

## What's the Message – Lesson 157

In this concluding lesson of What's the Message, we will present a summary of the message of the Bible, plus a charge to our listeners.

Greetings in the name of Jesus, our Savior. O God, we stand in awe of the good things You have prepared for us, things so good that they surpass our understanding. We ask that You would cast out all our sins and evil desires, and replace them with Your Holy Spirit in our hearts, and guide us into a life pleasing to You. This we ask in the name of Jesus the Christ, Your Son who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Teacher, in our last lesson you stated that we would present a summary of the complete Bible this time. Is that even possible? Can the Bible be summarized in just a few minutes? Of course, we faced the same challenge when we did the summary of the Old Testament back in Lesson 86. And yet, it was possible to present a meaningful, yet succinct summary that our listeners have found useful. Lesson 86 will not be repeated here, but is helpful at this point for our listeners to review it on their own.

Note well how the account begins, with the fundamental statement that God is real and exists without the need of our approval. He alone is the Creator of all things, whether we approve of that or not. He is the One who establishes the rules, and the consequences for breaking those rules. He told Adam that on the day he ate of the forbidden fruit, he would experience death. And death has been the lot of all mankind ever since. But God also announced a plan of forgiveness that would restore Adam into the presence of God. Here we see two great themes, or doctrines: Law and Gospel. These themes continue, not only in the Old Testament, but also in the New.

Parallel with those two doctrines are two themes that we saw being developed from Adam onward: the themes of trust, and obedience. We saw how Israel never fully learned to trust God completely and to obey Him fully. We saw this throughout the New Testament also, and saw that it applies to us just as much as it did to the people of 2,000 and 3,000 years ago.

We can say that we saw how God used the history of empires to prepare the world for the coming of His Son. And when the time had fully come, Jesus stepped into this world of ours and took on our flesh, in order that He might fulfill the requirements of God's law for us. We have learned that Jesus is the focal point of

the entire Bible, and with understanding gained from our New Testament study we may see more clearly references to His predicted earthly presence in the Old Testament. We have learned many lessons from Jesus, but most importantly that He came to save us from sin, to earn for us reconciliation with the Father, and that He is the only path to heaven.

Now, because of Jesus, our risen Lord, we too shall rise and live eternally with Him in heaven.

This was the theme that the Apostles carried with them, out into the Jewish world first, and then to the gentile world at large. It was a message that was met with opposition from the beginning, and continues to this day. In spite of this opposition, God is the One in control and His Word still persists through us into this sinful world. God's message of love and forgiveness is the ultimate victor, because God is more powerful than Satan.

We have also learned that God has provided us with the guidance of His Word through the epistles of the Apostles; guidance that helps us deal with the pressures and temptations of daily life, and guidance that helps us to recognize and deal with false teachers and doctrines. God's Word has also given us lessons on Faith, Justification, Sanctification, Suffering and Hope, and even of eschatology – the end time. In all of this there was always this consistent theme: hold fast to your faith.

But perhaps St. John says it best of all in his Gospel, chapter 20, verses 30 -31: *Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.*

And with that we bring this course to a close. Now, lest you think that you have graduated, and can now stop studying, please let me say a few very personal words. At the time of the initial release of this lesson on the website I will be in the middle of my 55th year of teaching adult Bible studies. You might think by now I would have learned it all. No. That is impossible to do. Every time I go back through and look at a section again, there is another precious diamond of insight and understanding, ready for me to pick up. And I have been blessed with many wonderful pastors over the years, and am particularly blessed with Dr. Braun today – a man who is an exceptional teacher – and I always look forward to each opportunity to gather new insights from him. Plus, there are always many

more good books about the Bible worth adding to my collection, books that help me to see a new perspective in God's Word at work. So my final word to all of you is this: you have not graduated in the sense that you have now completed your study, you have only laid the groundwork for further study. So where do you go from here? I give you this charge: you go back to the beginning, and start over with Lesson One, and proceed at your own pace. This time you will learn even more as you work your way through the course again and utilize the Study Aids in a small group discussion.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Cor. 13:14)