

DISCOVER

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

12

**An Ever-
Present
Savior**



NAPOLEON BONAPARTE (1769–1821), also known as Napoleon I, was a French military leader and emperor who conquered much of Europe in the early 19th century. One day, Napoleon was reviewing his troops, riding his ever-famous white horse. The horse became frightened and reared dangerously, jerking the reins from Napoleon's hands. Momentarily endangering Napoleon's life, the horse raced along a line of men standing at attention. One of the privates standing in the line threw down his musket and—leaping forward—caught the reins, bringing the horse to a standstill.

The young man handed the reins to Napoleon, who responded by saying, “Thank you, Captain.”

The private, standing in his plain uniform of an infantryman, responded, “Of what regiment, sir?”

“Of my guards,” replied the emperor.

The young man left the line of soldiers and started off across the field in his old, muddy infantry uniform to join the officers on

the hill at staff headquarters. With a bark of authority, one of the officers shouted, “What are you doing here?”

He replied, “I am a captain of the guard.”

In amazement, the officer responded, “Who says so?”

The young soldier pointed to the emperor riding by and replied, “He said so.”

It was not the uniform, the sword, or the medals, but the word of the emperor that made a private into a captain of the guard. It was all about the emperor; he made the difference.

1 | Unlimited Access to Jesus

You may look at your life and feel like you don’t amount to much. Your sins and bad choices may make you feel as if you don’t have much to offer, but that is how most of us feel at times in this life. In fact, the Bible says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

However, that is not the whole story. Romans 6:23 (KJV) states this promise: “But the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Did you notice the word *gift*? You see, it’s not about you; it’s about Him! The word of King Jesus—the Emperor of the Universe—makes all the difference. He promises that His gift to you is eternal life—eternal life in His presence.

In fact, Jesus says that He “will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). This means that Jesus is always there by your side—helping you and guiding you every step of the way. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is with every one of us 24 hours a day, seven days a week! He wants to cultivate a personal relationship with you.

What encouraging promise did Jesus give His followers just before He ascended to heaven following His resurrection?

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. . . . Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18, 20).



While He was here on earth with us, Jesus gave some amazing all-inclusive invitations to those who gathered around Him. Those invitations are still open to us today. Jesus invites us to come to Him anytime, anywhere:

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

“The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37).

Christ is no longer with us on earth; He is in heaven. What is He doing there that makes it possible for Him to be with us “always”?

“Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:14-16).

Jesus is our “great High Priest,” our personal Representative in the sanctuary in heaven. Notice how He can identify with us. He was “in all points tempted just as we are,” able to “sympathize

with our weaknesses,” and can “help in time of need.” As our High Priest in heaven, Jesus can usher us into the very presence of God. No wonder we’re urged to “come boldly to the throne of grace.”

The high priest was the top religious leader of the Israelites. His role was to oversee all of the religious services and ceremonies in the earthly sanctuary (the place of worship) of the Israelites.

As our High Priest in heaven, how closely is Jesus associated with His Father in the work of saving us from sin?

“This Man [Jesus], after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God” (Hebrews 10:12).

The living Christ—someone who understands us—sits at the right hand of God as our personal Representative.

What qualifies Jesus to be our High Priest in heaven?

“Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted” (Hebrews 2:17, 18).

Jesus can be our Representative in heaven because He became a human being like us. He calls us His brothers and sisters. He was tempted like we are. Now, as our High Priest at the Father’s right hand, He knows what we’re going through. Above all, Jesus is qualified to be our Priest because, as the Lamb of God, He died for our sins.

“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29).

“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

Jesus assumed responsibility for our sins and died in our place. This is the gospel—the good news—for all human beings everywhere and for all time.

2 | The Gospel in the Old Testament

After the Israelites left Egypt, but before they reached the land of Canaan, God instructed Moses to build a portable tabernacle as a place of worship—a sanctuary that could be carried with them in their wilderness travels—to be set up and taken down as needed. God gave detailed instructions about its design and carefully explained how its services were to be carried out. This tabernacle was to be a copy of the temple in heaven (Hebrews 8:4, 5; 9:23, 24). That’s why God told Moses to build it “according to the pattern which was shown you” (Exodus 25:40). Nearly 500 years later, King Solomon’s great stone temple replaced this portable one, but it was built using the same plan.

Not only was the sanctuary in the Old Testament to be a place of worship, but its main purpose was to teach the Israelites about God’s plan of salvation and the forgiveness of sin that was offered through Jesus, “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29).

All the sacrifices pointed ahead to the coming Messiah, the One who would pour out His lifeblood so that our sins could be forgiven. Everything that happened in the Hebrew temple was an object lesson, a way to help human beings visualize and experience God’s forgiving grace. These Old Testament ceremonies were object lessons that pointed to the New Testament Savior, Jesus Christ, who through His life and death ministers as our High Priest.

What additional purpose did God have in mind for requesting the Israelites to build a sanctuary?

“Let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them” (Exodus 25:8).

Sin had caused a tragic separation between human beings and their Creator. The sanctuary provided a way for God to once again have an ongoing relationship with us—to live among us. The wilderness sanctuary, and later the temple, became the center of religious life and worship in Old Testament times. Every morning and evening, the people would gather around the sanctuary and establish contact with God through prayer (Luke 1:10), claiming God’s promise: “I will meet with you” (Exodus 30:6).

It surprises some people to learn that the Old Testament teaches the same gospel of salvation as the New Testament. The Old Testament symbolism of Israel’s sanctuary actually served as an object lesson of Jesus’ sacrificial death so that our sins may be forgiven. It also illustrated His role as our High Priest ministering on our behalf in the heavenly sanctuary. Rightly understood, the Old Testament sanctuary and its services reveal what Jesus is doing today in the temple in heaven, as well as what He is doing on earth through the Holy Spirit to enrich and guide each of us in our daily lives.

3 | Jesus’ Ministry for Us Is Revealed in the Sanctuary

Since the earthly sanctuary was patterned after the temple in heaven, it reflects the heavenly sanctuary where Christ now ministers. Exodus 25-40 describes the services and ceremonies of the wilderness sanctuary in great detail.

Briefly, the sanctuary had two rooms—the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. A courtyard surrounded the sanctuary. In the courtyard in front of the sanctuary, there stood a bronze altar on

which the priests offered sacrifices. These sacrifices symbolized Jesus, who through His death on the cross became “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). When the repentant sinner came to the altar with his sacrifice and confessed his sins, he received forgiveness and cleansing. In a similar way, the sinner today obtains cleansing through the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

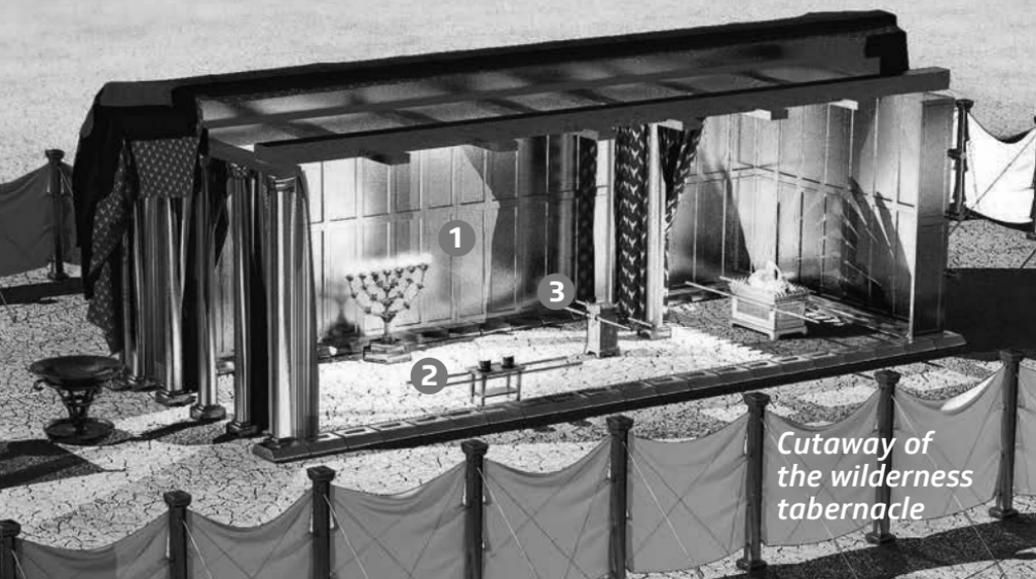
If we come to Jesus, asking Him to forgive our sins, can we be certain that He will do so?

“If we confess our sins, He [Jesus] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Occasionally, we hear of people who have forgiven someone who wronged them terribly—and we wonder how they could do so. On March 6, 2016, as Pastor Tim Remington mingled with church members outside his church in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, a troubled young man came up behind him and fired a .45-caliber handgun 12 times. According to an article in the *Idaho Statesman*, eight hollow-point bullets ripped through Remington’s back and shoulder. His right arm shattered. A lung collapsed. One bullet skipped upward, penetrating his skull and coming dangerously close to his brain.

Miraculously, Remington survived—following seven hours of initial surgery, nine days in the intensive care unit, and another nine days of further hospital recovery. Even more miraculously, he has forgiven his assailant, whom he sees as someone suffering from mental illness and paranoia. He is concerned that in prison, his would-be killer will receive treatment for his physical and mental problems—but won’t find Jesus Christ, who alone can turn his life around and give him peace.

If a human being such as Remington can forgive the one who has caused him and his family such suffering, can we doubt that



our loving Savior Jesus will keep His promise to “forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”?

Everything in the sanctuary and its services pointed forward to Jesus and His work as our Savior. There were three items in the first room, the Holy Place:

- 1 A seven-branched lampstand that burned continuously (Exodus 25:31-40; 27:20), representing Jesus as the never-failing “Light of the world” (John 8:12).
- 2 A table of consecrated bread (Exodus 25:23-30), which symbolized Jesus, “the bread of life” (John 6:35), who satisfies our physical and spiritual hunger.
- 3 A golden altar of incense (Exodus 30:1-8) that represented Jesus’ prayer ministry for us in the very presence of God (Revelation 8:3, 4).

The second room, the Most Holy Place, contained only one item—the gold-covered Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:10-22). This was a gold-covered wooden chest with a lid of pure gold called the “Mercy Seat” (Exodus 25:17-21). Two golden angels sat

on this Mercy Seat facing each other. God told Moses, “There I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat” (Exodus 25:22). Here was the very presence of God in the sanctuary, and it symbolized His throne. The two tables of stone on which God wrote the Ten Commandments were kept in the Ark of the Covenant, below the seat. All this was to help the Israelites—and us—better understand God’s mercy toward sinners and the intercession of Christ on behalf of human beings who have broken God’s great moral law.

A curtain divided the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Thus, even the priests who entered the first room of the sanctuary were not able to see into the second room—which represented God’s throne—containing the Ark of the Covenant.

When Jesus died on the cross, what happened to this curtain?



“Behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” (Matthew 27:51).

When Jesus died, the Most Holy Place of the temple was exposed to view. After His death, no curtain can come between a holy God and a sincere believer. Jesus, our Savior and High Priest, ushers us into the very presence of God.

“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Hebrews 10:19–22).

Today we have access to the throne room of heaven because Jesus is our High Priest at God’s right hand in the true sanctuary (Hebrews 8:1, 2). He is not there to shield us from the Father, but to enable us to come into God’s presence—into the Father’s heart of love. So “let us draw near.” Why? Because God welcomes us! As Jesus said, “I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you” (John 16:26, 27).

Today, in the sanctuary in heaven, Jesus continues to carry out His same saving work for us that was foreshadowed in the Old Testament sanctuary so long ago.

4 | A Revelation of Christ Who Died to Save Us

Just as the earthly sanctuary served as a miniature reproduction of the heavenly temple where Jesus now ministers for us, the services carried on in the earthly sanctuary were also an example and shadow of what is in heaven (Hebrews 8:5, KJV). However, there is a striking difference: the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary is superior to the earthly sanctuary (Hebrews 8:6). The priests who served in the earthly temple could not forgive sin; only Jesus through His sacrifice can forgive sin (Hebrews 9:26).

In the Old Testament sanctuary services, when an individual sinned, he would bring an unblemished animal as a sin offering, and “lay his hand on the head of the sin offering, and kill the sin offering at the place of the burnt offering” (Leviticus 4:29). Then the priest took the blood of the offering into the sanctuary and placed some of it on the Altar of Incense. This illustrated the truth that sin results in death and that the sinner can escape the death penalty only by having a substitute, the Lamb of God, die in his or her place.

Christ’s sacrifice stands at the very heart of the sanctuary system.

First, the animal to be sacrificed was required to be without blemish, because it represented Jesus Christ, who is “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Hebrews 7:26).

Second, the guilt of the sinner was transferred to the guiltless animal by a confession of sin and the laying on of hands. This symbolized Christ taking on our guilt at Calvary; the sinless One became “sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Third, the sacrificial animal had to be killed and its blood spilled, because it pointed forward to the supreme penalty that Christ suffered on the cross.

These sacrifices happened repeatedly in the Old Testament sanctuary, but they pointed forward to Christ’s one great saving act on the cross. Having died for our sins, He entered the holy places “with His own blood . . . once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” for us (Hebrews 9:12).

5 | Why the Blood?

Some people have complained, “Christianity has too much blood in it.” Why is it that “without shedding of blood there is no remission” of sin (Hebrews 9:22)? Why is blood such an important symbol in the Bible?

It may not seem like a very pleasant image at first, but the blood of Christ can speak eloquently to us.

A. Christ’s blood is a symbol of life.

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood . . . it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11).

Christ’s life was as important as His death. Jesus lived a perfect life for your imperfect life. If it weren’t for His sinless life,

the cross would serve no purpose; and had He not lived after He died, His death couldn't save us. As Paul said:

“If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty” (1 Corinthians 15:14).

When Jesus spilled His blood on the cross, He was pouring out His life for humanity; He was offering up His perfectly obedient life as a substitute for our failures.

B. Christ's blood is a symbol of His death.

When He shed His blood on the cross, He was paying “the wages of sin”—death (Romans 6:23). He experienced the agony of complete separation from God the Father. God the Son (Jesus) took upon Himself the full results of sin to demonstrate how tragic wrongdoing really is. He could then forgive sinners without trivializing sin.

C. Christ's blood is a symbol of the suffering heart of God.

The cross reveals how much pain sin has brought to God. He is not a bloodthirsty deity demanding a sacrifice—He Himself was the sacrifice. When the Father and Son were torn apart at Calvary, the Father must have turned away in anguish as the Son died of a broken heart.

Christ's blood represents the whole drama of the atonement, that amazing act which enabled God to “reconcile all things to Himself, by Him [Jesus], whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Colossians 1:20).

6 | A Revelation of Jesus Who Lives to Save Us

The Old Testament sacrifices represented the death of Christ as

our sacrifice. The work of the priests represented His ministry as our High Priest in heaven.

“For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24).

What is Jesus’ day-to-day work in the heavenly temple?

“Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost [forever] those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

Some mistakenly assume that, as our Intercessor, Jesus is in heaven begging a reluctant God to forgive us. In fact, God joyfully accepts His Son’s sacrifice on our behalf. The Father and Son are working together to save us.

As our High Priest in heaven, Christ also pleads with humanity to accept His sacrifice and promise for a better life now through a relationship with Him. This relationship is strengthened through

studying the Word of God and receiving spiritual power through prayer.

Jesus laid down His life for every person who has ever lived in this world. And now, as our Intercessor, or Mediator, He offers us pardon for our sins. He urges us to accept His salvation and mercy. However, Jesus can’t save us unless we accept His grace.

Individually, we must make a personal decision to accept the sacrifice of Jesus and receive forgiveness and eternal life.

In 1830, George Wilson was convicted of robbing the U.S. mail in Pennsylvania and sentenced to be executed. However, influential

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WordSearch

If you want to go deeper into this study topic, complete this section.

1. What incredible, reassuring promise does God give to each of us? (Hebrews 13:5)

2. What effect does sin have on our relationship with God? (Isaiah 59:2)

3. What does the blood of Jesus do for us in terms of our relationship with God the Father? (Ephesians 2:13, 18)

4. What place does Jesus occupy in heaven today? (Hebrews 8:1; 10:12)

5. Whom did the Apostle John see walking among the lampstands of the sanctuary in heaven? (Revelation 1:12, 13)



friends convinced President Andrew Jackson to pardon him. Imagine everyone's surprise when Wilson refused to accept the president's pardon! However, that wasn't the end of the matter.

Wilson's refusal raised a legal question: Is a pardon valid *if the person pardoned refuses to accept it*? This question eventually went to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled that a pardon "may then be rejected by the person to whom it is tendered [offered], and if it be rejected, we have discovered no power in a court to force it on him." Just as George Wilson made a choice, so every person must make a decision to accept the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins.

Won't you accept the pardon Jesus offers you? He lives in heaven today to save you from sin and keep you close to Him in a saving relationship. Won't you accept Him fully as the Savior and Master of your life?

My Decision

- I accept Jesus' pardon for my sins. For my daily spiritual help I will come to Him as my representative in heaven, knowing He will give me just what I need.

My Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, I'm so thankful that through Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, You are constantly guiding my life. Thank You for saving me and for giving me a better life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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