

God's Living Word

taught by Richie Temple



Purpose: God's Living Word is an audio class designed to equip you with basic tools necessary for reading and studying the Bible so that you can apply the truths of God's word to your everyday life. By covering the major themes presented in the Scriptures and establishing foundational principles to keep in mind while reading the Bible this class will help to put you on the path to a better understanding of God's Living Word.

Class Description: The class is broken down into five Sessions. Each of these Sessions are made up of two (roughly 30 minute) teachings. The topics of the Sessions are listed below accompanied by a brief description.

Session I - **God's Living Word: An Introduction** - Introduces the God of the Bible as a living God who has made know his will to all mankind through his powerful word.

Session II - **Principles For Understanding the Bible** - Sets forth basic principles for reading and studying the Bible in order to better understand and apply the truths therein.

Session III - **In The Beginning** - Covers the major themes and events from Genesis chapters 1-3 which lay the foundation upon which the rest of the Bible is built.

Session IV - **An Old Testament Overview** - Differentiates between the immediate and ultimate themes of the Old Testament while presenting some of the major covenants and promises and explaining their fulfillment in Christ.

Session V - **A New Testament Overview** - Presents God's plan of salvation, fulfilled in Christ, as freely available to all mankind through the gospel.

How To Use This Class: This class is designed to be used as flexibly as possible by individuals or groups. The class may be gone through entirely, in sequence or may be broken up and used as individual topical teachings. We recommend that you follow along in the Syllabus and that you look up the all of the verse references in your Bible. Please feel free to make copies of the entire class or individual Sessions, however the class is not meant to be used for money making purposes of any kind. If you prefer, we will be happy to send additional copies to anyone who would like to have them. Comments and suggestions are especially appreciated since the class is updated from time to time.

Please write to the author of the class, Richie Temple, at: richie@unity-of-spirit.org

Our Prayer is that this class will contribute to your understanding of the Bible in order that you may bear more fruit in your relationship with your heavenly Father day by day.

God's Living Word is produced jointly and offered freely by:

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&

Cary Christian Fellowship
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The basic text used throughout is the New International Version of the Bible.

God's Living Word: An Introduction

Session 1.1

Scripture References:

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| •1 Timothy 2:3-7 | •John 17:17 | •Matthew 15:1-9 |
| •John 3:16 | •Psalm 119:89-105 | •Matthew 22:29 |
| •2 Timothy 3:14-17 | •Isaiah 55:8-11 | •Hebrews 4:12-13 |
| •John 8:31-32 | •Matt. 4:4 | •1 Peter 1:24-25 |

Main Ideas:

God's basic will for all people is stated in 1 Timothy 2:3-7:

1. To be saved,
2. To come to a knowledge of the truth.

The Bible = the Scriptures = God's word in written form. As God's revealed will the Bible is useful for teaching, rebuking and correcting people in their beliefs and their practical everyday lives.

The Bible has one central theme upon which all else revolves and that is: God's plan of salvation that he brings to fulfillment through his Son, Jesus Christ. This plan is grounded in a few basic truths:

1. There is only one God.
2. There is only one people of God.
3. There is only one hope of salvation for all of God's people.

The God of the Bible is a living God and his word is liberating, trustworthy, illuminating, powerful and effective.

Mankind needs both physical and spiritual nourishment. The Bible contains the spiritual nourishment we need to know God's will and to live in fellowship with him as our heavenly Father.

The truth of God's word in the Bible must be our only standard for truth. We must know and understand the Scriptures in order to avoid falling prey to the traditions and commandments of men that can nullify the truth of God's word in our lives.

If we desire to know God, we must come to the Scriptures, for in the Scriptures God's power and will are made known.

God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, is the creator and judge of all mankind. Each of us is responsible to God and will give an account of our lives to him. God's word is the standard by which we will be judged. Through understanding God's word, we can know God's will and conduct our lives accordingly.

People come and go, but the truth of God's word will live and endure forever.

God's Living Word: An Introduction

Session 1.2

Scripture References:

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| •Hebrews 11:6 | •Psalm 37:3-6 | •Matthew 6:25-34 |
| •Hebrews 4:1-2 | •Proverbs 3:5-6 | •1 Thessalonians 2:13 |
| •Genesis 15:1-6 | •Luke 8:4-15 | •Romans 8:28 |
| •Psalm 26:1-2 | | |

Main Ideas:

In order for God's word to become living and real in our lives, it must be joined by **faith**.

The words "faith" and "believe" have the same basic meaning. Both are translations from the same Greek root word - *pisti*. To have faith in God's word is to believe that God's word is true.

Faith is not magic. Instead, faith is a humble trust in God and his word. It is to accept God's word as being true and then to hold to it in your life.

The God of the Bible is a living and personal God who is at work in the world today. However, individuals have the choice to respond to God and his word with faith or unbelief.

The Bible is filled with examples of people who chose to put their faith, confidence, and trust in God and, as a result, reaped the corresponding benefits in their lives.

When we believe God's word, we enter into a true and right relationship with God. He becomes our Father and we become his children. We can then produce the fruits of that relationship which include blessings in this life and the assurance of a share in the much greater life to come.

We must also consider that if we reject God's word, we will receive the consequence of unbelief. We will be required to go through this life without all the blessings which accompany a personal relationship with the living God and our prospect for the future will be bleak: to perish after the final judgment.

The Goal of the Christian life is to continue in our relationship with God - built on faith - throughout our lives. As we seek to attain this goal, we will receive the blessings of our relationship, and we will produce the fruits of righteousness. A life such as this brings great glory and praise to God.

As the foundation of our lives, we must put our faith, confidence and trust in God as our heavenly father who in all things in this life is working for the good of those who love him.

Principles for Understanding the Bible

Session 2.1

Scripture References:

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| •2 Timothy 3:16-17 | •Exodus 19:1-8 | •Acts 1:1-2 |
| •Hebrews 1:1-2 | •Exodus 24:3-4 | •Galatians 1:1-2 |
| •2 Peter 1:20-21 | •Luke 1:1-4 | •Revelation 1:1-4 |

Main Ideas:

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for:

1. **Teaching** us how we are to believe and live.
2. **Rebuking** us when we are believing or living wrongly.
3. **Correcting** us so as to bring us back to believing and living correctly.

The Purpose of the Scriptures as stated in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 is to train God's people in righteousness in order that they may be equipped to carry out God's will in every good work.

Hebrews 1:1-2 gives us a brief summary in answer to the question: How did we get God's word as recorded in the Scriptures?

1. The Old Testament: "God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways."
2. The New Testament: "but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son."

Examples concerning the Old Testament:

1. "...men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." 2 Pet. 1:21 NASB
2. "Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel..." So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak."
Ex. 19:1-8

The Gospels contain records of some of the words and deeds of Jesus Christ. These words and deeds were heard and observed by his close followers, the apostles. The apostles recounted them as they shared the good news of Jesus Christ with others. These accounts were later recorded in writing and collected in a form like we have them today to be sent to various groups of people that they might know the gospel as well.

The book of Acts is much like the Gospels concerning the manner in which its content was transmitted. The difference lies in the content itself. Acts records some of the significant events and teachings from the early years of the church's efforts to share the gospel with the world.

Romans through Revelation are, for the most part, letters written by apostles to individuals or churches concerning the message of the gospel and living life according to that message. Over a period of time, these letters were collected and put in the form which we have today. They were preserved in this manner so as to help later generations, including ours, understand the good news of all that has been accomplished through Jesus Christ.

Principles for Understanding the Bible

Session 2.2

Scripture References:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------------|
| •Acts 8:26-35 | •Jonah 1:1-3 |
| •Mark 12:28-34 | •1 Corinthians 1:1-3 |

Main Ideas:

There are two main **goals** of biblical study.

1. **To understand the original intent and meaning of the Scriptures.** (Always ask yourself the question, “Do I understand what is written?”)
2. **To correctly apply the truth of God’s word in our lives.** (Always ask yourself the question, “How does this apply to me today?”)

In order to accomplish these goals, first and foremost, we must:

READ, READ and READ THE BIBLE

As we read the Bible we need to:

1. Read the Bible as a whole. Try to gain a scope and understanding of its central and fundamental truths (e.g. God’s Plan of Salvation).
2. Focus on the points being made rather than on every detail. Remember that the parts will fit within the whole.
3. Distinguish between the fundamental, universal, or absolute principles of truth which are unchanging and are grounded in the character of God himself **VS.** the situational applications of truth dependent on historical, cultural, geographical, or other specific situations.
4. Memorize those verses or sections of Scripture that are most meaningful to your life. Spend time thinking about what these verses mean and practice applying the truth of these verses in your everyday life.

Some basic information about the Bible itself that we need to keep in mind:

1. There is one Bible, but it is made up of many parts: The Old Testament, the New Testament, various books, letters, prayers, songs, etc. Some of these are going to be more applicable to your life than others (e.g. the New Testament letters).
2. The context in which the different parts of the Bible were written vary. We must be aware of the original audience and ask, “What was their historical, geographical and cultural context?”
3. The Bible is made up of different types of literature: Historical Narrative, Poetry, Law, Gospel, Letter, Apocalypse, etc.
4. The Bible uses different types of language to convey truth: Literal (e.g. Genesis 1:1) and Figurative (e.g. Matthew 4:4).

Find a version of the Bible that you can understand and that you will faithfully read. There are a number of excellent versions available. For suggestions on different versions to explore see the last page in this syllabus.

For more detailed study of the Bible, you can consult various study aids. These include: Study Bibles, Bible Dictionaries, Commentaries and other works. For a list of suggested aids see the last page in this syllabus.

Scripture References:

•Genesis 1:1 - 2:3

Main Ideas:

Theme: Genesis chapters 1-3 sets forth the foundational truths upon which the rest of the Bible is built. These chapters set the stage for the central theme of the entire Bible: God's plan of salvation which he brings to fulfillment through his Son, Jesus Christ. In contrast to all the mythological creation stories of ancient times, these chapters present the truth of a sovereign and personal God creating the heavens and earth, and all that is in them, in accordance with his own divine purpose and will. These chapters explain the meaning, purpose and order of all of God's creation – in accordance with their proper relationship to God, the Creator.

Biblical Concepts and Language: Gen. 1-3 sets forth God's creation of the heavens and the earth in pictorial language that is easy for God's people to understand. It presents the creation of the world in six days with God "resting" on the seventh day after his work has been completed. It uses a combination of literal and figurative language – (along with many literary devices) – to communicate to mankind the meaning, purpose and proper relationship of God's creation with God, the Creator.

God, the Creator: The main character of the Bible is God. God's revelation of himself and his will is progressive throughout the Bible. The Bible always assumes the existence of God and an invisible spiritual realm that preceded the creation of the heavens and earth. God exists "from everlasting to everlasting" and "his kingdom rules over all" (Psalm 90:1-2; 103:19). Though God is "spirit" and therefore "invisible," his "eternal power and divine nature" are "made plain" to mankind by the works of his creation (Romans 1:18-20). Everything in God's creation was brought into existence through God's spoken word - in accordance with God's own divine purpose and will – and was "very good."

Mankind and God's Created Order: The creation of mankind – male and female – in God's own image and likeness to rule over the earth was the crowning achievement of God's creation in Genesis (Gen. 1:26-27). Men and women find their true meaning and purpose in life only by living by faith in a proper relationship with God, their Creator, and carrying out God's will on earth. All biblical morality - and law - is based on man being created in God's image and living in harmony with him.

Examples of other Scripture references to creation:

Exodus 20:11, Job 38-41, Psalm 8, Psalm 19, Proverbs 8, Isaiah 40-43, Mark 10:5-9, John 1:1-5, Acts 14:14-18, Acts 17:16-34, Romans 1:18ff., Romans 8:18-25, I Corinthians 8:6, Ephesians 1:4-5, Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews 1:1-2, Hebrews 11:3, II Peter 3:3-7, etc.

Scripture References:

•Genesis 2:4 - 3:24 •Revelation 12:7-9

Main Ideas:

Mankind's Relationship with God: Genesis 2:4 begins the biblical story of mankind's relationship with God which continues throughout the Bible. The LORD God formed man (*Hebrew - adam*) from the dust of the ground (*Hebrew - adamah*) and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life so that man became a "living being" or "living creature" (Genesis 2:7). Biblically, man is a *psychosomatic* unity of body and spirit - totally dependent upon God for life. God is immortal, but man is mortal – subject to death (Genesis 2:17). It is only the life-principle or life-force of "spirit" or "breath" from God that gives man life and makes him "a living being." All other animals also have this same "life-force". What makes man special is that he is created in the image of God. In Genesis 2:4 – 3:24, Adam is "the [first] man" who is a prototype for "every man" who follows after him. In one sense, Adam's story is the story of us all. There is a blending of literal and figurative truth throughout this record with many plays on words, much symbolism and many other literary devices to emphasize the importance of these truths.

The Fall of Man: The continuation of the man and woman's blessed life with God was dependent upon their obeying God's command. If they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil they would be "doomed to die" (Gen. 2:16-17, a Hebrew idiom). The Serpent (cf. Revelation 12:7-9) tempts the woman to "become like God/gods" (Genesis 3:5). She is deceived and breaks God's command and gives some of the fruit to Adam (the man) who also eats it. The consequences are cataclysmic for mankind and all of God's creation: sin, evil and death entered the world (Genesis 3:7-24; Romans 5:12-14; Romans 8:18-23).

God's Plan of Salvation: From this point, the biblical story centers on the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation which God had purposed in Christ "before the creation of the world" (Ephesians 1:3-10). This plan progressively unfolds in the life of Israel but against the background of a great spiritual battle that is taking place behind the scenes. Fortunately, God's people have the assurance of ultimate victory (cf. Genesis 3:15, Romans 16:20). This ultimate victory is presented pictorially in the book of Revelation chapters 21-22 with the final establishment of God's everlasting kingdom – coming down out of heaven - in a new heaven and new earth where righteousness dwells. This is the ultimate biblical hope and it forms the biblical compliment to Genesis 1-3.

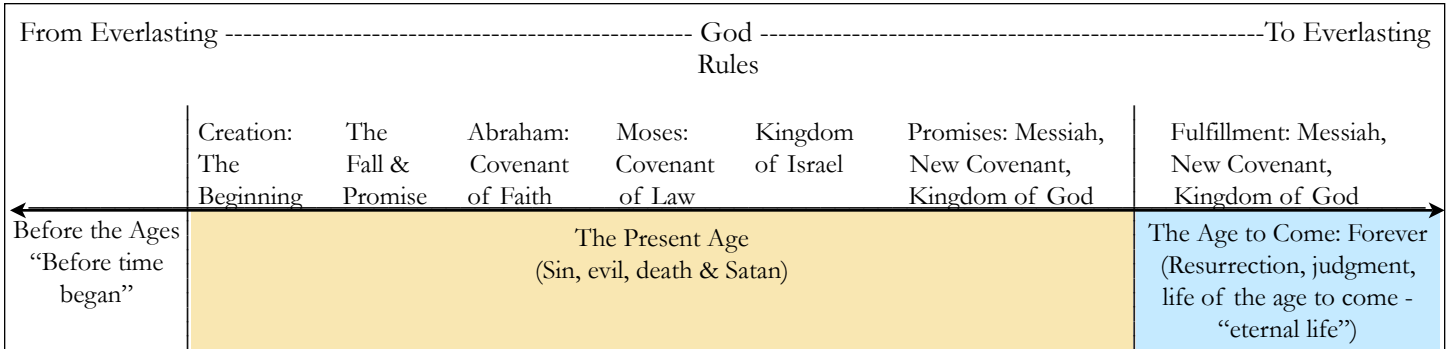
An Old Testament Overview

Session 4.1

Scripture References:

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|-----------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| •Hebrews 1:1-2 | •Genesis 18:17-19 | •Exodus 21:12-14, 22-25 |
| •Luke 24:27 | •Exodus 19:3-5 | •Exodus 22:1-2, 14-15 |
| •Genesis 12:1-3 | •Exodus 20:1-17 | •Exodus 24:3-8 |

Old Testament Perspective



Main Ideas:

The Old Testament (the Law, the Prophets and the Writings) is primarily a spiritual history and anthology inspired by God with two major themes:

1. **Immediate theme:** God's covenant relationship with Abraham and his descendants (offspring or seed) – the nation of Israel – through which God works out his ultimate theme for the world.
2. **Ultimate theme:** God working in history to bring about the redemption and salvation of mankind through Israel's promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Principles to remember when reading the Old Testament:

1. God revealed himself - through his mighty words and works - *progressively* throughout the Old Testament according to the circumstances and limitations of his people, in order for them to understand.
2. There is a limited revealing of the spiritual battle in the Old Testament, (Genesis 3:15, etc.) but God is always at work behind the scenes to bring to pass his ultimate will for mankind.
3. The relationship between the Old and New Testament is one of Old Testament *promises* to New Testament *fulfillments*. Christ is foretold and foreshadowed in the Old Testament (Luke 24:13-32, 44; 2 Corinthians 1:18-22; Colossians 2:16-17).
4. The Old Covenant which God established through Moses was a just and fair guide for his people until their redemption was complete through the work of Christ.
5. The Old Testament is written from a Hebrew perspective: all events – whether good or evil – were ultimately attributed to the active or permissive will of God under his sovereign rule.

“The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed.
The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.” - Augustine

An Old Testament Overview

Session 4.2

Scripture References:

•Deuteronomy 4:1-8	•Jeremiah 7:21-26	•Isaiah 9:6-7
•Micah 6:6-8	•Jeremiah 31:31-34	•Daniel 12:1-3, 13

Main Ideas:

The entire Old Testament foreshadowed and prepared for the coming of God's Anointed Savior and King, the Messiah (Christ). Through him God's plan of the ages, the salvation and redemption of mankind and all creation, would be accomplished.

God's **covenant of the law** which he established through Moses with Israel set out provisions for the people to obey in order to set them apart, as God's special people, from the nations surrounding them. This law had as its foundation the justice and righteousness of God which he desired for his people to follow and imitate. The law established a system for dealing with offenses fairly, maintaining justice for the offended and oppressed and protecting the perpetrators from excessive punishment. The penalty matched the crime. The sacrificial system set up by the law gave to the people of Israel a means whereby they could show outwardly the remorse in their hearts stemming from their failings and shortcomings before God. By fulfilling the requirements concerning the sacrifices the people were given assurance that they had met God's demand on account of their sin and so they could continue in their walk with him.

God's desire was always to have a people who would worship and serve him from the heart. The "old" covenant's role was only temporary, serving as a guardian, or custodian, of God's people until Christ (Galatians 3:19-25). Its sacrificial system foreshadowed Christ's sacrifice for the sins of the world. Christ fulfilled this law thereby bringing its time of use to an end by his life, death and resurrection.

Israel's unfaithfulness to God brought about their domination by and captivity to foreign rule. It was during these times of despair that God's prophets brought to God's people messages of hope and promise for the future.

The three major Old Testament promises for God's people:

1. The establishment of a new covenant between God and his people. This covenant would be different from the "old" Mosaic covenant in that it would not be an external law. Instead, God would put his Spirit in all his people and would write his laws on their hearts moving them to obey his will. He would forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more. This covenant was put into effect by Christ's sacrificial death, resurrection, and the giving of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2. (Jeremiah 31:31-34, 2 Corinthians 3:1-6)
2. A Savior-King, the Messiah (Christ). God would raise up a Davidic king who would destroy God's enemies thereby rescuing God's people from their oppressors. Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. (Mark 8:27-30, Acts 2:36-39)
3. God's kingdom would be established by his Messiah in a renewed earth. All of God's faithful people including the dead from times past, now resurrected, would enjoy life in a renewed earth ruled by God in righteousness and peace forever.

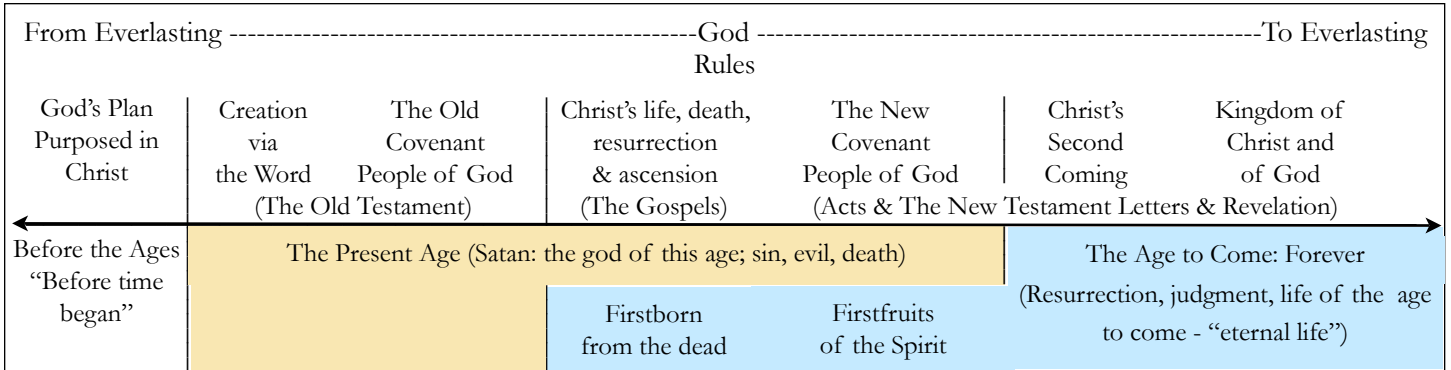
A New Testament Overview

Session 5.1

Scripture References:

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| •Hebrews 1:1-2 | •Luke 3:21-22 | •Luke 24:44-53 |
| •Galatians 4:4-7 | •Luke 4:14-21, 42-44 | •John 1:1-18 |
| •Luke 1:1-4, 26-35 | •Luke 22:14-21 | •John 20:30-31 |

New Testament Perspective



Main Ideas:

The central theme of the New Testament is God's plan of salvation which finally comes to fruition in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God, being conceived through the power of God's Spirit. He was later anointed with God's Spirit, enabling him to carry out his role as the Messiah or Christ, God's representative Savior and King. ***Note - The Spirit of God throughout the Old and New Testaments signifies the power and presence of God himself. The Spirit is the means by which God works through his people and in his creation.***

As the future ruler of God's kingdom, Jesus made it his chief aim to teach, explain and demonstrate the love, power, and righteousness of the coming kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ revealed that the deliverance which God planned for his people was not from earthly rulers but from the spiritual forces of evil: Satan and his kingdom of evil, sin and death.

Through his life, death, resurrection, and the giving of God's Spirit, Jesus Christ fulfilled the major Old Testament promises given to God's people. With Christ, as the firstborn from the dead, the resurrection had begun. With the giving of the Spirit, as the firstfruits of the age to come, God's people could enjoy a portion of his kingdom even as the present age continued. With Christ's return God's kingdom will be all in all.

God's powerful word, his expressed purpose and plan of the ages, dwells bodily in Jesus Christ.

A New Testament Overview

Session 5.2

Scripture References:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| •1 Corinthians 11:17-34 | •Romans 1:16-17 | •Philippians 3:20-21 |
| •2 Corinthians 3:1-6 | •Romans 3:21-24 | •1 Corinthians 15:1-11 |
| •Titus 3:4-7 | •Romans 5:1-2 | •1 Corinthians 15:20-28 |
| •Hebrews 9:26-28 | •1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 | •Revelation 21:1-5 |

Main Ideas:

The gospel message as preserved in the pages of the New Testament is simple. By his sacrificial death Christ established a new covenant between God and man. As a result, those who believe in Christ are forgiven of their sins, accepted as children in God's family, and become heirs of eternal life to come in God's kingdom. Believers in Christ receive the firstfruits of the Spirit and become a part of God's new covenant people. Their Christian responsibility is to live a Christ-like life of love and service until Christ's return.

The Lord's Supper provides a symbolic representation of the essential elements of the gospel message. There are three basic ideas presented in the Lord's Supper relating to the past, present, and future. **Past:** Christ gave his life as a sacrificial death and thereby ratified a new covenant between God and his people. **Present:** God's new covenant people are one body in Christ. **Future:** God's people share one hope. Jesus Christ will return in the future in order that all of God's people may share in God's kingdom with him.

The new covenant is not based on obedience to external laws. Instead, it is based on the life-giving Spirit of God himself which he imparts to his people making them a part of his family and enabling them to live for him, like Christ, until Christ returns.

Throughout the Book of Acts and the New Testament Letters the proper response in the heart of a believer to the gospel of God is to;

Believe in Christ - Live a Christ-like life - Until Christ returns

The Second Coming of Christ and the final establishment of God's kingdom in a new heavens and earth where righteousness dwells is the only hope for mankind. This hope promises deliverance from the sin, evil and death of this present evil age. At Christ's second coming all OT and NT believers – whether dead or alive – will be changed from mortal to immortal so as to be like Christ and inherit the life of the age to come in the kingdom of God. The Book of Revelation chapters 21-22 gives a pictorial representation of the final victory of God's kingdom coming down out of heaven and being established in a new heaven and new earth forever. This fulfills the biblical hope expressed in Christ's prayer "your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:9-10). This is the final fulfillment of God's plan of salvation which is the central theme of the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

Recommended Works

Versions of the Bible:

More Literal	Meaning For Meaning		More Free
King James Version	*English Standard Version	*New International Version	*New Living Translation (2004 edition)
New King James Version	New Revised Standard Version	*Today's New International Version	New English Bible
New American Standard Bible	New American Bible	New English Translation	New Jerusalem Bible

*Indicates most highly recommended versions for everyday reading.

Study Aids:

NIV Study Bible. Edited by Kenneth L. Barker. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

Understanding Scripture: How to Read and Study the Bible. A. Berkeley Mickelsen, Alvera M. Micklesen. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2002.

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth. Douglas Stuart, Gordon D. Fee. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.

The New Testament: Its Background, Growth, and Content. Bruce M. Metzger. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003.

New Bible Dictionary. Edited by D. R. W. Wood. Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996.

All of the above can be found on Amazon.com or obtained by your local bookseller.

For a comprehensive list of commentaries and other resources visit:

www.unity-of-spirit.org
(Recommendations Page)