

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

GREAT BIBLE LESSONS

“The Way Home”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

Christians often sing the song, “This world is not my home, I’m just a passin’ through. My treasures are laid up, somewhere beyond the blue.” How true it is that in this world in which we live, we are like foreigners in a strange land. This world is not our home, and it is not what our lives are all about. Right now we are “on our way home.” This life is our one chance to find the correct path back to God so that we can enjoy eternity with Him forever. In Philippians 3:20 Paul illustrated the fact that we are strangers in this life, and that our true citizenship is found in Heaven: “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul understood that a citizen is one who permanently resides in an area. We are not permanent citizens in this life. Rather, our lives here are temporary and passing. Those lives are but “a breath or a sigh” (Ps. 90:0). They are like a vapor that is here today and gone tomorrow. They are like a flower, which appears as beautiful, but then dies and passes away. As we consider today the topic of “the way home,” I hope to be able to pass on some principles that will help you so that if you are not on your way home, you can learn how to do that. And, if you are already a Christian who is on his or her way home to Heaven, I hope that the principles we discuss here will help you on your journey.

In order to understand how to get home, a person first must understand that this life is not what our lives are about. It is true that we spend much of our time on things that will never really amount to anything. But the work and toil that we do now can still bring honor and glory to God. As we go through this life, we are “just a passin’ through” to another life. In 2 Corinthians 5:1 Paul said, “We know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” That is the home for which we are searching—the home that resides “on the other side of the Jordan.” Jesus said in John 14:2-3, “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a 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.” Jesus taught us clearly that the road home can be found only through Him. In the context of John 14:5 Thomas said, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus then said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (vs. 6). When death comes, there are only two places that a person’s soul can go. In Matthew 25:46 Jesus said, “These [the evil] will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” It is my hope and prayer that every person will obey the Gospel and get on the path to Heaven.

But to do that, there are certain things you must do. What, then, can a person do to ensure that he or she is on the way home to God? First, in order to get to Heaven you must **desire** that more than anything else. If you have ever been on a prolonged journey, and you were away from home when you really did not want to be away, you probably can remember the longing you had to return home to be back with your family and to be in a fa-

miliar setting. That is the idea Christians must have. To go home, you must desire to go home. We can see examples in Scripture of people who had a desire to go to Heaven. Let me mention just three of them. Among those would be Abraham—a man who was looking to “go home.” He thought of himself as a stranger and an exile. In Hebrews 11:10 we read that Abraham, “waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” It was to Abraham that the promise was made that, in his seed, all nations would be blessed. God even made a significant land promise to Abraham. Yet Abraham was not really looking for that. Instead, he was looking for that heavenly home “whose builder and maker is God.”

Another person who had a desire to go to Heaven was David. In 2 Samuel 12:23, after the death of the infant son who was the result of his adulterous affair with Bathsheba, David said, “Now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.” David was motivated by the death of his son to want to go to Heaven. His attitude was that while he could not bring his son back to life, he could one day join him in Heaven. That thought ought to comfort every mother or father who has lost a child. It should give us a desire to want to go to Heaven.

Another example of a person who wanted to go to Heaven is Paul. In Philippians 1:23-24 he said, “I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.” Paul went on missionary journeys. He sacrificed for Christ. He was beaten. He enlightened others in the Scriptures. He was thrown out of the cities where he went to preach the Gospel. Why did he do all of those things? It was because, more than anything else, he wanted to go to Heaven. Is Heaven your main desire in this life? Can you say right now, “I want more than anything else to go to Heaven”? If not, then you will never make it home. Until you make such things as Heaven, the church, and serving God your first priorities, there is no way you will be right with God. Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” Until you put God and the kingdom first, you will never be on the right path.

Second, a person must **decide** to go to Heaven. Life is filled with decisions that have to be made. Joshua illustrated this in Joshua 24:15 when he said,

“And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

In this life we cannot have everything. Instead, we must decide what is most important to us. A decision **not** to go to Heaven is a decision to go to Hell. If you want to go to Heaven, then you must **decide** to go there. God, His Son, and the Holy Spirit are all pleading with us to make the right decision. In Romans 10:21 we read, “But to Israel He says: ‘All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people.’” The idea of God “stretching out His hands” indicated that He wanted to help people find a way home. But they would not have it. I am reminded of 2 Peter 3:9—“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” God is not slow to keep His promises. In the context (the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world) Peter was addressing those who were asking, “We’ve heard that this was promised, so when **is** Christ coming?” Peter wanted those people to know that God “is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness.” Rather, God is longsuffering, and wants to give people time to get right. We must decide, while we still have life and time, to do right in order to go to Heaven. Another example is round in Revelation 22:17 where John wrote,

“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.” God has made every person this offer. He has given every person the option. If you thirst, “Come,” He says. If you want to be a part of the river of life so you can live forever, “Come!” The Spirit and the Bride are begging us to be a part of the family of God, but God will not force us against our will. We are free moral agents, and as such we have the right to decide what we will do. To go home, we must **decide** to do so. It is a personal decision. No one can make that decision for you. No one can live for you. And no one can prepare for you. You are responsible and accountable for what you do in this life. From 2 Corinthians 5:10 we learn, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” Romans 14:12 teaches us, “So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.” The decision to “go home” is yours. A mother and father cannot make that decision for you. Nor can religious leaders or friends. You have to decide on your own that, more than anything else, you want to spend eternity with God. Do not be like the five foolish virgins in Matthew 25. There were ten virgins—five foolish, and five wise. The five foolish virgins did not have enough oil. When the bridegroom came, they were to go out to meet him and take him to the banquet hall, but they did not have enough oil. They tried to borrow from the five wise virgins, but then none of the virgins would have had enough oil. When the five foolish virgins left to go buy some oil, the door to the hall was shut and they lost their opportunity. Their time to decide to do right had been before them, but they had not made the correct choice. Have you made the decision to go home to Heaven? If not, then why not make that decision today?!

If you want to go home to Heaven, you must remember that there is only one way, or one path, to Heaven. In Matthew 7:13-14 we learn that there is a path that can be taken that will **not** lead people home to Heaven. There is a broad path and a wide way that is taken by many people. But it leads to destruction. Then there is a narrow path and a restricted way. Few people take that path, which leads to eternal life. The only way to get home to God is through Jesus Christ. Look again at John 14:6, where we learn the importance of going home to the Father through Christ. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” If a person is going to be saved, there is only one way to do that—through the sacrifice for sin that Jesus made. In Acts 4:12 Peter said, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” There is one body that Christ is going to come back to receive one day. Ephesians 4:4 teaches us, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling.” If a person is not in that one body (which is the church—Ephesians 1:22-23), then he cannot be saved. The text of 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 teaches us that when Christ returns, He then will deliver the kingdom (the church) to His Father. Going “one way” requires that we realize there is only “one faith” that can save us. Ephesians 4:5 teaches that there is just “one faith.” The “one Lord, one baptism, and one faith” are all essential doctrines of Christian teaching. Jesus taught us that doctrine **is** important. In 2 John 9 John said, “Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God.” Are you on the one way? Are you in the one church? Are you are part of the one faith of which we read in the Bible? Have you given yourself to the one guide—the Word of God? In 2 Timothy 3:16 we are told, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Have you given yourself to the one rule—the rule of God in Heaven and of Christ Himself? Philippians 3:16 says, “Let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.”

Have you dedicated yourself to doing the will of God? Are you on the right way to Heaven itself? You must understand that this way is a narrow way. It is not a popular road, and it is not the path down which most people go. Look at Matthew 7:13-14, and see what Jesus said about this “one way” that leads to Heaven. Jesus had been preaching to people about getting in the right way and following God’s will. Then He said, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” When the Bible says “few,” it means just that—few souls (a very small number). In the days of Noah, “few” were saved in the ark (eight souls). The majority of the religious world today is going down a path that has been devised by men. I hope today that you will get on the narrow way. You must realize that the idea that “one way is good as another” is false. In Proverbs 14:12 we read, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” We may think it’s the right way. Or we may feel in our hearts that this is the way God would do something. But if it is not found within the Scriptures, then you can rest assured that it is not the correct way to get to Heaven. The Bible and the Bible alone is the perfect road map to Heaven, and is the only way you can know you are on the right path. Imagine going on a journey to a place where you’ve never been before. You get out your map or use your GPS, and you find the directions about how to get to that place. But halfway along the way, if the directions tell you to “go right,” but you “go left,” will you get there? Absolutely not! Your way was not as good as the way the road map told you to go. And **your way** did not end up getting you where you wanted to go. The Bible is your road map. And unless you are willing to follow it, there is no way you are going to make it home.

The way home is not difficult or something that cannot be understood. Rather, the way home is very simple. In fact, in Isaiah 35:8 we read, “A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray.” This highway is for those who really want to do the will of God. You can get on it if you desire to do so. What, then, must a person do to get on the road that leads home? There are three steps that must be followed if a person wants to get on the road home.

First, a person must be willing to abandon self. To ensure that you are on the right road to Heaven, you must realize that this life is not to be lived just for “self.” In Matthew 16:24 Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” A person must be willing to say, “Life is not about me. I cannot live my life just for **my** pleasures, passions, and lusts. I must be willing to give up things in order to follow Christ.” Consider the example found in 2 Corinthians 8:5 in the context of giving. The Macedonians were very liberal givers, of whom it was said, “They first gave themselves to the Lord.” To really be on the right road that is the way home, we must deny ourselves and give ourselves instead to the cause of Christ. This means that we must put off the old man of sin. Ephesians 4:22-24 talks about how we put **off** sin, ungodliness, and unrighteousness, and how we put **on** those things that are right. We must not do those things that are not correct according to God’s will. We must no longer clothe ourselves with sin, but must instead clothe ourselves with righteousness. We must be willing to forsake all to follow Jesus. In Matthew 19:27 we are told that if we are not willing to forsake all, then there is no way that we can be a disciple of our Lord and Savior. We must come out of self, and get into Christ. To be saved, a person has to get into the group of the saved.

Second, to get on the right road, you must find the right way. The right way to get on that road is by being baptized into Christ’s body. Becoming a Christian is simple, not difficult. God has not made the Bible where we cannot understand it. In fact, in Ephesians 3:4 we are told that when we read, we **can** understand God’s will. To become a Christian, a per-

son must first believe that Jesus is God's Son. In Acts 8, when Philip and the Ethiopian nobleman were traveling together, they came to a body of water. Apparently Philip had been discussing baptism with the nobleman, because the man asked, "What hinders me from being baptized?" Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." Do **you** believe that Jesus truly is God's Son, that He is the Savior of the world, and that He is the only way by which you can be saved? If so, then you also need to repent of things in your life that are not right. Repentance is a changed will that leads to a changed way. In Luke 3:7-8 certain Jewish leaders came out to John the Immerser to be baptized. From the context, it appears as if they were doing it only because "everyone else was doing it" (that is, just to be popular). John said, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance." True repentance demands a change of life that is seen in one's new lifestyle. In Acts 3:19 Peter said, "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, "Unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

As part of God's plan of salvation, then, a person must believe in Jesus, be willing to repent, and be willing to give up those things in his life that are wrong so that he can follow Jesus. But a person also must confess that Jesus is the Son of God. In Romans 10:10 we read, "With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." A person must be willing to say, as the Ethiopian nobleman did, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. If a person will not confess Christ, He will reciprocate, and will not confess that person before His Father (Mt. 10:32-33). Then, a person must be baptized in water. There are so many people today who do not understand the importance of being baptized in order to get into Christ. Imagine drawing a circle so that the inside of that circle represents being "in Christ." How does a person who is outside of Christ get in the circle? Galatians 3:27 tells us explicitly how to do that. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." To get on the right path and follow the way of the Savior as one of His children, a person must be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins. Doing that, of course, does not "earn" a person salvation. Baptism does not represent some kind of meritorious work that allows a person to look up to God and say, "You now **owe** me my salvation!" Being baptized is no different than believing, repenting, or confessing. It is a condition that God set forth that we must meet because God told us to. But we cannot look to Heaven and say, "You owe me salvation!" Baptism is not a work that earns us salvation. Rather, it is something we do to obey the will of God. In Mark 16:16 Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." If a person does not believe in Christ, then he or she is not a candidate for baptism. But if a person does believe, Jesus said that such a person must be baptized in order to be saved. But someone might say, "That's just one Scripture." Think, then, about Acts 2:38. The Gospel had just been preached. Peter told the Jews, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Verse 37 then tells us, "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?'" Did Peter say, "You do not have to do anything because Jesus has done it all for you?" No, that is not what he said. In Acts 2:38 Peter said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." We read in Acts 2:41, "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized." Did the people on the Day of Pentecost have to be baptized to receive forgiveness of their sins? Absolutely!

Saul, too, had to be baptized for the same reason. In Acts 22:16 the Bible says that Ananias said to Saul while he was waiting in the city of Damascus, "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Saul had to be baptized in order to have his sins washed away. If we hear God's Word, believe in Jesus, repent of our past sins, confess Christ as the Son of God, and are baptized, then we become a part of "the saved"—those who are on their journey home to Heaven.

Third, once a person gets into Christ, he then must move forward toward Heaven by getting out of self and living for Christ in order to live faithfully before Jesus all the days of his life. The destination of the journey we are discussing today ends up in Heaven itself. Paul said as much in Colossians 3:1-4,

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."

To **make it** to Heaven, we must **stay focused** on Heaven. Jesus had something on which He was focused, and we, too, must be just as focused. Hebrews 12:1-2 says,

"Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

As His focal point, Jesus had the joy of pleasing God and of fulfilling the Father's will by coming to Earth. Our focal point ought to be Heaven. The moment we stop looking up, we start looking down. We will become discouraged. We will want to give up. And we very likely will never make it to Heaven. To make it to Heaven, we must stay focused on that which is right. Are you on the way home? Have you done what you need to do to be a part of the family of God? Have you made the decision that you want more than anything to go to Heaven? If not, why not? Why have you not obeyed God's will? More than anything, I want you to know that God loves you and that God wants you to be saved. God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). If you would like to have a copy of today's lesson, please visit our Website at www.thegospelofchrist.com and fill out the media-request form you will find there. We will be happy to send you a copy of this lesson, or any of our other lessons. If there is any way we can help you find your way home, we will be happy to do so. We love you, and we want more than anything for you to make it to Heaven.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE WAY HOME”

1. According to Philippians 3:20, where is a Christian's true citizenship?
2. In 2 Corinthians 5:1, Paul discussed how Christians will eventually have “a building from God, a house not made with hands.” Where is that house located?
3. According to Matthew 25:46, what are the only two options regarding where a person's soul can end up for eternity?
4. Jesus said in John 14:6 that there is only one way to Heaven. What is that one way?
5. What statement did King David make in 2 Samuel 12:23 that showed his desire to one day go to Heaven?
6. What “torn feelings” did the apostle Paul express in Philippians 1:23-24?
7. In Matthew 6:33, what did Jesus command His disciples to do?
8. In Joshua 24:15, what did Joshua tell the Israelite people to do?
9. What two attributes of God are discussed in 2 Peter 3:9?
10. What do Revelation 22:17 and 1 Timothy 2:4 have in common?
11. According to 2 Corinthians 5:10, what appointment do all people have scheduled in the future that cannot be avoided?
12. According to Romans 14:12, what appointment do all people have scheduled in the future that cannot be avoided?
13. According to Ephesians 1:22-23 and Ephesians 4:4, how many churches did Christ establish?
14. What important truth does Proverbs 14:12 provide for us?
15. What statement concerning the Christians in Macedonia is found in 2 Corinthians 8:5 that should be equally true of us today?
16. Isaiah 35:8 describes a certain “highway” that we need to ply if we expect to make it to Heaven. What did Isaiah call that highway?
17. What did Paul mean when he told the Christians in Ephesus to “put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man” (Eph. 4:22)?
18. What did Peter mean when he said to Jesus, “We have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?” (Mt. 19:27)?
19. What did Jesus tell His followers in Matthew 16:24 regarding the road home?