

“YOU BELIEVE WHAT?!”

WEEKLY SABBATH LESSONS



4TH QUARTER – 2024

THE CHURCH OF GOD at JERUSALEM ACRES
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“YOU BELIEVE WHAT?! – Part 1”

LESSON 1 ■ For week ending October 5, 2024

WE BELIEVE: “There’s only one truth.”

There’s been an active campaign propagating in our society today which supports the theory that each one of us is permitted to conjure up our own “version” of what truth is. Some people call it, “my truth.” We are also told that there is no *absolute truth* anymore: everything is subject to one’s personal perspective or opinion. Nothing could be further from the truth! Let’s see what God’s Word has to say about the subject.

KEY TEXT: “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

1. LET’S CLEAR THE AIR.

- » For the record: **THERE IS ONLY ONE TRUTH AND HIS NAME IS JESUS CHRIST!**
- » And furthermore, for the record, there is one who is the **FATHER OF ALL LIES**: His name is Lucifer, Satan, Devil, El Diablo, etc.
- » Let’s read John 8:44, (NIV), “*You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*”
- » It must be emphatically stated and believed that Satan is the **ORIGIN** of all lies. Notice the scripture says, “*...not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him.*”
- » The only time Satan “uses” the truth is when he’s trying to manipulate and/or confuse the person he is tempting (II Corinthians 11:14).
- » Read the example of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). Satan tried to “confuse” Jesus by quoting scripture to Him! If Satan did it to Jesus—he’ll do it to you as well!

2. SATAN STARTED PLAYING GAMES WITH THE TRUTH AT THE VERY BEGINNING.

- » Before I forget, let’s establish another important principle: Don’t engage in a conversation with the Devil—he will outtalk you! Read I Peter 5:8. Would you get into a discussion with a vicious lion?
- » Jesus gave us an example to follow in Matthew 4. Jesus responded to Satan by quoting Scriptures in response to his taunts. We should do the same thing! What was Jesus’ final statement to Satan (Matthew 4:11)?
- » Discuss the authority that has been given to us as believers. Read James 4:7 and Luke 10:19.

3. SATAN MESSED UP!

- » When we talk about the deceptive powers of Satan, we must recognize that he unwittingly revealed his technique in the temptation of Eve.
- » What was the first thing Satan did with Eve? Read Genesis 3:1. What’s happening here? Satan is successful in making Eve **DOUBT WHAT GOD SAID**.
- » This is the same thing that is happening in our society today. Our generation is questioning the Word of God that has been the established standard (the truth!) since the beginning of time (II Timothy 3:1-9). Discuss the statement in verse 9, “*these also resist the truth*”.
- » When we allow ourselves to question God, we invite **CONFUSION** into our lives. Consider what we are witnessing including gender confusion, sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, greed, and so on (I Timothy 4:1,2).

4. SATAN HAS SET A TRAP FOR YOU.

- » Let’s get back to Satan’s attack on Eve. After he introduced **DOUBT** into the subject matter, Satan proceeded to tempt Eve with the concept of **POWER**. Read Genesis 3:4,5. What was Satan saying to Eve? He was telling her that she could be like God—which has always been his plan (Isaiah 14:13-15).
- » We are seeing this same scam being played out today. Satan has convinced this generation that they are “*like God*” and make their own decisions disregarding the penalties of their actions (II Peter 2:1,2).

“YOU BELIEVE WHAT?! – Part 2”

LESSON 2 ■ For week ending October 12, 2024

WE BELIEVE: “Jesus went to Hell.”

I can remember thinking to myself one day, “Do the Pygmy people who live in the remote jungles go to hell because they haven’t heard about Jesus?” Have you ever asked yourself questions like that? Aren’t we glad that we don’t have to know the answer? LOL! What we do know is this: Yahweh God has done everything He can to spread the Gospel message to every human on earth—including sending His Own Son to Hell! Prove it!—you say. Okay let’s do it!

KEY TEXT: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9).

1. FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD.

- » For the record: **GOD LOVES EVERYONE!** The Bible tells us emphatically that God loves us unconditionally. In fact, His Word tells us that there is nothing that can separate us from that love (Romans 8:31-35).
- » Let’s read John 3:16,17. What’s interesting about the love of God is that it causes action. Because God loves us—it creates a response. Because He loved us—HE GAVE.
- » Does our love for others (including God) cause us to give or respond? Give of ourselves, our time, our emotions, our resources and so on. True love gives. True love causes action.
- » So, what about the Pygmies in the jungle? First, we must recognize that God sees all (Hebrews 4:13).
- » I can remember reading stories as a young child about MISSIONARIES that traveled to remote villages in South America and Africa spreading the Gospel Message. Some of those missionaries were killed in their ventures. What inspired them to do that? It was the love of God for all mankind being manifested in their vision to share God with others—regardless of the personal sacrifice it involved (Revelation 12:11).

2. JESUS IN HELL—ARE YOU SURE?

- » Again, we are establishing the nature of God with regards to people who have not had access to the salvation message. I’m often reminded of Jesus’ visit to Hell.
- » We find this account in I Peter 3. First, let’s set the stage. It’s the week of Jesus’ crucifixion some 2,000 years ago. Jesus shared the Last Supper/Passover with His best friends/disciples and is later betrayed by Judas in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 27:27-31).
- » He is later condemned by the Jews who choose a murderer over Him, and He is subsequently hung on the Cross of Calvary for our sins. Later, at the end of the Passover (Wednesday Evening), He is removed from the cross and placed in the Tomb for a period of 3 days and 3 nights (Matthew 27:57-61).
- » It was after He was placed in the Tomb that Jesus descended to Hell. Read I Peter 3:18-20.

3. WHAT WAS JESUS DOING IN HELL?

- » If you’ve read the Old Testament you recognize that “salvation” or “access to God” was not readily available to the Gentile Nations (although there were some exceptions).
- » In fact, God expressly commanded the Jewish people not to interact, intermarry, or associate with the heathen Gentile Nations (Deuteronomy 7:3,4).
- » What Jesus did, while in Hell, was to offer salvation to those who did not have access to salvation prior to that time. Peter mentions what happened in I Peter 4:6. Notice the scripture says, “*the gospel was preached also to those who are dead...*”
- » What does this have to do with the Pygmies in South America? I believe this scripture gives us proof that *all people will have access to the Gospel* before being judged by God (Matthew 24:14).
- » Consider this while reading Romans 4:5-7.
- » We can’t explain how all of this works—we just know that God loves everyone and He is just!

“YOU BELIEVE WHAT?! – Part 3”

LESSON 3 ■ For week ending October 19, 2024

WE BELIEVE: “Jesus was born in the Feast of Tabernacles–Part 1”

Have you ever watched the Big Bang Theory on TV (you don't have to raise your hand–LOL)? Ever seen the episode where Sheldon talks about the pagan origins of Christmas in order to get out of giving gifts to his friends? In The Church of God, we believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin in the Fall of the year on Tishri 15, the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles. Maybe we should write a letter to Sheldon to encourage his position against gift-giving.

KEY TEXT: *““But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law” (Galatians 4:4).*

1. The Church of God Jerusalem Acres has taught for years that Jesus Christ was born during the Feast of Tabernacles: A YEARLY CELEBRATION OF THE HARVEST in the Old Testament economy.

- » However, we never made a point of trying to identify the actual date that Jesus was born.
- » We know the day that Jesus died: Wednesday, Abib 14, the Day of Passover. We readily admit that was the day some 2,000 years ago that changed our lives and gave us hope of a bright future.
- » However, we must also admit that Passover could never have happened if Jesus had not been born 33½ years earlier on Tishri 15 (the beginning of the Feast of Tabernacles).
- » Read Galatians 4:1-5. The Apostle Paul used the phrase, *“when the fullness of time had come,”* to describe the birth of Jesus.
- » The use of that phrase tells us that Jesus was born at a very specific time. His birth was not random or spur of the moment. It was a defined, well-organized event of monumental proportions.

2. The key to understanding the timing of Jesus' birth is found in a passage in the book of Isaiah.

- » Let's breakdown Isaiah 9:2-7,
 - 2 *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Those who dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.”*
 - » This is in direct correlation with Luke 2:9 when the shepherds beheld an angel and a great light when Jesus was born.
 - 3 *“You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy; They rejoice before You according to the joy of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.”*
 - » This great light shines when you are rejoicing **OVER THE HARVEST IN THE FALL.**
 - » Tabernacles is a celebration of the harvest. **It occurred on the exact same day of the same month every year.** There was no guessing as to when you would celebrate the harvest.
 - » **LEVITICUS 23:39a,** *“Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month [Tishri15], when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days...”*
 - » The celebration/joy of the harvest was at a very specific time of the year. It wasn't random—it was a set time: Tishri 15–THE FIRST DAY OF TABERNACLES.
 - 4 *“For You have broken the yoke of his burden And the staff of his shoulder, The rod of his oppressor, As in the day of Midian.*
 - 5 *For every warrior's sandal from the noisy battle, And garments rolled in blood, Will be used for burning and fuel of fire.”*
 - » What happens on the 15th day of the 7th month (Tishri 15)? **JESUS IS BORN!**
 - 6 *“For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*
 - 7 *Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”*

3. God was very specific as He instructed the Israelites concerning His feast dates in the Old Testament.

- » He was not vague when He defined His feast dates and what He wanted done on those dates.
- » We all know the story of how God used the Roman Government to call for a census (Luke 2:1-3) that required Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem (Luke 2:4-7) so that the prophecies concerning Jesus' birth could be fulfilled (Micah 5:2).

“YOU BELIEVE WHAT?! – Part 4

LESSON 4 ■ For week ending October 26, 2024

WE BELIEVE: “Jesus was born in the Feast of Tabernacles–Part 2”

The birth of Jesus Christ on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Tishri 15), was one of the greatest events to ever happen in our world. Jesus voluntarily lowered Himself so that He could be born of a woman and that He could die on a Cross to save you and I. Is it possible that God did not chose a specific date, a date He had already set apart and sanctified, for this monumental event to take place? We believe God chose a very special date. We know *where* He was born (Bethlehem), we know *how* He was born (of a virgin in a manger), and now we know *when* He was born (Tishri 15).

KEY TEXT: “*And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb*” (Luke 2:21).

1. God’s feast dates are special times of the year.

- » Have you ever wondered *why* you likely have never heard about God’s/Jewish Feasts and traditions? It’s because of Satan’s plan of deception. In AD 135—approximately 100 years after the Crucifixion of Jesus—the Roman Emperor Hadrian outlawed the practice of the Jewish religion in general (including the Sabbath) and emphasized to the Roman authorities the Christian distinction from Judaism.
- » We’ve been robbed of our Jewish heritage by Roman Emperors almost 2,000 years ago. It’s time to restore God’s festivals, special days, and feasts!
- » Read Leviticus 23:1,2. What does the word *feast* mean? It means *properly an appointment, a fixed time or season, appointed (sign, time)*.
- » Notice that part of the definition of this word is that it could mean an appointed *sign* or *time*. We know that when Christ was born, a particular SIGN was shown.
- » **LUKE 2:8-12**, “*Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”*”

2. Jesus was born on the first day of the Feast (Tishri 15) and circumcised on the last day (Tishri 22).

- » Jesus’ birth was not a random event that could take place on any given date. Jesus was born on a very specific date, at a specific place, and at a specific time in history.
- » **LUKE 2:21**, “*And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.*”
- » Since Jesus was born on the first day of the feast, that would mean He was circumcised on the last day of the great feast.
- » *Circumcision* was a sign of God’s covenant with His people (Genesis 17:10-14).
- » Ever wonder why Tabernacles lasted for 8 days? Read Leviticus 23:36? God in His great foreknowledge knew that His Son would be born—and subsequently circumcised—during this great Feast.

3. Joseph and Mary remained in Bethlehem until the time that they could present Jesus “to the Lord” at the Temple in Jerusalem.

- » The Law had very detailed instructions concerning the birth of children and the “uncleanness” of women after birth. Read Leviticus 12:2-6.
- » Because Mary had a male child, Jesus, she had to wait a total of 40 days before she could present Him, along with the required sacrifices, at the Temple in Jerusalem (Luke 2:22-24).
- » God instructed the Israelites to dwell in booths only during a certain time during the year: THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES (Leviticus 23:42,43).
- » Discuss the parallels of Jesus being born in a manger while the Israelites were celebrating the harvest in booths (Luke 2:12).
- » Finally, John summed up what happened at Tabernacles when Jesus was born in John 1:14.

“YOU BELIEVE WHAT?! – Part 5”

LESSON 5 ■ For week ending November 2, 2024

WE BELIEVE: “God sees you!”

My wife and I were watching the premiere of the “Golden Bachelorette” recently and the 61-year old Bachelorette was telling how that she felt “invisible” after her husband of many years died of pancreatic cancer a few years ago. She also mentioned how that he had always made her feel “seen” during their marriage. As human beings, we want to be “seen.” What does that mean? According to AI (don’t laugh): *“Feeling recognized and accepted for who you are by another person. Having a part of your identity, emotions, needs, or physical presence fully recognized. Experiencing representation, validation, support, and/or inclusion.”* Now that we know what AI has to say about this subject, let’s find out what God’s Word says!

KEY TEXT: *“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him...”* (II Chronicles 16:9a).

1. DO YOU FEEL ABANDONED?

- » A couple of weeks ago we discussed the deception of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. We know that their decisions caused separation between God and mankind.
- » The first separation began immediately when Adam and Eve hid from God rather than walking and talking with Him in the cool of the evening (Genesis 3:8).
- » Read verse 9 and 10. Here we see one of the first responses to sin in our lives: WE HIDE FROM GOD.
- » What is the purpose of hiding? So that WE CANNOT BE SEEN.
- » The second response that Adam revealed is: *“I was afraid...and I hid myself.”*
- » Adam and Eve found themselves: “Naked and Afraid,” which is ironically the name of a reality show on the Discovery Channel! Read Hebrews 4:13.

2. WE HIDE BECAUSE WE THINK GOD IS MAD AT US BECAUSE OF SIN.

- » That human desire to hide from God is because we know that God is holy and we also know that we have not always been holy! Paul wrote about this struggle in Romans 7. He summarized it in verse 18.
- » First, we must acknowledge that God knows ALL ABOUT US. Read Psalm 103:14.
- » What does the word *frame* mean? The Hebrew word means *form, imagination, mind, work*.
- » I believe God is telling us that He knows the struggles we have with our sinful flesh (Romans 3:23 | John 1:8; Romans 5:12). God knows you have a sinful nature.
- » In fact, Jesus died for us *while we were yet sinners* (Romans 5:8).

3. GOD WANTS TO BE WITH YOU.

- » Have you ever told yourself that no one would want to be with you if they KNEW EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU? All of your struggles, your failures, and your faults? Guess what? Jesus knows all about it (Hebrews 4:14-16).
- » HERE’S THE GOOD NEWS: God knows everything about you, and HE STILL LOVES YOU UNCONDITIONALLY (II Corinthians 12:9).
- » Consider King David. He had monumental failures in his life (including adultery, murder, lying, stealing, etc.) and yet God said that he was a man after His own heart (I Samuel 13:4). While that statement was made before David’s failures, God did not reject him after he failed. Instead, God still used David and even allowed His Son, Jesus Christ, to be born from King David’s lineage (Luke 18:38).
- » In fact, God chose us from the beginning of the world according to the pleasure of His will (Ephesians 1:3-7). Paul continues, *“And you, He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins”* (Ephesians 2:1).
- » Be assured that GOD SEES YOU. He VALUES YOU. After all, He is the one who created you in His image. Instead of hiding from God because of failures in your life, confess them to God and ask for forgiveness as David did (Psalm 51:5-12).
- » Next, forget the past and walk forward with God on your side! Read Philippians 3:12-14.

“YOU BELIEVE WHAT?! – Part 6”

LESSON 6 ■ For week ending November 9, 2024

WE BELIEVE: “Jesus can’t come back yet.”

I used to see a bumper sticker on the back of cars that said, “In case of rapture this car will have no driver.” There’s a prominent teaching in the Christian Kingdom about the imminent return of Jesus to this earth. They say it could be any second, any time, perhaps before I finish typing this paragraph. Is that a true statement? Can Jesus come back at any minute? The Biblical answer is NO. The truth is that Jesus cannot return until certain prophecies are fulfilled. Let’s investigate what the Bible has to say on the subject.

KEY TEXT: “*and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began*” (Acts 3:20,21).

1. I’M CONFUSED!

- » First, let’s read the KEY TEXT in the Amplified Version for some clarity: “*whom heaven must keep until the time for the [complete] restoration of all things about which God promised through the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time*” (Acts 3:21, AMP).
- » Second, let’s establish that people have been confused about this subject for thousands of years.
- » Paul had to address the same issue in his day—over 2,000 years ago. According to II Thessalonians 2:1, what is Paul talking about in this chapter?
- » Go ahead and read verse 2 of that chapter. Notice Paul addresses a couple of issues that had arose because of their confusion on the subject. Paul tells them, “*not to be quickly unsettled or alarmed either by a [so-called prophetic revelation of a] spirit or a message or a letter [alleged to be] from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has [already] come*” (II Thessalonians 2:2, Amplified Version).

2. GOD KNOWS WHAT HE IS DOING.

- » Before we discuss this subject further, let’s establish the fact that God knows what He is doing.
- » This scripture always comes to my mind: Acts 15:18, “*Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.*” What does that mean? God sees the BIG PICTURE. You and I are stuck in the present; however, God has full knowledge of the past, present, and future. Furthermore He is not indecisive. God is not sitting up in Heaven, on His Throne, trying to decide whether or not to send Jesus Christ to this earth. That’s not the God we serve. God has a plan. He told us about the plan in Acts 3:21.

3. WHAT REQUIREMENTS HAVE TO BE MET BEFORE JESUS RETURNS AT THE 7TH TRUMP?

- » **First, all relevant prophecies concerning Jesus’ 7th Trump return must be fulfilled.** That’s what the Apostle Paul went on to tell the group he was talking to in II Thessalonians Chapter 2. Let’s examine what Paul says must happen before Jesus returns.
- » Read II Thessalonians 2:3. Notice that Paul starts off with a warning about “deception.” That was the same theme that Jesus taught when asked about the same subject (Matthew 24:3,4).
- » Paul says that, “*the falling away comes first.*” That phrase has been the subject of many debates and is open to broad interpretation. However, it’s the next phrase that Paul says that brings some definitive landmarks to watch for: “*...and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition.*”
- » Here’s where we see some identifiable signs to watch for. The “*man of sin...the son of perdition*” is none other than the AntiChrist of the Last Days. He is an evil man, Satan’s imitation of Jesus Christ, who will arise out of the Islamic Nation at the end of the Battle of Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38:6-9) in the mountains of Israel by making worldwide peace (Daniel 8:25; 9:27).
- » The AntiChrist will ultimately rule the world (Revelations 13:7,8) for a period of 7 years before he is destroyed by Jesus at His 7th Trump return (II Thessalonians 2:8; Revelations 19:15).
- » Obviously, the Battle of Gog and Magog has to happen first (a war in the Golan Heights Mountains of Israel where it borders Lebanon and Syria).
- » We can see the world stage being set for this battle, but it has not happened yet.
- » Jesus is held in heaven because of prophecy. Remember, that’s His testimony! Read Revelations 19:10.
- » Rest assured. God is in control. He is working all things our according to His plan (Philippians 1:6).

“YOU BELIEVE WHAT?! – Part 7”

LESSON 7 ■ For week ending November 16, 2024

WE BELIEVE: “I get a new body!”

Did you know that Americans spent more than \$11.8 Billion on aesthetic procedures (plastic surgery) overall in 2022? Why? Because they wanted to improve their appearance. Did you know that as believers, you and I are promised to inherit a new, incorruptible body one day? Why waste all that money on facelifts, tummy tucks, and liposuction when we’re promised a brand new, updated body whether we go by way of the grave or are changed in an instant at Jesus’ 7th Trump return? What kind of body will we have? Can we still eat? Let’s look at God’s Word for the answers.

KEY TEXT: “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption” (I Corinthians 15:50).

1. I HOPE YOU LIKE FISH!

- » The Bible is very clear that Jesus is our example in all things. What kind of body will we have? According to I John 3:2, John tells us very clearly that “*we shall be like Him.*”
- » So, the question becomes: What was Jesus like when He resurrected from the dead?
- » One of the first accounts we read about Jesus after His resurrection is found in Luke 24 when Jesus appears on the Road to Emmaus. The account indicates that they did not recognize Him (verse 15,16). After a time of traveling with them, they asked Jesus to eat with them (verse 28-30).
- » So, our first clue is a WIN for all you BREAD LOVERS out there. Jesus ate bread with them!
- » Verse 32 tells us another feature of our new bodies: we will have the ability to “vanish” to move from place to place supernaturally. Later in verse 36 when Jesus reappears, He shows them His hands and His feet which obviously still bore scars from His Crucifixion wounds.
- » Jesus then said, “*Have you any food here?*” He then ate “*broiled fish and some honeycomb*” (verse 42,43).

2. DO ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN?

- » In I Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul gives us more insight into what we can expect with our new bodies. But first, Paul tells us about the different types of “flesh.”
- » Read I Corinthians 15:35-37. Paul introduces the interesting concept that we can’t really *live for God*, until we *die to ourselves*. Discuss this concept concerning your life (I John 3:16; John 15:13).
- » In I Corinthians 15:39,40, Paul talks about our flesh and the different types of created beings. One of the greatest benefits of our new bodies is found in verse 42. We are promised a new body that “*...is raised in incorruption.*” What does that mean? There will be NO CORRUPTION in our new bodies.
- » Can we admit that our current bodies fight against us as we age? And, not just concerning spiritual battles, but we also fight against diseases, cancer, and all sorts of maladies in our flesh.
- » Paul addresses the issues concerning our earthly/fleshy bodies compared to our heavenly bodies in verses 46-49.

3. WILL I STILL BE MARRIED AND HAVE BABIES IN MY NEW BODY?

- » The short answer is NO! (LOL). We are not the first ones to have this thought or ask this question.
- » Consider Jesus’ response to this question when asked about marriage by the Sadducees in Matthew 22:29,30, “*...You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels of God in heaven.*”
- » So, I’m gonna be single and alone again in paradise? Not hardly!
- » Read I Corinthians 2:9. We cannot even begin to comprehend what our eternity with Yahweh God will be like (Revelation 21:4).

4. DID YOU JUST CALL ME A “TENT”?

- » God promises us a new body. Paul tells us more about it in II Corinthians 5:1-8.
- » It’s not possible for us to inherit what God has for us with our mortal bodies (I Corinthians 15:50).
- » However, as believers, we will be changed in the twinkling of an eye (I Corinthians 15:51-58).
- » So, if you’re thinking about a “tummy tuck,” save your money!

“YOU BELIEVE WHAT?! – Part 8”

LESSON 8 ■ For week ending November 23, 2024

WE BELIEVE: “God has a reward program!”

With record-high interest rates on credit cards, mortgages and such, some credit card companies are trying to lure new customers with promises of a “reward program.” If you use their credit card, you can earn reward points that you can use towards buying even more stuff (LOL)! I have a much better “reward program” to offer you. Did you know that you can get rewarded for simply getting a glass of water for a prophet of God? The next time you see that your Pastor needs water—go for it! There’s a reward waiting with your name on it!

KEY TEXT: “...He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6b).

1. CAN WE ALL ADMIT THAT WE LIKE TO BE REWARDED?

- » When’s the last time you turned down a reward? If we do something nice for somebody, *we want to be thanked*. If we make/cook a meal, *we want to be acknowledged and complimented*. If we write 6 Sabbath School lessons in one day, *we wanted to be congratulated* (LOL).
- » The word “reward” means *a thing given in recognition of one’s service, effort, or achievement*.
- » When we work for someone, our paycheck is our reward. A lifetime of hard work is a result of our disobedience in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:17-19).
- » We want rewarded! God knows this about us. It’s not a negative thing—it is reality. This is the way we train our children: we punish the bad and reward the good (Proverbs 13:24).
- » If we are not careful, our lives can become focused on reaping earthly/fleshly rewards. Jesus addressed this issue in Matthew 6:19-21. While we are instructed to work if we want to eat (II Thessalonians 3:11,12), our *work* should not be the entire focus of our lives. We are created to serve God.

2. HOW DO I GET THE THINGS I WANT?

- » In Matthew 6, Jesus continues His teaching about life in Chapter 6. What does He say about *worrying*? Read Matthew 6:25-32.
- » Jesus concluded in verse 32 by saying, “...*your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*” Discuss the concept of Yahweh God being our Father and His promise to supply our needs. Does that mean we sit at home and wait for the door bell to ring?
- » Jesus goes on to clarify what He is talking about in Chapter 6. In verse 33 He says, “*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...*”
- » Jesus is talking about our priorities in this life. We all know that the cares of this life will consume you if you let it. Jesus even warned about this in Luke 21:34,35 where He lists the “*the cares of this life*” as one of the “*snare*” that will hinder those that “ *dwell on the face of the whole earth.*”

3. ONLY WHAT YOU DO FOR CHRIST WILL LAST.

- » It’s a hard concept for us to understand that only what you do for the cause of Jesus Christ will last. Consider the words of Paul found in I Corinthians 15:57,58. If you remain faithful until the end, all of your “*labor is not in vain in the Lord.*”
- » Let’s consider that for a moment. The Bible says that one day we will all give an account of ourselves to the Lord (II Corinthians 5:10). Will God be impressed by your financial success—the earthly rewards that you have accumulated? The answer is “No, He will not.”
- » God’s ways are often contrary to ours. Consider Luke 9:24. Jesus then asks, “*For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?*” (Verse 25).
- » What about the whole “cup of water” thing? Read the words of Jesus found in Mark 9:41.
- » God wants you to be part of His reward program. The more you do, the more rewards you receive (Colossians 3:23,24). Let’s be clear: Salvation is a gift of God to whomever will receive it (Romans 6:23).
- » Fight the good fight—finish the race and receive your reward (II Timothy 4:7,8)!

“YOU BELIEVE WHAT?! – Part 9”

LESSON 9 ■ For week ending November 30, 2024

WE BELIEVE: “Our loved ones who have died and gone to Heaven, are sound asleep.”

Have you ever heard someone say, “My Grandmother in heaven must be watching over me!” While that is a lovely thought, there is no Bible foundation to support that statement. God’s Word instructs us to build our house (or our lives) on the Solid Rock of His Word. To be honest, watching over me is a full-time job. It’s the Holy Spirit’s job to guide my footsteps and to lead me to truth. Let Grandma rest in peace—she’s earned it!

KEY TEXT: “We are confident yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord” (II Corinthians 5:8).

1. WHAT DOES JESUS SAY ABOUT THE MATTER?

- » I immediately think about the story of Lazarus when I think of the status of our saved loved ones who have died in the Lord.
- » Jesus was staying around Jordan and ministering to the people (John 10:40,41) when word was sent to Him that His friend, Lazarus, was sick (John 11:1-3). Obviously Mary and Martha had very urgent prayer request for Jesus.
- » How did Jesus respond (John 11:4)? Have you ever considered that your “urgent prayer request/need” may end up being your greatest testimony? Jesus had a plan which included Lazarus. Can God trust us with our “test”?
- » Read John 11:5,6. It is obvious that Jesus loved Lazarus and his family. In fact, when Jesus decided to visit their household, His disciples tried to discourage the trip (John 11:7-10).
- » Read verse 11. Was Jesus confused about Lazarus’ condition? Read John 11:12-16. Discuss the pessimism of Thomas found in verse 16.

2. SHHHH! THEY’RE SOUND ASLEEP!

- » Most of us know the rest of this story. Jesus arrives at the home of Lazarus and Mary and Martha are mad. Lazarus has been dead—and in the grave/tomb—for 4 days (John 11:17-22).
- » Martha essentially says to Jesus: “You can resurrect Him if You want—You have the power.” When Jesus agrees, Martha thinks He is talking about the general resurrection in the Last Day. Jesus responded by saying, “*I am the resurrection and the life...*” (John 11:23-27).
- » The point we want to stress from this story is that Jesus told His disciples that Lazarus was “asleep.” So, according to Jesus, the righteous dead are *asleep*. Paul confirms this truth in I Corinthians 15:51 when he said, “*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed...*”
- » What subject was Paul addressing? He was saying that at the time of the 7th Trump, those that are alive and remain, will be changed in a moment (I Corinthians 15:52). The point is that all of those righteous—who go by way of the grave—are considered to be *asleep*.

3. THERE’S A WHOLE BUNCH OF PEOPLE ASLEEP!

- » Those that have fallen asleep in Christ have hope! Read I Thessalonians 4:13-18.
- » According to Daniel 12:2, both sinners and saints who have died are asleep at this present time.
- » John 5:28,29 confirms this truth.
- » The truth of the matter is this: We don’t need Grandma to look over the banister of heaven and watch over us. We don’t need her to *intercede* for us.
- » Jesus (via the Holy Spirit) is the One who watches over us and intercedes for us (Romans 8:34).
- » The concept of *saints* or *loved ones* “watching over us or interceding for us” stems from the Roman Catholic Church doctrine of men and women attaining the status of “saint” thus having the ability to intercede on our behalf before God. According to Holy Scripture, there is only One Mediator. Read I Timothy 2:5. Jesus is the only way/door to God (John 10:9,10; 14:6).
- » Let Grandma rest in peace. If you have a need, or need someone to watch over you, pray to Jesus—He’s the one who hears your prayers (I John 5:14,15)!

“YOU BELIEVE WHAT?! – Part 10”

LESSON 10 ■ For week ending December 7, 2024

WE BELIEVE: “If I can’t forgive you, I’m not forgiven myself–Part 1”

Most of us think we are pretty smart. Satan likes to encourage that line of thinking. The Word of God is given so that you and I can have life—and have it more abundantly! However, if we ignore God’s Word, or change it to fit with our way of thinking, we are inviting chaos, strife, and discontent into our life. Forgiveness is a choice. You have the power to access this freedom in your life simply by being obedient to God’s Word. When I forgive you, I set myself free to be forgiven as well. I don’t know about you, but I need to be forgiven! I have no choice but to forgive you if I want to live my best life.

KEY TEXT: “But if you do not forgive men [and women] their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:15).

1. In Matthew 6:5-8, we find Jesus instructing His disciples about the basic principles of praying.

- » Read Matthew 6:5-8. Let’s read verse 5 again. According to this verse, not all prayers are offered for the right reasons.
- » What does verse 6 instruct us to do? So many times we try and subvert what God’s Word tells us to do (Romans 8:7). Billions of people around the world pray certain phrases (verse 7)—Jesus called them “*vain repetitions*”—believing that the *quantity* of their prayers is more important than the *quality* of their prayers (Matthew 6:7).
- » What advice does Jesus give us all in verse 8? Jesus establishes that HE is the Teacher—not men (including heathens) and their customs, traditions, and practices. This is a very important lesson for us all. We are not to follow the devices of mankind—we are to follow the instructions of Jesus (John 14:6).
- » II TIMOTHY 3:16, NLT, “*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.*”
- » The Bible (God’s Word) is the Manual for our lives. It is the authority that we should turn to for direction, correction, and the power to live a successful life.

2. Let’s take a look at The Lord’s Prayer found in Matthew 6:9-15.

- » First of all, read the first part of verse 9. Let’s establish up front that this is JESUS—the very Word of God—speaking (John 1:1-5).
- » In verse 9, Jesus begins by telling us emphatically: “*In this manner, therefore pray...*” The *New Living Translation* makes it a little more clear when it says: “*Pray like this...*” The disciples asked Jesus how they should pray and Jesus responds by giving them detailed instructions which covers what they should do—and what not to do!
- » Please read Matthew 6:9-13. Notice that the prayer ends with “*Amen.*” That word simply means *so be it, firm, trustworthy, surely*. However, that’s not the end of this story. Verses 14 and 15 are found in Matthew’s account, but they are not listed in Luke’s version found in Luke 11:2-4.

3. So, what does Jesus tell us in Matthew 6:14,15?

- » Read Matthew 6:14-15. When a teacher wants to emphasize an important point to a student, they will often repeat or emphasize an instruction so that the student has a better understanding of the importance of that instruction. The same is true with Jesus—the Master Teacher (Matthew 7:29).
- » In verse 12, Jesus instructs us to pray: “*Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors...*” Luke’s version says, “*And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us...*”
- » The word *debt* in the Greek means: *something owed, that is, (figuratively) a due; morally a fault: debt*. When we sin, there is a penalty due—a debt. That penalty is death (Romans 6:23). This is the law of God established in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve as a penalty for disobeying God (Genesis 2:16, 17).
- » The *New Living Translation* version of verse 12 says this: “*and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.*”
- » Read Matthew 6:14, 15 again. In these two scriptures we see the introduction of the word **IF** for the first time in this model prayer. **IF** is a small—but very powerful—word. The word *if* is a conjunction. Conjunctions are words that link other words, phrases, or clauses together. Next week we will examine these two verses.

“YOU BELIEVE WHAT?! – Part 11”

LESSON 11 ■ For week ending December 14, 2024

WE BELIEVE: “If I can’t forgive you, I’m not forgiven myself–Part 2”

Can we admit that we still struggle with doing the right thing at times? Someone trespasses against us—at home, on the job, on the road (LOL)—and before we know it we lose our temper. What? A Christian can lose their temper? The answer is a resounding, “Yes!” (We’ve all seen it happen!). Today we will talk about how to properly address a “trespass.” Did you know there is a biblical formula you have to follow in order to experience true forgiveness? Let’s see what Jesus has to say about the subject of *trespasses and forgiveness*.

KEY TEXT: “For with God nothing will be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

1. Think about this....

- » Jesus tells us that the only way to handle a **TRESPASS** is to **FORGIVE THE PERSON** (Matthew 6:14,15).
- » Every single day we are potentially trespassed by someone. What is a trespass? When someone violates you in some way. Examples: They hurt your feelings, they abuse you in some manner (physical or emotional), they say something that is false about you, they accuse you of something you didn’t do, etc.
- » The only way to keep that TRESPASS from becoming planted in your heart is to FORGIVE that person. Jesus doesn’t say *just forget about it*. Jesus doesn’t say *just ignore it*. He doesn’t say, *quit being such a big baby*. God’s ways are higher than ours! Read Isaiah 55:9 and Hebrews 4:12.
- » Jesus instructs us to **FORGIVE**—that requires us to make a **CHOICE** (Deuteronomy 30:19). We choose to obey because that’s what Jesus instructs us to do! However, if we fail to forgive, we have also made a choice to disobey God and we will suffer the consequences (Romans 6:23).

2. Jesus says we have to make the decision to forgive.

- » We have to get into the habit of forgiving those that trespass against us on a DAILY BASIS. Remember, the “Lord’s Prayer” is a DAILY PRAYER (“*Give us this day our daily bread...*”).
- » **REMEMBER THIS:** **If we fail to forgive, that trespass it still alive and well in our heart.** Can we trust our hearts? Read Jeremiah 17:9.
- » The reason we can ERUPT at someone—over something very small—is because we have unforgiveness planted in our hearts. According to Galatians 5:19-21, “*outbursts of wrath*” are a fruit of the flesh.
- » No wonder Jesus tells us to forgive them—on a daily basis!!! Otherwise we are a walking time bomb—ready to explode over something insignificant. Read James 1:26.
- » If we don’t deal with our emotions, and simply repress or suppress them, they are still there in our heart and **THEY WILL COME OUT OF OUR MOUTH IN OUR SPEECH** (Luke 6:45).
- » Jesus wants our hearts free and clear. Why? So we can love each other unconditionally.

3. Let’s talk about our emotions.

- » EMOTIONS (plural noun) – *a natural instinctive state of mind deriving from one’s circumstances, mood, or relationships with others.*
- » This secular definition could easily substitute the words “*natural instinctive*” with “*fleshly*”.
- » How many have proven that there is nothing *good* within your flesh (Romans 7:17,18)?
- » Our *emotions/feelings* need to be dealt with. We should ask ourselves, “Why am I feeling this way?”
- » “Is there something in my heart that I need to deal with?”
- » That’s what Jesus said in Mark 11:25,26. Notice He used the phrase, “*...if you have anything against anyone, forgive him...*”
- » Instead of ignoring our emotions/feelings, we should deal with them head-on. Hebrews 12:15 tells us that we should be “*looking carefully*” at ourselves to avoid any root of bitterness.
- » Instead of your feelings controlling you, you can choose to control your feelings by forgiving others.



“YOU BELIEVE WHAT?! – Part 12”

LESSON 12 ■ For week ending December 21, 2024

WE BELIEVE: “I will live forever!”

Let me clarify that title: “*part of me*” will live forever. Why? Because I am made in the image of God. You and I are composed of a body, a spirit, and an eternal soul. Our mortal bodies will eventually die and return to dust. Our spirit (the breath of life) will return to God who gave it. Finally, our soul (our eternal being) will either go to be with God or spend eternity with Satan in the Lake of Fire (Hell). If we truly understood the eternal consequences of the decisions that we make every single day, what would we be doing? Let’s take a moment and discuss that question this morning.

KEY TEXT: “*But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven...for where your treasure is, there your heart [your wishes, your desires; that on which your life centers] will be also.*” (Matthew 6:20,21 AMP).

1. “HURRY UP WITH THE LESSON PLEASE, I HAVE TO GO TO WORK!”

- » Have you noticed that the pace of life has increased extensively? It seems like it takes every waking moment of your life just to be able to exist (I Peter 5:7).
- » Consider this: The cost of living has increased dramatically in the last 4 years. Monthly rent payments have risen 30% since the pandemic. Food costs are up 20% across the board. Car prices are through the roof. People have to work 2 and 3 jobs just to make ends meet. A lot of people have even had to give up fast food ☹!
- » What in the world is going on? Jesus mentioned this briefly in His warning concerning the Last Days. Read Luke 21:34-36. Jesus called all these external pressures on us: “*the cares of this life.*”
- » Satan is trying to monopolize your mind, your time, and ultimately your life. Jesus declared this in the Parable of the Sower. Read the words of Jesus in Mark 4:3-9. While some of the hearers were confused about the parable, what did Jesus say to the apostles (Mark 4:11)?
- » Finally, read the explanation of the parable in Mark 4:13-20. Discuss verse 19 where Jesus talks about “*the cares of this world.*” According to Jesus, what is Satan trying to do to us?

2. While we are commanded to work and make a living, our focus should be on serving God.

- » Let’s be clear: God’s Word commands us to work—including “hard” work. Read Genesis 3:17-19.
- » Even in the New Testament, Paul and Timothy address the issue of working for a living (II Thessalonians 3:10; I Timothy 5:8).
- » So, the question becomes: How do I work for a living and work for God at the same time?
- » Jesus addresses this issue as well. Consider His Words found in Matthew 6:19-21.
- » Jesus addresses the issue of “treasure.” What does the word mean? The original Greek word *thēsauros*’ (pronounced: *thay-sow-ros*’) literally means *a deposit, that is, wealth.*
- » My father, Bishop Samuel Kramer, used to say: “*If I go out of my way to help someone here on earth, I have made a ‘deposit’ in my heavenly account. Then, when I need help, I can make a withdrawal from my heavenly account if needed.*” Read the story of the Good Samaritan found in Luke 10:27-37).

3. What are you—a sheep or a goat?

- » If you’re like me, you have a lot of questions about what our life will be like when Jesus returns to this earth to rule and reign for 1,000 years (followed by eternity with Him!).
- » However, there’s no mystery about the scenario that will take place when Jesus judges the world. We find an account of this event in Matthew 25. Let’s read verse 31-33 to start. Now, let’s find out what the SHEEP receive: Read Matthew 25:34-40. What did Jesus say about “*the least of these?*” GOATS, it’s your turn now: Read Matthew 25:41-46. Don’t be a goat!!!
- » Someone once said: “*Only one life will soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ will last.*”
- » What are you doing with your life? Are you building up treasures in heaven or here on earth?
- » Bishop Joseph Mizell used to say: “*I’m a preacher who knows how to butcher meat. I’m not a butcher who knows how to preach.*” You’re gonna live forever: the question is “*Where?*”



“YOU BELIEVE WHAT?! – Part 13”

LESSON 13 ■ For week ending December 28, 2024

WE BELIEVE: “My words have power!”

Have you ever been accused of having a “smart mouth”? I know I have (LOL). Most of you know about my battle with stage 4 oral cancer. It resulted in the removal/replacement of 3/4 of my tongue. It has also *hindered* my ability to communicate easily. I now have to slow down when I talk and I’m only saying *about half* of what I want to say: Much to the delight of some—LOL! It has also taught me about the *power* that our words have. I choose to be positive about my cancer journey and subsequent recovery. I know I am blessed. People tell me they have to “*listen closely*” to understand me now—I intend to use that to my advantage! – Bishop David Kramer

KEY TEXT: “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Proverbs 18:21).

1. What we say matters.

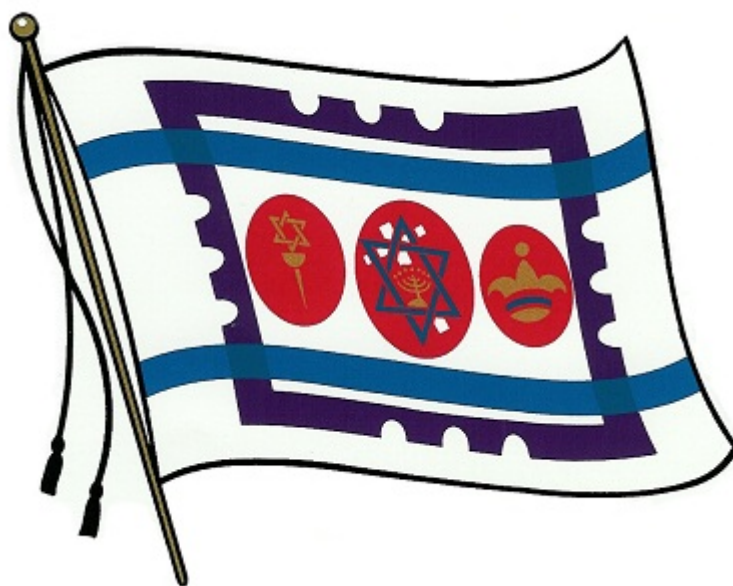
- » My decision to be POSITIVE about my cancer journey came from watching the example of my mother, Sara Mae Kramer. Even in her old age, she spoke positively about her health, her life, and her desire to be with Jesus. By watching her example, I learned the power of being *positive* even in *negative* situations.
- » I believe my Mom was fulfilling the instructions of Titus 2:1-8. She was *teaching* by the example that she lived and the words that proceeded from her mouth.
- » Let’s read verse 8 again. The Amplified Version reads, “*sound speech that cannot be condemned...*”

2. You and I are living in a time when everyone can hear what we say.

- » The very day that I was diagnosed with cancer, Alecia and I decided—while in the parking lot of the doctor’s office—to share our journey of fighting cancer on Facebook. Why? So we could show others how to endure a trial and/or test. We weren’t even sure how things would turn out, but we knew God would walk with us.
- » Did you know that is Biblical? Let’s examine the testing of Peter found in Luke 22. According to Luke 22:31, what was happening? I take comfort in this scripture knowing that Satan has to get permission before attacking a believer (Job 1:6-12).
- » Satan wanted to take out Peter. He wanted to destroy his ministry. While Jesus permitted the attack, He did not forsake Peter, no, instead Jesus prayed for him (Luke 22:32).
- » When I was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer, I wanted God to miraculously heal me so I could avoid having part of my tongue removed. I’ll never forget what Bishop Lavell Craig told me. He said, “*God knew you had cancer on your tongue. It wasn’t a surprise to God.*” Bishop Craig encouraged me to take the necessary medical steps (surgery, reconstruction, etc.) to remove the cancer from my mouth.
- » In other words, God already had a plan for my cancer journey, my recovery, and my continued ministry.
- » That’s what Jesus told Peter in Luke 22:32. He said, “*when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.*” Jesus already saw Peter being victorious *after* the test/trial. He instructed Peter to share his testimony to encourage/strengthen the brethren. Have you ever denied Jesus?

3. Some might say: “I’m not a preacher!” Really? I think you are.

- » Most of us have a smart phone in our hand. Want to know what the temperature is? Google it. Can’t locate a scripture? Use your Bible app. We have the world at our fingertips: How are we using it?
- » You are preaching every single day that you comment/like/post on various social media platforms (Facebook, X (Twitter), TikTok, etc.). You have the power to spread *positivity*, or to be *negative*.
- » God’s Word tells us that we are to be the “light” of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). Jesus instructs us to let our light shine so that people will glorify God in heaven. This has always been His plan for us (Isaiah 60:1,2). **LIGHT IS POSITIVE. DARKNESS IS NEGATIVE.**
- » Read the **KEY TEXT** again. Most of us have a hard time controlling our tongue (James 1:19,26).
- » You and I have the **POWER** to either **HELP** or **HINDER** those around us. As believers, we have **HOPE**—His Name is Jesus Christ! Let me encourage you to be positive in an increasingly negative world.
- » Be positive. Spread light. Use every opportunity to **ENCOURAGE SOMEONE** with your word today!



A quarterly publication of

THE CHURCH OF GOD

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Cleveland, Tennessee 37364-1207, USA
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