israel (Psalm 100:3).
- » His statement is confirmed by Jesus, Himself, when He declared emphatically, “*I am the good shepherd.*” Read the account found in John 10:7-15.
- » Our view of God is too small—too cramped—too provincial—too human (Job 11:7-9). And, because it is, we feel unwilling to allow Him to have authority or control—much less outright ownership—of our lives.

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## **2. Let’s review the power of the triune Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).**

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- » God the Father is God the author—the originator of all that exists. It was in His mind, first, that all took shape (Genesis 1:1).
- » God the Son (Jesus), our Savior, is God the artisan—the artist, the Creator of all that exists. He brought into being all that had been originally formulated in His Father’s mind (John 1:1-5).
- » God the Holy Spirit is God the agent who presents these facts to both our mind and our spiritual understanding so that they become both real and relative to us as individuals (John 16:13-15).
- » Now the beautiful relationships given to us repeatedly in Scripture between God and man, are those of a Father to his children and a Shepherd to His sheep.
  - 1) These concepts were first conceived in the mind of God our Father (John 3:16).
  - 2) They were made possible and practical through the work of Jesus Christ the Son (John 6:38).
  - 3) They are confirmed and made real in us through the agency of the gracious Holy Spirit (John 15:26).

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## **3. The statement, “The Lord is my shepherd,” immediately implies a profound yet practical working relationship between a human being and his Maker.**

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- » This alone should stir our spirits, quicken our own sense of awareness, and lend enormous dignity to us as individuals (II Peter 3:9).
- » To think that God, in Christ, is deeply concerned about us as a particular person immediately gives great purpose and enormous meaning to our short sojourn upon this planet (I Thessalonians 5:23).

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## **4. Our lot in life depends on the type of shepherd who governs us.**

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- » Under one man, sheep would struggle, starve, and suffer endless hardship (John 10:12,13).
- » In another’s care, they would flourish and thrive contentedly (Psalm 23:1-3).
- » The fact remains that Christ, the Creator of such an enormous universe of overwhelming magnitude, deigns to call Himself my Shepherd and invited me to consider myself His sheep—His special object of affection and attention.
- » Who better could care for me? Read Psalm 23:4-6.

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# “THREE REASONS WHY GOD IS OUR SHEPHERD”

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Lesson 2 ■ For week ending January 11, 2020

It is no accident that God has chosen to call us *sheep*. The behavior of sheep and human beings is similar in many ways. Our mass mind (or mob instincts), our fears and timidity, our stubbornness and stupidity, and our perverse habits are all parallels of profound importance. Despite all of our faults, God has not forsaken us. When we truly understand all that He has done to preserve us, we can state with assurance “God is my Shepherd!”

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**KEY TEXT:** *“Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people and the sheep of His pasture” (Psalm 100:3).*

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**1. REASON #1: I am basically bound to admit that God’s ownership of me as a human being is legitimate—simply because it is He who brought me into being and no one is better able to understand or care for me.**

- » I belong to Him simply because He deliberately chose to create me as the object of His own affection (Genesis 1:26,27).
- » It is patently clear that most men and women refuse to acknowledge this fact. Their deliberate attempts to deny that such a relationship even exists, or could exist, between a man and his Maker demonstrates their abhorrence of admitting that anyone really can claim ownership or authority over them by virtue of bringing them into being (Job 21:15; Exodus 32:7,8).
- » Our decisions have consequences. What does Romans 6:16 have to say about the subject?
- » When we choose to disobey God, we pledge our allegiance to another shepherd whom God tells us wants to destroy us (I Peter 5:8).

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**2. REASON #2: Even though the majority of mankind rejected God, He was driven by love to reach out to them again through Jesus Christ His Son.**

- » Again in Christ, He demonstrated at Calvary the deep desire of His heart to have men come under His benevolent care (Romans 5:8).
- » He Himself absorbed the penalty for their perverseness. Read and discuss Isaiah 53:4-6.
- » Thus, in a second very real and vital sense, I truly belong to Him simply because He has bought me again at the incredible price of His own laid-down life and shed blood (I Corinthians 6:20; I Peter 2:24).
- » So, there remains the moving realization that we have been bought with a price, that we are not really our own, and that He is well within His rights to lay claim upon our lives (I Peter 1:18,19; II Corinthians 5:14,15).

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**3. REASON #3: The third reason why we are under obligation to recognize His ownership of us is that He literally lays Himself out for us continually.**

- » Sheep do not “just take care of themselves,” as some might suppose. They require, more than any other class of livestock, endless attention and meticulous care.
- » Despite all of these characteristics, God never gives up on us. He, as our Shepherd, has to continually lay down His life for us in order that we might flourish and prosper.
- » He is ever-interceding for us (Hebrews 7:25).
- » He is ever-guiding us by His gracious Spirit (John 16:13-15).
- » He is ever-working on our behalf to ensure that we will benefit from His care (Titus 2:14; John 15:9-17).

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# “THE MARK OF THE CROSS”

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Lesson 3 ■ For week ending January 18, 2020

For the man or woman who recognizes the claim of Christ, and gives allegiance to His absolute ownership, there comes the question of bearing His mark. The mark of the cross is that which should identify us with Him for all time. The question is: Does it?

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**KEY TEXT:** *“Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matthew 16:24).*

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**1. Jesus made it clear, when He stated emphatically, “If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me” (Luke 9:23).**

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- » Basically, what it amounts to is this: A person exchanges the fickle fortunes of living life by sheer whimsy for the more productive and satisfying adventure of being guided by God (Mark 8:35).
- » It is a tragic truth that many people who really have never come under His direction or management claim that “The Lord is my shepherd.”
- » They seem to hope that by merely admitting that He is their Shepherd, somehow they will enjoy the benefits of His care and management without paying the price of forfeiting their own fickle and foolish way of life (Romans 8:5-11).
- » Is it enough to just acknowledge that Jesus is Lord without submitting to Him (James 2:19)? Does mere acknowledgment make Jesus your Shepherd?

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**2. One cannot have it both ways. Either we belong to Him, or we don’t (Joshua 24:15).**

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- » Jesus Himself warned us that there would come a day when many would say, “Lord, in Your name we did many wonderful things,” but He will retort that, “I never knew you.” (Matthew 7:21-23).
- » It is a most serious and sobering thought which should make us search our own hearts, motives, and personal relationship to Him.
- » In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus promises us one thing for sure: There is a storm headed our way! Discuss the importance of belonging to Jesus and building our lives on His sure foundation (I Corinthians 3:11-15).

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**3. Ask yourself the following questions. Be truthful with your response to each question.**

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- » Do I really belong to Him? Read and discuss Galatians 2:20.
- » Do I really recognize His right to me (Romans 12:1)?
- » Do I respond to His authority and acknowledge His ownership? Read John 3:30.
- » Do I find freedom and complete fulfillment in this arrangement (Romans 8:28)?
- » Do I sense a purpose and deep contentment because I am under His direction?
- » Do I know rest and repose, besides a definite sense of exciting adventure, in belonging to Him?

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**4. If you have answered “yes” to the questions listed above, then you can truly exclaim, “The Lord is my Shepherd!”**

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- » I’m thrilled to belong to Him, for it is thus that I shall flourish and thrive no matter what life may bring to me (Galatians 6:8)!
- » If we forsake our own dreams for His will, He will reward us (Matthew 19:29).

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# “I SHALL NOT WANT”

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Lesson 4 ■ For week ending January 25, 2020

What a proud, positive, and bold statement to make! Obviously, this is the sentiment of a sheep utterly satisfied with its owner and perfectly content with its lot in life. Since the Lord is my Shepherd, then I shall not want. Actually the word “want”—as used here—has a broader meaning than might at first be imagined. No doubt the main concept is that of not lacking—not deficient—in proper care and management. Does this statement imply that believers will never experience hardships? Let’s take a closer look.

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**KEY TEXT: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake” (Psalm 23:1-3).**

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**1. Another aspect of “not wanting” is the idea of being utterly contented in the Good Shepherd’s care and consequently not craving or desiring anything more.**

- » This may seem a strange statement for a man like David to have made if we think in terms only of physical or material needs.
- » After all, David had been hounded and harried repeatedly by the forces of his enemy, Saul, as well as those by of his own estranged son, Absalom (I Samuel 19:1,2; II Samuel 15:13,14). He was obviously a man who had known intense deprivation, deep personal poverty, acute hardship, and anguish of spirit.
- » Therefore it is absurd to assert—on the basis of this statement—that the child of God, the sheep of the Shepherd’s care, will never experience lack or need! Read II Timothy 3:10-12.

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**2. It is imperative to keep a balanced view of the Christian life. Serving God does not exempt you from experiencing tests, trials, or hardships (James 1:2-4).**

- » One must consider the careers of men like Elijah, John the Baptist, the Apostle Paul, and our Lord Himself, to realize that all of them experienced great personal privation (*def. lacking essentials such as food and warmth*) and adversity (II Corinthians 6:3-10).
- » When He was coming to us, the Great Shepherd Himself warned His disciples before His departure for glory that “...*in this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world*” (John 16:33).

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**3. One of the fallacies that is common among Christians today is the assertion that if a man or woman is prospering materially it is a significant mark of the blessing of God upon his or her life. This simply is not so (Psalm 34:17,18).**

- » Rather, in bold contrast, we read in Revelation 3:17, “*I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing. But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.*”
- » Or, in an equally pointed way, Jesus made clear to the rich young ruler who wished to become His follower, “*One thing you lack... Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor... then come, follow Me*” (Mark 10:21).

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**4. Based on the teachings of the Bible, we can only conclude that David was not referring to material or physical poverty when he made the statement, “I shall not be in want.”**

- » For this very reason, the Christian has to take a long, hard look at life. He has to recognize that as with many of God’s choice people before him, he may be called on to experience lack of wealth or material benefits (Philippians 4:11-13).
- » Yet amid such hardship he can still boast, “*I shall not want and I shall not lack the expert care of management of my Master!*”

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# “TRANSFORMATION OF THE INNER MAN”

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Lesson 5 ■ For week ending February 1, 2020

*Transformation* is that process of death and rebirth whereby what was our weakness, becomes our strength. *Sanctification* overcomes the power of canceled sin, but *transformation* turns the mess to glory. While many of us want to forget our past failures, God wants us to use our greatest failures—and the resulting victory—to encourage others.

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**KEY TEXT:** “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*” (Romans 12:1,2).

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**1. As is true for the work of inner healing, so transformation of the inner man is not the work of a few superstars. It is the labor of the entire body of Christ.**

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- » Transformation is taking place in every person who is born-again today.
- » Even through hardships, we can see God’s hand molding and shaping us (II Corinthians 4:16-18).

**2. Transformation proceeds by brokenness.**

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- » Psalm 34:18, “*The LORD is near to the brokenhearted, and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*”
- » Wherein we still trust in our own righteousness, His grace has little room to express His righteousness. But wherein we are acutely aware of our sin and brokenness, His life is set free to be resurrection life in us. Truly our “*strength is made perfect in weakness*” (II Corinthians 12:9).
- » If life has broken you, you are the one Jesus came for! Read and discuss Isaiah 61:1-3.

**3. The good news of the Gospel is not merely *pardon*, which leaves the record of sin and of itself says nothing of change in the sinner, it is complete forgiveness!**

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- » In legal terms, *pardon* only says that the sinner will no longer be punished, whereas *forgiveness* erases the record of sin (Romans 6:23).
- » The good news is *justification* (that in Christ the debt ledger is paid and we are even with the board again).
- » The good news is also redemption, that in Christ Jesus we are brought back from the hand of death. The good news is victorious fulfillment!

**4. Some naively have said what is not in God’s Word: “If you haven’t forgotten, you haven’t forgiven,” or “You should forget you ever sinned” (Psalm 103:11,12).**

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- » Far from forgetting our sins, we are to remember them with sweet gratitude and joy.
- » God “forgets” our sins, but this does not mean God develops amnesia. Rather, He “forgets” by no longer counting our sins against us. Our forgetting should be akin to His.
- » Having fallen, remembering means we cannot justify blaming another, and we are prepared by our “misbeings” and “misdoings” to help others from the same holes and traps (II Corinthians 1:3-7). Discuss the importance of sharing your personal testimony.
- » Neither true healing nor transformation ever erases what is past. That would be to invalidate rather than to celebrate. Transformation holds implicit that nothing in our lives is ever wasted. The grace of God is so complete that there is no event in our lives without which we would be better off.
- » Transformation, therefore, confirms that Satan has won no victories whatsoever among the saved, for from the ground plan of Creation, even as God planned to turn the lowly cross to highest victory, so He has turned every aspect of our (seemingly) defeated lives to glory!

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# “AN UNBELIEVING HEART”

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Lesson 6 ■ For week ending February 8, 2020

Can you remember when you first asked Jesus into your heart? You started on a journey towards Christ to ultimately change/transform your wicked heart (Jeremiah 17:9). The Psalmist David put it this way: “How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart? Cleanse me from these hidden faults” (Psalm 19:12, NLT). This process is called *transformation of the inner man*.

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**KEY TEXT: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you and evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12).**

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## **1. The problem of belief in God has never been solely to convince the conscious mind.**

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- » If it were, God would need only to raise up forensic debaters or brilliant apologists (*def. a person who offers an argument in defense of something controversial*) rather than pastors and churches who nurture.
- » Read Romans 10:10. It seems that too often we have all mentally translated that passage to say: “For with the MIND man comes to believe, and confesses with his mouth.”
- » It is easy to confuse deep, heartfelt conviction with mere intellectual assent and to think salvation is thereby accomplished.
- » It’s not that anyone’s conversion experience is thereby invalid, but that it did not finish the process.
- » **We have been too easily convinced of completion!** (Romans 12:1,2).

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## **2. We are saved, being saved, and will ultimately be saved.**

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- » When belief in the heart opens the floodgates of understanding to the mind and conviction of the spirit, and we respond in the sinner’s prayer to invite Jesus in, we are redeemed.
- » But that experience of conversion is not all there is to being saved (Luke 9:23; Ezekiel 36:26,27).
- » Redemption and justification are entrances to the process of growing into salvation (I Peter 2:1-3).

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## **3. Our hearts need to be transformed anew in far more reaching areas every day, or we fail to grow in Jesus (Proverbs 3:5,6).**

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- » Indeed, that is our primary definition of growth in Christ: further and further death and rebirth through continuing inner conversion. Read II Corinthians 3:18.
- » As the light of God’s Word reaches into the dark, hidden recesses of the heart—plowing up the stubborn clods of self-righteousness and weeding out the old in mind and heart—the heart is then prepared to produce good fruit, sixty to a hundredfold (Matthew 13:3-8).
- » The sword of truth pierces “*even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*” (Hebrews 4:12).
- » Note carefully: “*the thoughts and intents of the heart*,” not the conscious mind!
- » Thus, the primary task of God’s Word is bringing the Gospel by circumstances and counsel to the unbelieving heart of the already believing (II Corinthians 5:17).

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## **4. What does it mean to “work out our salvation”? Read Philippians 3:12-13.**

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- » Evangelism of the unbelieving hearts of believers is a continuing and constant work in progress.
- » Historically, in America, sanctification came to mean striving to live up to the law upon the base of a supposedly already transformed character. The struggle all too often led to judgmentalism and hypocrisy rather than to the gentle nature of Jesus.
- » The Lord must be allowed to occupy the “land” of inner space in each believer’s heart (Ps. 51:6).
- » As the Word touches the places of unbelief in our hearts, we will arise in conversion to take up the battle cry against our flesh and make it our joy to plunge into inner death and rebirth (I Cor. 15:31).

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# “HOW WE SEE GOD”

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Lesson 7 ■ For week ending February 15, 2020

We serve a God who loves us unconditionally. Even after we failed Him, He sent His only-begotten Son to rescue us from death. However, the truth of the matter is that our relationship with our earthly father—or *lack* of relationship with our father—colors our perception of God. And, because of our misconceptions, we fail to see God for who He is: a kind and loving God who wants us to be successful!

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**KEY TEXT:** “*Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God*” (Matthew 5:8).

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**1. Most of us believe that someday (when we die) we will be allowed to see God the Father and be unafraid when that time came.**

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- » Of course this is true, but the Lord wants us to “see” Him—not so much with physical sight—as to come to know and comprehend His nature (John 14:7-11).
  - » In conversation we say, “Oh, I see,” when we really mean, “I understand.”
  - » Jesus was saying that those whose hearts are purified, come to understand and embrace God for who He actually is.
  - » The inference is that because our hearts are not pure, we impute to God motives and ways that are not His. We do not see God, but only our projection of Him (Isaiah 59:2).
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**2. So, what are the impurities in our heart?**

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- » Read I John 4:19-21.
  - » Here we see that the impurity is *hate*. Hate blinds the eyes (Ephesians 4:30-32).
  - » We are told further that our hatred of fellow human beings colors what we see of God—or prevents it altogether! We do not love or see God properly (Proverbs 28:13).
  - » That is one of the primary facts that necessitate continual conversion of the heart. Our hidden and forgotten judgments, especially against our fathers and mothers, prevent us from seeing God as He is (Romans 3:23; Psalm 86:15)
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**3. 20/20 vision scripture: Proverbs 20:20.**

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- » Proverbs 20:20, “*He who curses his father or his mother, his lamp will go out in time of darkness.*”
  - » Our judgments made against our parents in childhood, usually long forgotten, have darkened our spiritual eyes. We do not see ourselves, others, life, or God, with 20/20 vision.
  - » “*The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD, searching all the innermost parts of his being*” (vs. 27).
  - » Our lamp fails to discern our own hidden ways, or those of others, to the degree and in the areas in which judgments have been made and our spirits have been darkened (Ephesians 5:8-11).
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**4. People often say, “Don’t talk to me about a loving God. Why doesn’t He stop all the wars, or at least prevent some of the things men do to men, sometimes in the very name of religion? Or doesn’t He care?”**

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- » We have all heard statements like that. We know the answer is not a mental one, but a matter of an impure heart. Rather than try to defend God, the question should be asked, “What was your father like?”
- » Invariably, you will uncover a history similar to what the person has imputed to God—cruelty, insensitivity, desertion, criticism, and so forth.
- » No matter what the *mind* may learn in church of a gentle and loving God, the *heart* has been scarred and shaped by reactions to their earthly fathers (Luke 6:45).
- » Talk about the importance of forgiving our judgments against our earthly fathers so that we can see our Heavenly Father with 20/20 vision (Deuteronomy 5:16).

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# “IS TITHING REQUIRED UNDER THE NEW COVENANT?”

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Lesson 8 ■ For week ending February 22, 2020

That is a question that is highly debated in many New Testament churches and among many believers. Some feel that if we don't pay tithes (or give 10% of our income to the church), then we are robbing God. Others feel that tithing was a Mosaic Law, just like other Levitical Laws such as dietary restrictions and wearing mixed types of fabric, that were fulfilled in Christ and do not apply to New Testament believers under grace, and that tithing brings us back under the Law. The Church of God teaches that while we are not required to tithe to receive the free gift of salvation, there are blessings to be found in tithing and giving generously.

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**KEY TEXT: "You must decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure - for God loves a person who gives cheerfully" (II Corinthians 2:9, NLT).**

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## 1. What is a "tithe"? The word *tithe* means *one tenth of annual produce or earnings*.

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- » Tithing was originally found in Genesis 14:20 where Abraham gave tithe to Melchizedek, and in Genesis 28:20-22, where Jacob promised to give God a "full tenth." This was before the Law was given to Moses.
- » All the way back to Genesis 4, it was obvious that the family knew the importance of giving back to God a portion that He had given to them.
- » Discuss the acceptable offering that was given by Abel in Genesis 4:3-5. In the same way that the Sabbath was established by God at Creation (God rested on the 7th day), tithing was a part of worship before the covenant was established with Moses for the people of Israel.

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## 2. Jesus did not come to abolish the Law, but to reform it (Matthew 5:17).

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- » Just as the New Covenant changed the Old Testament practices, such as sacrifices (God calls us to be living sacrifices - Romans 12:1) and circumcision (we are now circumcised of the heart - Romans 2:25-29), we probably don't have "grain" to bring into the storehouse—but we do have income!

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## 3. What did Jesus have to say about tithing? Jesus was rebuking the Pharisees in Matthew 23 about their pious attitudes.

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- » One statement in this dissertation Jesus makes about tithing is in verse 23, "*You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.*"
- » Jesus clearly says here to them that they SHOULD tithe, but to remember that the more important matter is the condition of your heart!

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## 4. In some cases, individuals will choose to withhold their tithes because they do not agree with the "institution" of the church organization or perhaps they have an issue with leadership.

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- » Examine the account found in Mark 12:41-44.
- » Although the Temple practices of her day were corrupt, the widow chose to honor God and give everything she had, and Jesus commended her and gave her great honor.
- » It is Biblical for the ministry to be supported by giving (I Corinthians 9:13-14).
- » Matthew 6:21 gives us a bold indicator of the condition of our hearts and where our priorities lie.

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## 5. The most frequently quoted scripture regarding tithing can be found in Malachi 3:8-9.

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- » Discuss the opportunity that we have to see and understand Old Testament scripture through the lense of grace and through Christ. *Giving* is a Biblical concept throughout the Bible, not only in tithes, but we are instructed to give offerings as we are able (Deuteronomy 16:17; Luke 6:38).

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# “THE GIFT OF PROPHET”

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Lesson 9 ■ For week ending February 29, 2020

The second of the five gifts of the ministry is the gift of prophet, a multifaceted gift that empowers one who receives it with the ability either to foretell the future, or to tell forth the revelation of the Word of God, or both. Throughout Bible history God has used prophets to speak forth His Word and to confirm His people. He continues to use them in His Church today.

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**KEY TEXT: “And He gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11).**

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**1. In Old Testament times, prophets were given for the purpose of predicting the future and of telling what God and men would do before the time came for them to do it.**

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- » Even then, the work of a true prophet was one of operating through the Holy Spirit to speak forth God’s Word (II Peter 1:21).
  - » Prophets were so important in the nation of Israel that God set forth certain criteria for recognizing a true prophet and for singling out a false prophet.
  - » Discuss this criteria from Deuteronomy 18:15-20.
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**2. With the advent of the New Testament, the primary thrust of the ministry of a prophet was changed from predicting the future, to preaching the fulfillment of prophecy in the life and ministry of Christ, and in the work that the Church continues in His stead (Luke 16:16; Ephesians 3:5).**

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- » Paul recognized the importance of the ministry of prophets, giving to them foundational status in the church in I Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 2:20.
  - » Expand upon the foundational nature of a gifted prophet.
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**3. The ministry of prophets in the New Testament Church was described in Acts 15:32 and in Acts 21:10,11.**

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- » Consider both of these instances and show how they reveal the comprehensive nature of a gifted prophet’s ministry.
  - » The job of the prophet is not only to predict what God will do, or to proclaim the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, but also to prevail in prayer that God will fulfill His Word.
  - » Consider this truth in the light of James 5:17,18.
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**4. The spiritual gift of prophecy is given for exhortation and edification of God’s Church for the profit of all (I Corinthians 12:7-10).**

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- » I CORINTHIANS 12:7-10, *“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.”*
- » It should not be confused with the gift of a prophet, which is a gift for a minister of the Word of God (Ephesians 4:7-16).
- » Gifted prophets are a valuable and foundational part of the Church. Men who have this gift have insights both into the prophetic Word and the future, that can help to perfect the saints and build up the body of Christ until it reaches the fulness of the stature of Christ.

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# “DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST”

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Lesson 10 ■ For week ending March 7, 2020

We often think of the evangelist as the traveling preacher who comes through our church to stir up the flames of revival, calling saints to action and sinners to repentance. This is definitely the goal, but how is this accomplished? In this study, will we take a closer look at the purpose, work, and calling of the gifted evangelist.

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**KEY TEXT: “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (II Timothy 4:5).**

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## 1. It was the Apostle Paul who told Timothy “to do the work of an evangelist.”

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- » The primary purpose of the evangelist is to preach the Gospel.
- » Paul had given his entire life, from the time he began to follow Jesus, to share the good news of the Gospel into all the world. Our key text comes from a passage in which he is passing the torch to the next generation (II Timothy 4:6-8).
- » Discuss Paul’s passion for the continued success of the Church.

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## 2. Paul describes the responsibilities that come along with being an evangelist in II Timothy 4:1-4.

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- » First of all, there must be a commitment to preach only the Word of God. Some, in an attempt to be popular with people, have tailored their message to suit the changing whims of their time rather than proclaim the truth that will save men’s souls.
- » It is the Word of God that transforms the hearts of men! Confirm this from Psalms 19:7, Psalms 119:103-105, and II Timothy 3:13-17.
- » It is for this reason that the evangelist must always be ready to speak the truth in love, whether it seems a favorable time or not!

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## 3. In Ephesians 4:10-15, we discover that *evangelists* are one of the five-fold gifted ministries given by Christ to His Church.

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- » The evangelist is called to work with the pastor and other ministry for the purpose of blessing God’s people and bringing them to perfection in the work of God.
- » An anointed evangelist will bring unity and stability to the Body of Christ.

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## 4. A good example of one who was called of God and did the work of an evangelist, was Philip.

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- » Philip was one of the seven, full of the Spirit, and called an evangelist (Acts 6:5; 21:8).
- » Philip took every opportunity to preach Jesus. He would preach to crowds (Acts 8:5-7, 12), and he would preach to individuals (Acts 8:34,35).
- » Philip was a spiritual flame burning with the Spirit of Evangelism (Revelation 3:15-19).

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# “WE HAVE WORK TO DO”

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Lesson 11 ■ For week ending March 14, 2020

Jesus used the imagery of laborers working in a field to describe the ministry of reaching souls. The harvest does not bring itself in. There has to be plowing, planting, watering, and harvesting. All of this takes diligent, steady work. In the same way, this world will only be reached for Christ when we as God’s people put in the work that is required. Jesus has called us to work in His field!

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**KEY TEXT:** *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58).*

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## 1. The Father did not call us into His Kingdom to sit idly by and wait lazily for the coming of His Son Jesus.

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- » From the very beginning of Creation, God created man to work (Genesis 2:15).
- » Discuss Jesus’ view on the work that must be accomplished as you read John 9:1-5.

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## 2. Jesus demonstrated through His life and ministry what it means to do the work of God.

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- » While the disciples had gone to find food for Jesus, He had taken the opportunity to minister to the Samaritan woman at the well.
- » What revelation did He share with them when they returned (John 4:31-38)?
- » What did Jesus answer when He was challenged for healing a lame man on the Sabbath day (John 5:17)?

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## 3. Like Jesus, we too are called to the work of bringing people into the Kingdom of God.

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- » When Jesus saw all the work that needed to be done in order to minister to the multitudes, what did He tell His disciples to pray? (Matthew 9:35-38)
- » In the parable of the great supper, where was the servant instructed to go in order to find people to fill the house? (Luke 14:21-23)
- » Someone must be willing to go. How will they know unless someone tells them? (Romans 10:14,15)

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## 4. The work that we are called to do is not our own but God’s!

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- » All that we do should bring glory to God. Only He can bring the increase (I Corinthians 3:5-9).
- » God will be with and bless those who do His work (Haggai 2:4-7; Zechariah 4:6).
- » With the polarization and darkness that we see in our world today, what is our job?
- » Read and discuss Isaiah 60:1,2.
- » As believers, we should not become part of the darkness that surrounds us. Our job is to share the hope and love that comes from accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Savior.

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# “HOW DEEP IS YOUR LOVE?”

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Lesson 12 ■ For week ending March 21, 2020

Our *identifications of love* (what we think love is) is based on two concepts:

- 1) **UNREGENERATE LOVE** – which is a selfish, worldly, conditional and manipulative love, and
- 2) **REGENERATE LOVE** – which is God’s love in us and is unconditional and forgiving.

Given that society is largely performance-oriented (I’m loved because of what I do) and operates on a reward system, it comes as no surprise that the capacity to love God and others is tainted with rules, conditions, and self-seeking motives. As believers, we understand the depth of God’s love for us as His people. The question bears asking, “*How deep is your love for Him?*”

– *Deaconess Kimberley Combs*

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**KEY TEXT:** “*Whom have I in heaven but You? I desire You more than anything on earth. My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; He is mine forever*” (Psalm 73:25-26, NLT).

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## 1. To love the Lord seems simple. After all, He is perfect in all of His ways and eternally faithful, just, and full of mercy and grace.

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- » So then, what is the issue with our love?
- » Love is much more than a feeling of gratitude and thanksgiving. It is a *commitment* to obey God’s Word (John 14:15; Micah 6:8).
- » The love we are to demonstrate towards our Lord must be more than words. In fact, Scripture clearly illustrates *love as an action* (Joshua 22:5).

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## 2. If we were to be completely honest with ourselves, we would readily admit that loving people is extremely difficult at times.

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- » In the flesh, even the believer can exhibit some character flaws that challenge our obligation to love unconditionally.
- » So, how does one choose love over the glaring faults and trespasses of others?
- » Jesus and Stephen knew what to do (Luke 23:34,35; Acts 7:57-60).
- » Granted, we are not subject to such extreme tortures, which is even more reason to forgive others the little intolerances.

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## 3. Forgiveness and love can be compared to a hammer and nails as both are needed in order to work effectively.

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- » One cannot truly forgive without love, and forgiveness is necessary in order to truly love (Proverbs 19:9). Forgiveness, like the hammer, will drive love deeper and help create a long-lasting bond with one another (1 Peter 4:8).
- » The person—who has been forgiven much—will love that much more! Read Luke 7:47.

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## 4. The Word of God equates love with obedience.

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- » Read John 14:15,21 and Exodus 20:6.
- » That being said, the question is then revised to say, “*How deep is your level of commitment?*”
- » **Unregenerate love** is all about *self* and *feelings*. It is an ever-changing selfish love that focuses on manipulating others to fulfill its fleshly wants and desires.
- » **Regenerate love** (God’s love in us that reproduces and creates love wherever it is shared) has little-or-nothing to do with self and everything to do with God and others—regardless of how one feels!

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# “JESUS – BOTH GOD AND MAN”

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Lesson 13 ■ For week ending March 28, 2020

Jesus Christ (Yahshua, the Messiah) embodies the greatest mystery of the Bible, for in His person the very God who created the universe and all things in it, became very man to live a victorious life, to die an atoning death, to experience a glorious resurrection, and to ascend into heaven to restore fallen man to the grace and favor of the Eternal Father!

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**KEY TEXT: *"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (I Timothy 3:16).***

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## **1. Jesus, the person of the Word of God, together with the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit, make up the one God.**

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- » There are not three Gods (Deuteronomy 6:4); however, there are three distinct personalities in the one God.
- » The Heavenly Father is that person of the Godhead who is unknown and unseen to the creation (John 1:18; 6:46; I Timothy 6:15,16).
- » It is the role of the Son, Jesus the Word of God, to reveal the Father to the creation.

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## **2. Before His incarnation, Jesus was the person of the Word, by whom all things were created (Colossians 1:15-17; John 1:1-3; Hebrews 11:3).**

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- » The eternal pre-existence of the Son of God is clearly seen in the prediction of Micah 5:2, *"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."*
- » Compare Psalm 90:2, *"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."*
- » It is confirmed in the words of I Peter 1:19,20.

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## **3. When the Word of God became flesh, He laid aside His heavenly splendor and power to become a human being—nothing more, and nothing less.**

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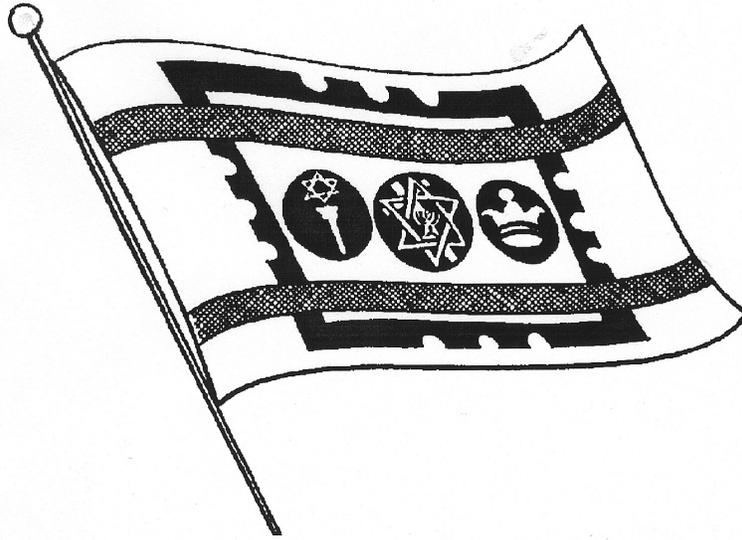
- » This is the message of Philippians 2:5-8, Hebrews 2:9,14 and Galatians 4:4.
- » The reasons for Jesus' becoming a man were two-fold:
  - 1) That He might overcome sin in the flesh (Romans 8:3; Hebrews 4:15) thus giving us an example of how to live a sin-free life (I Peter 2:21).
  - 2) That He might overcome death by being resurrected (Hebrews 2:9,14; Romans 5:17).
- » According to Revelation 1:17,18, who now holds the keys to death and hell?
- » Revelation 1:17,18, *"And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades [hell] and of Death."*

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## **4. Jesus Christ is destined to return to earth as the express image of the person of the Father, to rule as God over all the earth for one thousand years (Hebrews 1:3,8,13; Revelation 1:5-7).**

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- » Then all things will be delivered up to the Father, and God will be all in all (I Corinthians 15:24-28).



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