

Goals

In this unit, we will cover the topic of salvation. We will explore what salvation means and how it has been fulfilled over time. We will also look at how a believer should lead his or her life while waiting for the Lord's second coming.

Through these lessons, the students will come to recognize that Jesus Christ is the Savior of this world and in the kingdom to come. They will also be reminded of their role in God's plan of salvation and be encouraged to preach the gospel.

unit
2**Teacher Devotional**

All too often we are content to be the "chosen ones." We don't really think about the privilege we haven't been given by being able to attend service and having a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. There are still many others who have yet to hear His message. As teachers, we have an important role to play in shaping the faith of our students. They are the ones who will be counted on in the future to spread God's message of hope and salvation. Our goal, no matter what the lesson focuses on, is to help our students grow in faith. That way, they will not only learn about God, but they will also be changed by Him. As we teach, can we see each of our students becoming God's vessel, put to great use? How can we make it our goal?

Salvation Through Jesus Christ

"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom 5:8)

Lesson 5

God's salvation

Listed Scriptures

1 Cor 15:54; Rom 5:15

Lesson Aim

- 1) To recognize that Jesus Christ is the Savior of this world and in the kingdom to come
- 2) To give thanks for His saving grace and be determined to live a life worthy of His name

Memory Verse

"And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!" (2 Tim 4:18)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Psalms 21-25

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D

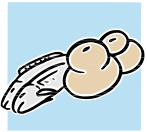


More than two thousand years ago, God found a virtuous virgin according to His plan of salvation. After she became betrothed to Joseph, she conceived through the Holy Spirit before marriage. When Joseph became worried about Mary's pregnancy, God sent an angel to tell him, "Do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife...she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.' So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet..." (Mt 1:18-25). From this passage, we can see that Jesus Christ was the center of salvation. He was the one to fulfill the plan of salvation and save man from the hand of Satan. In the past four lessons, we learned about God's characteristics, creation and magnificence. In the next few lessons, our theme will be God's salvation.



Before the lesson, read to the students a story book called, "A Tale of Two Princes", by Eckart Zur Nieden (English text adapted by Mack Thomas). Although it is a children's book, it can still be enjoyed by all and is a great introduction to today's lesson. It highlights how Jesus Christ is the only Savior in the world. Also in Paul's last letter, he described the meaning of salvation. He told Timothy that the Lord Jesus would save him from evil and bring him into the heavenly kingdom. Thus, we can see that there are two parts to salvation: one pertaining this world, and another pertaining to the next.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Jesus Christ is the Savior of This World

When we think about salvation, we often look to the skies and point to the eternal life we will receive. However, God's salvation is also important for our lives on earth. While we live in this world, we are surrounded by sin and evil. We know that evil comes from the hand of Satan. The Lord's Prayer says, "Lead us from temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Mt 6:13). Therefore, we need someone to help us overcome everything we need to face. Jesus Christ is the only Savior of this world. Through death, He destroyed the power of Satan so that He may release those who were bound by the fear of death (Heb 2:14-15). All who are afraid to be controlled by the devil can come before the Lord. The Lord Jesus' gospel contains the great power of God and will save all who believe in it. The gospel will make men the citizens of Heaven. Through the power of the Holy Spirit they will be able to conquer sin. They will be able to live a life that is holy, reverent, peaceful and free.

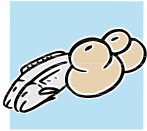
**A . Saving People From the Clutches of Sin**

In the days of Eden, Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. Thus, they ended the spiritual lives of all mankind and all people are born with "original sin" (Gen 2:17; Ps 51:5). Later, all humans were like the "living dead" because of their sinful actions and thoughts. Although they had souls, they had no

hope (Eph 2:1, 12). Thus all the world came under the control of Satan. That's why the bible tells us, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing dwells; for to will is present within me, but how to perform what is good I do not find" (Rom 7:18). Paul also said, "O wretched man I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom 7:24). Therefore, Jesus Christ told His disciples, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God" (Lk 9:59-60). Those who have not received salvation not only must die a physical death, but must also endure a second death, that of eternal suffering in the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:11-15). They will be with the devil and his angels (Mt 25:41). However, when the salvation of Jesus Christ comes upon us, we will be able to conquer death through the Lord Jesus (1 Cor 15:54). This is because Jesus Christ died on the cross to save us from death (2 Cor 1:10). The devil has been a murderer since the beginning. The Book of John tells us that "there is no truth in him, and everything he speaks is a lie" (Jn 8:44; Jas 3:14-16; Rev 12:9). Before people receive salvation, they are all under Satan's control (1 Jn 5:19). However, even though Jesus Christ was tempted by the devil, He was not persuaded to sin (Heb 4:15). Therefore, those who believe in Jesus Christ will have true peace. Because He has already overcome the world, they will not be confined by the devil and will have no fear toward the bitterness and sadness of this life (Heb 2:14; Jn 16:33, 14:27).

**B . Saving Man From the Bondage of the Law and Sin**

"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law" (1 Cor 15:56). Everyone who is mortal cannot be called righteous, because there is no perfect man before the law. However, if there were no law, then sin would not be considered sin because people would not know where to draw the line (Rom 3:20, 5:3). So while we can not be saved by following the law (since no one is perfect), we still need it to tell us what is right and wrong. God does not want us to fall to sin and be bound by the law. When the fullness of the time came, God allowed Jesus Christ to be born under the law. This was to save us from the law, so we could receive status as sons of God. It is also so that we could receive the Holy Spirit (Gal 4:4-6). Because Christians have received the salvation of God, they are no longer bound by the law. Instead, we live under grace (Rom 6:14, 7:4-6). Romans tells us, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (Rom 5:12). Jesus Christ was cursed for our sake. He was hung on the cross. But through His precious blood, we were redeemed and saved from the curse of sin (Gal 3:13). "For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many" (Rom 5:15). Clearly, we can not overcome sin through obedience to the law and the wages of sin is death. Only the grace of God can give us everlasting life (Rom 6:23).



Part 2

Jesus Christ is the Savior of the World to Come

God's salvation will save people from the clutches of sin and the power of Satan while living in the world. But salvation can also bring people into the Heavenly Kingdom. This gives men hope of everlasting life and glory.



A. The Kingdom of Heaven

Although it is hard to really picture what the kingdom of heaven is like, we can catch a glimpse of it from what is recorded in the Bible.

- It is the spiritual kingdom of God. It is incorruptible and undefiled. Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of God (Eph 1:20).
- It does not fade away and is a place filled with the glory of God (1 Pet 1:3-5). We should rejoice because our names are written in heaven (Lk 10:20).
- It is a place of everlasting peace where we will be forever with our Heavenly Father. Therefore, Jesus Christ comforted His disciples and said, "In my father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to the place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn 14:2-3). Thus, those who baptize into the Lord will be the citizens of heaven.
- Revelation describes heaven with various images. In 21:1-8, the new heaven is like a tabernacle, where God lives with His people and they with Him, in perfection. In 21:9-27, heaven is like a great city, with great light and clear as crystal. This image represents how we will be protected in the heavenly kingdom. In 22:1-5, it describes how heaven is like a garden, with the river of life and the tree of life. This represents how we will be provided for completely when we dwell in the kingdom of God.



B. Entrance into the Heavenly Kingdom

When Jesus Christ was in this world, He walked through each village and was in the synagogues teaching people, preaching the kingdom of heaven (Mt 9:35). He taught people about the pathway to heaven. The Lord Jesus' disciples were sent out to preach the news that "the kingdom of heaven is near" (Mt 10:5-7). Thus, we can see how the true God's salvation is the gospel of heaven. All who believe in the

gospel will be taken into the kingdom of heaven (2 Tim 4:18). God has prepared for us inheritance in heaven. All who believe and accept His way may receive the Holy Spirit – the guarantee of our inheritance (Eph 1:13-14). Peter once asked Jesus Christ, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). This is the basic knowledge Christians should have. Jesus Christ also once told Nicodemus the content of salvation, saying, "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" (Jn 3:16, 36). From here, we can see that the Lord Jesus promises us the eternal blessing of heaven (1 Jn 2:25). One day, the heavens and earth will be destroyed and a new heaven will be awaiting us. When Jesus Christ comes again, He will transform our lowly bodies to spiritual forms, so that we may be like His glorious body (Phil 3:21; 1 Cor 15:42-44). As believers in the gospel, we are "kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet 1:5). Those chosen in the Lord will be receive the everlasting glory in the end and receive the crown that does not fade (1 Pet 5:10, 4).

Teaching Tips

You may wish to spend some time discussing the passages found in Revelation that talk about the heavenly kingdom so that the students have a better understanding of what they can look forward to. Contrast it to the world in which we live today, how polluted and filthy it is, both in the physical and spiritual sense. The new heaven, however, will be perfect in every way.

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



- How has Jesus Christ saved us from the clutches of sin and Satan?



- What does it mean that we live under grace and not under the bondage of sin and the law?



- Use two images to describe what the kingdom of heaven is like. Use the Bible to support your answer.



- Why do you think that in addition to the earth, the heavens as we know it now will also be destroyed? Think about how this "old" heaven compares to the "new" heaven.

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Have you really thought about what will happen to you after you die? How important is it to you to be able to enter into God's heavenly kingdom? How can you strive to make that happen?

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



“God Touched Me”

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I testify. I was born in Cambodia, and I came to the United States in 1981, when I was nine years old. From 1975 to 1979 there was a genocide in Cambodia: out of 6 million people, 3.5 million died during those years. Every day, people died from starvation or execution—even my relatives and my loved ones. I always asked myself, what kind of God created people, and then allowed them to die like that? How can this God be a good God? Can't He see that all these people are dying?

After I came to this country, I started having nightmares. It was the same nightmare every night. Five evil spirits would grab me: two of them would tie my hands, two of them would tie my feet, and one would choke me. I was so afraid of going to sleep. Growing up, I worked two or three jobs because I didn't want to sleep. All this time, I was so fearful and lonely. When I read the Buddhist sayings that the world is full of suffering, I really believed it. I had been seeking the truth and looking for God all my life, but I still felt so lonely in my heart. I said to myself, “Life must be better than this”. In college, I went to parties where I saw people dancing, drinking, and having so much fun. I said, “Wow, this is what happiness is, huh?” So during my first and second years in college, I went out and I drank and I danced. When I went to parties, I would get up on the stage and dance like crazy. People would yell my name, “Vuthy! Vuthy!” But I couldn't find happiness. Finally, I said to myself, “This isn't the way”. I almost flunked out of school my sophomore year. When I realized what was happening to me, I settled down a little bit during my junior year, but I still felt so lonely. I thought that maybe, when I get out of college, I'll get a job and make some money, and that will make me happy. But after I graduated and got a good job, my heart still felt empty.

I was still constantly searching for the truth all this time, but without any success. For a while I went to a Christian church, where I was baptized for the first time. But God didn't move me and I didn't see God in that church, so I left. After that, my mother took me to a Greek Orthodox church where I was baptized the second time. But I fell asleep every time I went there, because they spoke in Greek and I couldn't understand what they were saying.

After I left this second church I said to myself, “Forget it, God doesn't exist.” I just focused on working at my agency. One of the women who worked there belongs to the True Jesus Church. One day she saw my Bible on my desk and asked me to attend a Bible study. I thought, “Why not, I have nothing to lose,” and went to the Bible study. At the end, when they knelt down and prayed in tongues, I was really scared. One of the sisters must have been praying for me, because the next week I couldn't wait to go to Bible study. At that meeting, I felt God move me. I started going to Bible study, and then I started to attend church services regularly. I felt that God was there, even though we gathered in only a prayer house. I started to pray sincerely every night because I felt the movement of God. Every biblical teaching that I learned and followed came true.

One night when I was sleeping, God's power came over me and said, “Vuthy, get up and pray.” So I said, “Okay,” and I started to pray. I said, “Hallelujah,” and this power came into me, and I started to speak in tongues. I started to weep from joy because I felt so much love and mercy from God. This was the first time I felt joy in my heart, and I knew it was from God. During that prayer God made me realize what kind of a person I was, and all the sinful things I had done in my high school and college years. While I was praying, God moved me to say, “Turn to 1 Peter.” I didn't even know where 1 Peter was in the Bible. So I got up, switched on the lights, and turned to 1 Peter, chapter 1. As I was reading, the words of God came alive, almost like they were three-dimensional. Every word came to me like it was living, and it really touched me.

A few days later, my nightmares came back again. I hadn't had those nightmares in a couple of years. They were the same five spirits, and this time they were choking me especially hard. I couldn't breathe, I couldn't yell, I couldn't scream. But I said, “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,” and they left. I asked the brothers and sisters in church why I still had nightmares despite having received the Holy Spirit. They asked me if I had any idols in my house. I did have a little gold Buddha head, and they told me that I had to throw it away. So in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I flushed it down the toilet.

The next night I had another nightmare, but this time there was only one spirit. This big, black spirit was choking me, and I couldn't see its face. It really scared me because this was something new. I said, “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,” and I started choking the spirit back. I turned the spirit over on my bed, and I saw that its face was corroded and full of worms. Then suddenly, it disappeared. Again I asked the sister at church why I still had these nightmares. I didn't know what was causing them; I didn't think I had anything else in my house. She said that I should check again. So I searched and searched, and finally I found another Buddha head that my mom had given me a long time ago. I had forgotten that it was in my jewelry box. So again in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I flushed it down the toilet.

After I was baptized in the True Jesus Church, I started to tell my father about God. My father is seventy-three years old. Ever since he was a young man in Cambodia, he has always practiced witchcraft. It was known all over town that no one could kill him by shooting or stabbing him. When I was a child I felt proud of this, but I didn't really believe it. When my family came to the U.S. in 1981, we were terribly mistreated. Our house was burned down twice. The second time, my father went outside and started fighting with the arsonists. One of them tried to hit my father with a baseball bat, but my father put his hand up and broke it in half. After that, I started to believe that my father really did use witchcraft. The first time my father went to a Christian church after he came to America, he became so sick that he almost died. His "spirit master" of witchcraft warned him that he would kill him if he continued to go to church. So from 1981 until 1999, my father never went to church.

In June 1999, I went fishing with my father. By then, I'd been regularly attending services in the True Jesus Church. I really believed that God exists and I felt His love. So I said to myself, "This is a great opportunity for me to talk to my father about God." I told him, "I've never asked you to do anything in my entire life. But I've found God, and I want you to come to church only five times. If after five times you don't feel anything, you don't ever have to come back." He agreed, "Okay son, I'll do it for you." That same night, my niece was in my father's room. Suddenly, she started screaming, "Grandma, grandpa, someone's trying to kill me!" My father looked around and there was no one there. Then he realized that it was his spirit master again. He told me about it the next day, but I told him not to worry because God is all-powerful, and only He can take away life.

The next Friday at Bible study, I asked the brothers and sisters what I should do about all the Buddhism paraphernalia in my father's room. They advised me to pray and to remove it, but who would dare go into his room and remove all of it? My father wouldn't do it, and I didn't have enough faith to do it myself. So the only thing we could do was pray. Thank God, my father came to church that Saturday. After the prayer, I asked him how he felt. He said, "I felt cold and full of chills." I thought, that doesn't sound right. Sure enough, I found out that he was wearing a big Buddha head around his neck. So I told him, "That's the problem, you need to get rid of that. You need to get rid of all the other things in your room, too, if you really want to pray to God." So with God's help, my father removed all his Buddhism paraphernalia (including his necklace), and he began to pray every night.

The next Sabbath, my father came to church and knelt down to pray again. I had never described to him what the Holy Spirit felt like. After the prayer, he said that he felt this tingling all through his body, and it felt really good. I really thanked God. During that same week, my father's left leg began to hurt so badly

that he couldn't even walk. He didn't understand why this was happening to him. On the way to church he said to me, "If your God is the true God, let Him heal my leg." So I thought, "We have him, Lord." My father is a man of his word. I knew that all we would have to do was to have faith and pray, and God would heal him. His leg hurt for a week, and then one night he woke up crying from the pain. The minute he got up, he felt this power from his foot all the way to his knee, and he was able to walk. He called and told me about it, and I was so joyful. The brothers and sisters at church had prayed really hard for him.

On our way to the next Sabbath service, he told me, "Son, I will follow your faith; I have already told your mother that I will follow your faith and follow your God." I really thank God. My father has practiced Buddhism all his life, just like his grandparents and great-grandparents before him. For him to believe in God and come to church is a miracle. Now my father, mother, and brother are attending Sabbath services regularly. God's love and mercy is beyond my imagination. When we pray with sincerity and faith, everything is possible through God. May all the glory and praise be unto our Lord Jesus.

Vuthy Nol-Mantia—Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Questions to think about:

1. *In which ways did this brother receive salvation on earth?*
2. *How do we know that this brother feels hope for eternal life in heaven?*
3. *Do you think it is easier for an atheist or a person who practices another religion (i.e., Buddhism) to convert to Christianity? Explain your answer.*

REFLECTION & PRAYER



Since God created the world, He has chosen us to be the sons and daughters of Christ, so that we may receive all kinds of blessing in heaven. He allowed for our sins to be forgiven, so that we may receive the Holy Spirit to guarantee our inheritance in His heavenly kingdom (Eph 1:3-14). However, the Bible records that the path to this perfect kingdom is hard and the gate to its entrance is narrow. Therefore, we must hold on to our faith and persist to the end. Then, we can have part in Jesus Christ and His salvation (Heb 3:14).