

YOUTH BIBLE STUDY COURSE

Lesson 1: What is Truth?

In these lessons we are going to be looking for truth. Many things are said that are supposed to be truth, but that aren't. Sometimes the lie is told on purpose to fool or deceive people, but quite often the person really thought he was telling the truth, though he was wrong. A wise man once said what we don't know is not our problem so much as what we 'know' that isn't so. This raises the question; can we really know what truth is? Is it even important to know the truth?

Because we live in a very real world, and what we think is truth shapes our decisions and the way we think and act, truth is very important to us.

Several years ago, in the western part of the United States, an older man and his wife went to the country to look for comfrey. Comfrey is an herb-plant that grows wild in certain parts of the country, and some people like to use the leaves to make a healthful tea. They gathered what they thought to be comfrey leaves. Taking them home, they dried them and then made tea to drink.

In the same part of the country there is another plant that grows called foxglove that at certain times looks somewhat similar to comfrey. Foxglove, however, is very poisonous. Somehow these folks picked the wrong leaves, and the tea that they made killed them both. It didn't really matter that they believed the leaves to be comfrey. The truth of the matter was that they were foxglove and poisonous.

People, who call themselves magicians, make a living by tricking people. Maybe sometime in your life you have seen one. They are very clever about making people believe they have seen something they haven't really seen. Our eyes are easily tricked. Clearly, we need a better way of judging truth than just depending on our senses.

Soon after the death of King Solomon, Israel was divided and the northern ten tribes of Israel established a separate kingdom. Their king was Jeroboam, a wicked king and he led the people to offer sacrifices and worship a golden calf, symbol of the sun-god Baal.

Because of this great wickedness, God sent a prophet to rebuke the King for this great evil. Before this man of God left his home, the Lord told him that he was not to eat or drink anything while he was down there, but to deliver his message and come straight back home. Read this story in your Bible in 1 Kings 13.

On his way home, this man of God stopped to rest under a large oak tree. While he was resting there, an old man who had been a prophet, caught up with him and invited him to come to his house and refresh himself with some water to drink and some food to eat.

The man of God told the old prophet that God had told him not to eat or drink until he had returned home. Then the old prophet lied to the man of God and told him: "I too am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord, saying, "Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.'" So the man went back with the old prophet, and ate bread in his house, and drank water.

While they were still sitting together at the table, the word of God spoke through this false prophet, reproving the man of God for his disobedience, and prophesying his violent death. On his way home, later that day, he was killed by a lion. You see, it made a very great difference to that man to have listened to a lie and believed it. He need not have died if he remembered that he knew what the truth was, it was what God had told him and he should not have listened to any other story from false prophets.

Can we know the difference between truth and that which is not? Yes, we can. The Bible contains God's Word of truth, and it means everything to us whether or not we know what it says.

There are many false prophets in our world today and as Jesus said, they deceive many. But no one needs to be deceived if they will take the time to learn what the Word of God really says and then follow that word.

It is hard for people to tell a false story and not become confused in the story they are telling. Maybe you sometimes have told something that you knew wasn't quite true. Remember how difficult it became to keep the story straight if anyone asked too many questions. The more questions that were asked, the harder it got to keep going without becoming all mixed up. On the other hand, when we are telling the truth, it doesn't matter how many questions are asked, we can give straightforward answers, and no matter how many times the story is told, it is the same.

The Bible tells us that it is just that kind of story. Did you know it was written over a period of nearly 2,000 years, and that it was written by a number of different people? Some of the people were well educated, others were not. Some were officers of court, and even kings, some were farmers, and others fishermen. Yet all these different people, writing over many, many years, all told the same story and agree with one another.

This is very wonderful, because if you were to go to your school and ask forty people to each write you a report on the same subject, when you got those reports, do you think they would all agree? Not very likely! But the Bible really had only one author—the Holy Spirit—and that is why it does agree. We will take a good look at just a few Bible Prophecies and we will find that the Bible can be relied upon to tell the truth.

Prophecies of Jesus' Birth and Ministry

1. In what town did the prophet Micah say Jesus would be born? Micah 5:2 _____

“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be Ruler in Israel; Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”

2. Where does Luke tell us He was born? Luke 2:1, 4-7

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.”

3. What did Isaiah prophecy about the way Jesus would be received by His people? Isaiah 53:3

_____ They would accept Him. _____ They would reject Him.

“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

4. What does John tell us about Jesus' reception? John 1:10, 11

_____ They accepted Him. _____ They rejected Him.

“He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”

Jesus' Burial Foretold

5. With whom was Jesus to be placed in his death? Isaiah 53:9 ___ The Poor. ___ The Rich.

“And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth.”

6. Where was Jesus buried? Matthew 27:57-60

Joseph was: ___ Poor. ___ Rich.

“When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: he went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his

own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.”

Note: What makes this fulfillment of prophecy of Isaiah so amazing is the fact that Jesus died as a traitor to the empire. You may remember that the final charge that the Jews threw at Pilate, persuading him to act against his conscience in crucifying Jesus, was the charge that Christ had set Himself up as a king against Caesar. See John 19:12. This accusation went along with the writing that was placed above His head on the cross, proclaiming Him to be the King of the Jews. See Matthew 27:37. The Romans were very jealous for their power and authority, and for anyone to be guilty of trying to work against the Roman government, was a very serious crime. Because this was the crime Jesus was charged with, we would expect that He would be buried in disgrace in an unmarked grave, where the worst of criminals were placed. Instead of this, however, one of the richest men in Jerusalem requested, and received His body, placing it in as fine a tomb as money could purchase. That anyone would dare to do this, or that Pilate would even allow it, under the circumstances, testified to the fact that it was a fulfillment of prophecy.

The Certainty of Prophecy

7. What did the apostle Peter say that they had seen as evidence of Jesus being the Messiah? 2 Peter 1:16–18

They saw G_____ and they heard a V_____

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.”

Note: This is referring to Jesus being glorified by His Father at the time of His transfiguration. You can read about it in Matthew 17:1–8

8. What even more certain evidence of Christ’s divinity did he have? 2 Peter 1:19 A More S_____ W_____ of P_____.

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.”

Note: The thought that Peter is sharing with us is this: even though he had seen with his eyes, and heard with his ears, great evidence that Jesus was the Messiah, the words of prophecy are more certain and are, therefore, more to be trusted than are our senses.

There are other prophecies that the prophets made that history reveals have been fulfilled in every detail.

9. What did the Lord say would happen to the city of Tyrus? Ezekiel 26: 4, 5, 12 D _____ the walls; lay the S _____, T _____ and D _____ in the water.

“And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD: and it shall become a spoil to the nations. And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water.”

Note: While the city of Tyre was at the height of her glory and power, and while it seemed she must stand forever, Ezekiel wrote that not only would her walls be destroyed, but the ruins would even be scraped up and cast into the sea, and that fisherman would spread their nets there.

A short time later, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, came against Tyre and after a siege of thirteen years, destroyed the city.

Even though the city lay in ruins, the prophecy foretold that even its ruins would be cast into the sea.

Two and a half centuries passed, and still the ruins lay right where they were, challenging the truthfulness of the prophecy of Ezekiel. Then from the East came the famous commander of the Greek armies, Alexander the Great. Reaching the place where Tyre had once stood, but now lay in ruins he saw that the city he had come to capture, had been rebuilt and stood on an island a half mile off the shore. Alexander was not discouraged, however. He put his men to work and they gathered up all the old ruins, using them to build a causeway out to the island-city. In accomplishing this task, the demand for material was so great that the very dust was scraped from the side of the former city, and laid in the sea.

We turn from the ancient city of Tyre and notice what the prophet wrote of her even more ancient sister city Sidon.

10. What did the prophet say would be in the streets of Sidon (Zidon)? Ezekiel 28:20-23 B _____.

“Son of man, set thy face against Zidon, and prophesy against it, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Zidon; and I will be glorified in the midst of thee: and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall have executed judgments in her, and shall be sanctified in her. For I will send into her pestilence, and blood into her streets; and the wounded shall be judged in the midst of her by the sword upon her on every side; and they shall know that I am the LORD.”

Note: Though the prophet foretold blood in her streets, and that she would suffer God's judgments, he did not predict her full and final destruction, as he had with Tyre. In spite of the fact that few, if any, other cities have suffered more than Sidon, Sidon has had an uninterrupted existence right down until this day.

At the time these prophecies were written, both of these cities were strong, and there was no indication as to what would befall them. Suppose, however, that the prophet had said that Tyre and Sidon would both be utterly destroyed? The thousands of people now living in Sidon would prove the falsity of the writings of God's Word.

**11. What does the prophet say will happen to the city of Ashkelon?
Zechariah 9:5 (last part)**

“Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.”

Note: This city was founded 1800 before the birth of Christ, and it remained a powerful city for 1500 years after the prophet had made the prophecy that no one would live in it. Then, in 1270 Sultan Beibars destroyed its fortifications and blocked its harbor with stones. For the last 700 years, the city has lain in ruins, testifying to the truthfulness of the words of the prophet.

**12. What did the prophets say would become of the great city of
Babylon? Jeremiah 51:37, 58 It shall become H_____.**

“And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling place for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.”

Note: (See also Isaiah 13:19–22.) The Babylonians thought Babylon could never fall. Its great stone walls, by some records, are said to have been over 300 feet high and 60 feet thick. The city was a mighty fortress. Yet the humble prophets wrote the messages that God dictated.

Many years after the prophecies were given, Babylon's great walls were broken to pieces, and the city was destroyed by fire. She is still in ruins—has never been rebuilt, and never will be!

No one lives there today, and only animals and birds of the wild now occupy the ruins of that once great city. The proud Babylonians no longer exist, but the roaming Arabs still pitch their tents in those lands, but none do so at the place of the ancient ruins of the city.

God told Isaiah to write all of this, more than one hundred years before it happened. Surely, then, as we read these amazing predictions and their wonderful fulfillments, we must believe God's Word to be true.

God Speaks to His Prophets

13. How did the prophets know what to write? Peter 1:21 They were moved by the _____.

“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

14. When these men wrote of Christ, whose Spirit was working in them? 1 Peter 1:11 The Spirit of _____.

“Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”

The Blessing of Listening to the Prophets

15. What do we gain from studying God’s Word? Romans 15:4 It gives us H _____.

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”

16. What promise is made to those who believe God’s prophets? 2 Chronicles 20:20 So shall ye P _____.

“And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem; Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.”

God is the only One able to foretell the future. He says in Isaiah 46:9, 10: “I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.”

The ability to tell us things before they happen is one great proof that He is God. Some who have claimed to be prophets have at times tried to tell of future events. Once in a while, it seems they are right, but the false gods and false prophets cannot tell the future and be right every time. There is no other book in existence that can make such claims as the Bible. And, while many have sought to prove the Bible wrong, the Bible remains, while they have faded from sight.

For 2,000 years men have attacked the Bible. They have tried to burn, change and destroy it, but it still stands. Though all else may pass away, God’s Word, as the apostle tells us, will last *forever*. See 1 Peter 1:23.

The Bible is the key to understanding all truth. As you learn more about the truths of the Bible, you will find that this knowledge will protect you from

believing many of the lies that Satan is seeking to fool people with. In the book of Psalms, David tells us: “His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.” Psalm 91:4

The apostle Paul tells us that it is only as we have on the armor, that truth provides for us, that we will be able to stand in the evil day. See Ephesians 6:13. He then goes on to list several pieces of armor that it is important for the Christian to wear. After naming several pieces of this armor that equips us to meet the enemy, he says, “above all,” take the shield of faith. It is only as we learn God’s Word that we can have faith. “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Romans 10:17