

BIG QUESTION UNDER INVESTIGATION

We're in... Unit 1: The God Who Reveals Himself

Unit 1 Big Question and Answer:
How Can I Know What God Is Like?
He Shows Me What He's Like!

PFI ESV Songs 1, Tracks 3,4

Unit 1 Bible Verse: Amos 4:13, ESV

"For behold, He who formed the mountains, creates the winds, and declares to man what is His thought. The LORD, the God of hosts, is His name."

PFI ESV Songs 1, Track 5

BIBLE TRUTH

We're learning... Bible Truth 3:
God Spoke to His People through Prophets Long Ago

Before Jesus came, God often spoke to His people through prophets. Prophets were godly people who spoke God's words to people, especially God's people. God would speak to the prophets, then the prophets would tell the people exactly what God said. Sometimes false prophets came who pretended to speak God's words. The difference between the false prophets and God's true prophets was that the words of God's prophets always came true.

Sometimes God used His prophets to warn the people to stop sinning against Him. He urged them to turn away from their sins and receive His forgiveness. If they did not turn back, God used the prophets to tell His people how He would discipline them. After God disciplined His people, He used the prophets to give the people His words of comfort and hope.

The Bible is God's Word. Much of it, God first spoke to His people through the prophets. They wrote it down for God's people to know and obey. The Bible calls Jesus the Word of God, the greatest prophet of all. That's because Jesus is God. He always spoke God's Word.

BIBLE VERSE

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

Bible Truth 3 Bible Verse:
Deuteronomy 18:18-19, HCSB

"I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. I will hold accountable whoever does not listen to My words that he speaks in My name."

CASE STORY

Matthew 3,14; Mark 1,6; Luke 3,9; John 1

Our story is:

The Case of the Wilderness Wild Man.

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

1. Who was the Wilderness Man? How was he like a wild man?
2. Why was he out in the wilderness? What was his message?

This story takes place in New Testament times, but was the answer to something that started way back near the very beginning of time.

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God, sin and death entered the world and spread to all people. It was so terrible! Every person deserved God's just punishment for their sins. They all faced being separated from Him forever and there was nothing they could do to save themselves from this sadness.

No, they couldn't save themselves, but there was someone who could: God. And He planned to do just that. So from even that first awful day, God treated sinners better than they could ever deserve. "Your sins deserve My punishment, but I will send you a Savior," He told them. And through the years, gave them many more promises about the Savior.

Many times these promises were spoken through His prophets. Moses, David, Jeremiah, Hosea, Malachi, Daniel, and many more all passed on glimpses of what this Savior do and be. But perhaps no prophet passed on more about the coming Savior than the prophet Isaiah. "The Savior will be God Himself. He will take the sins of God's people upon Himself. He will rise from the dead," Isaiah reported God's word to the people. And what sign could the people look for to know when the Savior was about to come? "A very special prophet will come to led the way for the Savior," he told them.

"This special prophet will be: "A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the LORD, make straight paths for him. Every valley will be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways, smooth. And all mankind will see God's salvation," he foretold.

Straight paths for the LORD, what did that mean? Just like kings in ancient times used to send servants ahead of their royal caravans to fill in pot holes and level out

bumps, God would send a great prophet to go ahead of his Messiah, to prepare the hearts of the people to be ready for Him.

But there aren't pot holes and bumps in our hearts, are there? Of course, not! But there is sin in our hearts. And there is selfishness and hatred for others, and even for God. These were the kinds of things God would use this great prophet to show the people, that they might turn away from their sin and humbly be ready to believe in the Messiah. Through faith in Him, God would bring forgiveness of their sins. He would change their hearts and fill them love for Him.

Who was this great prophet God sent to prepare the people's hearts for the Messiah? An angel appeared to a man named Zecharias and told him: "Zecharias, your wife is going to have a baby, but don't name him after yourself, like everyone expects you, too. You must name him 'John'-which means 'gift of God.' As your son, he is My gift to you. But even more so, he is My gift to My people. He will prepare the way in their hearts for the Messiah," the LORD said through the angel. "John will be greater than any of the Old Testament prophets. I'm not just going to fill him with my Spirit when it's time for him to start speaking to the people for Me, like I did with the other prophets. No! I'm going to fill him with my Spirit even before he is born!" the LORD promised.

"Now I have special rules that you must teach him to obey," the angel said as he continued with the LORD's message for Zecharias. "He is never to have a haircut, drink wine or touch a dead body his whole life. I want you to do these things so that he will be ready to be my special prophet who will speak my words to prepare the people for the Lord, the Messiah Jesus, when the time comes," the angel commanded.

Everything happened just as the angel had said. Elizabeth became pregnant and she gave birth to a baby boy. Zecharias and Elizabeth, John's parents, did just what the angel told them to do. They gave him the name 'John.' They never cut his hair or let him drink wine. They kept him away from dead bodies. They kept all the other special rules God gave them for raising John. They took him to the desert of Judea to raise him there. John grew up living a rough, outdoor life out in the hot sun, among rocks, snakes, scorpions. His parents gave him locusts (like grasshoppers) and honey for food. God blessed John and

he grew up to be a godly man. The LORD was getting him ready to be the prophet who would prepare the way for the LORD, the Messiah Jesus.

Thirty, long years passed while John lived out in the desert. He had grown into a strong man, with long, long hair that had never been cut. He wore rough clothes made out of scratching camel's hair and a thick leather belt around his waist, just like the great prophet Elijah had hundreds of years earlier.

But far more important than how John looked on the outside, was God's word in his heart, that he longed to preach. "It is time to prepare the way for the LORD, the Messiah Jesus," the Holy Spirit prompted John inside his heart. "Preach the words to the people that I will give to you."

So John went over to the River Jordan, near Bethany and began to speak the words the LORD gave him: "Repent and turn away from your sins for the kingdom of God is near. Be baptized to show that you are turning away from your sins and turning to God. Prepare the way for the LORD, the Messiah Jesus. Make your hearts ready for Him. Live right for God," he urged his listeners.

Before long crowds of people came from Jerusalem and all over the country to hear John. They heard his message and believed. John brought them down into the water and baptized them.

"What should we do now?" the people asked John.

"Don't just change the way you think, change the way you act, too. Be generous and share with others in need. "The man with two [shirts] should share with him who has none, and the one who has food should do the same," John told them.

The tax collectors asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?"

"Stop acting like all the other tax collectors who get greedy and take too much money. Only ask for the fair amount," he told them.

"What should we do?" asked the soldiers.

"Don't be like the other soldiers who threaten people with their swords just to make them give them money. Don't lie about people to get them in trouble with the law. Be satisfied with how much money you get paid," John replied.

Some of the Pharisees and Sadducees came to listen to John, too. But they didn't come to prepare for the coming

Messiah. They came to see what John was doing and get him in trouble, To them John said, "You are like a brood of vipers—poisonous snakes. You hide in nooks and crannies waiting for a chance to strike and kill the good works of God. You need to turn away from your sins, too, just like everyone else. If you do not, you will face God's punishment!" John warned.

But did they listen? Sadly they did not! The Pharisees and the Sadducees refused to join the tax collectors, soldiers and others. They would NOT repent and be baptized. They didn't think they needed to. And so, their hearts were not ready to receive the Messiah who was coming.

And soon the Messiah did come. He came and stood among the crowd listening to John as he preached and baptized by the Jordan River. At last it was His time! Yes, Jesus, the Messiah, Himself, had come!

As Jesus walked through the crowd towards John, God gave John a new message to tell the people: "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! He is the one who comes after me. He is more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie... I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel," John told them.

John's time was through. The prophet had done his job. He had prepared the way and now, praise God, Jesus the Messiah had come! Jesus would preach His words to the prepared hearts of those who heard God's call through John and many would turn and believe in Him.

Our Bible Truth is: God Spoke to His People through Prophets Long Ago

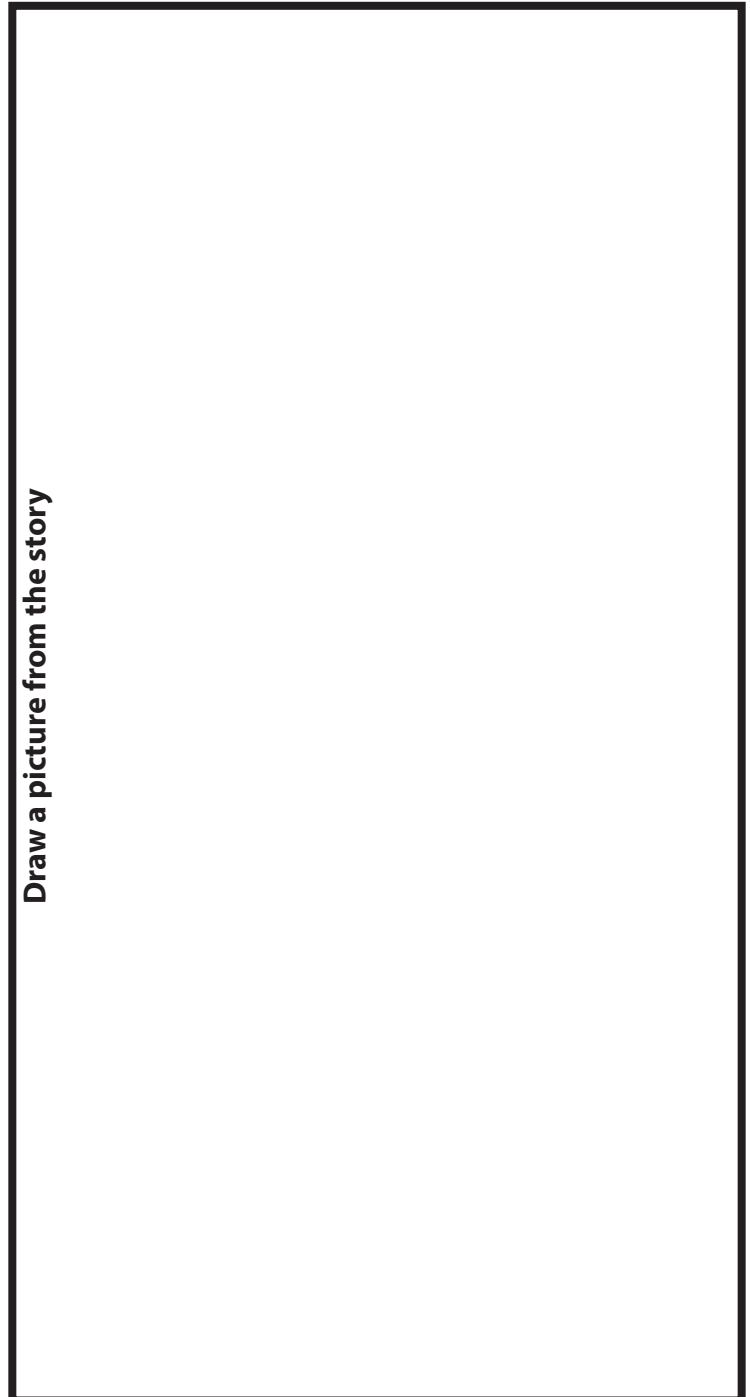
Our Bible Verse is: Deuteronomy 18:18-19, HCSB

"I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. I will put My words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. I will hold accountable whoever does not listen to My words that he speaks in My name."

John had finished his job, preparing the people of Israel for the Messiah, when Jesus began to preach. But do you know, he is still preaching his message today, as we listen to this story. Are our hearts prepared for the LORD? Have we confessed and repented of our sins like many people did when they heard John's message from God? Or are we

still like those Pharisees and Sadducees who might know the right answers but still do not think they need to repent of their sins? The LORD wants US to prepare our hearts for Him, too. He wants us to confess and repent of our sins. He wants us to turn and trust in Jesus as our Savior. If we do, He will fill our hearts with His Spirit, just as He did to those who turned and trusted in Him two thousand years ago.

Let's praise this God who spoke long ago to His people through His prophets. Let's ask Him to prepare the way in our hearts, too, that we might confess and repent of our sins, and turn and trust in Jesus.



Draw a picture from the story

SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU

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

The prophets spoke God’s words to the people long ago, but we will never know what they are. They are lost.

Answer: False. The LORD had the prophets right down His words and write them down just right. We have them in the Bible.

2. Crack the Case Questions:

a. Who was the Wilderness Wild Man? How was he like a wild man?

Answer: John the Baptist. He didn’t cut his hair; he wore for camel’s hair clothes; he ate locusts and honey.

b. Why was he out in the wilderness? What was his message?

Answer: The LORD told him to go live in the wilderness, in fulfillment of the words of the prophets spoken many years earlier. He told people to repent of their sins and be baptized to be prepared for the coming Messiah.

3. Fill in the missing words from the Bible Verse:

Deuteronomy 18:18-19

“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their ___; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I ___him. I will hold accountable whoever does not ___ to My words that he speaks in My name.”

Answers: brothers; command; listen.

AN ACTS PRAYER FROM OUR STORY

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

A God, we praise You for being so merciful that You would plan to send Jesus to save us from our sins.

C God, we confess that we are sinners, like the people who listened to John the Baptist. We can be greedy. We can look good on the outside when we are really sinful in our hearts. We need to repent of our sins! We need a Savior!

T God, we thank You for loving sinners so much that You would promise to send them a Savior; and, that You would prepare their hearts so they could be ready to trust in that Savior.

S God, work in our hearts! By Your Holy Spirit, help us to turn from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior.

BIBLE TRUTH HYMN

The God of Abraham Praise

PFI ESV Songs 1, Track 18

Verse 2

His Spirit floweth free, High surging where it will:
In prophet’s word He spoke of old, He speaketh still.
Established is His law, And changeless it shall stand,
Deep writ upon the human heart, On sea or land.

Words: Daniel ben Judah Dayyan, Translated by Newton Mann

Music: Meyer Lyon

God’s Holy Spirit works powerfully, doing everything God wants Him to do. Long ago, in the days of the prophets, God’s Spirit spoke His words to them, and then they spoke God’s Words to the people. The prophets didn’t just speak God’s words. They also wrote them down in the Bible. God spoke different kinds of things to His people through the prophets. Sometimes God’s words were laws He wanted His people to keep. Sometimes they were words of comfort or warning. Other times, they were words about the future. God’s Holy Spirit helped the prophets say God’s words just right...and He helped them write them down just right. Even now, we can read God’s words that the prophets wrote down when we read the Bible. God can use them to “write” His truth deep upon our hearts. That is, He can use them to teach us His ways and how He wants us to live. He can use them to help us to know Him and obey Him.

BIBLE VERSE SONG

I Will Raise Up

PFI ESV Songs 1, Track 19

I will raise up, I will raise up,
I will raise up for them a prophet like you.
I will raise up, I will raise up,
I will raise up for them a prophet like you.
He will come from among their brothers,
I will put my words in his mouth,
And he will tell them everything I command him.
And whoever does not listen,
I will hold him accountable.
I will raise up, I will raise up,
I will raise up for them a prophet like you.
I will raise up, I will raise up,
I will raise up for them a prophet like you.
Deuteronomy Eighteen, eighteen and nineteen.

Words: Deuteronomy 18:18-19, HCSB Music: Constance Dever ©2012

God tells us in His Word that He would raise up prophets to instruct the people. He used them to instruct the people in how they could be saved by trusting in Him. He used them to warn the people to turn back to Him when they kept on sinning against Him and to offer them forgiveness for their sins. The people were to obey the prophet’s words because they were His words. God’s people still read the words of the prophet’s written in the Bible today. There are things that God wants them to still obey that He commanded through them, long ago.