

Lesson Book:

WHAT IS SIN?

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INTRODUCTION

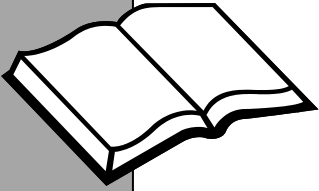
The purpose of this text is to aid the reader in a better understanding of various truths found in the Holy Scriptures and discovering for themselves how the Scriptures apply to their lives. It is the desire of this work that through this study of the Scriptures each learner will be brought closer in their relationship to their Creator as a result of these lessons.

Presented on the following pages is a series of one page lessons associated with the topic of “*What is Sin?*” Each lesson has been optimized to work best for use in a small group, but is also appropriate for individual review. In fact, if you plan to meet with others to work through this lesson book, it is highly recommend that you work through the lessons ahead of time to find answers in Scripture, as most lessons welcome discussion. When prompted for discussion, *opinions* should be heard and discussed, of course. However, a Scripture verse or passage should accompany discussions as the foundation for what the belief or opinion is based on. Study tools, such as a printed concordance or searchable Bible software to help you find the location of a Scripture that you may be having a hard time remembering, are encouraged for use with these lessons. Please remember always to study the Scriptures in context of the full passage to ensure that it properly accompanies the topic being discussed.

Concerning the source used for these lessons, please note that all Scripture quotations in this book are taken from the Modern King James Version of the Bible. The purpose in using this particular English translation is simply because of its wide acceptance and the fact that it is public domain in the United States, allowing the text to be freely quoted without copyright restriction. From the start, readers are encouraged to have his or her preferred translation of their Bible alongside for reference while reading along.

In addition, traditional Christian terms and names are *intentionally* used throughout this lesson book to reach a larger scope of readers and help those who may be beginners in this knowledge learn with ease. Occasionally, the need to employ the use of a Hebrew term or phrase may present itself for a clearer understanding of Scripture; when this occurs, the corresponding English meaning is always supplied.

What is Sin?



Scripture Highlights

Romans 3:20 because by the works of the Law none of all flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law is the knowledge of sin.

Romans 7:7 What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Let it not be said! But I did not know sin except through the law. For also I did not know lust except the law said, You shall not lust.

1John 3:4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness.

Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you from being priest to Me. Since you have forgotten the Law of your God, I will also forget your sons, even I.

James 4:17 Therefore to him who knows to do good, and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Questions

The entirety of Scripture speaks of sin and the penalty of sin. Jesus came to preach how to live a righteous life, but He also came to sacrifice His life by taking our sins upon Himself so we could live. He paid the penalty for our sins and said “Sin no more”. Please answer the following questions.

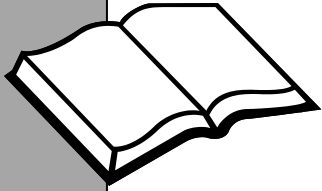
- 1) What is your definition of sin? Do you think it would differ from that of your grandparents?
- 2) What does Paul say will provide us with the knowledge of sin?
- 3) Does Paul say the law is sinful?
- 4) Where do we find the reference to “You shall not covet”? Please locate this in your Bible.

Group Discussion

There are more laws in addition to the law against coveting, such as “You shall not kill” and “You shall not steal”. Please read Exodus 20:1-21 to review these laws. These are the laws Jesus, Paul, and the disciples spoke of.

- 1) Are these really laws or commandments? Are they simply suggestions? Are they just guidelines, but everyone can determine for themselves how to interpret each of them? In other words, “Sin is in the eye of the beholder”.
- 2) In looking at James 4:17 above, it defines sin as “knowing good, but not doing good”. But how do we define “good” when it seems to differ among people? “Good” seems to vary with the societal issues of the day and age we’re living in. For instance, is it abortion or women’s rights? Is someone a terrorist or a freedom fighter? How would you define “Doing Good” in respect to this verse?
- 3) In looking at 1 John 3:4 above, how does John define sin? How do you know if you are lawless? What standard of judgment is going to be used to determine our righteousness or sin? Do we use our feelings and “good works” to determine our righteousness?
- 4) If sin is so important that Jesus would give His life for us, then shouldn’t we expect Scripture to provide a definition for sin? If a definition were provided, what about the interpretation of that definition? Shouldn’t there be a standard to not only define sin, but also to interpret that definition of sin?

The Law is Righteousness



Scripture Highlights

Deuteronomy 6:25 And if we are careful to do all this commandment before Jehovah our God, as He has commanded us, it shall be our righteousness.

Psalms 119:172 My tongue shall speak Your Word, for all Your Commandments are righteousness.

John 16:8 And when that One comes, He will convict the world concerning sin, and concerning righteousness, and concerning judgment.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.

2 Timothy 3:16 All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,

1 John 3:10 In this the children of God are revealed, and the children of the Devil: everyone not practicing righteousness is not of God, also he who does not love his brother.

Background Review

We have just seen The Law defined as the means by which we determine what sin is. It is our standard of identification.

“The Law” comes from the Hebrew term “Torah”. The Torah consists of the first five books of Scripture given directly by God to Moses to record for future generations. Christians frequently refer to this as being part of the Old Testament. The proper Hebrew term would be Tanach.

The Old Testament is known as the Tanach. It contains the original stories of creation and the giving of God’s instructions to His people on how they may draw near to Him. We also see what happened to them when they failed to obey all His instructions. We see the Covenant with Abraham culminate with the Covenant at Sinai, known as the Marriage Covenant which continues to be enforce throughout all the subsequent generations of those in attendance that day. These instructions define how to be righteous before Him and therefore dwell with Him.

Now let’s look deeper into what “The Law” means from a Hebraic viewpoint since the Scriptures were written by Hebrews in the Hebrew language and Hebrew culture. The Tanach is what they read and referenced. There was no Renewed Covenant Scriptures (erroneously called the New Testament) yet.

Group Discussion

The Tanach is where we find the definition of terms we see in the Renewed Covenant. This is their language, their writings, and their culture, therefore we shouldn’t replace their cultural understanding of words with our own.

Please discuss these questions amongst yourselves.

- 1) How do you see righteousness defined in Scripture? Does it seem to point to the commandments?
- 2) When Timothy wrote his letter, what did he mean by referencing “All Scripture”? Would that be the Tanach or the Renewed Covenant? (Hint: The Renewed Covenant was not written yet.)
- 3) Read Psalms 9:8. David indicates God shall judge with righteousness. What is he referring to? What is God going to use as a standard to judge with righteousness?
- 4) What is the linkage between sin, the commandments, righteousness, and judgment?
- 5) Read Deuteronomy 4:8 and Acts 10:35. What does it say about nations?

Obedience brings Righteousness

Scripture Highlights

Romans 6:16 Do you not know that to whom you yield yourselves as slaves for obedience, you are slaves to him whom you obey; whether it is of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness.

Hebrews 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My Laws into their mind and write them in their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Psalms 119:104 Through Your Commandments I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

Proverbs 11:19 So righteousness tends to life; but one pursuing evil, it is to his own death.

Forwarding Thoughts

You now have determined that sin is defined by The Law. You have also seen “The Law”, but more accurately called “His Instructions”, leads us to righteousness. “Law” implies a negative, heavy-handed, and burdensome yolk. Is this true?

1John 5:3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome.

These instructions are how we become righteous before Him. We do not define our own instructions. We use His instructions. We do not interpret His instructions. We let Scripture tell us the interpretation.

We “Do This” or “Don’t Do That” according to His instructions. This is what obedience is.

Romans 6:16 tells us obedience leads to righteousness and according to Proverbs 11:19, righteousness leads to life.

Let’s look at another thing. Multiple references have been made to the interpretation of the instructions. Almost everyone has heard of the Ten Commandments. Yes, this is “The Law”, but it is not the entirety of it.

The Ten Commandments are actually a summary of the Torah (His Instructions). These are recorded on the Stone tablets given to Moses at Mt. Sinai. The details of how to interpret those ten summarized laws are further defined in the Torah. Exodus 20 begins with the ten summarized laws and then proceeds to provide the details of each. This is where we get the interpretation of those laws so we don’t each go our own way. This is the standard God will use for righteousness.

We will close this teaching by addressing another issue that is likely on your mind. The letters of Paul contain many verses that seemingly contradict what has been explained to you in this lesson book. That contradiction, however is entirely in the misunderstanding of Hebraic terms, idioms, culture, and the people to whom he addressed. This has caused many to turn away. There is confusion over Written Law vs Oral Law, Law vs Grace, and even who the Pharisees and Gentiles are. Even Peter expressed how Paul’s teachings to the Gentiles were being twisted or perverted by those untaught and unstable. These were the Gentiles without the Hebraic background and understanding he was addressing. Please don’t reject His Torah by your false understanding of Grace.

2 Peter 3:15-16 And think of the long-suffering of our Lord as salvation (as our beloved brother Paul also has written to you according to the wisdom given to him as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable pervert, as also they do the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction).

We likewise see the Prophet Habakkuk speak of a future time when the Torah and justice (His judgments) are not taught due to those who suppress and twist what is said due to their own misunderstanding.

Habakkuk 1:4 Therefore the law has become helpless, and justice does not always go forth. For the wicked entraps the righteous; therefore justice goes forth, being perverted.