

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?

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?

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.

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?

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?

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?

Priska's Tithe

Priska Chepkwony

Priska lives in Kenya. Even before she became an Adventist, she was a faithful tither.

One day Priska placed her tithe in an envelope and wrapped it in plastic. She asked her daughter to take the envelope to the church treasurer's home nearby.

Priska's daughter delivered the tithe to the treasurer's house. But the treasurer was not home, so the girl left the envelope with the treasurer's daughter, who placed it in a cupboard for safe keeping. But in the busyness of life, the daughter forgot to tell her mother about the tithe.

At the end of the month the treasurer was writing out tithe receipts and noticed that Priska had no tithe. Knowing that Priska would never withhold her tithe, the treasurer asked Priska about it.

Priska told the treasurer that her daughter had delivered the tithe to her home and given it to the treasurer's daughter, who had put it into a cupboard for safe keeping. But the girl could not remember in which cupboard she had placed the money.

The treasurer searched for Priska's tithe envelope but found nothing. Feeling responsible for God's funds, she determined to repay the missing money herself. But Priska told her, "There is no need to replace God's money; it is God's, and He will take care of it."

Several months passed, and the church prepared to host a district meeting. The deaconesses cleaned the church, and members cleaned their homes. The litter was gathered and burned. After all the trash had burned, the ashes were spread out.

At the bottom of the ashes lay a small packet wrapped in plastic. A child found it and took it to the church treasurer. She opened it to find Priska's missing tithe and offerings. All of the money was there; none of it had burned. The church members rejoiced that God had protected His tithe.

Priska never doubted that God's tithe would one day appear. God protected that which was set aside as His property.



Priska Chepkwony (left) is a primary school teacher in western Kenya.