

What's the Message – Lesson Twelve

Today we will review the first eleven lessons and tie them all together.

Greeting in the name of Jesus, our Savior. We pray that the Spirit of God will use these studies fruitfully in you, that you may grow in your understanding of our God, His grace and mercy, and the plan that He has for your life. Amen.

In the first few lessons we established several key points fundamental to all Judeo-Christian doctrine.

First was the establishment that God is; He is real, eternal, and all-powerful.

And we learned that creation was not an accident that happened by a chaotic multiplicity of chance happenings and mutations. It was the planned creation of a Master Designer that the Hebrews knew as Yahweh. We also learned that Yahweh referred to His being in the plural, when He said: “*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.*”

We stated then that we Christians see these statements as a clear reference to the doctrine of the Trinity which we proclaim.

Secondly, we stated that God made all things, not just some things, good . . . very good, in fact, and suited for the purpose God created it.

This is not what the Devil and atheistic evolutionists want you to believe, of course, but it is what God has taught us and we are comforted by His assurance, and approach each day with a thankful heart for His blessings.

This was elaborated upon in the lesson about the Garden of Eden, where we saw Adam living a life of a perfect relationship with God, with himself, with others, and with the rest of creation. Adam was given certain duties and responsibilities, and all that was required to maintain this perfection was his obedience to God's will.

In lesson four we saw this relationship take a reverse course as mankind succumbed to the deceitful lies of Satan, and rebelled against the authority of God, desiring to be as God, the one in control. Although the consequences of this rebellion were immediately initiated, even then God promised that He would send a special One, descended from Adam and Eve, who would defeat Satan and restore mankind to God's family.

Next came the first examples of the consequences of sin. Cain murders Abel, and is separated from his parents, and from God.

Now we begin to see the development of this theme of selection and separation. It begins with the selection and separation of the line of Seth, as the ones from whom the promised blessing would come. Yet, even within this family we find that sin had so overtaken the entire world that God decided He would destroy all mankind and start over with a new "Adam" in the person of Noah.

But once again, even the family of Noah contains within it the necessity for further selection and separation, and the line of Shem rises to the fore. And once again, like a small child that keeps reaching for the hot stove, mankind repeats the same mistakes of selfishness and arrogance, and tries to be like God. And so God disperses the nations at Babel, because they . . . like us . . . forget so quickly God's patience and grace, and His demand for obedience.

In Lesson Eight we met Abram, whom God had called to walk in His ways, and to separate himself from the pagan influences in which he had been raised. We were introduced to the promise God made with Abram, to make him a great nation, and would bless him . . . so that Abram would be a blessing to others.

We made the claim that this covenant with Abram was now the central theme of the rest of the Old Testament, and that all of the pages which follow were only a commentary on Israel's failure to keep that covenant. The importance of obedience was again emphasized.

In Lesson Nine we learned about the significance of the material blessings that would be granted to Abram, and their intended purpose. We were also given a peek into the fact that Israel soon distorted their understanding of these blessings, and saw them as an

end in themselves, a distortion that would become a curse to them in later years.

In Lesson Ten we saw how Abram stepped out in faith, and did exactly as God had commanded, and obeyed God's call! We saw Abram putting God's will first, and the needs of others before his own. And so there was another step in the process of selection and separation as Lot and Abram moved away from each other.

In Lesson Eleven we saw that the doctrine of justification by grace, through faith, is not strictly a New Testament doctrine, but was already in effect in the covenant with Abram as he was now renamed Abraham.

God's promise was not something that Abraham had earned and deserved, but it was a gift of grace. And this covenant was sealed in blood, by the action of God, just as Jesus has sealed our promise with His blood, by His actions as our substitute.

To help us better understand what we have been reading in this book we call "The Bible," there is an underlying principle that has been lying in the background, but one that we have not called your attention to. Now that we have some basic themes established, this seems to be a good time to bring it out. We are now focusing on Abraham, and the revelation he has received from God and passed onto his descendants.

It is necessary for us to remember that Abraham was a Hebrew. In contrast, we – who are also known as "westerners" – are from the Greek heritage in terms of thought patterns and culture. Although Yahweh is neither Hebrew nor Greek, His word was transmitted to us through a Hebrew conduit, and was originally phrased within a Hebrew context. Therefore, it is important that we need to learn to think like a Hebrew if we are to understand its nuances and implications.

For the moment we can only establish the fact of this principle, but will call it to your attention in future lessons and will develop it further in the Study Aids that accompany this course.

Next time we shall learn a lesson about how Yahweh instituted and used a visual aid to remind the Israelites that they were selected and separated to be His people.

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