

Our Lord *and* Savior Jesus Christ



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Luke 1:26-38, John 1:1-18, Acts 9:1-19, Rom. 3:9-26.*

Memory Text: “Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord’ ” (*Luke 2:10, 11, NKJV*).

Key Thought: The New Testament calls us to receive Jesus, both as Savior and Lord.

Savior and Lord. Many Christians today are looking for a “no strings attached” Savior. They want deliverance without obligation. They may profess the name of Christian but end up with a savior of their own making. Though it is true an angel counseled Joseph to call the miracle Child “ ‘Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins’ ” (*Matt. 1:21, NKJV*), an angel also announced to the shepherds on the hills near Bethlehem that “ ‘there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord’ ” (*Luke 2:11, NKJV*).

More New Testament texts refer to Jesus as Lord than as Savior. It is impossible to receive Jesus as Savior and reject Him as Lord. Peter refers to Jesus as “our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (*2 Pet. 1:11, NKJV*), and Paul encourages us to look for “the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (*Phil. 3:20, NKJV*). This week we will explore both the importance and the consequences of the crucial question: Have you received Jesus, both as Savior and Lord?

**Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 2.*

Our Need for a Savior *(Rom. 3:9-26).*

The apostle Paul warns the Romans that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” *(Rom. 1:18, NKJV)*. Rebellion against the will of God and the Word of God has consequences. “The wages of sin is death” *(Rom. 6:23, NKJV)*.

Read Romans 3:9-26. What important point is Paul emphasizing? (If you have never read Paul’s epistle to the Romans, you may want to begin with Romans 1:1 in order to follow his whole argument.)

Have you noticed the human tendency to compare ourselves with others in order to make ourselves look good? We point to others who are worse sinners than ourselves, forgetting that we ourselves also stand condemned. Even the act of self-justification is an evidence of our fallen condition. The apostle Paul leaves no room for excuses. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We all stand condemned before a holy God. This is not hard to see. All we have to do is look at the world around us, and we see so much evidence of our sinfulness.

What are some of the evidences you see of human sinfulness? How far do you have to look to see them?

There’s no question: Sin and the results of sin exist all around us. And in us. We don’t have to point the finger at others; we can find all the evidence of sin by looking within ourselves. And that was part of Paul’s point. Every mouth is stopped before God, including our own!

Look at your own life. Do you see anything within yourself that could commend you to God? Why is looking at yourself the best way to realize there is no hope, unless hope comes from a gracious, merciful, and forgiving God?

Key Text: *Acts 9:1-19*

Teachers Aims:

1. To reveal Christ as Savior of the world and as Lord of our lives.
2. To show that all of us are sinners in need of a Savior.
3. To show that we acknowledge Christ as Lord by allowing Him to rule in our lives.

Lesson Outline:

I. Accepting Christ for Who He Is (*Luke 1:26-38*).

- A. What obligations come with being a Christian?
- B. When we receive Christ, why must we accept Him for who He is and all He is?
- C. Why is understanding Christ's role as both Savior and Lord crucial to our spiritual growth?

II. Righteousness Unmerited (*Rom. 3:9-26*).

- A. What does Scripture tell us about the nature of humanity?
- B. How do we receive God's gift of righteousness?
- C. Is there anyone God cannot save? Explain.

III. Salvation by Acceptance (*John 3:16*).

- A. Who receives salvation?
- B. What must follow our acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior? (*James 2:14-26*).
- C. What change do acceptance and obedience bring about? (*Eph. 4:22-24*).

Summary: Accepting Christ does not come easy. Human weaknesses can stand in the way. By receiving Jesus as both Savior and Lord of our lives, we can triumph over sin through the power of the Holy Spirit.

COMMENTARY

Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Each man and woman is dissatisfied with some aspect of his or her life. That dissatisfaction is manifested in two ways: (1) "Skunks" tend to blame their dissatisfaction on a person or a thing outside themselves, while (2) "turtles" tend to blame themselves for everything. Both views are dysfunctional. Our problems do not come solely from external forces, whether we conceive of these forces as our parents, a particular set of circumstances, or Adam and Eve. Nor do our problems come solely from inside us. We are not to blame for every trouble that comes into our life.

Most of us tend to swing back and forth between being a "skunk" or a "turtle." If we blame ourselves for our troubles, it is often more than we can stand. Because it is also unrealistic, we hand all the

Heaven's Greatest Gift *(Luke 1:26-38, John 1:1-18).*

Sunday's lesson left us with the realization that, unless there was divine intervention in our behalf, we would have no hope. The good news, of course, is that God has intervened in our behalf: through Jesus Christ.

While many followers of other world religions admire Jesus Christ as a holy prophet or a great teacher, few recognize the true significance of Jesus Christ's entrance into humanity.

What message did the angel Gabriel deliver to Mary, the mother of Jesus, about the identity of the Child she would conceive? *Luke 1:26-35.*

The New Testament writers boldly declare that Jesus Christ was conceived by the supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit of God. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (*Luke 1:35, NKJV*). Born of a human mother, Jesus could call only God His real Father. He is Son of God and Son of man.

Consider the testimony of the apostle John at the beginning of his Gospel record. What important message does he convey about Jesus Christ? *John 1:1-18.*

Jesus Christ is more than a holy prophet. He is more than a great teacher. He is the Word made flesh. He is God's thoughts made audible. One with the Father from eternity past, the only begotten of the Father became human flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He is Immanuel, God with us, and yet He was "with us"—not in the thunder and lightning and clouds of Sinai—but as one of us; that is, He was as fully human as we are. What an amazing condescension for Him who "was in the beginning with God"!

It has been said a desperate situation calls for desperate measures. What should it tell us about what sin has done to us that it would require God Himself becoming a human being and then dying in order to save us from the penalty of sin? How should this realization help us trust that, however desperate our own personal situation, the God who would do this is able to save us from whatever challenges we face?

blame to someone or something outside ourselves. Everything is all our spouse's fault or all our boss's fault or the fault of the weather. When our spouse or our boss or the weather does not accept all the blame, we swing back to thinking it is all our fault again.

How are we to escape this gut-wrenching roller-coaster ride?

Let us begin by recognizing we are born separated from God and out of touch with His reality. We had no choice in that. It does not do us any good to blame Adam, Eve, or God.

However, that does not mean we are completely at fault for the condition in which we find ourselves. We do not know what reality is all about. The solution to our dilemma is not found in placing blame on anyone in our past. The solution comes from focusing on the future and on what we need to learn to live in the reality God created. God does not blame us for the circumstances of our birth. Instead, He offers us a way to internalize reality. Through Jesus, we can once more be united with God and learn how to live within His reality.

Jesus is Lord because He created everything and has authority over what He created. But Scripture rarely appeals to this authority as a way of motivating us to obey Him. Rather, Scripture describes Jesus as One who seeks to woo and win us with His love. He is the Creator of the reality He wants us to live in, and He knows best how human beings operate. Because He loves us and does not want us to keep stubbing our toes in the dark, He shines a light into our lives so we can see what is really there. We can pay attention to what is there and avoid hurting ourselves, or we can ignore what is there and remain miserable. It is God's love and mercy that draw us to Him. Our reception of God's love and mercy is a prerequisite for our accepting His authority.

Another way of understanding Jesus' authority is to see it as the authority of a father. The authoritarian father who demands obedience will produce a rebellious child. The child feels condemnation and guilt in the presence of the father. The child does not feel loved. So, the child has no motivation to accept his father's authority. In contrast, a father who makes sure his child feels loved and who limits the child appropriately will produce an obedient child. The child feels acknowledged, cared for, and affirmed by the father. The positive relationship that develops motivates the child to accept the father's authority.

Besides being the authority, the father is also the creator of the child and the one who cares for it, protects it, provides for it, and guides it.

In the ancient world, there were clear lines of authority. But there also were clear lines of responsibility. People in authority were responsible for meeting the needs of those under their authority. If people in authority did their job well, they were respected and obeyed. If they were arbitrary and dictatorial, there was often rebellion.

God's Perfect Plan *(Isa. 53:3-7)*.

When Jesus came to the river Jordan to be baptized, John the Baptist exclaimed, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (*John 1:29, NKJV*). In this brief declaration, John the Baptist provided a succinct summary of God's perfect plan of salvation. Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God.

Review the following portions of Scripture. How do these passages help you to understand God's perfect plan of salvation?

Gen. 22:6-14:

Isa. 53:4-7:

Rev. 5:1-14:

We have all gone astray. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And the wages of that sin is death. We all deserve to die. But Jesus Christ, the Son of God, willingly took our punishment upon Himself. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (*Isa. 53:5, NKJV*).

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He was laying down His life as the Lamb of God. He was fulfilling God's perfect plan of salvation in every detail. “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (*1 Cor. 15:3, NKJV*). “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (*2 Cor. 5:21, NKJV*).

“Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’ ”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25. Read this famous quote aloud, but put yourself in there: “Christ was treated as I deserve, that I might be treated as He deserves. . . .” Read it aloud over and over until the wonderful truths it portrays hit home and you realize—for yourself—what Christ has done for you.

If we view God as exercising His authority simply because He is the Creator, He may well seem arbitrary and dictatorial. People often believe that kind of God sends people to hell simply because He does not like them. But the Bible reveals a God who does not violate our individuality or our sense of justice. He does not just lay down the law. He embodies it. He is in no way fickle or arbitrary. So, His authority makes sense. His judgments are made in the open rather than in the secret recesses of His mind.

To summarize, we are born out of sync with reality. God is the Creator of the reality He wants us to live in and has, therefore,

Inductive Bible Study

Texts for Discovery: *Luke 1:26-38, John 1:1-18, Acts 9:1-19, Romans 3:9-26, Philippians 2:5-11*

❶ “ ‘There is no one righteous,’ ” maintains the apostle Paul, “ ‘not even one’ ” (*Rom. 3:10, NIV*); thus our need of a Savior. A Savior does for us what we cannot do for ourselves; yet, through the years people have tried to convince themselves they do not need a Savior. What evidence in your own life, or in the lives of those you know, persuades you that our situation is hopeless without a Savior?

❷ The opposite of *Lord* (Greek: *kurios*) is “slave” or “servant” (Greek: *doulos*). In New Testament times, no one would ever mistake a master for a servant, or vice versa. Yet, according to *Philippians 2:6-11*, our Lord Jesus became a servant in order to effect our salvation. In what ways did He demonstrate humility? How should we translate His example into our experience?

❸ As a result of His humility, “God exalted [Jesus] to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name” (*Phil. 2:9, NIV*). How does Christ’s humility reveal His lordship in ways a demonstration of power and strength never could? How has Christ’s humility affected you personally?

❹ In *Acts 9*, Saul of Tarsus is literally stopped in his tracks by a demonstration of Jesus’ power. At what point or points have you been forced to come to terms with Christ’s claims on your life? What have been the results?

❺ The Bible contains many stories of people whose lives were changed as a result of their encounters with divinity. What is the relationship between accepting Jesus as Lord and living a life of freedom?

Responding to God's Grace (*1 Cor. 1:18-31*).

Our gracious heavenly Father has made a perfect provision for everyone to be saved. We who were dead in our sins can be made alive in Christ Jesus. The apostle Paul proclaimed the good news: "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (*Rom. 10:9, NKJV*). So, when Paul and Silas were asked by the Philippian jailer what he needed to do in order to be saved, their answer was simple and to the point: " 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household' " (*Acts 16:31, NKJV*). Salvation is available for all who accept God's perfect plan. When we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be saved.

Unfortunately, not everyone is willing to accept God's perfect plan. Some view the message of the Cross and blood atonement as a remnant from humanity's barbaric past. Others would rather trust in their own wisdom rather than the wisdom of God.

How does the apostle Paul describe the varying responses to God's perfect plan of salvation? *1 Cor. 1:18-31*. **How** are some of these same responses manifested today by those who hear the gospel?

In apostolic times, there were some who viewed the death of Jesus Christ on the cross as a scandal, a stumbling block. How could Someone who was executed as a criminal be the Messiah? Others viewed the message of the Cross as foolishness. How could one Man's death affect the destiny of the human race? Both groups rejected God's perfect plan of salvation and scorned His grace, some because it went against their own personal religious views, others because it just didn't seem reasonable, logical, and "scientific." However, some embraced the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. They accepted the death of Christ for their sins as the power of God and the wisdom of God. In spite of opposition to the gospel, the apostle Paul declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (*Rom. 1:16, NKJV*).

What has your own response been to the gospel? Go back over your own experience with Jesus and your response to His saving grace. What, more than anything else, moved you to accept His salvation? Or are you still making excuses?

provided a way for us to get back in sync with it. As a good Father, He protects us, provides for us, and guides us as we rediscover how to live right.

Witnessing

Perhaps one of the most amazing things about God is He chooses to reveal Himself to us. The Creator of the universe—all-knowing and all-powerful—makes Himself known to sinful humanity.

Not only has He made Himself known through nature, the prophets, and His mighty acts, but He took on humanity itself that we might know Him better. “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known” (*John 1:18, NIV*).

But God did not stop there! He chose to use His people to further reveal Himself. Just as John the Baptist testified concerning Christ, so we are called to testify.

Whereas John could testify only to the true Light that was coming into the world (*vs. 9*), if we have accepted Jesus as our Lord and Savior, He has taken up residence in our hearts and that Light shines within each one of us: “To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (*vs. 12*).

Hebrews 2:11 tells us Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters (*NLT*). Can we truly say with Paul that we are not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ?

It has been said:

We are writing a gospel, a chapter each day,

By the deeds that we do and the words that we say.

Men read what we write, distorted or true,

What is the gospel according to you?

Has your life been so transformed that people see Jesus in you? Have you laid hold of the power available through the Holy Spirit that made Jesus say “ ‘Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these’ ” (*John 14:12, NIV*)?

Confessing Jesus Christ as Lord *(Acts 9:1-19)*.

The apostle John records the sad news that Jesus Christ “came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (*John 1:11, NKJV*). Because He was not the Messiah they were looking for, many rejected God’s perfect plan for their salvation. But the apostle John also records the good news: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (*John 1:12, NKJV*). Many read this testimony and fail to grasp its true significance. When we accept God’s perfect plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, we not only receive Jesus Christ as Savior. We receive Him as Lord.

Examine the account of Saul’s conversion and his interaction with Ananias, recorded in Acts 9:1-19. What are the implications for your own life when you receive Jesus as Savior and Lord?

When Saul realized he was encountering the risen Christ, the first thing he said wasn’t “Lord, what do You want me to believe?” or “Lord, what do You want me to say?” but it was “Lord, what do You want me *to do*?” Saul, here, by calling Jesus “Lord,” recognized that because of who Jesus was, Saul needed to obey Him. And when the Lord said “‘Arise and go,’ ” Saul arose and went. We see the same response from Ananias. At first he argues with the Lord Jesus Christ, questioning His judgment. But when the Lord said “ ‘Go,’ ” Ananias went. The message is clear: When we confess Jesus Christ as Lord, we recognize His absolute authority over our lives.

What word of reproof did the Lord Jesus Christ give to those who confessed Him with their lips but not with their lives? *Luke 6:46-49*.

When we receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, we will obey Him, and, as a result, our lives will be radically transformed. It’s in the doing, the obeying, and the living the life of faith that we are changed.

If Christ were to suddenly appear to you, as He did to Saul, and you said “Lord, what do You want me to do?” what do you think He would say to you, and why?

Life-Application Approach

Icebreaker: If you made a list of concepts and ideas in which you had absolute certainty, what would you include? How long would your list be? How would it be valuable information to share with a friend? In John 1:14 (*NIV*), Jesus is described as “the One and Only . . . full of grace and truth.” In what ways have you personally experienced His absolute certainty in your life?

Thought Questions:

1 Most advertising campaigns are based on the premise of product superiority. The best product sells. How does the concept of comparisons impact our Christian lives? Why is it dangerous for us to measure our religious experience with that of another human? Paul quotes, “ ‘There is no one righteous, not even one!’ ” (*Rom. 3:10, NIV*). How does personal, honest reflection of your own life help you turn to a gracious, merciful, and forgiving God?

2 “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory” (*John 1:14, NKJV*). The Creator became human to address our need. We each have a choice; we might say, “Our options are open.” Will you see God’s salvation as “foolishness” or the “power of God” (*1 Cor. 1:18, NIV*)? How has God’s gift of salvation impacted the way you live your life? What have been the practical implications? How would you describe to a neighbor or colleague from work the choice you have made?

Application Question:

Jesus Christ confronted Saul on the road to Damascus. “A light from heaven flashed around him” (*Acts 9:3, NIV*) to get his attention. Later Jesus describes Saul to Ananias as “ ‘my chosen instrument to carry my name’ ” (*vs. 15, NIV*). The difference required a name change. How would you describe the impact in your life before and then after you found Jesus to be a personal Savior and Friend? What kind of instrument for the advancement of the gospel has He made you? Write a letter to God that reflects your willingness to do what He calls you to do. This week, find a friend and share your experience and testimony.

Further Study: Read the Second Epistle of Peter. Notice the numerous references to the Lord Jesus Christ. This epistle begins and ends with references to Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

Think of some individuals in Scripture who struggled with the implications of accepting Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Here are some examples:

Nicodemus—*John 3:1-21, 7:50-53, 19:39-42*

The rich young ruler—*Matt. 19:16-26*

Zacchaeus—*Luke 19:1-10*

Thomas—*John 20:19-29*

As you look over these examples, what appears to be the reasons for their struggles? Are there any common elements to each situation?

Discussion Questions:

1 How can we encourage one another to confess Jesus Christ as Lord in every aspect of our lives without sounding legalistic or judgmental? How can we be sure to avoid the trap of legalism as we seek to have Jesus rule in every area of our lives? Why is a proper understanding of salvation by faith alone the only way to protect yourself against legalism?

2 As a class, what could you do to help members in your local church realize the importance of allowing Jesus to be Lord of their lives? In other words, what could you do to encourage members to make a total commitment to Jesus?

3 What encouragement would you give to a friend who wants to experience salvation but who is afraid to totally surrender to Jesus Christ as Lord?

4 Go around the classroom and ask each member to answer the following question, “What is the gospel?” After each person has a turn, analyze the answers. What are the differences and the similarities in the various views of the gospel?