

BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

We're in... Unit 12: God's People Live for Him

Unit 12 Big Question and Answer and Song:

"How Should God's People Live?

They Should Live Like Jesus!" *PFI NIV Songs 12, Tracks 3,4*

Unit 1 Bible Verse and Song: Ephesians 5:1-2

"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

PFI NIV Songs 12, Track 5

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 13:

God's People Know Heaven Is Their Home

Jesus is God's Son. He left His home in heaven to come to earth to save God's people. He lived a perfect life and offered it up as the perfect payment for the sins of God's people, so they could be His forever. Jesus rose from the dead on the third day then went back to heaven to reign. He is preparing a place for God's people to come and live with Him. There is nothing better than living with God and enjoying Him forever. The Bible tells us that we can't even imagine how wonderful it will be. There are many hard things that God's people may have to endure here on earth, but they look forward to the day when they go home to heaven and suffer no more. There are also many good things that God's people enjoy here on earth, but they know that none of them can compare to the good things they will enjoy in heaven in God's presence. Every day, God's people try to please God with whatever happens in their lives, but they are always looking forward to that wonderful day when they will go home to be with Him forever.

BIBLE VERSE

How do I know this is true? The Bible tells me so!

Bible Truth 13 Bible Verse: Philippians 3:18-20

"I have often told you before and now way again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."

CASE STORY

adapted from "A Gentleman in Prison" by Tokichi Ishii

Our story is called:

The Case of the Prisoner's Paradise.

As you listen to the story, see if you can figure out:

1. Who was the prisoner? What was his punishment and why did he deserve it?
2. Why was this prisoner so different from the others who faced the same punishment?

This story doesn't take place in Bible times. It takes place in the early 1900's in Japan.

The great "Empress of Russia" sped across the Pacific Ocean from Tokyo, Japan to Vancouver, Canada. Famous for record – breaking speed, its luxurious service, and its elegant rooms, the "Empress of Russia" was a ship like few others. Almost any comfort that could be had was found aboard this elegant passenger ship.

But the one thing not even the "Empress of Russia" could offer was the guarantee of good weather. This particular trip prove to be so stormy that even the sturdiest passengers were forced indoors.

A group of passengers sat together in one of the ship's drawing rooms, sharing stories to pass the time. Among them was a little Canadian woman named Caroline MacDonald who told the amazing story behind the coin she wore on a chain around her neck.

This coin was given to me by Tokichi Ishii, one of the wickedest, cleverest criminals in all of Japan," Miss MacDonald began. "He was a robber and a murderer. He sat in a prison cell for twenty years then escaped. Ishii fled to the lonely mountains near Okazaki for safety. The police tracked him for year and at last caught him and put him back in jail. This time, he was put in a special, protected cell and sentenced until he to death by hanging. Japan looked forward to be rid of this terrible criminal once and for all.

As Ishii sat in his cell he began to think about what would happen to him after he died. "I wonder if there is life after death? I wonder if there is a God who judges us and punishes our sense? If there is, then surely I deserve hell for all the wicked things I've done. I wish I knew the answers to these questions!

Ishii didn't know about the Lord, but the Lord knew about Ishii and soon brought him the answers to his questions. On New Year's Day, Annie West and I were

visiting Ishii's prison. we gave out Bibles and shared the good news of forgiveness through Jesus to all who would listen. Ishii was one of those who listened and accepted the New Testament we offered him.

"This book is the Bible, God's Word. Read it and you will learn so much more about Jesus and find answers to your questions," we told him.

At first, Ishii just put the Bible up on the shelf and ignored it. But one day he was so bored he decided he would pass the time by reading it. Soon, Ishii was fascinated with the story of Jesus. When he read about Jesus being unjustly sent to death on the cross he became especially interested. 'He is a man who knew something about the world he lived in,' Ishii told himself.

But it was when Ishii read how Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," asking forgiveness for His enemies, that he finally understood what the good news of Jesus meant for him.

'Lord Jesus, Your love and forgiveness are amazing,' Ishii prayed. 'If You forgave those wicked men treating You so terribly, then I believe You would even forgive me for all the wicked things I done.'

With that prayer, the Lord did forgive Ishii and made him a new man. Everyone noticed the difference. Although he was under the sentence of death and might be let out to be home in the morning, Ishii was so known as the most cheerful man in the whole prison. Prison officers and even the governor of Tokyo, himself, came to see for themselves the change that had come to Ishii.

'What makes you so happy?' the governor asked him.

"I have become a Christian," Ishii replied. "I know there is a God in heaven who forgives sins. He has forgiven mine through Jesus. When I die, He will take me to heaven to be at home with Him forever. He will forgive your sins, too, if you will but ask Him," he urged the governor.

The prison chaplain, a Buddhist priest, came to see Ishii, too. "Every day, the prisoners waiting to be hung are in agony until 9 a.m. when they hear if it is their day to die or not. Every day is filled with dread that it's their last day. Is this how you spend your day?" he asked.

"No, not at all!" Ishii replied. 'Every morning I am glad.' Holding up his New Testament he said, "The words of Christ written here tell me that He is with me even now in this cell. I talk with Him every day. I know when I die, He will take me to be with Him in heaven forever. No wonder

I am so happy!" he told the chaplain.

"It was a wonderful thing, seeing the Lord work in Ishii's life," Miss MacDonald told the other passengers, who eagerly listened to her story. "Each time, Miss West and I went to visit him, the Lord had changed him even more. As the time for his hanging drew near, Ishii shared with us his wonderful plan: 'Any day now, I will be called to gallows to die. Before I go, I want to write down the story of how the Lord forgave a wicked man like myself and adopted me as His dearly loved child. ***It's been over forty years since I went to school and I have forgotten much.*** Pray for me that God would help me to write down this story in time,' he asked us.

We prayed and Ishii worked as quickly as he could. Each day, Ishii was relieved when 9 o'clock passed and the jailer had not come for him. Day and night, he wrote and wrote. Finally he laid down his pen and said, 'I am done. Now perhaps others will read my story and find their hope in Jesus. I want them to know there is a God in heaven who forgives sins of even the worst sinners. They can be His dearly loved adopted children, too. And when they die, He will take them to home to heaven to be with Him forever.'

One morning, not long after Ishii had finished his story, the jailer came at 9 o'clock to his cell. "The time has come, Ishii. Are you ready?"

"I am very ready," replied Ishii, with excitement. "I am not afraid."

"You are a brave man," said the jailer, 'most men tremble with fear when I come for them, but you seem almost glad. Here comes the Buddhist priest. We must go now.'

Sadly, the jailer led Ishii to the scaffold, the Buddhist priest following them. He had come to love Ishii and hated to see him die.

"Don't be sad," he told the jailer. "I'm not! How can I be, since this morning I have read the words of Jesus, 'Let not your heart be troubled...I am going ahead of you to prepare a place for you.' I die without fear. The good news of Jesus tells me that there is forgiveness even for me, the worst of criminals. I am going home. But please do me one last favor. Give Miss MacDonald the book I have written along with all my other things."

The jailer promised he would.

In a few minutes all was over. Ishii had gone home to be with Jesus. The prisoner had reached paradise. The next

day, the prison officials delivered a small package to me. It contained Ishii's book, this copper coin you see around my neck, and one last little message. It said: 'Today I am sitting in my small, dirty, prison cell, and yet I am far more contented than in the days of my freedom out in the world. In this prison cell, only nine feet by six feet in size, I am happier than if I was living in the largest house I ever knew. Then he closed with this little verse:

My name is defiled,
 My body dies in prison,
 But my soul, purified,
 Today goes to the City of God.'

Ishii knew that here on earth he had been a wicked person. He had lived over half his life in small, damp prison cell, and he faced death because of the things he had done.

But he knew that Jesus had forgiven him his sins. And that very day, he would be in his heavenly home, living face to face with Jesus forever. And that was far better than anything he could have in this world, by far."

All was silent as Miss MacDonald finished her story. All the passengers were deeply moved by Ishii's story. What were they thinking about? Only God's work in Ishii's life... or perhaps were they thinking about what eternal home with God in heaven," Miss MacDonald thought. "This was what he hoped would happen. And praise God, it begun to do just that already."

Our Bible Truth is:

God's People Know Heaven Is Their Home

Our Bible Verse is: Philippians 3:18-20

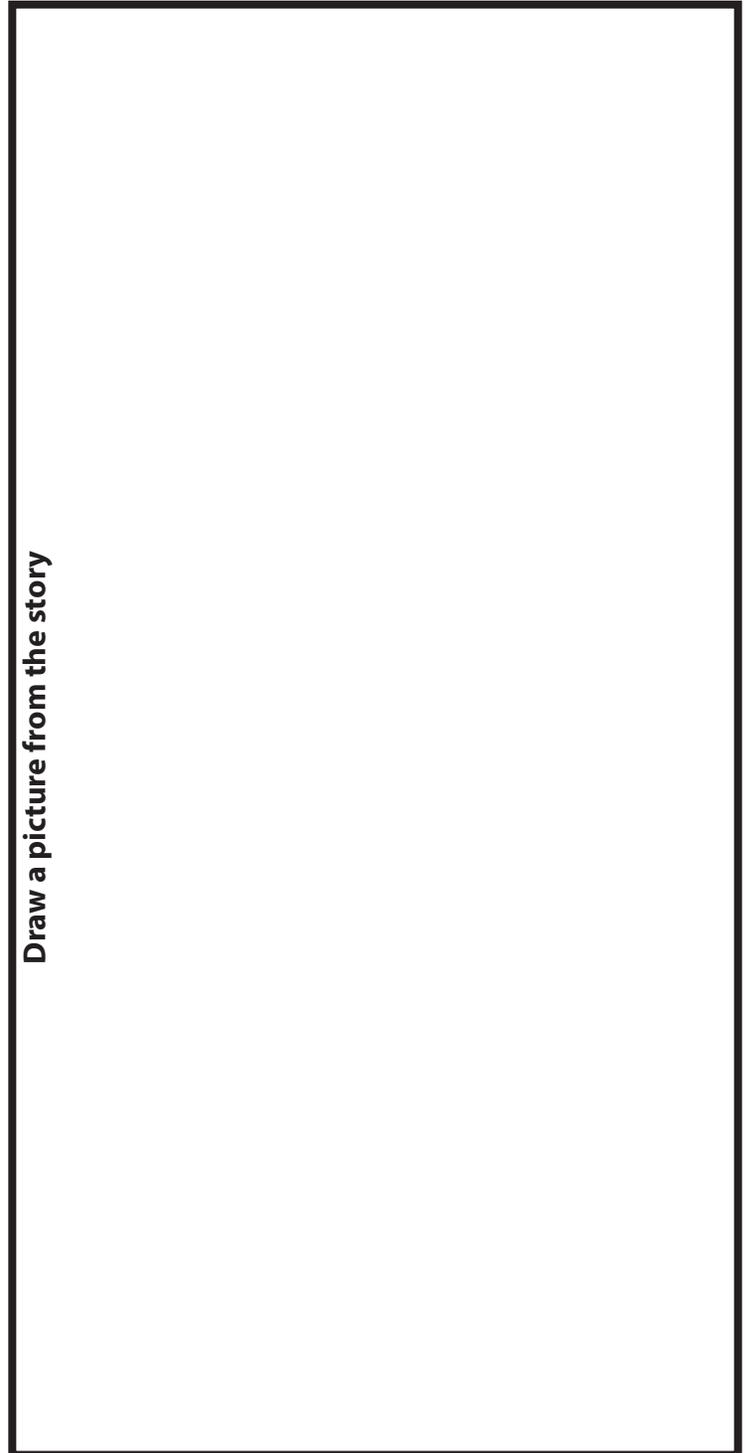
"I have often told you before and now way again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Ishii's destiny had been destruction, but no longer, thanks to His Savior Jesus. Now his citizenship was in heaven and happy he was to go there!

What about you and me? Perhaps we have not robbed or murdered anyone as Ishii did, but we are sinners needing God's forgiveness, nonetheless. To Ishii it was clear that nothing in this world could compare with being forgiven, being adopted by God and getting to be at home with Jesus forever. Even today, God calls us to turn way from

our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Even day, our citizenship can be in heaven!

Let's praise God for offering forgiveness of sins through Jesus. Let's praise Him for delighting to adopt sinful people like you and me as His very own children. Let's ask Him to help us to confess our sins to Him, turn away from them and trust in Jesus as our Savior that we might be forgiven. Let's ask Him to help us look forward to home in heaven and use each day of our lives on earth as preparation for being with Him forever.



Draw a picture from the story

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

1. A Question about the Bible Truth, True or False:

The Bible tells us that life in heaven with Jesus will be better than anything we can imagine.

Answer: True.

2. Crack the Case Questions:

a. Who was the prisoner? What was his punishment and why did he deserve it?

Answer: Tokichi Ishii. He was sentenced to be hung to death for being a robber and a murderer.

b. Why was this prisoner so different from the others who faced the same punishment?

Answer: Unlike the other men who were sentenced to death, Ishii didn't dread dying. He knew he would be going home to be with Jesus and was delighted about that.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse: Philippians 3:18-20

"I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, ___ live as enemies of the cross of ___. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we ___ await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Answers: many; Christ; eagerly.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

The Sands of Time Are Sinking

PFI NIV Songs 12, Tracks 38-41

Verse 1

The sands of time are sinking,
The dawn of Heaven breaks,
The summer morn I've sighed for,
The fair, sweet morn awakes;
Dark, dark hath been the midnight,
But dayspring is at hand.
And glory, glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's land.

Verse 3

O Christ, He is the fountain,
The deep, deep well of love,
The streams of earth I've tasted,
More deep I'll drink above,
There to an ocean fullness,
His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's land.

Verse 2

The King, there in his beauty,
Without a veil is seen,
It were a well-spent journey,
Though sev'n deaths lay
between;
The Lamb with his fair army,
Doth mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth,
In Immanuel's land.

Verse 4

With mercy and with judgment,
My web of time He wove,
And aye the dews of sorrow,
Were lusted with His love,
I'll bless the hand that guideth,
I'll bless the heart that planned,
When throned where glory
dwelleth,
In Immanuel's land.

Words: Anne R. Cousin Music: Constance Dever

People used to tell time with a hourglass. It would take exactly one hour for the sand to sink from the top of the glass to the bottom. God's people know that the sands of time are sinking...that the day when they will go to live at home with God in heaven is coming closer and closer. They will live out every day of their life, according to God's perfectly good plan. Then, they will go to be with Him in heaven. God's people are so excited for the day when they will live with God forever! At last they will get to see Him, their King, who gave up His life as the "Lamb of God"--the perfect sacrifice for their sins. Life here on earth may be difficult sometimes. There may be times of sorrow. But God's people trust in God's good plan for them every day they live here on earth; and, they happily look forward to getting to live in heaven--the glorious Land of Immanuel, which means God with us. There, they will at last live at home with their God... and there's no place as wonderful as home, especially this home.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

A=Adoration, C=Confession, T=Thanksgiving, S=Supplication

A God, we praise You for not just offering forgiveness of sins to sinners through Your Son, Jesus, but delighting to do so!

C God, we confess that we, like Ishii, are sinners who have rebelled against You and Your good ways. We deserve Your punishment. We need Jesus to be our Savior!

T God, we thank You that we do not have to make ourselves good enough to ask You to make us Your children. Thank You that this is Your free gift through Jesus. Thank You that You want us to be with You forever in heaven.

S We ask You to work in our hearts, helping us to confess our sins, turn away from them and trust Jesus as our own Savior. We ask that You would help us to know and love You while we live here on earth and that one day You will take us to live with You in heaven forever.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

Many Live As Enemies

PFI NIV Songs 12, Track 42

Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ,
Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ,
Their destiny is destruction,
Their mind's on earthly things,
Their mind's on earthly things

But our citizenship is in heav'n,
Yes, our citizenship is in heav'n,
And we eagerly, we eagerly,
Await a Savior from there.
Philippians Three,
eighteen through twenty.

Words: Philippians 3:18-20 Music: Constance Dever ©2011

All of us are sinners. We have all chosen to live life our own way, instead of God's good way. We deserve God's punishment, not eternal life with Him. But God sent His Son, Jesus, to save sinners like us. He took the punishment for sins when He died on the cross. On the third day, He rose from the dead in victory. Now all who turn away from their sins and trust in Him as their Savior are forgiven their sins. They belong to God. No longer are they people who belong in this world. They are citizens of heaven--that's where their home is. And one day, either they will die to go to live with Him; or, Jesus will come back and take them home, Himself. Oh, how wonderful that will be! God's people eagerly await for that day to come. No more sin and death! Such wonderful closeness with God always! Until that day, God's people will go on telling others the good news of Jesus. They don't want anyone to remain an enemy of the cross of Christ and face God's punishment. They want them to repent and receive eternal life.