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|  | Before we transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament, I want to go back and remind you of the **two problems** that face every person:  **Sin leads to death** (Genesis 2:16,17 OT4). **Romans 5:12 (NT272)** reminds us that we inherited a sin nature from Adam. It’s not just what we do, it’s who we are. Because of sin, our life will be separated from our body. And even more importantly, we are separated from God.  **Breaking the law leads to punishment** (Exodus 20:1-20 OT125). We are all guilty of breaking all of God’s laws and should feel like David in **Psalm 38:3,4 (OT916),** burdened by guilt and concerned about God’s pending judgment. *Man-made religions* teach us that we should balance our sin by doing good works. But when we get a clear understanding of the nature of God (**Revelation 15:3,4,8 NT450**) and the nature of man (**Romans 3:19,20 NT269**), it becomes clear that such a solution will never work (**Proverbs 16:25 OT1054**).    These two problems represent the “bad news” in the Bible. Regardless of what people may want to believe, these problems will not go away if we ignore them and they cannot be overcome by human effort. Our only hope is this: God must do something to save us, something amazing and powerful. And in our brief study of the Old Testament, we have seen some clues that point us toward God’s ultimate solution for these terrible problems. |
|  | In our study (so far), we’ve focused mainly on the first two sections of the Old Testament:  The Pentatuch – five books of history and the Law written down by Moses  History – true stories of the history of Israel and its kings  We’ve read some verses from the “Poetry” books of Psalms and Proverbs  As we transition to the New Testament today, we will look at a few of the words spoken by the Prophets. |
|  | To complete our very brief study of the Old Testament, I want to point out six prophecies that will help us transition to the New Testament. First, three prophecies from the book of Isaiah, written 600 years before Christ:  ***Isaiah 7:14 –*** *“Therefore, the Lord Himself will give you a sign: the virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call Him Immanuel.”* Immanuel means “God with us.”  ***Isaiah 9:2,6 –*** *“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light … For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given … and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”*  ***Isaiah 40:3-5 –*** *“A voice of one calling: ‘In the desert, prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God.’ … And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind will see it…”* |
|  | ***Malachi 3:1*** *- "See, I send My messenger, who will prepare the way before Me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to His temple, the Messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty.”*  Malachi was the last Old Testament Prophet, and he reminded the Jews that God’s promised Savior would come to save them. He also told them that before the Savior came, God would first send another prophet. This prophet would teach the people so that they would be ready for the coming Savior. |
|  | Next, a prediction from the prophet Daniel from 535BC about the coming of “The … One”:  ***Daniel 9:25,26*** *– “Know and understand this: from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One…” (62+7)\*7 = 483 years. “the One will be cut off…”* The decree was issued by Artaxerxes in 445BC (Nehemiah 2:1-8). |
|  | For 400 years after Malachi was written there was a period of silence. But then, something very important happened. During the reign of Herod the Great (ruler of Israel from 37-4BC), an angel appeared to a priest named Zechariah and gave him some great news (**Luke 1:5,11-13,17**). Zachariah and his elderly wife would have a son – the prophet that Malachi said would “prepare the way.”    As we studied in the Old Testament, when God makes a promise, He will fulfill it. Sometimes a promise seems impossible to man, but nothing is too difficult for God. But, we know that God will fulfill every promise - down to every last detail. Zachariah’s wife Elizabeth gave birth to a son just like the angel said, and he was named John. His father then gave this prophecy:    ***Luke 1:76-79*** Since the time of Adam and Eve, man had been in darkness (the darkness of sin). Finally, the time was coming! |
|  | Six months after the angel appeared to Zachariah, the angel came to have a talk with a young virgin named Mary living in a small town (Nazareth) **Luke 1:26-33**. The angel Gabriel tells Mary that she will have a baby: the Son of God. She asks a very good question in **v.34**, and is given the clear answer in **v.35** – God is able to do whatever He chooses.    Maybe you have heard this story before – the “Christmas” story. But please don’t miss the significance of this: The Almighty God, who created everything in the universe, awesome in power and glory, was about to take on the humble limitations of a human body and move onto this tiny speck of a planet. Immanuel – God with us, as a helpless baby. Can you imagine anything more amazing? For God to take such an unbelievable step, He must have had a glorious plan in mind.    There is another important prophecy concerning the birth of the Savior in **Micah 5:2**, saying that He would be born in the city of Bethlehem. But we have a problem: Mary was from Nazareth. However, look what happens in **Luke 2:1-4**. Caesar Augustus (Caius Octavius) ruled the Roman Empire between 31BC and 14AD. About 8BC, he issued an order for a census (it probably took a few years to complete), requiring everyone to return to their hometowns.  Because of this command, Mary and her new husband Joseph needed to register in Bethlehem, the city of David (his ancestor). In **verses 5-7**, we see that the child named Jesus was born in a humble stable, certainly not what you would expect for a normal king. But Jesus was not a normal king! |
|  | There is much more to say about Jesus, but for now, let’s go back to the story of John, the one sent to announce the coming of the Savior and prepare the Jews to receive Him. God made sure that John gave an urgent and important message to get the people’s attention.  What was the message that John was preaching? When John used the word “repent” he meant that the people needed to change their attitude about themselves and sin. They had to change their minds in preparation for the coming Savior. The people needed to understand and agree that there is only one true God and they must serve and worship Him completely. They must admit that they had sinned against God by disobeying His laws and they couldn’t do anything to make themselves acceptable to Him. They must confess that all sin is against God and God hates sin and will always punish it by separating the sinner from Himself.    When a person was baptized, it was a sign to everyone else that the person agreed with God that he deserved death for his sins (going under the water was a picture of burial). It was also a sign that he believed that God would send a Savior to save him. Baptism doesn’t make God accept us and cannot pay the price that we deserve for our sins. The payment of sin is always death. Baptism is just a sign to show others that we agree with God’s message and we are trusting only in Him to save us. |
|  | At this time, there were many different kinds of people who came to John in the wilderness:  Normal Jewish men and women – people who knew that they had broken God’s law, were separated from God, and were seeking a solution for their problem.  Roman soldiers – people who often experienced death and suffering and were seeking answers to life’s deepest questions.  Pharisees – proud religious leaders who tried to please God by obeying their outward obedience to the law, following the traditions of their historical culture.  Sadducees – religious people who served in the temple, but didn’t really believe many of the things God had said. Their goal was to maintain good relationships with the Roman government and keep their high positions of leadership.  Scribes – intellectual men who hand-copied the scrolls of Scripture. They were also called “lawyers” and “teachers of the Law.” They thought God was happy with them just because they could remember and explain the law. |
|  | **Matthew 3:7-9**  - John spoke some very strong words to the Jewish Leaders who came out to hear him.    Would God accept the people just because they were descendants of Abraham? Of course not. Some people think that they will be accepted by God because of their parent’s faith, because they try to be good, or because they went through some kind of ceremony. No one is accepted by God because of these things. God judges everyone individually - not by family, success, position, or religious activities. God will bless anyone that chooses to recognize their sin and turn to Him. |
|  | As we close this lesson, remember: we have all offended God and are separated from Him – this is the “bad news” of the Bible. I wonder – which kind of person are you like:    The common person who knows you have sinned?  The Roman solider who is seeking the meaning of life?  The Pharisee who is trying to obey the rules and maintain traditions of culture?  The Sadducee, trusting in your connections, relationships, or job for success?  The Scribe, putting your hope in your education? |
|  | Regardless of who you are, the first step we must take is to recognize that we are each guilty of breaking God’s law. This step of repentance and humility prepares the way in our own hearts to receive the “good news” in the next lesson. |