



The Book of Heaven— The Bible

In April of 1832 a boy was born and given the tribal name “Thunder Rolling In The Mountain.” He was the son of Old Joseph, the leading chief of one of the largest Nez Perce bands.

Both old and young Joseph were among the early Native converts to Christianity. They were influenced by Pastor Henry Spalding at the Protestant mission on Lapwai Creek in the beautiful Wallowa, Oregon Nez Perce country. Young Joseph, or “Thunder Rolling In The Mountain,” and his little brother “Ollicut,” which means “frog,” spent much of their childhood around the Lapwai Mission. When “Thunder Rolling In The Mountain” was in his teens, he was baptized and given the Christian name of Joseph. Little did anyone realize

that young Joseph would become a mighty chief known worldwide for his character and courage.

Old Joseph tried to live by the Bible that he affectionately called the *Book of Heaven*. As the years rolled by, the Nez Perce people faced many disappointments and heartaches. Old Joseph was upset by hypocrisy and the unfairness of others. But he continually taught his young boys that if they followed the teachings of the *Book of Heaven* (the Bible), they and their children would always know prosperity and fulfillment.



● Young Chief Joseph

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Before Old Joseph died he called Young Joseph to him and said, “My son, my body is returning to Mother Earth and my life is very soon going back to the Great Spirit. You are now the chief of our people. They look to you to guide them. Remember to stay close to the teachings of the *Book of Heaven* and live according to them.”

Young Joseph buried his father in the beautiful Wallowa Valley, and then and there promised himself, “I will be true to the principles of the *Book of Heaven* and to the land that I love more than all of the rest of this world.”

Joseph always tried to live by the principles of the

Bible. He found it to be important in leading his people through any difficulties or problems that arose.

Key Thought. Each year thousands of books are printed and millions of copies are sold. But the Bible, the Word of God, is still the most popular book ever printed. Why? First, it points out the way to eternal life. Second, there is “power” that comes when we read and follow God’s Word, giving us strength and inspiration to follow the example of Jesus. Third, it gives us answers to most of the questions we meet from day to day and helps us to know how to live a meaningful life. Every year the lives of thousands of Native men, women, boys, and girls are changed by reading the *Book of Heaven*. It is a letter of love and instruction to you from God Himself.

BIBLE ANSWERS

1. Who gave the inspiration for the writing of the Bible? 2 Timothy 3:16. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of _____.” *(All quotations from the Bible in these lessons are taken from the New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise noted.)*

NOTE: The Bible was written by men, but God the Creator is the one who revealed to them what to write. That’s why the Bible is so powerful and changes the lives of those who read and follow its teachings. The Bible is God’s Word filled with His promises and counsel. Though written in the words of men, the ideas are God’s ideas.

2. Who helped men to know exactly what to write in the Bible? 2 Peter 1:21. “For prophecy never came by



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the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the _____.”

NOTE: The Holy Spirit worked with Bible writers in different ways. Bible writers such as Isaiah and John were given visions. A vision is like a dream, and these men wrote what they dreamed about. The books of the Bible were written in various forms. Paul wrote in the form of letters. Other men, like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, simply wrote about their experiences of being with Jesus and what He taught them. One of the most amazing things about the *Book of Heaven* (the Bible) is that all its authors, sometimes separated by centuries of time, never contradicted each other in the ideas they wrote down. Why not?

The reason for this is simple: all these authors were guided in their thinking by the same Holy Spirit.

3. Why was the Bible written? Romans 15:4. “For whatever things were written before were written for our _____, that we . . . might have _____.”

NOTE: In the Native culture story-telling is important to learning. Stories of the past are told by fathers to their children. When their sons grow up they tell these same stories to their children. There is often the chance that the story might be changed in telling it many times.



Native people in the Yukon place rock formations like this Ice Cap marker at key locations. The Bible is a marker to guide us on the road of life.

God didn't want His stories to us to be changed or misunderstood. He wants men and women to know firsthand His promises to them. This is why He had His messages written down and printed in what we know as the Bible—so people through the ages couldn't change them.

4. According to Jesus, who will we learn about when reading the Bible? John 5:39. “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of _____.”

NOTE: In nearly every book of the Bible there is something about Jesus. He is our pattern, showing us how we should live. The Bible tells us about His coming to earth to fulfill His plan to save us from heartache and eternal death. It also tells us about a place He is preparing for us to live in the future. Jesus' life is a true example of what a citizen of heaven is like. Jesus showed by example how to stay close to our Creator.

The story of Jesus is a golden thread running through the *Book of Heaven* (the Bible). In the West those who work with cattle and horses use rope. There are many kinds of rope. Some are better than others. A high quality rope put out by one maker has a black strand woven

through it. When you buy this brand of rope you know that it is genuine and you can always depend on its strength. It is only through Jesus, whose life and teachings are woven through the Bible, that we have salvation and a perfect example of how to live. Only in spiritual writings and teachings that are Jesus-centered can we have strong trust.

5. Why does the Bible tell us stories of what happened to men and women in the past? 1 Corinthians 10:11. “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our _____ [learning].”

NOTE: We learn from things that happen to other people. For example, Native fishermen may tell you that they have learned through trial and error how to keep flies off salmon when they are being dried. It’s good to listen because they have learned from experience. In the same way God tells us how men and women in the Bible faced problems like the ones we face today. The Bible shows how they allowed God to help them when they went through trouble. As we read about these people, we are encouraged by knowing that if God could help them, He can help us too.

6. A person without hope is like someone stumbling in the darkness. In such darkness to what is the Bible compared? Psalm 119:105.

“Your word is a _____
to my feet and a _____
to my path.”





God hasn't left us in the darkness.
He has given us the Bible as our
source of spiritual light.



NOTE: Have you ever been caught away from home on a cloudy night without a light to guide you? As you feel through your pack, you find a flashlight—which can be likened to the Bible. Then you find some spare batteries—which can be likened to the Holy Spirit. Then putting the batteries into the flashlight, it is wonderful to have a light again. The light helps you find your way back home.

We are living in a dark world, spiritually speaking. There are many different spiritual philosophies, teachings, and ideas floating around us today. But there is only one way of really knowing what is truth—what does the Bible say? The Bible is our only safe rule of faith. God hasn't left us in darkness. He has given us the Bible as our source of spiritual light to guide us toward heaven and along life's pathway.

7. What does the Word of God give us, which brings freedom to us? John 17:17, last part. “Your word is _____.” (See also John 8:32.)

NOTE: God is true; we can depend on His Word. The Bible shows us how to connect with the power of God that will change our life. The greatest evidence that the Bible can produce this change is the freedom, hope, and courage that is experienced by all who continually study and follow its principles and teachings. Many people



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have found that making the Bible the foundation of faith and practice in their lives gives them peace and power for daily living. Do you need peace in your life? By taking a little time each day to read the Bible, your life will never be the same again.

Closing Thought. On September 21, 1904, as young Chief Joseph sat by the fire in his teepee, he had a massive heart attack and died. One of the greatest tributes to Chief Joseph was this testimony of his wife: “My husband was a good man because he was faithful and true to the teachings of the *Book of Heaven*. He sought to make peace with all his enemies. He knew that the *Book of Heaven* would make him a good leader and in the end would bring prosperity to his people. He taught that we will only know trouble and strife when we stray away from the Bible’s teachings. He had hope in the future because of the truths in this wonderful book.”

Like Chief Joseph, you can make the *Book of Heaven* (the Bible) your guide in life.

Source: *The Great Chiefs*. Time Life Books, 1975, pp. 182–186.

Next Lesson. Where did evil come from? We will look to the *Book of Heaven* to find the answer to this important question.



Native New Day

P. O. Box 53055, Los Angeles, CA 90053-0055

EDITORS: NATIVE MINISTRIES NORTHWEST EDITORIAL COMMITTEE;

RUSSELL HOLT

ILLUSTRATIONS: A. J. McCOY

DESIGN & PHOTOGRAPHY: ED GUTHERO DESIGN: MICHELLE C. PETZ

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