

GOD IN ACTION



BIBLE STUDY

GOD IN ACTION



ONE ARMY: We see a God-raised, Spirit-filled Army for the 21st century - convinced of our calling, moving forward together

We will...

- deepen our spiritual life
- unite in prayer
- identify and develop leaders
- increase self-support and self-denial

ONE MISSION: Into the world of the hurting, broken, lonely, dispossessed and lost, reaching them in love by all means

We will...

- emphasise our integrated ministry
- reach and involve youth and children
- stand for and serve the marginalised
- encourage innovation in mission

ONE MESSAGE: With the transforming message of Jesus, bringing freedom, hope and life

We will...

- communicate Christ unashamedly
- reaffirm our belief in transformation
- evangelise and disciple effectively
- provide quality teaching resources

God In Action Bible Study Course

We have produced this ‘God in Action’ Bible study manual for the Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army, September–December 2012. This course is comprised of a look at various pericopes through which one can become convinced of the truth of the doctrines of The Salvation Army. This study guide is not meant to be a complete Soldier preparation course. It will however augment any Salvation Army course: Soldier preparation, Soldier training, Local Officer training, Candidate training, new believers’ course, etc.

Because of the necessary inherent structure of topical studies, so many good training courses use proof-texting, a peppering of Biblical quotations, or a synthesis of similar passages to support the Biblical truths that they extol. It is equally valuable however to see that what we do believe can and indeed is actually derived from comprehensive, contextual study of the Scriptures themselves. With this in mind we have created the ‘God In Action’ Bible study course, which we hope will be useful to augment many Salvation Army courses. Each lesson of this 11-part Bible study will look at one or two – or in some cases three - passages of Scripture that we believe can be summed up (at least in part) by the statement of belief placed at the forefront of that lesson. In each Bible study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various Scriptures and we will be encouraged to ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it?’

-Captain Michael Ramsay

January 10, 2013

Course Outline

Lesson 1: 2 Timothy 3:1-4:5 and John 5:31-40

Page 5

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God; and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.

Lesson 2: Genesis 1-4

Page 9

We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.

Lesson 3: John 1:1-18

Page 15

We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead - the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost - undivided in essence and co-equal in power and glory.

Lesson 4: Luke 1:26-38

Page 19

We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.

Lesson 5: Romans 5:12-21

Page 23

We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocency, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness; and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.

Lesson 6: John 2:23-3:35

Page 28

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has, by His suffering and death, made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.

Lesson 7: 2 Peter 1; 1 Thessalonians 5; Romans 8:1-17

Page 32

We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit are necessary to Salvation.

Lesson 8: Galatians 3:1-4:7

Page 36

We believe that we are justified by grace, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.

Lesson 9: James 1-2; 2 Peter 3, Jude

Page 41

We believe that continuance in a state of Salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ

Lesson 10: 1 Thessalonians 5

Page 49

We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson 11: Matthew 7:13-27 and Chapter 25

Page 52

We believe in the immortality of the soul; in the resurrection of the body; in the general judgment at the end of the world; in the eternal happiness of the righteous; and in the endless punishment of the wicked.

In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various Scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 1: 2 Timothy 3:1-4:5 and John 5:31-40

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God; and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.

Background and context: Assuming Pauline authorship of 2 Timothy, Paul probably wrote this letter while he was in prison in Rome under Emperor Nero in the mid-60s CE. Now, this imprisonment was different than other imprisonments that Paul had suffered. Previously Paul was under house arrest – an electronic monitoring type of situation, albeit before electronics of course - where Paul had a fair bit of leniency in his imprisonment. Now, however, he is in a dungeon. Tradition has it that this is Paul’s final imprisonment as well. He will only leave the dungeon for the grave. Paul will die via capital punishment here in Rome and he is now in prison awaiting that conclusion. The conditions in the dungeon were probably not as bad as those for the people today trapped in Guantanamo Bay; Paul’s experience, however, may be similar or even worse than prisons in most correctional facilities in this country. It certainly is not the house arrest that Paul had experienced earlier. This is a new style of imprisonment for Paul and this is what life is like for him as he is writing this letter to his friends and church family.

2 Timothy 3:1-9 speaks about those who oppose the truth. How can we tell what is the truth?

What qualities abound in those who oppose the truth?

2 Timothy 3:10-16 speaks about persecution that arises from proclaiming the Scriptures. What happened to Paul when he preached the Scriptures?

What can happen when we preach the Scriptures? Does this apply to 21st Century Canada?

What good is Scripture?

Is the potential persecution worth it? If so how would we prove that it is worth it? What risks have we taken for the sake of God and the Scriptures?

2 Timothy 4:1-5 speaks of a time when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Is that time now?

What is it like when people do not put up with sound doctrine? Are people doing this now?

What should we do when sound doctrine isn't even accepted in our community or our churches in this community?

John 5:31-40

Background and context: John, a first century fisherman was probably the author of this letter. John and his brother James (The sons of Zebedee) actually dropped their work mid-day and left their dad to run the family business without them in order to follow Jesus. John was known in the Gospel of John as ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved’ and had a prominent role in serving Jesus as a disciple and an apostle.

John 5:31-39 speaks about studying the Scriptures. Why does Jesus say that we should study the Scriptures?

How important is it to study the Scriptures?

What would happen if we didn’t study the Scriptures? What would we miss? Would it be anything really important?

Are we willing to commit to pray and read the Scriptures a little bit everyday?

Further Reading

Courvoisier, Jaques. 1963. *Zwingli: A Reformed Theologian* Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press.

General of The Salvation Army, The. 2010. *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* London: Salvation Books: 1-21

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2008. *John Wesley's Means of Grace compared with Ulrich Zwingli as seen through a Salvationist Lens*. Presented to William and Catherine Booth College (October).
http://www.sheepspeak.com/Michael_Ramsay_History_TSA.htm#Wesley1

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2011. *2 Timothy 3:12-17: Lest We Forget*. Presented to Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army (13 November). <http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2011/11/2-timothy-312-17-lest-we-forget.html>

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2011. *2 Timothy 4:1-5: Share the Good News*. Presented to Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army (20 November). <http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2011/11/2-timothy-41-5-share-good-news.html>

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2008. Why Should I Read the Bible? *Nipawin Journal*, February 2008.
<http://www.sheepspeak.com/sasknews.htm#Bible>

Stephens, W.P. 1986. *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Tomes, Roger. 2008. Scripture its Own Commentator: a History of English Cross- Reference Bibles, *Expository Times* 119(July): 488.

Wesley, John. *The Means of Grace* III.

Wesley, John. *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* 1829. Thomas Jackson, editor, V:ii,iii. London: John Mason. Cited in Arnett, William M. 1968. "John Wesley and the Bible," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 3, no. 1, (Spring): http://wesley.mnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/theojml/01-05/03-1.htm

Zwingli, Ulrich. 1524. *Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God* Zurich.

Genesis 2:4-25

- ❑ What is God's relationship to this environment that He created?
- ❑ What is man's relationship to God and the environment God created?
- ❑ What is our responsibility today for the environment? Does this still apply? If it does do we look after God's creation? How can we who are here today obey the command to look after God's creation?

Scriptures for further exploration re: creation: Psalm 33:6, Psalm 93; Isaiah 45:12; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 11:3

God as Governor: Genesis 3

When God made this wonderful garden out of nothing for Adam and Eve to tend, He – as the governor of all things – just asked something very simple in return. God made the world for His people and He told them to take care of it and obey Him in two or three simple ways.

1. Genesis 1:28a: "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it...'"
2. Genesis 1:28b: "Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."
3. Genesis 2:16-17: "And the LORD God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.'"

God says 1) populate the earth, 2) take care of everything in it and 3) in doing this I'll let you eat anything you want in the garden – but just not the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; it's not safe. I'm saving that for something.

3) Genesis 2:16-17: “And the LORD God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.’”

- ❑ Read Genesis 3: How do people respond to God’s command to save the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?
- ❑ What was the result of their response?
- ❑ What are some of the things that God asks us to do and how do we respond?

1) Genesis 1:28a: “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it...’”

- ❑ Read Genesis 11:1-9: what is humankind’s response to the command to fill the earth?
- ❑ What is God’s response to their actions?
- ❑ This is very similar to the command in Acts 2 (especially vv. 1-5, 42-47). Genesis 11 records God’s confusing of people’s language so that they would go to the ends of the earth. In Acts 2, God provides an understanding of various languages so that we can bring His Good News of Salvation to the ends of the earth. How does this relate to Genesis 1 and Genesis 11?
- ❑ What is our responsibility to go and share the good news of Salvation?

2) Genesis 1:28b: “Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

- ❑ Leviticus 25-26 records the direction that the land itself shall enjoy its Sabbath rest (Leviticus 25:2, 26:33-35) just as man was commanded to (Exodus 20: 8-11, Deuteronomy 5:15), and just as God did (Exodus 20:11, Genesis 2:3). As Israel, as ‘tenants’ of God’s land failed in their responsibility to carry out this duty to take care of the land, then what did happen to Israel (Leviticus 25:23, 2 Chronicles 36:20-21)?

- ❑ What will happen to us if we fail in our duty to tend the earth (2 Chronicles 36:20-21)?

Scriptures for further exploration: Job 34:14-15; Psalm 65:9-13, 104:24-30; Isaiah 65:17-25; John 19:11; Romans 8:18-25; Colossians 1:17; Revelation 21:1-4.

God as Preserver

Genesis 4:

- ❑ Genesis 4:1-12 records what Cain did to his brother; what were the consequences of Cain's actions?
- ❑ Cain pleaded for mercy, what did God do?
- ❑ God is the preserver of all things. Job 12:10 records that, "In His hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind." Job 27:3 refers to the life within us as "the breath of God in my nostrils." Job 33:4: "The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life." And Psalm 104:29 warns us "When You [God] hide Your face, they are terrified; when You take away their breath, they die and return to the dust." God is the preserver of all life. If He were to withdraw His Spirit from us, we would perish (cf. also Job 32:8, 34:14; Psalm 33:6; Ecclesiastes 3:19).
- ❑ What happens if God ceases to be the preserver of all life?
- ❑ As God is the preserver of all life, what does this mean to us?
- ❑ As God is the creator and governor of all life and we are his managers of sorts, how can we be good stewards of the earth and all that the Lord has entrusted us to manage on His behalf?

Further Reading

Brueggemann, Walter. 1982. *Genesis, Interpretation 1*: Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press.

Chung, Michael K. 2005. *The Narrative of the Tower of Babel in Dialogue with Postmodern Christianity*, Presented to Fuller Theological Seminary (Fall 2005).

Fretheim, Terence E. 1994. *The Book of Genesis NIB I*: Nashville: Abingdon Press.

General of The Salvation Army, The. 2010 *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* London: Salvation Books.

Hausser, Alan. 1982. "Genesis 2-3: the Theme and Intimacy and Alienation," *Art and Meaning: Rhetoric in Biblical Literature* ed. David J.A. Clines, David M. Gunn and Alan Hauser. Sheffield, England: Department of Biblical Studies, The University of Sheffield.

Josephus, *Antiquities I*. iv.1.

Kidner, Derek. 1967. *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* Downers Grove, Il.: InterVarsity Press, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 1, S. 58

Peery, Pete. 2011. 'Genesis 1:1-2:3' *Interpretation: a Journal of Bible and Theology* 65no.4 (October): 392-394.

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2012. *Genesis 1-4: God: Creator, Governor, and Preserver of All Things*. Presented to Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army (26 February).
<http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2012/02/genesis-1-4-god-creator-governor-and.html>

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2011. "Genesis 11:1-12:4: A Very Moving Covenant," *Journal of Aggressive Christianity* 70, (December 2010 – January 2011): 32-35. Available on-line:
http://www.armybarmy.com/pdf/JAC_Issue_070.pdf

- Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2006. *Leviticus 25 1-23 in the Context of the Holiness Code: The Land Shall Observe a Sabbath* Presented to William and Catherine Booth College (Fall 2006), available on-line at http://www.sheepspeak.com/OT_Michael_Ramsay.htm - Leviticus 25 1-23
- Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2009. *Reading Report on Charles Darwin, "Recapitulation and Conclusion"* [Darwin, Charles 1872. *The Origin of the Species* Akron, Ohio: Werner, chapter 15, pp. 267-306]. Presented to William and Catherine Booth College (February 2009). Available on-line: http://www.sheepspeak.com/Michael_Ramsay_History_TSA.htm#Darwin
- Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2012. *Room For Creation*. Swift Current, Saskatchewan: Sheepspeak. http://www.sheepspeak.com/Room_for_Creation.pdf
- Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2012. *Genesis 1-4: God: Creator, Governor, and Preserver of All Things*. Presented to Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army (26 February). <http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2012/02/genesis-1-4-god-creator-governor-and.html>
- Salvation Army, The. 1998. *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* London: The Salvation Army: 27-28.
- Salvation Army Ethics Centre, The. 2009. *Responsibility for the Earth* Toronto: The Salvation Army Canada and Bermuda. Available on-line: <http://www.Salvationarmyethics.org/position-statements/responsibility-for-the-earth-2/>
- Schuele, Andreas. 2012. 'The Spirit of YHWH and the Aura of Divine Presence' *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 66no. 1, (January): 16-28.

In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various Scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 3: John 1:1-18

We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, undivided in essence and coequal in power and glory.

Background and context: John, a first century fisherman, was probably the author of this letter. John and his brother James (The sons of Zebedee) stopped their work mid-day and left their dad to run the family business so they could follow Jesus. John was known in the Gospel of John as ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved’ and had a prominent role in serving Jesus as a disciple and an apostle.

What is the Word?

Have you ever tried to solve a word puzzle? Solve for the puzzle this word: In each section below answer the question, “What is the Word?”

1. John 1:1-3:

The Word:

- was in the beginning
- was with God
- was God

a. What (Who) is the Word?

2. John 1:3-5:

The Word:

- All things were made with this word
- Life was in this word
 - Light was in this life
 - This life was the light of man
 - This light shines in the darkness but is not understood

a. What (Who) is the Word?

b. What (Who) is the Light?

3. John 1:6-8:

The man:

- ❑ Was from God
- ❑ Was named John
- ❑ Witness to testify about the light
 - People could believe through the light
- ❑ Was not the light

b. What (Who) is the Man?

c. What (Who) is the Light?

4. John 1:9-13:

The Light

- ❑ Gives light to everyone
- ❑ Is coming into the world
- ❑ Made the world
- ❑ Was in the world
 - The world did not recognize him
- ❑ He came to that which was his
 - His own did not recognize him
- ❑ Gives the right to become children of God to Those who recognize and receive him
 - These children are born of God not people

c. What (Who) is the Light?

5. John 1:14:

The Word

- ❑ Was in the world
- ❑ Became flesh
- ❑ Dwelled (lived) among us
- ❑ We have seen the Word's glory
 - The Word's glory is the glory of the only begotten Son (therefore the Word is the Son)
 - Came from the Father
 - Full of grace and truth

a. What (Who) is the Word?

d. Who is the Son?

6. John 1:14:

The Son

- ❑ John testified about Him
- ❑ Out of His fullness we receive grace
- ❑ Grace and truth came through Him (the Law came through Moses)
- ❑ He is Jesus Christ
- ❑ No one has ever seen God except Him
- ❑ He is the only begotten Son
- ❑ He is God himself
- ❑ He is in closest relationship with God
- ❑ He has made God known

d. Who is the Son?

7. Summary:

- a. What (Who) is the Word?**

- b. What (Who) is the Man?**

- c. What (Who) is the Light?**

- d. Who is the Son?**

What is the relationship between Jesus Christ and God?

Read Genesis 1:1-2, Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 1:26-37: What do we know about the relationship between God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit? Why does this matter to us?

Scriptures for further exploration: Job 33:4; Luke 1: 30-33, 46-55; 4. John 14:16-26; 15:26, 16:12-15; 20:22-23; Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:6.

Further Reading:

Coutts, Frederick. 1978. *The Salvation Army in Relation to the Church* London: International Headquarters

General of The Salvation Army, The. 2010 *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* London: Salvation Books.

Gunton, Colin. 1991 *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark

Kruse, Colin G. *John: An Introduction and Commentary*. 2003. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 4), S. 24, 31

Luther, Martin. Comments cited in R.C.H. Lenski. 1961 *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, p. 33.

Moltmann, Jurgen. 1981. *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* London: SCM Leonardo Boff 2000 Holy Trinity: Perfect Community. Maryknoll NY: Orbis; 2005 Trinity and Society. Eugene Oregon: Wipf & Stock Publishers

O'Day, Gail. *NIB IX: The Gospel of Luke, The Gospel of John* 'John', p. 520.

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2011 *John 1:1-18: Word Puzzles*. Presented to the Swift Current Corps (10 April). <http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2011/04/john-11-18-word-puzzles.html>

Salvation Army, The. 1998. *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* London: The Salvation Army.

Sloyan, Gerard. 1988. 'John' in *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*: Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press.

Volf, Miroslav. 1998. *After Our likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans

In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various Scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 4: Luke 1:26-38

We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.

Background and context: Luke, the author of the both ‘Luke’ and ‘Acts’, was a 1st century physician. These two short books (letters) that he wrote read like a two-volume set. In the opening chapters of Volume 1, Luke contrasts Jesus Christ and Augustus Caesar, the leader of Rome, which was the paramount Superpower when Jesus was born. Caesar was worshipped as a god. He ruled the most powerful country in the world and was seen as a son of god in that his deceased adopted father Julius Caesar was also revered as a god. This ‘god-king’, ‘son of god’ won a brutal civil war and was arguably the most powerful of all the Roman rulers in history. He achieved a restless peace in the Mediterranean, know as the ‘Pax Romana’ through a series of wars but this wasn’t a real peace as, of course, many subjugated peoples were awaiting their opportunities to seek independence. Luke points out that Jesus, in contrast, truly is God, the Son of God, and the Prince of Peace. Notice how different Jesus, the real King of Kings, is from Caesar Augustus or any other ruler or any leader of a superpower either past or present. Luke, in invoking Caesar Augustus’ name in Chapter 2 is drawing this parallel and making this contrast for all of us to see as it is only in the person of Jesus Christ that the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.

Luke 1:26-38

1. Why would Mary be troubled by the words, “Greetings you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you”? (Luke 1:28)

2. Why do we think God sends an angel/messenger to Mary? (Luke 1:26)

3. Why do we think Luke repeatedly mentions that Mary is a virgin? (Luke 1:27, 34)

4. What news does Gabriel give Mary? What do we know about her child? (Luke 1:31-33,35)
 - a. What does it mean to be called ‘Son of the Most High’? (Luke 1:32)

 - b. What is the ‘throne of his father David’ to which this pericope refers? (Luke 1:32)

 - c. How can he reign over the house of Jacob *forever*? (Luke 1:33)

5. Read Verse 35 (NIV): The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God..."

a. How will Mary become pregnant?

b. What does this mean about the parentage of her son Jesus?

6. What does all of this mean for us here today?

John 3:16 (NKJV): For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Scriptures for further exploration: Matthew 1:18-25; 4:1-11; Mark 1:41; 11:12; 14:32-42; Luke 2:52; 4:1-21; John 1:1-5, 14-18; 3:16-21; 4:6; 11:35; 14:1-11; 17:1-5; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:10-18; 5:1-10

Further Reading:

Culpepper, R. Alan. 1995. *Luke*. NIB 8: Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon.

Craddock, Fred B. 1990. *Luke*. Interpretation: Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox.

General of The Salvation Army, The. 2010. *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* London: Salvation Books: 79-85.

Hare, Douglas R.A. 1993. *Matthew* Interpretation: Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press.

Green, Joel B. 1997. *The Gospel of Luke*. NICNT 3: Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Leifeld, Walter L. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* Pradis CD-ROM: Luke/Exposition of Luke/II. Birth and Childhood Narratives (1:5-2:52)/B. Birth Narratives (1:57-2:20)/3. The birth of Jesus (2:1-7), Book Version: 4.0.2

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2008. Is Jesus God? *Nipawin Journal* (28 May 2008).

http://www.sheepspeak.com/sasknews.htm#G_d

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2008. Is Christmas just a tradition? *Nipawin Journal* (December 2008)

http://renewnetwork.blogspot.ca/2008_12_01_archive.html

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2008. *Luke 1:26-37: Do You Believe?* Presented to Nipawin Corps (24 December 2008), Swift Current Care Centre (17 December 2011), Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army (24 December 2011) by <http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2008/12/luke-126-37-do-you-believe.html>

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2006. *Matthew 1:18-25: Do you believe?* Presented to each Nipawin and Tisdale Corps (24 December 2007). Presented to CFOT chapel in Winnipeg (December 2006).

<http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2008/12/matthew-118-25-do-you-believe.html>

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2010. *Matthew 1:18-2:18: What is your choice?* Presented to Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army (26 December 2010) <http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2010/12/matthew-118-218-what-is-your-choice.html>

Salvation Army, The. 1998. *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* London: The Salvation Army: 35-43.

In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various Scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 5: Romans 5:12-21

We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocence, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness; and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.

Background and context: Paul’s letter to the Romans was written in the mid-to-late 50s and is arguably addressed to a Gentile dominated church. In the mid-to-late 50s, Rome was the Mediterranean world’s dominant power and Nero was the Roman Emperor (54-68 AD, Proconsul since 51AD). Immediately prior to this time, in 49 AD, Nero’s predecessor, Claudius had banished the Jews from Rome. The bulk of the remaining Christians then would be non-Jews. When Nero officially ascended the throne in 54, many of the Jewish Christians returned. Things had changed and this was the historical context of Paul’s letter. Paul’s letter to the Romans is clearly an important work. N.T. Wright claims that “Romans is neither a systematic theology nor a summary of Paul’s lifework, but it is by common consent his masterpiece.”²

Romans 5:12-14:

1. What does it mean and how did it happen that sin entered into the world through one man? (See Genesis 3:1-17)

2. How and why did death come to all people?

3. What does it mean that “all sinned”?

² N.T. Wright, *The Letter to the Romans* (NIB 10: Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1995), 395.

2. What does it mean that “through one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man many will be made righteous”?

3. Are we sinners or are we righteous?

Romans 5:20-21

1. What was the purpose of the Law?

2. What was the result of the Law?

3. Fill in the blanks and explain your answer:

_____ = death and _____ = eternal life.

4. Does all of the above apply to us today? If so, how does it apply? If not, why not?

Romans 3:23: “for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”

For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The Greek word for ‘sinned’ in this passage (*hamartanō*) carries with it the classic definition of sin that we have probably heard before: that of ‘missing the mark’. It brings to mind the idea of an archer shooting for a target and falling short – missing the target. On the surface this seems innocuous enough but if we then find out that that archer is William Tell – who is famous because he shoots apples off of people’s heads – and if we then find out that indeed the apple is about to be placed on our heads, it becomes important. You don’t want him to miss the mark. William Tell, of course, used to shoot the apples off the head of his own sons and so if he missed, the consequences could be most devastating for both father and son (as is our own sin). When we continually sin – the consequences are often fatal. Romans Chapter 3 tells us that indeed, we have all sinned, we have all fallen short of this glory of God (Romans 3:23) and Romans 1 and 2 tell us that because of that we deserve to die (Romans 1:32, 2:12).

John Phillips, tells us:

‘Paul describes sin as a coming short of the divine standard: Two men went to the recruiting office in London to join the guards regiment. The standard height for a guardsman was a minimum of six feet. One man was taller than the other, but when they were measured officially both were disqualified. The shorter of the two measured only five feet seven inches and was far too short; his companion measured five feet eleven and a half inches and, stretch to his utmost, as he did, he could not make it any more. Nor did his pleas avail. It mattered nothing that his father was a guardsman, that he promised to be a good soldier, that he had already memorized the drills and knew the army regulations by heart. He was short of the standard.⁴

Scriptures for further exploration: Genesis 1-4, 8:20-9:7, Deuteronomy 4:26-31, Psalm 5:4-8, 8:4-8, 51:1-5, Isaiah 43:27-28, 48:9-11, 59:2, 64:6, Jeremiah 2:20-21, Matthew 5:48, Luke 16:9-31, John 3:19-36, Romans 1-8, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22, Ephesians 4:24, James 3:9, 1 John 1:18, Jude 20-21, Revelation 2-6.

³ By Captain Michael Ramsay, *Romans 3:22b, 23: There is no difference, for all have sinned...* Presented to Swift Current Corps, 12 July 2009. Available on-line <http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2009/07/romans-322b-23there-is-no-difference.html>

⁴ John Phillips, *Exploring Romans* (Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1969), 67.

Further Reading:

Achtemeier, Paul J. 1985. *Romans*, Interpretation: Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press.

Bruce, F.F. 1985. *Romans*, TNTC: Leicester, U.K.: Leicester Press.

Dunn, James D.G. 1988. *Romans 1-8*. WBC 38A: Word Books: Dallas, Texas.

General of The Salvation Army, The. 2010. *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* London: Salvation Books: 109-125.

Phillips, John. 1969. *Exploring Romans* Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press.

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2009. *Romans 3:22b, 23: There is no difference, for all have sinned...*
Presented to Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army (12 July 2012).
<http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2009/07/romans-322b-23there-is-no-difference.html>

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2006. *Romans 5:8: while we were still sinners Christ died for us...*
Presented to Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army (26 July 2009).
<http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2009/07/romans-58-while-we-were-still-sinners.html>

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2011. *Romans 6:23: The Obedience Company* Presented to Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army (04 September 2011)
<http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2011/09/romans-623-obedience-company.html>

Salvation Army, The. 1998. *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* London: The Salvation Army: 58-66.

Wright, N.T. 1995. 'Romans and the Theology of Paul' *Pauline Theology, Volume III* ed. David M. Hay & E. Elizabeth Johnson. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Wright, N.T. 1995. *The Letter to the Romans* NIB 10: Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon.

In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various Scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 6: John 2:23-3:35

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has, by His suffering and death, made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved

Background and context: John, a first century fisherman was probably the author of this letter. John and his brother James actually dropped their work mid-day, leaving their dad to run the family business without them so they could follow Jesus. John was known in the Gospel of John as ‘the disciple whom Jesus loved’ and had a prominent role in serving Jesus as a disciple and an apostle.

John 2:23-3:8

1. What kind of a greeting is this? Why would Nicodemus come by night? (John 3:1)
2. What does it mean to ‘see the Kingdom of God’? (John 3:3)
3. What does it mean to be born of the Spirit? What does it mean to be born of water? (John 3:4)
4. Explain John 3:8: “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

John 3:9-15

1. Put Jesus' comments in Verses 10-11 into your own words; what is Jesus saying to Nicodemus and us?

2. Read Daniel 7:3,13-14: who is the 'Son of Man'? (See also Matthew 25:31ff.)

3. Read Numbers 21:1-8 (cf. 2 Kings 18:4). What comparison is Jesus drawing in Verses 14 and 15?

4. To whom is both the Salvation from the snakes and the Salvation provided through Jesus offered?

Important Note: *this Salvation is available for everyone but not everyone necessarily takes advantage of it.*

John 3:16-21

1. 'One and only Son', as it reads in some translations, is better translated as 'only begotten Son'; what is the difference?
 - a. Why might 'one and only son' be a misleading phrase?

2. Who takes advantage of the offer of eternal (everlasting) life?

3. Why did God send His Son into the world?

4. Does God's Son condemn people?
 - a. How is it that some people are condemned?

5. Verses 19-21. What is this saying? How does this relate to Chapter 1:1-18?

John 2:22-36

1. Verses 22-26. Who is the recorded dispute between and what is it all about?

2. Verses 27-30. What is the Christ (Messiah)?
 - a. Who is the Christ?

 - b. Who is not the Christ?

3. Verses 31-33. What does it mean to come from either heaven or earth? What is said about each?

4. Verses 34-36. What is the relationship between God and His Son, Jesus?
 - a. What is the relationship between God and people who put their faith in Jesus?

 - b. What is the relationship between God and people who do not put their faith in Jesus?

Scriptures for further exploration: Genesis 12-17, Numbers 21:1-8, Isaiah 53, Leviticus 16-17, Mark 8-14, Romans 2-5, 1 Corinthians 5, 2 Corinthians 5, Hebrews 9, 2 Timothy 2, 1 Peter 1.

Further Reading:

Augustine, *Doctrinal Treatises* Chapter 14, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf103.iv.i.vi.xv.html>

General of The Salvation Army, The. 2010. *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* London: Salvation Books: 127-442

Kruse, Colin G. 2003. *John: An Introduction and Commentary* Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 4), S. 24, 31

McGrath, Alister E. ed. 2006 *The Christian Theology Reader 3rd Edition* Oxford Blackwell.

O'Day, Gail. 1995. *The Gospel of John* NIB IX: Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2011 *John 3:16-21: For God so loved the world..* Presented to each the Nipawin, Tisdale (23 November 2008) and Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army (12 March 2011) <http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2008/11/john-316-21-for-god-so-loved-world.html>

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2007. *The Good News of Romans: Paul and the Gospel and Salvation (Romans 1:16-17)*. Presented to William and Catherine Booth College.

Salvation Army, The. 1998. *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* London: The Salvation Army. P. 35-43

Sloyan, Gerard. 1988. *John. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*: Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press.

In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various Scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 7: 2 Peter 1; 1 Thessalonians 5; Romans 8:1-17

We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and regeneration by the Holy Spirit are necessary to Salvation.

Background and context: Paul’s letter to the Romans was written in the mid-to-late 50s and is arguably addressed to a Gentile dominated church. In the mid-to-late 50s, Rome was the Mediterranean world’s dominant power and Nero was the Roman Emperor. Immediately prior to this time, Claudius had banished the Jews from Rome. When Nero officially ascended the throne in 54 CE, many of the Jewish Christians returned. Things had changed and this was the historical context of Paul’s letter.

According to tradition the Apostle Paul wrote his letter to Thessalonian church even earlier than he wrote his letter to the Romans. Being composed ca. 50 CE, it was probably one of the earliest of all Paul’s letters that we still have

As far as 2 Peter is concerned, it is most likely that this letter was written in Rome sometime in the first Century. If we accept that Peter was the author of this letter then it would have to have been written before the conclusion of Nero’s reign (ca. 64 CE) as tradition has it that Peter was martyred under Emperor Nero by being crucified upside down on a cross.

Read 2 Peter 1:3-4

1. From where did we receive everything that we need for life and godliness?
2. In what way is it known that we received these?
3. What is the result of receiving this?

Read Romans 8:9-17

1. Who belongs to Christ and who does not (v. 9)?
2. Who will live and who will die (v.13)?
3. What does it mean to be children of God?
4. Are you a child of God? If not, would you like to be? If so, how is your life different than it otherwise might be?

Scripture for further exploration: Exodus 6:6-8; Isaiah 9:6-7; 35:3-4; 53:4-6; Jeremiah 31:31-34; 33:14-16; Luke 15:17-24; 18:9-14; 24:25-27; Acts 2:32-36; 8:32-35; Romans 1:17; 3:21-26; 8:15-17; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Galatians 4:3-7; Ephesians 1:3-12; 1:19b-21; Philippians 2:6-11; Titus 3:4-7.

Further Reading:

Achtemeier, Paul J. 2011. '1 Peter 4:1-8,' *Interpretation: a Journal of Bible and Theology* 65No. 1 (January): 76-79

Bartlett, David L. 1962. *NIB XII: The First Letter of Peter*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press.

General of The Salvation Army, The. 2010. *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* London: Salvation Books.

Kistemaker, Simon J. 2007. *NTC: Commentary the First Epistle of Peter* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic.

Minear, Paul. 1983. 'Holy People, Holy Land, Holy City: The Genesis and Genius of Christian Attitudes,' *Interpretation: a Journal of Bible and Theology* 37No. 1 (January): 18-31.

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2006. *Grace and Works: a Look at Doctrines 5-10 of The Salvation Army Presented to The Salvation Army's College For Officer Training (March 2006)*
http://sheepspeak.com/Michael_Ramsay_Theology_TSA.htm#Works

Salvation Army, The. 1998. *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* London: The Salvation Army.

Thomas, Robert L. The Expositor's Bible Commentary. Pradis CD-ROM:1 3. Responsibilities to oneself (5:16-18), Book Version: 4.02

Wesley, John. 1991. "The Almost Christian." Cited from Outler & Heitzenrater.

Wright, N.T. 2009. *Justification: God's Plan and Paul's Vision* Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic.

Wright, N.T. 1995. "Romans and the Theology of Paul," *Pauline Theology, Volume III* ed. David M. Hay & E. Elizabeth Johnson. Minneapolis: Fortress: 38-39.

In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various Scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 8: Galatians 3:1-4:7

We believe that we are justified by grace, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.

Background and context:The Apostle Paul’s letter to the Galatians was written circa 49-57CE to a church or a number of churches in a region of modern day Turkey. Paul is quite concerned because it appears that there are some “false believers” who actually want the church in Galatia to rely on rules, regulations, feasts, celebrations and the Law rather than relying on Jesus for their Salvation (cf. Galatians 3:10, 4:9,10 cf. also Deuteronomy 27:26).

Read Galatians 3:1-10

1. How does Paul begin this passage? What sort of language and tone does he use in the first 5 verses?
2. What can we infer from Paul’s words about his feelings about the situation at hand?
3. Why is Paul upset?
4. Who is a descendant of Abraham?
5. Are Jews or Gentiles saved in any different way from each other? Are some more privileged than others? Are Gentiles now any less God’s chosen people than the Jews?

6. Who is blessed along with Abraham?

7. What befalls those who try to really on their own actions or race/association/family (works of the Law) for their Salvation? Are you saved because your mother goes to church? Are you saved because you do good things?

8. How do the righteous live? What does it mean to live this way?

9. What, according to our passage here, did Christ redeem us from? How? Why?

Read Galatians 3:15-18

1. Write a version of the example Paul uses here in your own words:

2. What is his point in saying this?

3. To whom did the Law (received by Moses 430 years after Abraham) apply?

4. Read Genesis 12:1-3, to whom does God's covenant of Salvation extend?

Read Galatians 3:19-4:7

1. Why did God give Moses the Law?
2. Was the Law opposed to God?
3. In Verses 3:23-25 and 4:1-7, to what professionals does Paul compare the Law?
4. What then was the purpose of the Law (cf. especially 3:24, 4:2)?
5. Are some people are saved a different way than other people (cf. especially 3:36-29)? Are some different than others in Christ Jesus? Is the Jew saved because he was born a Jew or the woman simply for being born a woman?
6. What is the status of all those that receive the promise of the Spirit (cf. especially 3:14, 25-29, 4:6-7)?

What does all of this mean for us here today, thousands of years later?

Scripture for further exploration: Psalm 37:3-6; 103:4-8; Hosea 11:3-4, 8-9; Luke 15:17-24; 18:9-14; John 1:9-18; 6:28-29; Acts 13:39; Romans 1:17-23; 3:21-26; 4:16; 5:1-8; 8:15-17; Galatians 4:3-7; Ephesians 1:3-12; 2:4-10; Titus 3:4-7

Further Reading

Cousar, Charles B. 1982. *Interpretation: Galatians*. Louisville, USA: John Knox Press.

Cranford, Michael. 1994. 'The Possibility of Perfect Obedience: Paul and an Implied Premise in Galatians 3.10 and 5.3'. *Nova Testamentum* 36 242-58

Gombis, Timothy G. 2007. "The 'Transgressor' and the 'Curse of the Law': The Logic of Paul's Argument in Galatians 2-3." *New Testament Studies* 53 81-93. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

General of The Salvation Army, The. 2010. *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* London: Salvation Books.

Hays, Richard B. 2000. *NIB 11: Galatians* Nashville: Abingdon: 181-348.

Longenecker, Richard N. 1990. *WBC 41: Galatians*. Waco, Texas: Word Books.

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2006. *Grace and Works: a Look at Doctrines 5-10 of The Salvation Army* Presented to The Salvation Army's College For Officer Training (March 2006)
http://sheepspeak.com/Michael_Ramsay_Theology_TSA.htm#Works

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2010. 'Don't be a McChicken: Covenant and Galatians 3:19-25' in the *Journal of Aggressive Christianity* 67(June - July): 35-38. Available on-line:
<http://www.armybarmy.com/JAC/article10-67.html>

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2011. *Galatians 3:19-25: Don't be a McChicken...* Presented to Nipawin Corps (January 20, 2008) and to Tisdale Corps (January 27, 2008) and Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army, (28 August, 2011). Available on-line:
<http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2011/08/galatians-319-25-dont-be-mcchicken.html>

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2007. *Paul's Understanding of the Role of Law as Reflected in Romans 2:12-16, 17-24, and 25-29* Presented to William and Catherine Booth College. Available on-line:
www.sheepspeak.com/NT_Michael_Ramsay.htm

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2007. *The Apostle Paul's Understanding of the Nature and Function of the Law*. Presented to William and Catherine Booth College (April)
[http://www.sheepspeak.com/NT_Michael_Ramsay.htm#Function of the Law](http://www.sheepspeak.com/NT_Michael_Ramsay.htm#Function%20of%20the%20Law)

Salvation Army, The. 1998. *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* London: The Salvation Army.

Scott, James M. ““For as Many as are of Works of the Law are Under a Curse” (Galatians 3.10) Paul and the Scriptures of Israel’ *JSOT*: 187-221.

Wright, N.T. 2009. *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision* Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic.

Wright, N.T. 1995. “Romans and the Theology of Paul,” *Pauline Theology, Volume III* ed. David M. Hay & E. Elizabeth Johnson. Minneapolis: Fortress: 38-39.

Wright, N.T. ‘The Law in Romans 2,’ 2001. in James D. G. Dunn, ed. *Paul and the Mosaic Law* WUNT 89; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1996, republished with English translations of German essays. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001.

Wright, N.T. 1995. *NIB 10: The Letter to the Romans* Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon.

Young, Norman H. 1998. ‘Who’s Cursed - and Why? (Galatians 3.10-14)’ *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117: 79-93.

In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various Scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 9: James 1-2; 2 Peter 3, Jude

We believe that continuance in a state of Salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.

Background and context: The book of Jude has been called the most neglected book in the New Testament. The author of this letter is probably either the disciple named Judas (not Judas Iscariot because, among other reasons, he was dead when this letter was written: Matthew 27:3-8, Acts 1:18-19). More likely this Jude is Jesus’ biological half-brother, Judas (cf. Jude 1:1; cf. also Matthew 13:55, John 7:3-10, Acts 1:14, 1 Corinthians 9:5, Galatians 1:19). In Verse 1 the author identifies himself as James’ brother. James was another one of Jesus’ brothers and a prominent figure in the early Christian Church in Jerusalem. This letter was written early on in the history of the Church: probably not more than forty years after Jesus’ death and resurrection. The Church was still quite small at this point. Judas, Jude is writing this letter to faithful and earnest Christians who are in the early Church (cf. 1:3,4; Matthew 7:15-20, 24:11; Mark 13:22; Acts 20:29-30; 1 Timothy 4:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:1, 4:3-4; 2 Peter 3:3).

Who wrote ‘James’? James –like Judas- was a common name in the first century. There are four men called James in the New Testament. Two of these have been suggested as possible authors. Some think the writer is the Apostle James, the son of Zebedee. Most scholars, however, believe that he was martyred too early (44 CE) to have written this letter (Acts 12:1-2) and see James, the brother of Jude and Jesus, to be the most likely author. In more recent times other views have been advanced, such as that the name ‘James’ is a pseudonym, or that the letter was originally anonymous, or that it was written by an unknown James, or that it was the product of a disciple of Jesus’ brother and thus represented the teaching of James who was the leader of the Church in Jerusalem. However, the evidence of the letter itself still favours the identification of the Lord's brother as the author (cf. Acts 15:13-29, 21:17-25, Galatians 2:12, cf. also ‘James the Just’ in Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 2.23). As far as the date of this letter is concerned, if James was the author the letter would need to have been written prior to 62 or 69 CE (the two commonly held dates for his death by stoning).

Pertaining to 2 Peter, it is most likely that this letter was written in Rome sometime in the first Century. If we accept that Peter was the author of the letter then it would have been written before the conclusion of Nero’s reign (ca. 64 CE) as tradition has it that Peter was martyred under Emperor Nero.

Read James 1:19-26

James 1:19-21

1. What does it mean to be quick to listen and slow to speak and become angry?
2. Why must we do this?
3. How do we do this?

James 1:22-27

1. Why should we not just listen to the word?
2. What does it mean to just listen to the word? What does that look like today?
3. How do we do what it says instead of just listening to the word?
4. What is the 'religion' that God accepts as pure and faultless?

Read James 2:12-26

James 2:12-19

1. How should we speak and act?
2. What does it mean that faith without deeds is dead?
3. Is simply believing that there is a God going to guarantee one eternal life with Christ?

James 2:20-26

1. What is the evidence provided that ‘faith without deeds is useless’?
2. How is it that a person is considered righteous?

What does all this mean for us today?

Read 2 Peter 3**2 Peter 3:1-10**

1. Why is Peter writing?
2. What is going to happen in the ‘last days’? Is that happening now?
3. What did people intentionally forget?
4. What should we not forget and why?

2 Peter 3:11-16

1. Since everything will be destroyed like this, how should we act?
2. What is going to happen to the heaven(s) and earth after it is laid bare by fire?
3. How are we to act while waiting for everything to be made anew?
4. What should we bear in mind while we are awaiting the re-creation of heaven and earth?

2 Peter 3:17-18

1. Why is Peter's warning here so important?
2. What will happen if believers are 'carried away by the error of the lawless'?
3. Instead of this happening what should we do?

What does all this mean for us today?

Read Jude 1

Jude 1:3-16

1. To whom did Jude write this letter?
2. Why did Jude write this letter?
3. Where here is it mentioned that there are the ungodly people and what do they do?
4. What happened to some who were saved from Egypt?
5. What happened to some angels who were already living in their 'proper dwellings'?
6. What does Verse 16 say is about these people?

Jude 1:17-25

1. What must we remember?
2. What must we do?
3. Why does Verse 21 record that must we do this?
4. Who is able to keep us from stumbling and present as faultless?

What does all this mean for us today?

Excerpt from *Grace and Works: a Look at Doctrines 5-10 of The Salvation Army* By Captain Michael Ramsay

Doctrine 9 may be read almost as a counter-balance to the justification by faith expressed in the eighth doctrine. It is one that will need to be explored a little more in depth. It is certainly one of our more controversial doctrines: *continuance in a state of Salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ* ‘Depends’ is the main point of contention in this doctrine. It is the lynchpin of many an argument made rationally and theologically that our position is purely a doctrine of works.

Does our Salvation depend upon our works? If it does, would it follow that we could earn our Salvation? This sounds like the debates of the first century Church pertaining to circumcision (cf. Acts 15, Romans 2-4, Galatians 5:1-5), meat sacrificed to idols (cf. 1 Corinthians 8), and dietary laws (cf. Acts 10, 15; Galatians 2:11-21). Are we, by this doctrine, as some have suggested, “...putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear” (Acts 15:10). If so, it would seem to contradict The Salvation Army’s eighth doctrine. How can one be justified by grace and not have one’s Salvation secured? Will God change His mind? Will He suddenly decide to ‘harden your heart’ (cf. Exodus 4:21, 7:3,

9:12) or send an evil spirit to torment you (cf. 1 Samuel 16:14)? Will he say that he never knew you (cf. Matthew 7:23)?

Salvation Story offers an interesting response to this line of questioning: on initial examination it apparently, for our part, reinterprets the word ‘depends’ as ‘is evidenced by’ and leaves the conditional work entirely to Christ. “We remember that an ongoing union with Christ *depends on his work* and not our feelings...Such assurance must be affirmed daily by obedience and never made an excuse for carelessness or complacent presumption. It is the changed life that *evidence* for the work of grace within.” ‘Obedience’ is mentioned in the preceding comment; ‘dependency’ - as our part - is not. The argument seems thus far to state that our continued Salvation depends not on our continued obedient faith but rather on Christ’s work. “We believe that God, who has accepted and saved us and given us eternal life, has given us also the assurance of our standing in him.” These statements on ‘assurance’ appear to read more like an acceptance of a doctrine of ‘perseverance of saints’ than one of ‘conditional perseverance.’

This assurance, however, is seemingly unsecured for “assurance does not mean that our Salvation is guaranteed to us against our own free will. It is possible to cease to obey Christ and so to forfeit our hope of eternal life. This is consistent with our understanding of the grace of God, who always leaves us open to respond freely to him. Freedom to live by grace includes freedom to turn away.” The Salvation Army then allows for the much accepted Christian doctrine of the eternal loss of the apostate. If one does not renounce God but displays no ‘continued obedient faith’, does one forfeit one’s Salvation? How does it relate to backsliders?

“Backsliding, then, is possible for true Christians. It can occur through the deliberate rejection of Christ, or, more insidiously, when we drift from the way of discipleship or neglect the means of grace. This does not mean that every time we sin we slide away from the grace of God. Even our many failures will not deprive us of the Holy Spirit’s presence if we turn to him for forgiveness and restoration. When we live a life of continued obedient faith in Christ we need not fall from grace and be eternally lost.”

This returns the discussion to an earlier question: does the Salvation Army really believe that one’s Salvation is dependent upon one’s continued obedience or - excepting apostasy - does it merely believe it to be evidence of one’s Salvation? “Our Salvation is assured as long as we continue to exercise faith in Jesus Christ. Such faith is expressed in obedience to his leadings, will and commands (1 John 2:3-6). Obedience as a free-will choice is a consequence of faith, and

without it, faith dies. Our conversion inaugurates a journey during which we are being transformed into Christ's likeness. Thus Salvation is neither a state to be preserved nor an insurance policy, which requires no further investment. It is the beginning of a pilgrimage with Christ."

The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; Salvation as a pilgrimage is a good analogy. It takes us from our initial contact with the Lord through to sanctification: "it was for [holiness] we were born and to fall short of this will be infinite, eternal loss, and doom us to an everlasting night of shame and contempt." "Our walk with Him must be constant...or else we will seek for Him some day and not find Him." We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Salvation Army actually does then observe that a continuance in a state of Salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.

Further Reading

Becker, Oswald and Otto Michel. 1981. "Faith" In *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Vol. 1, ed. Colin Brown. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan: 587, 594.

Brengle, Samuel Logan. 1988. *Heart Talks on Holiness* Atlanta, Georgia: The Salvation Army Supply and Purchasing Department.

Cowdery, Ann Hoch. 1994. "Hebrews 4:1-13" *Interpretation* 48 no 3 (July).

General of The Salvation Army, The. 2010. *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* London: Salvation Books.

Green, Michael. 1987. *2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 18, S. 214.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. "The Scriptural World of Hebrews" *Interpretation* 57 no 3 (July 2003).

Luther, Martin. 1994. *Vermischte Deutsche Schriften* Translated by Rev. Robert E. Smith. Fort Wayne Texas: Concordia Theological Seminary.

Perkins, Pheme. 1995. *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude* Interpretation: Louisville, Kentucky, USA: John Knox Press.

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2006. *Grace and Works: a Look at Doctrines 5-10 of The Salvation Army* Presented to The Salvation Army's College For Officer Training (March 2006)
http://sheepspeak.com/Michael_Ramsay_Theology_TSA.htm#Works

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2012. *James 2:17: Salvation Equation*. Presented to Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army (25 March). <http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2012/03/james-217-Salvation-equation.html>

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2012. *Join Us Aboard The Salvation Float! (Matthew 28:16-20)* Presented to Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army (15 April).
<http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2012/04/matthew-2816-20-join-us-aboard.html>

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2012. *Jude: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* Presented to Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army (22 April). <http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2012/04/jude-good-bad-and-ugly.html>

Rogers, Jr., John B. 2003. "Hebrews 1:1-4" *Interpretation* 57, No. 3 (July).

Salvation Army, The. 1998. *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* London: The Salvation Army.

Watson, Duane F. 1962. *The Letter of Jude* NIB XII: Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press.

In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various Scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 10: 1 Thessalonians 5

We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Background and context: Tradition states that this letter, written by the Apostle Paul to the church at Thessalonica, was probably one of the earliest of his letters that we still have, being composed ca. 50 CE.

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

1. When and how is the ‘Day of the Lord’ coming (vv.1-3)?
2. Should we be surprised when this happens? Why or why not (vv 4-5)?
3. What does it mean to be ‘children of the day’?
4. As children of the day what should we do?
5. What does it mean to be sober and to put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of Salvation? How do we do this?
6. Why must we be sober to put on the breastplate of faith and love, and the helmet of the hope of Salvation?

7. In light of the aforementioned how should we act one unto another?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28

1. As we encourage one another (v.11), how should respond to those working alongside us (or even our 'up-line') for the Kingdom?

2. How should we specifically respond to people when they are idle? Do we?

3. How should we respond to people when they are faint-hearted? Do we?

4. How should we specifically respond to people when they are weak? Do we?

5. What should our response be when evil or bad is done to us? Do we?

6. How do we know what is evil?

7. Can we abstain from every sort of evil and thus be kept blameless? If not, why not? If so, how?

What does all of this mean for our lives here today?

Further Reading

- Cranford, Michael. 1994. 'The Possibility of Perfect Obedience: Paul and an Implied Premise in Galatians 3.10 and 5.3', *Nova Testamentum* 36 242-58
- Gaventa, Beverly Roberts. 1998. *First and Second Thessalonians Interpretation*: Grand Louisville, Kentucky, USA: John Knox Press.
- General of The Salvation Army, The. 2010. *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* London: Salvation Books.
- Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2006. *Grace and Works: a Look at Doctrines 5-10 of The Salvation Army*. Presented to The Salvation Army's College For Officer Training (March 2006) http://sheepspeak.com/Michael_Ramsay_Theology_TSA.htm#Works
- Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2011. *I Thessalonians 5:16-22 (23&24): The 7 P's and the Pi* Presented to the Nipawin Corps (14 December 2008) and to the Swift Current Corps of The Salvation Army, (11 December 2011) <http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2008/12/1-thessalonians-516-22-23-7-ps-and-pi.html>
- Salvation Army, The. 1998. *Salvation Story: Salvationist Handbook of Doctrine* London: The Salvation Army.
- Wesley, John. 1991. "The Almost Christian." Cited from Outler & Heitzenrater.

In this Bible Study we will be looking at different ways in which God is active in our world today. We will look at various Scriptures and ask ourselves, ‘what are we going to do about it’?

Lesson 11: Matthew 7:13-27 and Chapter 25

We believe in the immortality of the soul; in the resurrection of the body; in the general judgment at the end of the world; in the eternal happiness of the righteous; and in the endless punishment of the wicked.

Background and context: This gospel was most likely written by Jesus’ disciple, the former toll-booth operator/ tax collector, Matthew (AKA Levi). It was written in and for a church predominantly composed of converts from Judaism ca. 80 CE. By the second century, Matthew was the most quoted of the gospels. Its careful structure made it suitable for use in the growing churches. Its wide-ranging collection of Jesus’ teaching on the ethics of Christian discipleship contributed its popularity.

Read Matthew 7:13-27

1. Does everyone spend eternity with the Lord?
2. What is the difference between a true and a false prophet?
3. Will everyone who calls Jesus, ‘Lord’ enter into his kingdom? If not, who will?
4. What are some of the things that people who are not a part of His kingdom but still call Jesus ‘Lord’ can do?
5. In light of verses 21-24, what is it that we must do instead of, besides, or even beyond calling Jesus ‘Lord’ and the aforementioned list of verse 22.

Read Matthew 25:31-46

1. Who does the Father bless?
2. What happens to those who are blessed?
3. Who does the Father not bless? What happens to them?
4. Into which category do we fall?

Read Matthew 25:14-30

1. Who does the master reward?
2. Who does the Master not reward and why?
3. What is the unfaithful servants reason? Is it a legitimate and acceptable excuse?
4. What happens to the unfaithful servant?
5. What happens to the faithful?

Read Matthew 25:1-13

1. Who is it that gets to be a part of the glorious eschatological party of Salvation?

What does all of this mean for us today?

Further Reading:

Barkley, William. 1972. *And Jesus Said*. Edinburgh, UK: The Saint Andrew Press.

Boring, M. Eugene. 1995. *Matthew*, NIB 8: Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press.

Carson, D. A. *Matthew*. The Expositor's Bible Commentary. Pradis CD-ROM: Book Version: 4.0.2

France, R. T. 1985. *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 1: Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press.

Hagner, Donald A. 2005. *Matthew 1-13*, WBC 33A: Dallas, Texas: Word Books.

Hagner, Donald A. 1995. *Matthew 14-28*, WBC 33B: Dallas, Texas: Word Books.

Hare, Douglas R.A. 1993. *Matthew*. Interpretation: Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press.

Harrington, Daniel J. 1991. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Sacra Pagina Series 1: Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press.

Hendricksen, William. 2007. *Matthew* NTC: Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic.

Lenski, R.C.H. 1964. *The Interpretation of St. Matthew* Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House.

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2012. *Address to the Hutterian Brethren Communities around Swift Current Saskatchewan, representatives of JD Agtech, Bank of Nova Scotia, Pioneer Co-op Agro , MNP, and Mayor Jared Schaffer on the occasion of the 15th annual Hutterian Appreciation Day* (Dec. 11) http://renewnetwork.blogspot.ca/2012_12_01_archive.html#970299223975565236

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2008. *As Christians do we have a responsibility to take care of the poor?* Nipawin Journal, (January). <http://www.sheepspeak.com./sasknews.htm#poor>

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2010. *Matthew 25: 31-46: I Just Want to be a Sheep* Presented to Trailview Alliance Church in Swift Current (07 March).
<http://sheepspeaks.blogspot.ca/2010/03/matthew-25-31-46-i-just-want-to-be.html>

Ramsay, Captain Michael. 2008. *Theology of Food Bank* (August - September).
<http://www.sheepspeak.com./sasknews.htm#A Theology of Food Bank>

Shenk, Wilbert R. 2002. 'New Wineskins for New Wine: Toward a Post-Christendom Ecclesiology', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 29 no. 2 (April): 73-79.

Via Jr., Dan Otto 1967. *The Parables: their Literary and Existential Dimension* Philadelphia, USA: Fortress Press.

Viviano, Benedict Thomas. 2010. 'God in the Gospel According to Matthew' *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 64 no. 4 (October): 341-354.