

# GOD TO THE RESCUE!

**DAY ONE:**           **GIDEON AND HIS 300 MEN**  
*THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH*

Judges 7

**Day Two:**           **SAMSON DEFEATS THE PHILISTINES**  
*THE IMPORTANCE OF REPENTANCE*

Judges 16:23-31

**Day Three:**       **ESTHER THE QUEEN**  
*THE IMPORTANCE OF SERVICE*

Esther

**Day Four:**       **PAUL AND SILAS IN PRISON**  
*THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER*

Acts 16:16-34

**Day Five:**       **JESUS RAISED FROM THE GRAVE**  
*THE IMPORTANCE OF HOPE*

Matthew 28:1-10

**Theme:**       **First Responders – *Firefighters, Paramedics, Police***

# GOD TO THE RESCUE!

## SERIES INTRODUCTION:

1. Sometimes when we get into trouble or into a dangerous situation, we are not able to help ourselves.
  - a. Think of some examples where we might have to call on someone to help us...
    - i. When someone is lost in the woods
    - ii. When a building catches on fire
    - iii. When someone who can't swim falls into the water
    - iv. When someone needs protection from an enemy
  - b. We all have times when we need someone to help us out of a situation.
2. In times like these, we need someone to come to our rescue!
3. Usually, those who come to rescue others put their own health and lives at great risk.
  - a. Think of people who risk so much to help others...
    - i. Police
    - ii. Firefighters
    - iii. Paramedics
    - iv. Military
  - b. We should honor and respect those who are willing to sacrifice so greatly to help us in times of need.
4. We consider these men and women heroes because of their great courage and compassion for those who are in need.
5. However, the greatest hero we can know is God!
6. In this week of studies at VBS, we will learn about how God comes to the rescue of His people whenever they are in need or trouble.
7. God even helps us when it costs Him a tremendous sacrifice.
8. By the end of this study, we will understand why we owe so much to God and why we should honor Him by obedience, service, and worship.

# GOD TO THE RESCUE!

## DAY ONE: GIDEON AND HIS 300 MEN *THE IMPORTANCE OF FAITH*

### Judges 7

#### Introduction:

1. In the time of the Judges, God's people often got into terrible trouble.
  2. The nation of Israel had been rescued from slavery in Egypt and guided by God to the Promised Land of Canaan.
  3. After giving them this land, God warned them not to be like the nations around them by committing sin and worshipping idols.
  4. However, the Israelites soon did exactly what they were not supposed to do.
  5. When they rebelled against God, He allowed their enemies to attack them and to cause them great suffering.
  6. Yet, when they repented and gave up their sins, God raised up a Judge to deliver them from their enemies.
  7. One of those Judges was named Gideon, and the enemy he was to fight was the nation of Midian.
- I. Gideon's Army of 300
- A. As we think about God's power to rescue, help and save, it is important to remember that God is not dependent upon large numbers or human wisdom.
  - B. Thus, the story of Gideon's army illustrates an important principle about God's power – with God on your side, you are in the majority.
  - C. As Israel prepared to go to battle with the Midianites, God informed Gideon that his army was too large.
    1. In human thinking, we would assume that the larger the army the greater the chance for victory.
    2. But, God does not play the odds and He is not bound by chance.
    3. Instead, He knew that if Israel won with a large army they would credit themselves with the victory and forget that God was the source of their success.
  - D. So, God instructed all who were "fearful and afraid" to leave the scene of the battle.
  - E. As a result, Gideon's army shrank from 32,000 men to 10,000 men.
  - F. God said that there were still too many soldiers so He would test them and choose who should go to battle and who should not.
    1. God instructed the men to go down to the water to drink.
    2. He told Gideon to divide them into two groups – those who got down on their knees to drink and those who lapped the water by putting their hands to their mouths.
    3. God said that those who lapped like a dog should go into battle with Gideon.
  - G. After this test, God had reduced Gideon's army to 300 men.
  - H. With those 300 men, God was able to defeat the entire army of Midian.

1. Gideon divided the men into three groups.
  2. To every man he gave a trumpet, a lamp and a pitcher.
  3. That night, Gideon and his men surrounded the camp of the Midianites.
  4. When Gideon blew his trumpet, all the men in his group did the same.
  5. On this signal, the other two groups began to blow their trumpets.
  6. Then, they all broke their pitchers, held forth their lamps and shouted, "The sword of the LORD and of Gideon!"
  7. Every man stood in his assigned place – no one became afraid and ran.
  8. Thus, the Midianites thought they were surrounded by a large army and, in their panic and fear, they began to attack one another as they fled from the battlefield.
  9. So, Israel won this battle with only 300 men and without fighting a single person.
- I. Because Gideon's army did what God commanded, they became the Lord's army – and, no matter how small their number, they were victorious.

## II. Gideon's Faith in God

- A. Another important lesson from the story is the role of faith in God's coming to man's rescue.
- B. God made it clear that He was the one who delivered Israel from the Midianites.
1. It was not because Israel had a larger army.
  2. It was not because Israel had better soldiers or weapons.
  3. It was not because Israel had better intellect or wisdom.
- C. God promised them a victory and He kept His word.
- D. However, man had a role to play in achieving the victory.
1. Gideon had to hear God's Word.
  2. Gideon had to believe in God and trust what He said.
  3. Gideon had to obey the commands of God.
- E. This is a definition and illustration of true Bible faith – belief, trust, and obedience.
1. Hebrews 11 is a great Bible chapter about faith.
  2. It gives us both a description (vs. 1) and a definition (vs. 6) of faith.
  3. Everyone mentioned in this chapter demonstrated true faith by hearing, believing and obeying the Word of God.
    - a. Vs. 4 – Abel offered the right sacrifice.
    - b. Vs. 5 – Enoch pleased God.
    - c. Vs. 7 – Noah built the ark.
    - d. Vs. 8 – Abraham obeyed (cf. vs. 9-19).
    - e. Vs. 24 – Moses obeyed (cf. vs. 23-29).
  4. Remember, faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26).
- F. If Gideon had not obeyed the Lord, God would not have come to the rescue of the Israelites.
1. God did not want His people to suffer at the hands of their enemies.
  2. But, when they chose to disobey Him, God allowed them to suffer to try to turn them back to Him – for their own good.

III. Gideon's Lesson for Today

- A. From this story we learn the power of God.
  - 1. God was able to punish His people.
  - 2. And, God was able to rescue His people.
  - 3. He still has that same power today.
- B. From this story we learn the importance of faith.
  - 1. Faith hears and believes the Word of God.
  - 2. But, faith also obeys the Word of God – whatever He commands.
  - 3. So, faith enables us to receive the help of God.
- C. From this story we learn our need of God's help.
  - 1. Of course, today, the enemy that we need to be rescued from is sin.
  - 2. To make forgiveness available, God sent His only-begotten Son to die on the cross (John 3:16).
  - 3. Jesus shed His blood so our sins could be washed away (Matthew 26:28; Ephesians 1:7).
  - 4. Without this sacrifice, we would have no hope – for, we cannot take away our own sins!
- D. From this story we learn our need to obey God.
  - 1. God wants to forgive us of our sins (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4).
  - 2. But, we must be willing to obey His commands.
    - a. Hear the Gospel (Romans 10:17)
    - b. Believe in Jesus (John 8:24)
    - c. Repent of sins (Acts 17:30-31)
    - d. Confess faith in Jesus (Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)
    - e. Be baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Galatians 3:27)
  - 3. Only if we obey will God come to our rescue!
- E. Gideon teaches us many important lessons, even for our lives today.

# GOD TO THE RESCUE!

## Day Two: SAMSON DEFEATS THE PHILISTINES *THE IMPORTANCE OF REPENTANCE*

Judges 16:23-31

### Introduction:

1. In our first lesson, we saw how God rescued the Israelites from the Midianites because of the faith and obedience of Gideon.
2. Our next lesson also takes place during the time of the Judges.
3. Samson was a Judge of Israel and, also, one of the strongest men who ever lived.
4. His mighty strength was a gift and blessing from God.
5. And, when Samson disobeyed God, he lost his strength and got into terrible trouble.
6. However, God is a God who rescues His people when they repent and return to Him.
7. Through Samson, God would once again deliver the people of Israel.

### I. The Background of Samson

- A. Once again, Israel sinned and God allowed them to be punished by their enemies – this time, the Philistines (Judges 13:1-5).
- B. Samson was the one chosen by God to begin the rescue of Israel from the Philistines.
- C. However, he was to be a Nazarite from the time he was born (cf. Numbers 6:1-21).
  1. This meant that he could not have anything to do with grapes including eating them, drinking wine, or having strong drink.
  2. He was not to cut his hair as a part of this vow to God.
  3. He could not defile himself with a dead body.
- D. On one occasion, as Samson travelled to arrange his marriage, he was met by a lion – which he killed with his bare hands! (Judges 14:5-6)
- E. Later, Samson caught 300 foxes and used them to destroy the crops of the Philistines (Judges 15:4-5).
  1. He divided the foxes into groups of two and tied their tails together.
  2. In between the two tails he tied a torch or firebrand!
  3. As the foxes ran in fear and panic, they dragged the torches through the fields of the Philistines.
  4. The fire destroyed the corn, the vineyards, and the olive trees!
- F. The Philistines were outraged at Samson and convinced the men of Judah to arrest him (Judges 15:12-15).
  1. Samson allowed himself to be tied up and taken to the Philistines.
  2. However, when he got there he broke the cords that held him and attacked the Philistines.
  3. Using the jawbone of a donkey, Samson killed 1,000 men!

- G. On another occasion, Samson took up and carried the gates of the city of Gaza all the way to the top of a hill – possibly about 30 miles away (Judges 16:2-3).
- H. Each of these events demonstrates the great strength the God had given to Samson.
- I. It also shows that God wanted Samson to be a judge and to lead the Israelites against their enemies.
- J. However, Samson seemed to be concerned mainly with his own personal desires and wishes.

## II. The Weakness of Samson

- A. For all of his physical strength, Samson was spiritually weak.
- B. Finally, because of his sin, Samson lost his strength and became physically weak.
- C. Samson fell in love with a woman named Delilah (Judges 16:16-21).
- D. She manipulated Samson into revealing the source of his great strength.
  - 1. He told her that if he broke his Nazarite vow he would lose his strength.
  - 2. One way that vow could be broken was by the cutting of his hair.
- E. When Delilah learned his secret, she told the Philistines.
- F. While Samson slept, they cut off the seven locks of his hair.
- G. Samson's strength was gone because the Lord had departed from him.
- H. The Philistines captured him and blinded him by putting out his eyes.
- I. Samson was treated like an animal and made to grind corn in the prison.
- J. Samson was in both physical and spiritual darkness.

## III. The Repentance and Return of Samson

- A. Though Samson had made many mistakes, the Bible says that his hair began to grow again (Judges 16:22).
- B. This indicates that Samson had renewed his vow to God – a sign of his repentance.
- C. While the Philistines celebrated their victory over Samson and worshipped their false god Dagon, God was planning to deliver them a stunning defeat (Judges 16:23-31).
  - 1. This temple was made up of two stories.
  - 2. The bottom level was full of Philistines, including their five lords.
  - 3. The upper level (the roof) held about 3,000 men and women.
- D. After the Philistines were done making fun of Samson, he asked to feel the pillars that supported the roof of the temple so he could lean on them.
- E. In this position, Samson prayed to God for one last moment of great strength.
  - 1. In his prayer, Samson showed his need for fellowship with God.
  - 2. He also acknowledged his dependence upon God.
  - 3. He recognized that God was the source of his strength.
  - 4. And, he prayed for vengeance upon the Philistines – what God had been seeking all along.
  - 5. All of this demonstrates the repentance of Samson.
- F. Samson took hold of those two pillars and, as God answered his prayer with the gift of great strength, Samson caused them to fall.
- G. The roof of the temple collapsed when the pillars were removed.

- H. Thus, Samson died doing battle with the Philistines – killing more in his death than he had killed in the battles he had fought earlier in his life.
- I. Samson teaches an important lesson about repentance.
  - 1. He was not perfect and made many mistakes in his life.
  - 2. However, he is listed in Hebrews 11 as one who was faithful to God.
  - 3. Samson was faithful because he repented and obeyed.
  - 4. He was faithful unto death – dying in service to God while fighting the enemy.
  - 5. God is always willing to forgive if we are willing to repent.
- J. Repentance is necessary for one to be a faithful servant of God.
  - 1. No one is perfect, and we all make many mistakes.
  - 2. Repentance is when we see that we are going in the wrong direction and decided to change and live the way God tell us.
  - 3. If we will repent and obey the Word of God, God will rescue us from sin!
  - 4. Matthew 3:2, 8; 21:29; Luke 13:3, 5; 15:7, 10; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 11:18; 17:30; 26:20; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; 2 Peter 3:9; Revelation 2:5, 16; 3:3, 19



# GOD TO THE RESCUE!

## Day Three: ESTHER THE QUEEN *THE IMPORTANCE OF SERVICE*

Esther

Introduction:

1. In our first lesson, we saw how God rescued the Israelites from the Midianites because of the faith and obedience of Gideon.
2. In our second lesson, we learned how God rescued Israel from the Philistines because of the repentance and obedience of Samson.
3. Our next lesson deals with a time much later in the history of Israel.
4. It concerns a lady named Esther and how God used her to rescue His people from complete and total destruction.

### I. The Background of Esther

- A. After the time of the Judges, the nation of Israel became a Kingdom.
  1. At first, they were united under three Kings – Saul, David, and Solomon.
  2. Each of those kings reigned for 40 years.
  3. But, after 120 years, the kingdom divided.
  4. The northern kingdom was made up of 10 tribes, and it became known as Israel.
  5. The southern kingdom was made up of 2 tribes, and it became known as Judah.
- B. The Kingdom of Israel became unfaithful to God and, in 721 BC, they were taken captive by the nation of Assyria.
- C. The Kingdom of Judah remained faithful to God for a time, but, in 606 BC, they were taken captive by the nation of Babylon.
- D. After 70 years in captivity, God allowed people from all twelve tribes to return to their homeland in Judah and the city of Jerusalem.
- E. After they returned, they rebuilt the city and the Temple, and sought to serve and follow God.
- F. It was during this time that the story of Esther took place.

### II. Esther Is Made Queen

- A. This story begins in the land of Persia where a man named Ahasuerus (or, Xerxes) was king.
- B. One day, he had a great party and called his wife Vashti to come and present herself before his guests.
  1. Vashti was very beautiful, and the king wanted to show her off to the other men who were present.
  2. However, Queen Vashti refused to obey the king's instruction – likely due to her sense of modesty and because of the drunkenness of the king.
- C. Because of her refusal, Vashti was removed from being Queen and another had to be found to take her place.

- D. There was a Jewish man named Mordecai who worked in the palace of King Ahasuerus.
- E. Mordecai had a cousin named Esther whom he had adopted and raised as his daughter.
- F. Esther was very beautiful and was chosen to become the new Queen.
  - 1. The King liked her very much and bestowed this honor upon her.
  - 2. However, he did not know that she was a Jew.

### III. Esther Defends Her People

- A. A man named Haman was promoted to a position of great authority in the land.
- B. He wanted everyone to bow down to him, but Mordecai refused – he would only bow down to God.
- C. When Haman found out that Mordecai was a Jew, he came up with a plan to kill all the Jews in Persia.
  - 1. Haman began to tell the king that the Jews were different from all others and that they would not keep the king's laws.
  - 2. He said that if the king did not do something about them it would set a bad example throughout the kingdom.
  - 3. So, Haman convinced the king to allow him to have all the Jews killed.
- D. On the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month (Adar), the leaders of the provinces in Persia were to kill every Jew in their territory.
- E. When Mordecai learned of Haman's plan, he wept bitterly.
- F. He sent word to Esther that she must go before the King and beg for her people to be spared.
- G. At first, Esther was terribly afraid.
  - 1. First, the King still did not know that Esther was a Jew.
    - a. If he found out, he might want to kill Esther.
    - b. If he found out she had kept this from him, he might be angry and treat her as he had Vashti.
  - 2. Also, no one was allowed to come before the King unless he called for them.
    - a. If someone came before the King without being called, he could be put to death.
    - b. However, if the King held out his scepter, it meant that he would allow that person into his presence.
  - 3. Either way, Esther was afraid for her life.
- H. Mordecai sent word to her that she had a responsibility to God and to her people.
  - 1. First, he reminded her that she was still a Jew and she would be killed with all the others if she did nothing.
  - 2. Next, he told her that if she did not speak up, God would still find a way to rescue His people.
  - 3. But, by refusing to speak up, she and her father's family would be put to death.
  - 4. Finally, he encouraged her to trust in God and His providence.
    - a. Mordecai said, "Who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this."
    - b. In other words, maybe God allowed Esther to become Queen so she could save her people from destruction.

- I. Esther told Mordecai that she and her maidens would fast and pray, and then she would go into the King.
    - 1. She also asked Mordecai and all the Jews in Shushan to fast and pray for her.
    - 2. She showed great courage when she said, "If I perish, I perish."
  - J. When Esther went in before the King, he responded by holding out his golden scepter – meaning, that he would allow Esther to come close and speak to him.
  - K. Esther asked the King to prepare a banquet for the two of them and Haman.
  - L. There, she made her plea known to the King.
    - 1. She revealed that she was a Jew and that her people were to be destroyed.
    - 2. She told the King that this was the plotting of Haman.
  - M. The King was filled with anger and ordered that Haman was to be hanged on a gallows that he had built hoping to kill Mordecai.
  - N. Mordecai was brought before the King and given the position that had been occupied by Haman.
  - O. However, the King was unable to reverse the law that had been written calling for the killing of the Jews.
  - P. So, the King wrote another law, giving the Jews permission to arm themselves and to fight against those who would attack them.
  - Q. On the 13<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month, all the leaders throughout the land stood with the Jews and helped them.
  - R. On that day, 75,000 enemies of the Jews were killed.
  - S. The next two days, the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of the 12<sup>th</sup> month, became days of rest and feasting – a yearly holiday that is known as Purim.
- IV. The Importance of Service
- A. The story of Esther teaches great lessons about serving God.
  - B. Oftentimes, it takes great courage to stand up for what is right and for the Word of God.
    - 1. People will make fun of us.
    - 2. They may threaten us or even hurt us.
    - 3. But, we must learn from the courage of Esther.
    - 4. It is always worth it to stand up for God!
  - C. Every child of God has a duty and responsibility to serve Him.
    - 1. Even though Esther was Queen, she still had to do what was right.
    - 2. God wants all people to obey Him and to do the right thing.
    - 3. If we love God, we will work hard to serve Him.
      - a. By worshipping Him
      - b. By studying His Word
      - c. By teaching the Gospel
      - d. By helping others
  - D. Like all people, Esther also had a responsibility to serve her fellowman.
    - 1. She could not sit back and allow her people to be killed.
    - 2. We must not sit back and do nothing while souls are being lost!
    - 3. We must serve our neighbors!

# GOD TO THE RESCUE!

## Day Four: PAUL AND SILAS IN PRISON *THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER*

Acts 16:16-34

### Introduction:

1. In our first lesson, we saw how God rescued the Israelites from the Midianites because of the faith and obedience of Gideon.
2. In our second lesson, we learned how God rescued Israel from the Philistines because of the repentance and obedience of Samson.
3. In our third lesson, we saw how God rescued the nation of Israel from destruction because of the services of Esther.
4. Our next lesson will focus on the rescue of two servants of God from prison.

### I. The Arrest of Paul and Silas

- A. While Paul was in the city of Troas, he received a vision from God.
  1. In this vision, Paul saw a man from Macedonia.
  2. This man was saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us."
    - a. The city of Troas was a part of the continent of Asia – on the far western border.
    - b. Macedonia was a province on the continent of Europe.
    - c. Between these two places was the Aegean Sea.
    - d. This would be a big step for Paul and for the preaching of the Gospel – going from one continent to another, from Asia to Europe!
  3. Upon seeing this vision, Paul knew that the Lord wanted him to preach in Macedonia.
  4. So, he began immediately to find a way to cross the sea.
  5. They sailed from Troas and, on the next day, came to Neapolis – and then travelled to the city of Philippi.
    - a. Philippi was a "chief city" in that part of Macedonia, meaning that it was an important town.
    - b. It was also a colony, meaning that Rome had a presence there, including soldiers.
- B. In Philippi, Paul met a Jewish woman named Lydia and preached the Gospel to her (16:13-14).
  1. She obeyed the Gospel by being baptized for the remission of her sins (16:15).
  2. She also invited Paul and those who were travelling with him to stay at her house.
- C. On day, as they were journeying, a young slave girl who was possessed by a spirit began to follow Paul and Silas.
- D. She did this for many days, declaring that they were servants of the Most High God.
- E. Finally, Paul performed a miracle and cast the spirit out of this woman.
- F. After he had done this, the masters of this slave were filled with anger.

1. They had used this woman and her affliction to make money for themselves.
  2. Now, since she was no longer possessed, they could not gain wealth from her supposed powers and predictions.
  3. By the way, this miracle proves that God is greater and more powerful than the devil and his demons.
- G. So, these men brought Paul and Silas before the leaders of the city and sought to have them arrested.
1. They claimed that Paul and Silas were Jews who were causing trouble in the city.
    - a. This was not true.
    - b. Though Paul was a Jew by birth, he had become a Christian.
    - c. And, they were not causing trouble, but preaching the Gospel and working miracles.
  2. They also claimed that Paul and Silas were teaching things that were contrary to Roman law and religion.
  3. Sadly, the crowd was persuaded by the arguments of these men.
- H. The magistrates ordered that the outer garments of Paul and Silas were to be removed and that they were to be beaten with many stripes.
1. This beating was probably not a scourging by whip or thongs.
  2. Instead, it was probably carried out with rods (cf. 2 Cor. 11:25).
  3. The Jews had a law that only 39 blows could be given at one time (cf. 2 Cor. 11:24).
  4. However, the Romans had no limitations.
- I. Following this, the two men were cast into prison.
1. The jailor was warned to make sure nothing happened to these two men.
  2. So, he placed Paul and Silas in the innermost part of the prison.
  3. This was an interior room with no windows and only one door.
  4. It received little to no light or fresh air.
  5. Try to imagine the darkness, the smells, and the pain that Paul and Silas experience just for telling people about Jesus!
- J. In the inner prison, Paul and Silas had their feet bound in stocks.
1. These stocks were made of wood.
  2. Usually, they had five holes – two for the feet, two for the hands, and one for the neck.
  3. Sometimes, one was used only for the feet; however, it forced the legs to be spread apart, causing great discomfort.
  4. Whatever was used, it was unnecessary and cruel – for, there was no way for Paul and Silas to escape the inner prison.
- K. It is humbling to think about the terrible things so many have suffered just for being a Christian and preaching the Gospel.
1. Would you continue to follow Jesus if it meant being beaten and imprisoned?
  2. Would you tell someone how to be saved from their sins if you knew you would be arrested for it?
  3. We must learn to have the same kind of faith and courage as Paul and Silas demonstrated.

- II. The Response of Paul and Silas
  - A. In spite of all that they had been through, Paul and Silas did not blame God or give up their faith.
  - B. Instead, in the middle of the night, in the middle of the prison, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God!
    - 1. What a wonderful example they are to all children of God.
    - 2. No matter how bad things got for them, they continued to pray and to sing!
    - 3. They did not become angry with God – they praised Him.
    - 4. They did not doubt or distrust God – they prayed to Him
  - C. It is important to notice that when they prayed and sang, the other prisoners heard them.
    - 1. This was not Paul and Silas performing a concert!
    - 2. Instead, it indicates that the others were aware of the faith and commitment of these two Christians.
    - 3. So, when big things started happening, the other prisoners would know that it was because of the power of God – and the faith of Paul and Silas.
  - D. Unexpectedly, there was a powerful earthquake that shook the foundations of the prison.
  - E. The result of this shaking was that the doors of the prison were opened and the bands that held the prisoners were loosed.
    - 1. Obviously, this was the work of God – intervening miraculously to release His servants.
    - 2. Compare with Acts 4:31; 5:19; 12:7, 10.
  - F. When the jailor woke up, he saw that all the prison doors were open.
    - 1. He assumed that all the prisoners had escaped.
    - 2. A Roman soldier who failed in his duty was subject to the severest punishment – even death.
  - G. Despairing, he drew out his sword and prepared to take his own life.
  - H. But, Paul called out to him and informed him that no prisoner had escaped.
  - I. Understanding what had happened, the jailor fell down before Paul and Silas and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”
    - 1. This was always the goal of God’s miracles – to convince people of the truth of His Word.
    - 2. Imagine, if Paul and Silas had not remained faithful to the Lord, this man might never have been saved from his sins.
  - J. They told him that he must believe in Jesus.
    - 1. However, because this man had never heard about Jesus, they had to preach the Gospel to him.
    - 2. So they spoke the word of the Lord to the jailor and his household.
    - 3. After hearing this message, the jailor demonstrated repentance by washing the stripes of Paul and Silas.
    - 4. Then, he obeyed what he had been taught by being baptized for the forgiveness of his sins.
    - 5. The members of his household also believed and were baptized.
  - K. Notice that the jailor was not said to be “believing in God” until he had been baptized into Christ.
  - L. He proved further his change of heart by bringing Paul and Silas into his house and feeding them.

- III. The Importance of Prayer
  - A. God came to the rescue of Paul and Silas.
  - B. However, they had a role to play in God's delivering them from prison.
    - 1. Like Gideon, they had to hold on to their faith in God.
    - 2. Like Esther, they had to continue to serve God.
    - 3. Also, they had to continue to praise God.
  - C. Their prayer to God was key to their being rescued by God.
  - D. God wants to help us, but we must be willing to ask for help!
    - 1. Matthew 6:8 – God knows that we have needs.
    - 2. Matthew 6:9-13 – But, he still wants us to ask for them.
      - a. Daily bread
      - b. Forgiveness
      - c. Guidance
      - d. Deliverance
    - 3. Matthew 21:22 – We must ask in faith, trusting God (Jam. 1:6).
  - E. Prayer gives us access to God's throne of grace (Hebrews 4:15-16; Matthew 7:7-11; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:7).
  - F. Prayer reminds us that we are dependent upon God and that He is the source of all blessings (James 1:17).
  - G. We must always be ready and willing to pray!

# GOD TO THE RESCUE!

## Day Five: JESUS RAISED FROM THE GRAVE *THE IMPORTANCE OF HOPE*

Matthew 28:1-10

### Introduction:

1. In our first lesson, we saw how God rescued the Israelites from the Midianites because of the faith and obedience of Gideon.
2. In our second lesson, we learned how God rescued Israel from the Philistines because of the repentance and obedience of Samson.
3. In our third lesson, we saw how God rescued the nation of Israel from destruction because of the services of Esther.
4. In our fourth lesson we saw how God rescued Paul and Silas from prison because of their faith and prayer.
5. Our last lesson will focus on Jesus and His rescue from the grave by the resurrection.

### I. The Resurrection of Jesus

- A. Following His death, Jesus' body was taken by Joseph of Arimathaea and laid in a tomb (Luke 23:50-53).
  1. It was a nearby tomb (John 19:41-42).
  2. It was a new tomb (John 19:41).
  3. It was a borrowed tomb (Matthew 27:59-60).
  4. It became an empty tomb (Mark 16:1-4).
- B. The tomb was sealed, with a stone rolled in front of the entrance, and guarded by Roman soldiers (Matthew 27:62-66).
- C. However, on the first day of the week, an angel descended from Heaven and rolled back the stone from the tomb (Matthew 28:1-3).
  1. As this happened, there was an earthquake.
  2. The Roman soldiers trembled with fear and fainted (Matthew 28:4).
- D. As Jesus' disciples looked into the tomb, they found it to be empty (Matthew 28:5-6; Mark 16:5-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-13).
  1. The empty tomb proved the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).
  2. The empty tomb fulfilled Jesus' promises (Matthew 12:40; 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19).
  3. The empty tomb fulfilled Old Testament prophecy (Psalm 16:8-10; Acts 2:25-31; 13:35-38; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
  4. The empty tomb proved Jesus' deity (Acts 2:22-24; Romans 1:3-4).
  5. The empty tomb provides hope for man (1 Corinthians 15).
- E. Jesus had been raised from the dead!
- F. Following His resurrection, Jesus appeared several times to His disciples.
  1. John 20:11-12 – First, to Mary Magdalene
  2. Matthew 28:1-10 – To women at the tomb
  3. Luke 24:13ff – To two disciples on the road to Emmaus



4. Luke 24:34 – To Peter (1 Corinthians 15:5)
5. John 20:19-23 – To 10 apostles (minus Thomas)
6. John 20:26-28 – To all 11 apostles (1 Corinthians 15:5)
7. John 21:1-23 – To disciples on the Sea of Galilee
8. 1 Corinthians 15:6 – To over 500 disciples
9. 1 Corinthians 15:7 – To James
10. 1 Corinthians 15:7 – To all the apostles
11. Matthew 28:16-20 – To the apostles on a mountain in Galilee
12. Acts 1:3-9 – To the apostles just before His ascension
13. Acts 9:1ff; 22:3ff – To Saul of Tarsus (1 Corinthians 15:8)

G. Finally, it was time for Him to return to His Father in Heaven.

H. The resurrection of Jesus teaches us an important lesson about baptism.

1. Baptism includes a death to sin, a burial in water, and a resurrection from the water (Romans 6:3-6).
2. In baptism, we reenact the death burial and resurrection of Jesus.
3. It is only in being resurrected that we have new life in Jesus (6:4).
4. It does not make sense for one to be saved and have new life and then to be buried in baptism! - *You do not bury living people!*
5. The Bible teaches that baptism is essential to salvation – for the remission (forgiveness) of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Peter 3:20-21).
6. If we want to obey the Lord and have our sins forgiven, we must be baptized!

## II. The Hope of Resurrection

A. The facts surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus are fascinating.

1. It is true that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world.
2. It is true that Jesus was buried in a tomb.
3. It is true that Jesus was raised from the dead.
4. It is true that Jesus appeared to many people after His resurrection.
5. It is true that Jesus ascended to the Father in Heaven.
6. It is true that Jesus established His kingdom – the church – on the Day of Pentecost.
7. It is true that Jesus is coming back to take the church (the saved) home to Heaven (John 14:1-7; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 5:23).

B. Yet, Jesus' resurrection from the grave gives us hope that we will also be raised from the dead.

1. In 1 Corinthians 15:20 and 23, Paul stated that Jesus was the "firstfruits" of the resurrection.
2. This means that He was the first to be raised never to die again.
3. However, it also means that He was not the last!
4. He has shown us the path that we all can follow.
5. Like Jesus, we may die and be buried; but, also like Jesus, we can be raised and go to the Father in Heaven!

C. The key to our hope of the resurrection is faithful obedience in this life.

1. Everyone will be raised from the grave on the Day of Judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10).
2. However, only the righteous will be raised to eternal life (John 28-29; 6:40; 11:24-25; 25:34ff).

3. The wicked will be raised to punishment (Matt. 25:46; 2 Thes. 1:8-9; Revelation 20:12-15).
- D. If our sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus, we have the hope of the resurrection!
  1. This requires obeying the Gospel.
    - a. Hear (Rom. 10:17)
    - b. Believe (Heb. 11:6)
    - c. Repent (Acts 17:30)
    - d. Confess faith (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)
    - e. Be baptized (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16)
  2. This requires faithful living (Rev. 2:10; 1 John 1:7).
    - a. Repent (Acts 8:22)
    - b. Confess sin (1 John 1:9)
    - c. Pray (Acts 8:22, 24; James 5:16)
- E. We can know and be sure that our sins are forgiven and that Heaven is our eternal home!

### III. The Resurrection of Hope

- A. Knowing these facts rekindles and maintains our hope.
  1. We know that Jesus was raised from the dead.
  2. We know that we will be raised from the dead.
- B. Thus, we continue to hope and trust in God – no matter what tests, trials, or temptations we face in this life.
  1. Jesus did not lose hope when faced with the cross (Heb. 12:1-2).
  2. Paul and Silas did not lose hope when faced with prison.
  3. Esther did not lose hope when faced with the threat of death.
  4. Samson did not lose hope when faced with persecution.
  5. Gideon did not lose hope when faced with battle.
- C. God will rescue us from sin and death if we never lose hope and continue in faithful service to Him!
- D. We must never lose our hope of salvation and our hope of Heaven!