

FOR  
TEACHERS  
OF TEENS  
AGES 15-17

# SENIOR HIGH BIBLE TEACHER

SPRING QUARTER | MARCH | APRIL | MAY 2024



# Senior High Bible Teacher

SPRING QUARTER

March, April, May 2024

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# The Weeks Ahead

This quarter encompasses the various ways Jesus definitively demonstrated His deity. But the crowds of people that followed Him ran the gamut from convinced or partly convinced to skeptical and even hostile. In lesson 1, we see Jesus clearly making claims to deity to His most hostile critics. When He said to them, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58), they attempted to kill Him.

But demonstration of His deity was usually in deeds, rather than words. Jesus consistently linked His hearers’ faith with the use of His divine power, as with the woman suffering from a lifelong bleeding problem (lesson 2, [Luke 8:48]) who intercepted Him on His way to heal Jairus’s daughter.

In lesson 3, before raising His friend Lazarus from the dead, Jesus comforts Martha, Lazarus’s sister, who told Jesus He was too late. But He gently corrects her unbelief, saying, “I am the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25). Lessons 4 and 5, covering the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, provide the basis for all that came before and all that will come after. Jesus’ humiliation would lead to His exaltation and confirmation from the Father at His resurrection, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee” (Heb. 1:5; cf. Acts 13:33).

Not all of Jesus’ miracles were as outwardly spectacular as raising the dead. His first sign was at a wedding of all places, where He rescued a celebration that threatened to end too soon when the wine ran out (lesson 6). By turning water into wine—the best wine of the night—Jesus demonstrated His power over the elements.

Even the demons bow to Jesus, as we see in lesson 7 when He casts out a dumb spirit from the son of a forlorn father. Jesus again links faith with His divine act as the man cries out, “Help thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24).

His authority extends to the Sabbath ordinances (the law), which God instituted for man’s benefit (lesson 8). In a Sabbath healing, He purposely has the man with the withered right hand stand up in front of the skeptics and stick out his hand just so He can highlight their hardness of heart in putting legalism before mercy (Luke 6:8-10).

In lesson 9, we see a more spectacular demonstration of Jesus’ authority over the elements when He calms a raging sea and challenges the faith of Peter, who attempts to walk on water like his Lord.

The Pharisees and scribes, unable to accept who Jesus was, failed to accept His mission (lesson 10, [Mark 2:10-11]). But Jesus miraculously demonstrated His authority to forgive sins.

Jesus was indeed greater, as stated explicitly in the introductory chapter of the book of Hebrews (lesson 11). And He was not just greater than Abraham, but superior to the angels, Moses, and the *temporary* Levitical priesthood.

In the end, Jesus is the only worthy One (lesson 12) because He is the divine Son of God and the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Rev. 5:9, 12). He is also the fulfillment of biblical prophecy from beginning to end (lesson 13).

—Brian Burke.

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# Jesus Is Lord

In a political environment that included opposition from an emperor cult where Caesar was deemed to be “Lord,” the cry of the first-century church was “Jesus is Lord.” Roman citizens were required to recognize Caesar as lord. Emperors were often titled *kyrios* (“Lord”) and *soter* (“savior”) (*Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, “Paul and the Imperial Cult”).

Most persecution of early Christians took place between the late first century and the early fourth century, before Constantine became the first Christian emperor. It developed because faithful Christians, who were otherwise law-abiding Roman citizens, refused to say, “Caesar is lord [*kaisar kyrios*].” Under Constantine, Christianity rose “from a persecuted sect to the prevailing religion of the Graeco-Roman empire” (Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. I, General Introduction).

The apostle Paul said, “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (I Cor. 12:3). Paul also recognized, as did the early church, that Jesus’ lordship was affirmed by, and connected with, His resurrection. Personal affirmation of these two truths is at the heart of the gospel (Rom. 10:9-10).

Paul spoke to Epicurean and Stoic philosophers on Mars’ Hill in Athens who were devoted worshippers of idols, even of an “unknown god” (Acts 17:23). Paul was now making known to them the God who “commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom . . . he hath raised . . . from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31). Again, Christ’s lordship is linked with His resurrection.

In an increasingly secularized and post-Christian culture, believers today

are also pressured to conform to all the edicts of the state, even when those edicts cross sacred-secular boundaries. Separation of church and state has come to be applied as separation of religion (especially Christianity) from the public square. But Jesus’ lordship must continue to be advanced because the state and the material world alone cannot be “ultimate.”

Nor can there be “neutrality” when it concerns reality and ultimate things, as M. Stanton Evans says so well in *The Theme is Freedom*:

From an earthly standpoint . . . the significant aspect of religion is the code of beliefs that it supplies concerning ultimate questions, about the nature and meaning of the world, and of our existence in it. All systems of human thought, and all societies, rest on responses to these questions. . . . However agnostic, scientific, or simply indifferent a people may be, they have to live their lives according to *some* such answers. . . . It follows that when a given religious outlook is rejected, the effect is not to adopt a worldview devoid of axiomatic concepts, but to replace one set of axioms with another. Functionally considered, these axioms are religious (119-120).

For instance, political correctness defines the axioms of secular political culture. Political correctness is a type of substitute code of ethics and speech intended to replace the Ten Commandments, while at the same time providing a form of personal justification for those who will accede to it. The Church of Political Correctness contains its own set of commandments and rituals. That’s why some have referred to abortion-on-demand

as the religious sacrament of the parties that espouse it. Some extreme forms of climate-change ideology could be seen as a secular apocalyptic interpretation of the prophecies of Revelation. These examples indicate that people have a sense of worship and devotion in them, even if it is, apart from sanctifying grace, misdirected toward other "lords."

These things should be considered in the context of our theme for this quarter where Jesus' lordship is displayed both in His miracle ministry and, no less important, in His redemptive ministry. In fact, His miracle ministry was in support of His redemptive ministry and not the other way around. Jesus was the only one suitable, as both God and man, to complete the redemptive ministry given to Him by the Father while at the same time abundantly proving it *was* given to Him by His Father.

The state will almost always seek ultimate authority in our lives, whether in education, healthcare, what drugs we put (or don't put) in our bodies, or even in what we may believe and speak. At least for now, it remains a softer version of the ultimate authority that the Roman emperors claimed over first-century Roman citizens. The tension between church and state is nothing new, nor is the competition between lords. Each generation must determine whom they will serve, and give to Caesar only that which is Caesar's and to Jesus, the only Lord, what He asks of us.

Polycarp (b. A.D. 69), Bishop of Smyrna, a disciple of the apostle John and prominent Christian teacher, understood the distinction and paid the ultimate price for refusing to confess "Caesar is Lord." When Polycarp, who was almost ninety years old at the time, was captured and brought back into the city of Smyrna, Herod "endeavoured to persuade him, saying, 'What

harm is there in saying, Lord Caesar?'" (ccl.org, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*). As Polycarp was being brought into the stadium, the proconsul asked him if he was Polycarp. Once Polycarp affirmed this, the proconsul asked him to "swear by the fortune of Caesar" and "reproach Christ."

Before he was martyred, Polycarp said, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?" Polycarp refused to acknowledge any other Lord than Jesus, and in his final words said, "I praise Thee for all things, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, with whom to Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen."

To sum up, everyone is "religious." It is only a matter of which god they serve, whether the god or gods of this world (who Paul said are really no gods), or the only true and living Lord Jesus Christ. But though there are many gods, so to speak, and lords, said Paul, "to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things . . . and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things" (1 Cor. 8:5-6). When Paul spoke to the Athenians of the God who was previously "unknown," but who had now revealed Himself in the resurrection of His Son, he told them God would judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He raised from the dead (Acts 17:31).

Paul said this man who was raised from the dead was highly exalted (made Lord) by God and given a name "which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, . . . and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord [*kyrios Iesous Christos*], to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

—Brian Burke.

# SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

**JOHN 8:31** Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed;

**32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**

33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?

**34 Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.**

35 And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: *but* the Son abideth ever.

**36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.**

37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.

**38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.**

48 Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?

**49 Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.**

50 And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.

**51 Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.**

52 Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.

**53 Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?**

54 Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God:

**55 Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.**

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw *it*, and was glad.

**58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.**

59 Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

## NOTES

# Jesus' Claim to Deity

Lesson Text: John 8:31-38, 48-56, 58-59

Related Scriptures: Deuteronomy 13:6-11; Romans 6:15-23;  
I John 2:1-6, 22-25; II John 1:9-11

TIME: A.D. 29

PLACE: Jerusalem

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**GOLDEN TEXT**—"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make ye free" (John 8:31-32).

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## *Studying the Text*

It is quite possible that the recipients of John's Gospel were dealing with false teachers who denied the identity of the Son and failed to appreciate the central role that He served in the Father's plan of redemption. If so, that might explain why the apostle emphasized the testimony of Jesus Himself, along with the witness of others, such as John the Baptist. One is left with the impression that Jesus was on trial throughout His ministry.

In accordance with Deuteronomy 17:6 and 19:15, several witnesses are presented. Each confirmed the truth regarding the Messiah. For example, in John 5:31-47, the Son identified four different but interconnected testimonies that validated the truthfulness of His messianic claims: John the Baptist, the Son's own miracles, God the Father, and Scripture (in particular, Moses [cf. 8:17-18]). As we turn our attention to this week's lesson, the theme of witnesses is spotlighted.

### **ANTAGONISTS' CLAIMS ABOUT THEMSELVES—John 8:31-38**

**The promise of freedom (John 8:31-32).** Verse 30 mentions the Jews who had believed in Jesus, at least superficially. In verse 31, John refers to

those Jewish residents in Jerusalem who had listened to Jesus' teaching in the temple precincts and had initially expressed belief in His claim to be the Messiah. Jesus declared to them that by continuing in His teaching, they would show the genuineness of their discipleship. Conversely, those who failed to persevere would demonstrate the superficiality of their professed faith.

Abiding in the teachings of the Lord Jesus is an eternally serious matter. Jesus said those who remained in their commitment to Him would come to a fuller understanding of and appreciation for the truths He taught. In fact, He *is* the truth (cf. 14:6). He leads His followers (both through what He accomplished on the cross and through what He taught) to genuine and lasting freedom from slavery to sin (8:32).

In contrast, possessing mere intellectual knowledge can never lead to the same result, regardless of how scintillating that information might seem. Furthermore, there is no spiritual freedom in possessing truth in an abstract, philosophical sense. The focus in the fourth Gospel is on the Person and work of Christ. Only faith in Him can