

Discussing How To Restore The Early Church

Returning Intimacy and Power to the Father's Children

*"I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for,
it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.
For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."*
(Matthew 18:19,20)



SECTION 1 - LESSON 6

THE OLDER TESTAMENT

Foundation For The True Gospel

Root For Spiritual Rebirth And Unwavering Trust In God

Key To Repentance

Source For Evangelism



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Foundation For The True Gospel Root For Spiritual Rebirth And Unwavering Trust In God Key To Repentance Source For Evangelism

The Older Testament: *Foundation for the True Gospel*

God is *passionate* to reproduce Himself through His people! He had commissioned Israel as His called-out ones to proclaim testimony to His miraculous interventions. Our Lord wanted His works to go before Him throughout all the earth so that mankind would marvel and seek Him out: *“Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done”* (1 Chronicles 16:8).

The commission Jesus entrusted to His disciples echoed the unbroken continuity of His Father’s purpose: God is calling His children to *reproduce* their relationship with Him in the lives of others.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Through the prophets in the Older Testament, our Father spoke of the one, final New Covenant He would offer mankind. He also presented within the Hebrew Scriptures the stipulations for people to embrace His New Covenant.

The foundation for the true Gospel — the “Good News” Covenant fulfilled in Jesus — abides in the *Older Testament!*

Think about it a moment:

- Awareness of a “new” and final Covenant is found in the Hebrew Bible.
- The 333 prophecies pointing to the Redeemer Whose shed blood would make the Covenant possible are found in the Hebrew Bible.
- The stipulations for man to enter into this Covenant are found in the Hebrew Bible.

That’s right! The foundations for the true Gospel permeate the Hebrew Bible. Jesus pointedly sends His hearers back to the Word of God, the Hebrew Bible, to apperceive the truth of His Messiahship. He knows that within that text they will find *Him* as the One Who both satisfies the righteous requirements of the Law and fulfills the words of the prophets.

“Whoever puts his trust in me as the Scripture says, rivers of living water will flow from his inmost being!” Now he said this about the Spirit, whom those who trusted in him were to receive later — the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been glorified (John 7:38,39).

The only Scripture in existence when Jesus spoke these all-important words of hope was the Older Testament. When people *trust* in Jesus as the Hebrew Bible requires, they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and become streams of life to others. Isn't this exactly what we see happening in the Book of Acts. Why? Because they embraced the true Gospel message foretold in the Hebrew Bible.

From our article, ***The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation***, we've listed below the five stipulations our Father requires for true followers of Jesus. We strongly encourage you to not only read the article, but more importantly, ensure that you've embraced the true Gospel! If you have, then everyone will recognize that you are a *stream of living water from whose innermost being flows the work of His Spirit*.

- **Repentance**
- **Love**
- **Obedient Trust**
- **Forceful Conviction and Determination**
- **Forgiving Others**

Describe the biblical basis that substantiates why you believe you are saved.

Have you become a 'stream of the Spirit' through the gospel you've believed? Ask others close to you in the faith for comment.

The so-called gospels that have been developed and propagated in recent centuries are devoid of the life-changing power you see in the Book of Acts. **First**, man-centered, false gospels disregard and even nullify the true Gospel that's founded in the Hebrew Bible to which Jesus refers. **Second**, the demonic powers of Hellenism have produced counterfeit gospels to ensnare people and inoculate them against the true Gospel. All that's required of these gospels is mental agreement with particular Bible verses from the Newer Testament.

These so-called gospels do not offer a Covenant relationship with the Father — an intimate relationship He deeply desires.

Counterfeit gospels bear fruit for Satan because those who swallow them have no firm understanding of the Older Testament foundations of truth. Without an underpinning on the pattern of obedient trust so vividly presented in the Hebrew Scriptures, the claims of Jesus seem irrelevant to people today.

Modern humanity has difficulty realizing the significance and cost of His atoning sacrifice for their sins. The 21st century worldview is far removed from the whole idea of blood sacrifice to cover personal guilt. Yet the writer to the Hebraic believers emphasized a very-well comprehended point when he wrote, "...**without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness**" (Hebrews 9:22).

Present-day Hellenized "Christianity" is a pluralistic, relativistic religious system. It differs little in nature from the pagan system of the ancient Greeks. In fact, most of what are considered *key features in Christian religious practices* today were adapted from, or influenced by, the Hellenist religious system. (We'll discuss

this further in our lessons in Section 2.)

In contemporary Christianity, concepts of *absolute truth* are quashed or disparaged as “intolerant.” Anyone who cites the Older Testament is branded “legalistic”, as though the commands Jesus taught and expanded upon had somehow emanated from a vacuum.

The Hebrew Bible requires you to assume *personal liability* for your sinfulness — an approach that contradicts today’s palatable I’m-OK-you’re-OK gospels. These are marketed through reliance on the blame/victimization mentality of the atomistic American culture: “It’s not my fault!”

Little wonder that commitment to Christ as *Lord of your life* has diminished instead to a self-centered hunger for a *life-improver*. “If I come to Jesus, my life won’t be so lonely, so poverty-stricken, so anxious.”

Few who embrace any of the false gospels take ownership of their *guilt* — their inherent sin nature as well as their actions and attitudes that deserve eternal condemnation. Therefore, they see little need for Jesus’s atonement or His Lordship in their lives. Rather, those who espouse man-centered gospels can *excuse* their sin, since their “belief” in Jesus translates into a means to bolster their life circumstances.

In contrast to today, the love-grounded obedient trust of the earliest Church was based on the God of the Hebrew Bible. They had no doubt that the foundations for the Gospel were found in the Hebrew Scripture. That’s how they recognized that the Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus proclaimed was authentic!

The teachings of Jesus and the apostles found their origins in the thirty-nine books of the Older Testament. Likewise, we followers of Jesus today must dili-

gently pursue the Older Testament as well as the Newer. That’s the only way we’ll perceive the relation-based *Hebraic bedrock* which undergirds the Gospel our spiritual forebears embraced. Only when we discern the *foundation* of the true Gospel can we ever hope to regain the *spiritual vitality* of the earliest Church.

We want to encourage you with this truth:

**If you want to be true to God,
you must regard the *entire Bible*
as *one complete and interdependent
revelation of God.***

Veteran missionary Trevor McIlwain writes that many heresies, misinterpretations, overemphasis of particular verses, and even the development of denominations can be traced back to failing to teach the whole Word in its *chronological, panoramic format* — from Genesis to Revelation.¹

Consider the chasm of distinction between man approaching God from *man’s point of view*, and God, the Initiator and Revealer, approaching man out of *His great love*. Ponder these points drawn by McIlwain in his thought-provoking volume, *Building on Firm Foundations*:

- The Gospel is *not* man accepting Jesus as his Savior, but that *God accepted the Lord Jesus* as the perfect and only Savior two thousand years ago.
- The Gospel is *not* man giving his heart or his life to Jesus, but that *Christ gave His life, His whole being, in the place of sinners.*
- The Gospel is *not* man receiving Christ into his heart, but that *God received the Lord Jesus into Heaven as the mediator of sinners.*
- The Gospel is *not* Christ enthroned

in the human heart, but that *God enthroned the Lord Jesus* at His right hand in Heaven.(emphasis added)²

Jesus our Lord has already fulfilled the reconciliation requirements of God. His payment is complete. His resurrection is a sign to us on earth that the sacrifice for our sin has been accepted by God the Father. He is satisfied. Rejoice!!!

How many times have you read the Bible from front to back? ____ What is the advantage of reading it this way?

The Older Testament: Root for Spiritual Rebirth and Unwavering Trust in God

“Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again’” (John 3:3).

For over 200 years before the coming of Jesus, the **Hebraic Stream** of Judaism had taught that a person must experience a *spiritual* birth. This is why Jesus gently chided Nicodemus, “**You *should not be surprised* at my saying, ‘You must be born again’”** (John 3:7).

In Hebraic terms, a definition of “conversion” involved the *total person* responding to God’s call on his life. Conversion equaled **rebirth**, *i.e.*, “born from above”, and answered the inner appeal of God to the *spirit* of His people. In essence, rebirth represented the desire of a person to relate to God as did their ancestor Abraham.

Many today think that the concept of

being “*born again*” was inaugurated by Jesus in John chapter 3. But Jesus was emphasizing for Nicodemus that the teachings of the Hebraic Stream were nothing new — they’d been understood for centuries! He even chastised the Pharisee for his spiritual blindness: “***You are Israel’s teacher,***’ said Jesus, ***‘and do you not understand these things?’***” (John 3:10).

The act of conversion was a response shift from the *head* to the *heart*, from *knowing about* God to *knowing Him intimately*. It represented a move from the “outside” to the “inside,” from following the letter of the law to intimately abiding with the God Who initiated it.

David utters the attitude necessary for spiritual rebirth when he records, “*I have set the Lord always before me*” (Psalm 16:8). His words express his inner desire to obey God out of *love for Him* rather than an external obedience compelled by God’s Law. This represented true spiritual rebirth in those claiming His Lordship.

The faith which Jesus required to be “*born again*” was defined more in terms of *trust* and *reliance* on God rather than the mental assent to specific Bible passages that many so-called gospels call for today.

To get an idea of the *ongoing* nature of your trust walk with Jesus until its completion at life’s earthly end, ponder Romans 10:9,10 from the *Jewish New Testament* (JNT) translation by David Stern:

That if you acknowledge publicly with your mouth that Yeshua [Jesus] is Lord and trust in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be delivered. For with the heart one goes on trusting and thus continues toward righteousness, while with the mouth one keeps on making public acknowledgment and thus continues toward deliverance.

The Hebrew word for “faith”, *emunah* (*em-oo-NAH*), does not mean mere belief that certain Bible verses are true. Rather, it overflows with a life-impacting **trust** in God. *Trust* is an emotional and responsive term that emanates from your heart, not a cognitive fact with which your brain agrees.

Trust certainly doesn’t just signify that you accept that God exists; that’s already a given! To simply believe with your mind is to give intellectual assent to a factual statement. To truly *trust* in God requires a wholehearted yielding of yourself to Him unconditionally.

Salvation in the early Hebraic Church was considered a process. *Entry* into the process meant that you trusted that the shed blood of Jesus paid the penalty for your sin. You responded through repentance — *turning away from* your sin and *turning to* God for forgiveness, spiritual reconciliation, and determination to live by His commands.

The process *continued* through your life as you were being sanctified (being conformed to the character of Jesus as you walked in His Spirit). It *culminated* at the moment of deliverance — when your name was proclaimed to the hosts of heaven. This was the moment of salvation for those who continued trusting.

Your pilgrimage *to* your salvation requires that you **keep on** trusting. It’s in this realm of *continuing to press on* that spiritual warfare takes place. Satan will do all he can to hinder or dilute your ongoing trust in Jesus. Your adversary’s goal is to entice you to live in doubt and unbelief.

As the enemy of God and of Christ’s followers, Satan is hell-bent to “**make war... against those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus; he was given power to make war**

against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation” (see Revelation 12:17; 13:7).

Satan’s warfare tactics include influencing or agitating your mind, will and emotions away from trusting in God in particular areas of your life.

[See our [Freedom In Jesus](#) video series for more on living victoriously in Jesus.]

Consider the following passage from a Hebraic viewpoint:

*For I am not ashamed of the Good News, since it is God’s powerful means of bringing salvation to everyone who **keeps on trusting**.. For in it is revealed how God makes people righteous in his sight; and from beginning to end it is **through trust** — as the scriptures put it, ‘But the person who is righteous will **live his life by trust** (Romans 1:16,17, JNT).*

*And it is a righteousness that comes **from God, through the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah, to all who continue trusting**.. Therefore, we hold the view that a person comes to be considered righteous by God on the ground of **trusting** (Romans 3:22,28, JNT).*

Summary

To be “born again” does not equal salvation as the counterfeit gospels peddle. To be born again is conversion from living by the world standards, or trying to keep the letter of the law, into intimate relationship with the Father by embracing the stipulations of His New Covenant.

You must still live a life of trusting until you depart this world. Salvation, for those who do so, is experienced at

the Judgment Throne when the Lord welcomes them into heaven.

Your faith pilgrimage to salvation comes to this: You discover complete purpose and fulfillment in your **relationship with God**, and you express this life of trust by **deeds of grateful service** that are empowered by His indwelling Spirit's presence. It isn't that you have to do these things. Doing them is a sign that you in fact have the Holy Spirit within you.

God is eager to share His boundless grace with those who are His own. His people, however, must realize their own helplessness apart from His sustaining power and love. Again, the indwelling Holy Spirit makes this possible.

As God initiates a particular circumstance, a follower of Jesus will respond in such a way that He is recognized as both real and trustworthy in his or her life. James makes a clear distinction between *believing* (which even the demons do) and a faith that is seen in *how a person lives*:

*But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by **what I do**. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that — and shudder" (James 2:18,19).*

The faith that's described in the Hebrew Scriptures emphasizes justice for the poor and compassion for the needy. Both of these matters demand *awareness* of the distressed individuals as well as *response* by meeting the need.

Jesus modeled obedience to this command by healing the sick (see Matthew 14:14), restoring sight to the blind (see Matthew 20:34), cleansing lepers (see Mark 1:42), and feeding the hungry (see

Matthew 15:29-39). He was profoundly aware of the needs of others and took concrete steps to satisfy them.

Evidence of a life that purposes to glorify God fulfilled the prophetic words of Malachi 3:18: "*And you will again see the **distinction** between the **righteous** and the **wicked**, between those who **serve God** and those who **do not**.*"

In contrast, today's distinctions between righteousness and wickedness are quite blurred. Congregation leaders have to beg parishioners to gather to pray or volunteer to disciple others, while the potlucks and gym nights are packed out. Pews are filled with those actively involved in immorality yet boldly claiming to be "Christian."

Where you taught that "To be born again equaled salvation"? (Yes) or (No). Do you still hold to this assumption? If you do, prove it from the Scriptures.

Describe your own trust relationship with God.

Ask those in your faith family to describe your trust in God. Is there a difference?

**The Older Testament:
Key To Repentance**

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD' — and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah (Psalms 32:1-5)

Psalm 32 is a penetrating insight into King David's realization of the withering effects of unconfessed sin, and the powerful restoration that confession brings about. In a way, this particular psalm stood as a beacon before the Jewish people, illuminating their need for repentance and the blessing that follows.

How did David know that he had sinned? Through the holy Law given to Moses. And, David recognized that God was against him because of his unconfessed sin. Sin always has consequences.

Few today recognize the Older Testament as a vital source for distinguishing sin — both behavioral and attitudinal! So many, ignorant of what God denotes as sin, suffer needlessly with His hand against them because of their burden of unconfessed sin.

God planned that His instruction, deepened by Jesus, would become a good way of life for us. His Word in both the Older and Newer Testaments would also humble unbelievers as they realized both their own guilt burden and their

own inability to keep His commands.

The prophet Jeremiah left no doubt as to the power of God's declaration: "*Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?*" (23:29). The chaff of a person's sin nature becomes burnt stubble and crushed debris as the Spirit wields the Word of God to bring conviction of heart to the unrighteous (see John 16:8-11).

Paul directs us to another reason to speak the Truth: "*So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith*" (Galatians 3:24). Even more clearly you can recognize the purpose of the Hebrew Scriptures as Paul confronts the believers in Rome: "*I would not have known what sin was except through the law*" (Romans 7:7).

The Spirit of God takes the truths of the law to reveal to you your constant failure to keep it. He then turns your eyes Christ-ward to the only perfect Lawkeeper Who has received your just punishment to satisfy a holy God.

The Hebraic Stream of Jesus's time were well aware of their sinful state. They understood that they were totally incapable of keeping the demands of the Law by their own strength. The annual Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) only magnified the abyss between man's performance and God's requirements. Thankfully, a God of grace was willing to accept a substitute death to pay the penalty for the offerer's sins.

Repentance represented for the Hebraic Stream a true *cry from the heart* to God and a *return* to His law. Salvation by grace is a gift from God to followers of Jesus (see Ephesians 2:8,9). Equally so did Judaism teach "*salvation by grace*, a necessary gift of God to help human beings bypass their inability to fulfill all God's expectations that they be holy 'as

Yhwh [is] holy.' *Human salvation by merit is impossible.* God's grace is an absolute need, and Yom Kippur teaches that it is an *absolute and free gift of God.*"⁴

The ten days leading up to the Day of Atonement were a time of personal reckoning for repentance and for throwing one's self upon the mercies of God. During this period each individual was to examine his or her heart to discern and repair any injury done to anyone during the preceding year. Only then could one seek God's absolution.

Note that this is exactly what Jesus demanded of His disciples in Matthew 5:23,24: "*Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.*"

Whether in the Hebrew Scriptures or in the Newer Testament, God never intended that there be denominations and sects to divide people. Rather,

the true dividing line between those who have fellowship with God and those who don't is repentance.

A repentant person who confesses his sins and turns from them is restored to full fellowship with our Lord. The apostle John affirms the key facet by which our Hebraic forefathers lived: "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9).

The prayers of a righteous, forgiven person are powerful (James 5:16-18). The righteousness of Jesus is our covering as His followers. The *responsive* righteousness of love-grounded obedient trust walks in the *will of our Father*.

During retreats we'd challenge people: "*There are 168 hours in week. Ask the Holy Spirit to tell you how many hours you're walking righteously in Jesus.*" The average was 4 hours. Four hours they were in fellowship with God. That's about 2% of the week. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how many hours in the week you're walking righteously. How does your answer make you feel? What does it tell you about your walk with Jesus?

Describe your sources for knowing what sin is, and what it looks like in your life.

Do you have a readiness to repent when you're convicted of sin? Ask those who know you closely in the faith to verify your answer.

The Older Testament: Source For Evangelism

"For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession"

(Deuteronomy 7:6).

God, of His own volition, launched His love relationship with the Israelites through the Chaldean, Abraham. Not

only did He *reveal Himself* to Abraham, He *initiated everlasting promises* to the patriarch and to his seed.

One promise declared to Abraham was the salvation of mankind: *“The Scripture foresaw that God would **justify the Gentiles** by faith, and announced the **gospel in advance to Abraham**: ‘All nations will be **blessed through you**’”* (Galatians 3:8; see Genesis 12:1-3).

God wanted to use the Israelites to display His holiness *through* them. They were to be *holy*, set apart from all others as His treasured people to serve His purpose. Through that unique relationship they could be ambassadors of the one true God to all other nations.

Keep in mind that God didn’t initially choose an entire people. He chose a Hebrew named Abraham, from Ur of the Chaldees. That man related to God through *trust-grounded obedience*. Through Abraham God wanted to create a people who would represent His love and holiness to the world.

God intended that His people be *evangelists* in word as well as deed. He made clear to them why He wanted them to live in obedience to His commands:

*Observe them carefully, **for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations**, who will hear about all these decrees and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a **wise and understanding people**’* (Deuteronomy 4:6).

A people who walk in wisdom and understanding must have a God Who is revealing that path to them! In a sense, we can say that the Church *began* with Abraham, and was *empowered* at Pentecost.

The Greek word, “*ekklesia*” (ek-leh-SEE-ah) which is generally translated “church”, literally means “called-out

ones.” Abraham was called out of Ur to become the *biological* father of the Israelites and the *spiritual* father of all who follow Jesus from every nation:

*The reason the promise is **based on trusting** is so that it may come as God’s free gift, a promise that can be relied on by **all the seed**, not only those who live within the framework of the Torah, but also those with the **kind of trust Avraham had** — **Avraham our father for all of us** (Romans 4:16,CJB).*

As you explore the trust-based lives of our spiritual forefathers in the Older Testament, you’ll receive a clearer understanding of the true nature of what love-grounded obedient trust entails. It’s far more than belief; it requires *responsive action!*

In the footsteps of the called-out ones of all time, we’re directed as His followers to represent the commands of God to all mankind, everywhere!

Consider Jesus’ words at His ascension as being spoken to you:

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.* (Matthew 28:19,20).

First He spoke these words to the disciples of His time. If His commands applied to them, don’t they apply to you also. They do...

What were they going to teach? *Everything He commanded them.*

What did he command them?

First, to trust in Him as the Hebrew Scriptures require (John 7:38).

Second, to teach the commands of God. “Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19).

The world in its ignorance of God’s commands is still held guilty. That is why Jesus, who died for all mankind, commands us to teach them where they sin against the holy commands of God.

There are 660 commands in the Older Testament. You need to know which of these still apply. Yes, the commands pertaining to the Temple sacrifice and Levitical priesthood no longer apply, but how about all the others that apply to our relationship with God and each other?

Jesus didn’t come to do away with these laws, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matthew 5:17,18).

In fact, He made them more stringent:

¶ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment” (Matthew 5:21,22a);

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27,28).

There are 1050 commands in the Newer Testament. How many of these do you know and live by? Are you prepared to represent Jesus and teach an unbelieving world what they are?

If you aren’t, then consider Paul’s words once again, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17).

How would you evaluate yourself as an ambassador of Jesus in the lives of other people?

Ask two or three who know you well in the faith about your effectiveness as His representative. Also, ask two or three unbelievers who know you well for their input. In particular, ask both parties, does your walk match your talk?

Bibliography

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