Getting to Know Your Bible

A Christadelphian
Bible Course

Not for sale. Issued free by:

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CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE COURSE

Before we begin…

Exploring the Bible is a thrilling adventure. These lessons are intended to act as sign-posts, pointing the way to Bible study. There are 22 in all, and they all deal with important Bible teachings.

If you want to benefit from this Course, then you must have a Bible of your own. Unless you also read your Bible, it will not help you much to read this Course. Probably you have a Bible already, but if not, then you should get one as soon as possible.

In almost every state there is a shop belonging to a Bible Society, where you can buy a Bible very cheaply. Make sure that the Bible you buy is a complete one; a New Testament on its own is only a part of the Bible, and you need it all.

With each lesson of the Course, there will be two sets of Bible readings. The first, under the heading WEEKLY READINGS, will give you six or seven chapters to read during the week. The second, under the heading READING FOR STUDY PAPER, will suggest one or two suitable chapters to read before you set to work on the lesson itself.

It might be a good plan to give each lesson three readings. First, read it through fairly quickly, to get an idea of what it is all about. Then go back to the beginning, and read it carefully, section by section. This time, turn up in your own Bible the passages referred to, and read them in their proper setting. Make a special note of anything you find difficult, or do not agree with. (Many difficulties will clear themselves as you go along). Then, read the paper through again in one sitting.

Some questions for you to answer

At the end of the course, you will find a set of Questions for each lesson. It will be a big help if you will answer the questions for each lesson as soon as you finish the lesson, and send them in every second week, two lessons at a time. When you answer the questions, try to say what you believe to be the truth. If you disagree with anything in the lessons, please feel free to tell us so. If for any reason you are not able to send in the answers, just send us a note to let us know you are still interested and want to continue getting the lessons.

Time well spent

Of course, studying this course will take up some of your time – say 15 minutes a day for Bible Readings, and about an hour each week for studying the lesson. Then there will be an extra half-hour every second week for answering the questions. But very soon you will find that the Bible is such an interesting book, that you will want to spend more and more time with it.

Reading the Bible

The Bible is full of interest. But that is not all: it is the Word of God. So we have to come to it prayerfully, asking that God will help us to understand its teaching.

There is one prayer in the Bible that we would do well to learn by heart:
"*Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law*" (Psalm 119 verse 18).

And so, by reading the Bible day by day, and striving to understand it, we shall not only become more and more certain that it is God's word, but we shall feel its effect upon us – changing our lives, and making us better men and women.

Doing the course

Answers can be emailed to the_christadelphians@yahoo.co.in or posted to

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No. 1

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The Bible our guide

WEEKLY READINGS Genesis, chapters 1-3;
Luke, chapters 1-3.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Psalm 1, Psalm 19 and
Psalm 119, verses 81-112.

The need for a guide

When we are visiting a place we have never been to before, we need some sort of a guide. It may be we buy a map, or a guidebook. It may be we ask a friend who has first-hand knowledge of the way – but we must have a guide.

So, as we travel through life, we need a guide. We need to know what is the purpose of life, and how we should live day by day. The Bible claims to have the answer to these questions.

When we consider the wonders of the world around us, and the marvellous way in which our own bodies are made, we feel sure that a great Creator must have been at work. But how can we know more about Him, and find out what He wants us to do.

The answer, of course, is in the Bible. God, the great maker of all things, has given us the guide-book that we need. If we would please Him, we must take that guide-book, and read it, and study it, and think about it day by day.

The Bible's claims

The Bible makes great claims. It speaks with authority, claiming to be the Word of God. Many times the prophets of the Old Testament begin their message with the words, "*Thus saith the Lord*". The apostle Paul tells us that
"*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God*" (II Timothy, chapter 3, verse 16).

If these claims were not true, and the Bible were not the Word of God, we could put it on the shelf and forget it. However beautiful its teachings, they would have no claim upon us.

Since the Bible is true, we dare not ignore it – unless we want to ignore God, and cut ourselves off from the offer of life which He has made!

How do we know that the Bible is true

What reasons are there for believing the Bible to be true? There are so many reasons that we cannot give them all here, but will mention a few of them.

In the first place, we have the Lord Jesus Christ's word for it. In His days, only the Old Testament had been written – and Jesus believed every word of it. Whenever He was challenged over anything that He had said or done, He would support His words and deeds by referring to the Old Testament.

When the Sadducees came to Him, arguing that there was no such thing as resurrection from the dead, He said to them,
"*Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God*" (Matthew, chapter 22, verse 29).

Then He went on to prove to them, from the Old Testament, that the hope of resurrection from the dead was part of the revelation of God.

Jesus speaks of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; of David and Solomon, and of many other people about whom we read in the Old Testament; and from the way in which He speaks of them, we know that He believes the Old Testament stories about them.

Then there is the fact that no one has ever proved the Bible false. Many enemies of the Bible, including some very clever men, have tried to do this, but they have all failed. If we stop to think about this, we have to admit that it is a remarkable thing.

Then again, there is the wonderful fulfillment of prophecies. The Bible speaks, from time to time, of events that are to come to pass hundreds of years later. In Matthew, chapter 2, for example, we read that the wise men came to Herod to ask "*Where is He that is born King of the Jews?*" Now Herod asked the chief priests this question, and they at once replied, "*In Bethlehem of Judea*". How did they know? Because, hundreds of years before, it had been prophesied in one of the books of the Old Testament – Micah, chapter 5, verse 2.

The history of the Bible, written so long ago, has been proved true again and again by modern discoveries.

So we could go on finding more proofs, but the best way is to read the Bible for ourselves. Then, gradually we come to see how each part fits in with the others, like the pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. We gradually come to see what a perfect picture it makes when complete, showing to us the whole purpose of God.

The contents of the Bible

The Bible is not really one book, but a collection of books – 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New, making 66 in all. They were written by many different author over a period of several thousand years, yet all combine to give us one complete story – the story of the working out of God's purpose with man, from its very beginnings – recorded in Genesis, right up to the time when
"*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever*" (Revelation, chapter 11, verse 15).

The Old Testament

The first five books of the Old Testament were written by Moses, who is called in the Bible, the "servant of God". The first book is called Genesis, which means "beginnings". It tells us about God's dealings with the first men on this earth.

Then follow Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

These four books tell us how God brought the Jews, whom He had chosen to be His people, out of Egypt, and gave them the land of Canaan (Israel). Then follow a number of books telling the history of this people, and God's dealings with them.

When we come to the book of Psalms, we find some of the finest poetry that has ever been written. You don't like poetry? But the poetry of the Bible is different. It speaks of feelings we all have at times, yet cannot put into words. For instance, take these verses from Psalm 8, verses 3 and 4.
"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him?"

Haven't you ever felt like that when you looked up at the stars at night?

Then we have the books of the prophets – the long prophetic works of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, followed by many shorter prophecies.

You will find a complete list of the books at the front of your Bible – this is just to give you some idea of their order and content.

The New Testament

This begins with four separate stories of the life of Christ, written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – each one telling the story in his own way.

Then follows the story of what happened after Jesus Christ was risen from the dead. Here we read about the first churches that were formed, in a book called "The Acts of the Apostles".

We have then a number of letters written by various apostles to help these young churches and, finally, the Book of Revelation.

Again, if you want a complete list, you will find it in the front of your Bible.

Note

If you would like fuller proof of the reliability of the Bible, write and -tell us, and ask for a copy of the leaflet Is the Bible True? Of Course It Is!

No. 2

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God so loved the World

WEEKLY READINGS Genesis, chapters 4-6;
Luke, chapters 4-6.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Isaiah, chapter 53.

What is wrong with the world?

Something is wrong with the world we live in – on this we must all agree. Open your newspaper any day, and you will be sure to see accounts of murders, frauds, and crimes; fighting and threat of war.

We are so used to these things, that we take them for granted. But if we stop to think about them, we are bound to ask, "Why?" Surely, when God first made the world – and made it such a perfect dwelling place for men – He intended something better than the world of trouble and uncertainty that we live in today.

The beginning of the trouble

In the beginning, when God made the very first man, called Adam, He taught him His ways. He also gave Adam a simple law, and, just as a father expects obedience from his children, so God expected obedience from Adam.

God said,
"*Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*"
(Genesis, chapter 2, verses 16-17).

Adam disobeyed God. His disobedience led eventually to death, as God had said it would. It also made it easier for Adam to sin next time, and more than that – all his descendants were born with this tendency to sin.

In Romans, chapter 5, verse 12, we read,

"*...as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*".

So we see that Adam sinned, and, because he was a sinner, he died

We also sin and die. When you read the chapter in Isaiah, did you notice the words of verse 6?
"*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way*".

The prophet Jeremiah tells us the same thing, in different words, when he says,
"*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked*" (Jeremiah, chapter 17, verse 9).

We read these things in the Bible, and we know from our own feelings that they are true, just as the apostle Paul did when he said,
"*For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing*" (Romans, chapter 7, verse 18).

We all have to agree with Paul – somehow, we never manage to be as good as we want to be.

What is the remedy?

Before he sinned, Adam walked in friendship with God. Now that friendship was broken. Adam was a sinner, and could no longer have fellowship with his Maker.

Adam probably did not know what a lot of trouble he was starting. Ever since then, for thousands of years, every one of his descendants (including you and me!) has followed in his footsteps and sinned (everyone except Jesus, of course). And because we are all sinful, we are all cut off from God. What a hopeless state! Men could do nothing to save themselves.

But God, in His love and His pity, did not leave men to die in their sins. He provided a way in which they could come to Him, and have life. We read in John, chapter 3, verse 16,
"*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*."

Now it IS always easier to make something if you have a good pattern to go by. A chi ld learns to speak by imitating his parents. And so we may

learn to be better men and women, by taking Jesus as our pattern, and learning all we can about Him, and trying to be like Him.

When we look at Jesus, we see what God wants us to be.

Jesus and the cross

Jesus never sinned. He always did those things that pleased God. And yet they crucified Him! God did not save Him from this terrible death. The verse we have already quoted from Isaiah goes on to say,
"The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

The Bible teaches us plainly that through the death of Jesus on the cross, in obedience to His Father's will, we may have our sins forgiven, and may have a hope of life.

There is something very wonderful about this – the love of God in giving His only Son, and the loving obedience of that Son to His Father's will. By believing in Him, we may have life. We cannot think about this too often. We shall come back to it again and again in all our searching of the Bible, because it is at the heart of the Christian's hope.

Believing in Him

John, chapter 3, verse 16, tells us that,
"*Whosoever believeth in Him (Jesus) should not perish, but have everlasting life*."

Does that mean that we have only to say, "I believe in Jesus", and we shall be saved from sin and death?

It may seem so at first, but let us stop and think for a while. If we really believe anything, we act upon it, don't we? If our child is sick, and we believe the doctor can save him, we don't just say, "I believe in Dr. So-and-so", and let the child go on suffering. Of course not. We send for the doctor, and, because we believe in him, we do whatever he says.

Now it is just the same with believing in Jesus. If we really believe, we shall find out what He wants us to do, and do it to the best of our powers.

Only if we do this, can we hope to be among those who *"will not perish, but have everlasting life".*

Summary

1. Adam, the father of the human race, sinned, and so God made him die.

2. We are like him; we also sin, and therefore we die.

3. God will forgive us our sins, and give us eternal life, if we believe in Jesus.

4. If we really believe in Jesus, we will want to do what He tells us.

No. 3

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The Return of

the Lord Jesus to the earth

WEEKLY READINGS Genesis, chapters 7-9;
Luke, chapters 7-10.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Acts, chapter 1;
2 Thessalonians, chapter 1.

Two thousand years ago

Jesus had been crucified. His followers were puzzled and disappointed. All their hopes had been placed in Him – now He lay dead in the tomb.

But the third day He rose again. Surely they must have remembered the words He had spoken to them before His death,
"*Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: ...but your sorrow shall be turned into joy*" (John, chapter 16, verse 20).

What a joy it must have been to see their beloved Lord and Master again. John tells us,
"*Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord*" (John, chapter 20, verse 20).

How glad they were, we can hardly imagine.

When Jesus went to heaven

Now read the first eight verses of Acts, chapter 1, again.

Picture to yourself how happy the apostles must have been during those 40 days, when Jesus was amongst them once more, as their teacher.

Picture them, at the end of those 40 days, standing on the green hill-slopes of Bethany, with Jesus in their midst. Suddenly, He was taken from them, upwards into heaven. How they would gaze after Him as He left the earth, and was hidden from their view by a cloud. He had been

taken from them again. Yet this time they were neither puzzled nor disappointed; not at all! Luke tells us that,
"...*He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven, and they worshipped Him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.*" (Luke, chapter 24, verses 51-52).

The secret of their joy

Why, after this second parting, were they so joyful? Partly, because Jesus had made them a promise. He had said,
"*Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*" (Matthew, chapter 28, verse 20).

So they knew that, whatever happened, He would be watching over them from Heaven.

But that was not all! While they were watching Him go into heaven, two angels came to them with a message. They said,
"*Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you in to heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven*" (Acts, chapter 1, verse 11).

This is such an important little verse, it is worth learning by heart.

As the disciples went back to Jerusalem to obey the commandments of their Lord, they knew for certain that Jesus Himself would come back to this earth. And this made them very happy.

The words of Jesus

That was nearly 2,000 years ago, and Jesus hasn't come back yet.

But He will come. He said so Himself. In Luke, chapter 21, verse 27, He speaks about coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. (Did you notice that He went in a cloud? and that the angels said He would come "*in like manner*" as they had seen Him go up?)

Many of the parables also speak of His second coming. Take, for instance, the parable in Matthew, chapter 25, verses 1-13. This speaks of a bridegroom and, although the picture is of an Eastern wedding, we have no difficulty in understanding it. The bridegroom, of course, is Christ, and the story warns us that when He comes, there will be some who are not prepared for Him.

Notice verse 13. Jesus doesn't say, "Ye know not whether your Lord will come or not". His coming is certain. But He does say, "*Ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh*".

In His very last message, in the book of Revelation, Jesus said, "*Behold I come quickly*" (Revelation, chapter 22, verse 7).

The witness of Peter

Not many days after Jesus had gone into heaven, we find Peter in the Temple, in Jerusalem, speaking boldly to the Jews who had been responsible for crucifying Him. See what he says, in Acts, chapter 3, verses 19-20:
"*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you*."

Peter also spoke of the second coming of Christ in a letter which he wrote later to believers. In II Peter, chapter 3, verse 4, he spoke of those who would say, scoffingly,
"*Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*."

Perhaps you have heard people use words very much like those. "Oh, they've been saying Jesus is coming back for a long time, but He hasn't come yet", and they sometimes add, "He never will."

But God has promised to send Him, and we know that He will keep His promise. Peter goes on to say, in verses 9 and 10,
"*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. – But the day of the Lord will come, as a thief in the night*..."

The witness of Paul

Jesus Himself appeared to the apostle Paul, and sent him to preach to others. Paul claims that the gospel that he preached was given him by Jesus Christ. And Paul taught about the second coming of the Lord. In Acts, chapter 17, verse 31, we find him saying,
"*He (God) hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained*..."

Paul wrote two letters to the Church at Thessalonica. You will find these letters in your Bible – they consist of eight short chapters, and – here is the surprising thing – in every chapter Paul mentions the coming of Jesus. In I Thessalonians, chapter 4, verse 16, the apostle speaks of the resurrection of the dead at Jesus' coming.
"*For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead In Christ shall rise first.*"

In 2 Thessalonians, chapter 1, verses 7-8, Paul tells how Jesus will be
"*...revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Here he speaks of Jesus Christ coming to punish some – but if we read on, we find that he also speaks of some to whom His coming will bring joy, for He will come "*to be admired in all them that believe*."

If we are wise, like the wise virgins of the parable, we will study His word, and prepare ourselves now for His coming. When Jesus said, "*Surely I come quickly*" (Revelation, chapter 22, verse 20) to the apostle John, he replied, "*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*."

Shall we be like the apostle, and make this the prayer of our hearts?

Summary
1. Jesus Christ is coming back to the earth.

2. We can be quite sure about this, because He said so Himself.

3. Also the angels said so, Peter said so, Paul said so, and John said so.

4. If we are wise, we shall prepare now for His coming.

No. 4

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Thy Kingdom Come

WEEKLY READINGS Genesis, chapters 12-14;
Luke, chapters 11-14.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER 1 Chronicles, chapter 29.

"Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth"

How many times have you said these words, or heard them said by others? They are part of the prayer which Jesus taught His disciples. You can read it in Matthew, chapter 6, verses 9-13. We know the words very well – but do we know just what they mean?

Look at them again. They are a prayer that God's Kingdom may come, and that His will may be done on this earth, as it is always done in heaven. So we see straight away that the Kingdom for which we are to pray is to be here on this earth. And when God's Kingdom comes, then men and women will do His will.

There once was a kingdom of God on earth

Did you know that, thousands of years ago, the Kingdom of God did actually exist on earth? Turn back to I Chronicles, chapter 29, and read verse 1, and then verses 10-13, taking special note of verse 11, which says,
"Thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all."

The Kingdom spoken of, as you will see when you read the chapter, is the Kingdom of Israel, in the land of Israel. Now read verse 23,
"*Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king instead of David his father.*"

The throne on which David sat, and on which his son Solomon sat after him, was in Jerusalem, the chief city of the land of Israel. And the kingdom over which he reigned was the Kingdom of Israel.

Why was the Kingdom of Israel called the Kingdom of God, and why was its throne called the "throne of the Lord"? It was because God Himself had given the Israelites that Kingdom; He had chosen Jerusalem for the capital city (I Kings, chapter 11, verse 13); He had given the laws by which the Kingdom was to be governed (you will find them in the Bible,

in the books of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy); and the King who reigned was reigning for God.

God's Kingdom overthrown

Hundreds of years passed by. King after king reigned over Israel in Jerusalem. Some were good kings, ruling in the fear of God, and some were evil.

At last there came a day when the nation of Israel had departed so far from God's ways, and the king who reigned at Jerusalem was so wicked, that God said that the kingdom should continue no longer.

Read Ezekiel, chapter 21, verses 25-27, and especially verse 27, which says,
"*I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: [the Kingdom of Israel] and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him*."

He whose right it is

We can see from the verses in Ezekiel that One was to come who "had a right" to the throne of the Kingdom of God – One who was the Heir – and God was going to give it to Him.

From the day that the last king was removed from the throne, right up to the present day, there has never been an Israelitish king ruling in Jerusalem.

But turn in your Bible to Luke, chapter 1, verses 31-33, and read the words spoken to Mary, the mother of Jesus, by the angel who appeared to her. Speaking of Jesus, the angel says,
"*He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David*."

Who has a right to the throne of the Kingdom of God? Why, Jesus, God's Son, of course. He has indeed a two-fold right, because His mother, Mary, was descended from the great King David.

Jesus claimed to be a King. At His trial, when Pilate asked Him, "*Art thou a King, then?*" He replied, "*Thou sayest that I am a King*" (John, chapter 18, verse 37). That is the Jewish way of saying, "Yes, I am."

Over the cross on which He was crucified was written, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS" (Matthew, chapter 27, verse 37). His enemies meant to mock Him, but what they said was true.

The Gospel that Jesus preached was the good news of the Kingdom of God. (Gospel means simply, good news.) In Luke, chapter 8, verse 1, we read that…
"*He went through every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the Kingdom of God.*"

Now you know why Jesus is coming back. He is coming back to set up again the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom and ourselves

Perhaps you may think, "Why, then, should we pray, 'Thy Kingdom Come'? If it is an Israelite Kingdom, what has it to do with us?"

You will learn, as you continue your studies, that the Kingdom over which Jesus will rule is going to extend far beyond the first Kingdom of God – indeed, it will extend over all the earth, and bring peace to all people.

And so we pray, "Thy Kingdom come". And we pray, too, that when Jesus comes back, He may say to us,
"*Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*" (Matthew, chapter 25, verse 34).

See how each part of the Bible helps to explain the other parts!

We have now learned:

1. That a Kingdom of God once existed in the land of Israel.

2. That God brought the Kingdom to an end, but promised to restore it to its rightful heir.

3. That that heir is Jesus, and He is going to sit on the throne of David at Jerusalem, ruling over the Israelites for ever.

4. That all the faithful will share in the blessings of the Kingdom.

No. 5

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The Kingdom of God – Peace on Earth

WEEKLY READINGS Genesis, chapters 15-17;
Luke, chapters 15-18.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Psalm 72;
Isaiah, chapter 35.

Peace on earth – when?

When Jesus was born, the angels sang for joy. The words of their song are written in Luke, chapter 2, verse 14,
"*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men*."

Yet from that day to this, there has never been any real and lasting peace on earth. And there never will be, until Jesus comes back to Israel to set up the Kingdom of God.

The Old Testament tells us a lot about that kingdom, and gives us many pictures of the time of peace and prosperity that it will bring.

The extent of the Kingdom

Look again at Psalm 72. In this Psalm we are given a picture in words of the time when God's Kingdom is established on earth. But, for the moment, notice particularly verse 8,
"He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."

This tells us that the Kingdom set up by Jesus in Israel is going to extend over the whole earth. We find the same thing in Psalm 2, verse 8, where God speaks to Jesus, saying,
"*Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession*." (In your Bible you may notice that it says "heathen" instead of nations. When the Bible was first written in English, about 400 years ago, the word "heathen" meant exactly what our word "nation" means today.)

Let us look up one more verse. Turn to the 14th chapter of Zechariah, and read verse 9,
"*And the Lord shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one*."

The rule of Christ

Jesus Christ will rule from Jerusalem, His capital city, which He once called, "*The city of the great King*" (Matthew, chapter 5, verse 35).

His law will go out through all the earth, as we read in Isaiah, chapter 2. Read verses 1-4, and note particularly: "*Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem*. "

An ideal kingdom

Suppose you were asked to say what conditions you would like to live under in an ideal world.

One of the first things you would ask for would be security; freedom from fear, and peace to enjoy the fruits of your labour. In fact, you would probably have a picture in your mind something like the one the prophet Micah gives us.
"*And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts hath spoken it*" (Micah, chapter 4, verses 3-4).

But before there can be peace, there must be a real effort on the part of men to walk in the ways of God. So long as men continue to go their own way, there will be trouble. So one of the first works of the Lord Jesus will be to teach all nations the ways of God.

But, you may say, there are some who simply wouldn't listen! That is true, and those who do not obey will be punished, as we read in Isaiah, chapter 11, verse 4, *"With the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked"* – for, remember, when Jesus comes back, He will be all-powerful.

Under the rule of Jesus, then, all people will learn to do that which is pleasing to God – as it tells us in Isaiah, chapter 26, verse 9,
"*When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness*."

Now turn over to Isaiah, chapter 32, verse 17, and you will read,
"*The work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.*"

Prosperity for all

With such perfect conditions, there will be prosperity on every hand. Did you notice verse 16 of Psalm 72, which says,
"*There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains*."

Mountain-tops are usually bare. If there is a handful of corn upon the top of the mountains, we can imagine how abundant it will be in the valleys. As we read in Psalm 67, verse 6,
"*Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us.*"

Even the deserts will be green in those days. Read the beautiful verses in Isaiah, chapter 35, which tell us how,
"*The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing*" (verses 1-2).

Healing of mind and body

With these blessings will come also the blessing of greater health and strength.

When Jesus lived on earth nearly 2,000 years ago, He brought health to many who were sick, by using the power that God had given Him. In the Kingdom of God, this power will again be seen.

Read on in Isaiah chapter 35, to verse 5,
"*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing*."

We can well imagine, too, that people will live longer than they do today. The prophet Zechariah tells us that this will be so. In chapter 8, verses 4-5, he says,
"*There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof*."

These verses speak of Jerusalem, but, as we have seen, the blessings of the Kingdom will extend over all the earth.

The sure word of God

Perhaps you are thinking, "All this sounds very nice, but it is surely too good to be true".

If the promises which we have read about depended on men, then we certainly could put no trust in them. Even the best of men may not be able to do what they promise, because of human weakness.

But these are the promises of God, and we may put all our trust in them.

Read Isaiah, chapter 55, verses 6-11, and notice particularly verse 11,
"*So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which! please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it*."

And so we may look forward with joy to that time when there shall be: "*GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH PEACE*" (Luke chapter 2, verse 14).

Summary

1. When Jesus comes back, He will become King of the World.

2. His capital city will be Jerusalem.

3. Allover the world there will be peace and prosperity, health and happiness.

4. In His world-wide Kingdom, everybody will learn to obey God's commandments.

No. 6

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How the children of Israel fit into God's Plan – 1

WEEKLY READINGS Genesis, chapters 18-20;
Luke, chapters 19-21.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Genesis, chapter 37;
Isaiah, chapter 43.

The beginning of the story

The story of the Israelites really begins with that faithful man Abraham. He had a son in his old age named Isaac, and Isaac had a son named Jacob, who was afterwards called Israel. Jacob had twelve sons, who were the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. The youngest but one of these sons was called Joseph, and the story of his life, which we have in the Bible, is one we never get tired of reading. But it is more than a good story – it tells us about important events in the history of the 'people of the Bible' – the Israelites. It gives us, too, a wonderful example of the over-ruling care of God for His people.

We all remember the story of how Joseph's jealous brothers sold him as a slave; and, how, after many trials, he became governor of Egypt. Then, in a time of famine, his father and his brothers came down to Egypt, because – thanks to Joseph, and thanks, of course, to God – there was corn in Egypt:

For a time, the Jews (originally called Israelites, or children of Israel) were quite happy in Egypt. But after Joseph's death, as the number of Jews in Egypt grew more and more, the Egyptians began to oppress them, and treat them as slaves.

Freedom for the slaves

Perhaps you know the story of how God brought these Jewish slaves out of Egypt, under the leadership of a man called Moses, and led them through a barren and deserted land to the borders of the land of Israel. On this long and dangerous journey, God fed them and cared for them. As we read in Nehemiah, chapter 9, verses 20-21,

"*Thou gavest also Thy good Spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not Thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. Yea, forty years didst Thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not.*"

God drove out the wicked tribes who lived in the land of Israel, and gave it to the Jews. He gave them laws, and chose Judges to rule over them. He said to them, "If you disobey, you will be punished". You will read in Deuteronomy, chapter 28, the blessings which God would give them if they obeyed Him, and the curses that were to come upon them if they disobeyed Him.

The Jews demand a king

Nearly 400 years went by. During those years, God had appointed Judges to rule over the twelve tribes of Israel. (The descendants of Jacob were divided into twelve family groups, called tribes). But the Jews became dissatisfied and wanted a king like the nations around them. I n asking for a king, they were refusing to recognise that God was their king. When Samuel, their Judge, told God how they had demanded a king, God said,

"*They have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I… should not reign over them*" (I Samuel, chapter 8, verse 7).

God granted their request, and gave them the king they wanted.

You may like to read for yourself the interesting story of the anointing of Saul, the first king of Israel. You will find it in 1 Samuel, chapters 8 and 9.

A divided kingdom

Saul was followed by the great King David, of whom you will be hearing more in a later lesson. After a long reign of 40 years, David died, and his son Solomon became king.

Solomon was very rich; he taxed the people rather heavily. This made the people discontented, and when Solomon died, they came to his son, Rehoboam, and asked him to ease their burden. You will read, in 1 Kings, chapter 12, how Rehoboam listened to his young friends, instead of taking the advice of the wise old men who had been his father's counsellors.

When the people came to King Rehoboam to ask whether he would agree to their request, he answered very unwisely. We read in 1 Kings,

chapter 12, verses 13-14, that the king "*answered the people roughly*", saying,
"*My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions*."

No wonder the people rebelled against such a king! Ten of the tribes of Israel went away, and formed a kingdom of their own, under a man named Jeroboam. Only Judah, the tribe to which Rehoboam belonged, and the little tribe of Benjamin, remained faithful to him.

So from this time on, we have two histories, side by side, in the Bible. There is the history of the ten tribes, often spoken of as 'Israel' or the Northern Kingdom (because they lived in the northern part of the land) and the history of the two tribes spoken of as 'Judah' or the Southern Kingdom.

The continual disobedience of the Jews

In the first and second books of Kings we read the sad story of how the people continually forgot about God, and forsook His ways.

At last, things became so bad that God said He would punish the people, as He had warned them continually that He would, by causing them to be taken from their land as slaves.

You will see from these words from 2 Chronicles, chapter 36, verses 15-16, how God had done everything He could to bring His people back to His ways,
"*And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy.*"

Punishment at last

Israel, the Northern Kingdom, was first taken captive. The king of Assyria came and carried the people into Assyria, and, as a nation, they never came back to their own land. You can read about this in 2 Kings, chapter 17, verses 6-18, and in verse 23, where the writer says,
"*...the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all His servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.*"

Later, the kingdom of Judah was taken captive by the king of Babylon. But their state was not as hopeless as that of Israel; God promised that after 70 years they should be brought back to their own land, and the Temple, which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, should be rebuilt.

Back in their own land again

Some of the Jews had grown so comfortable and wealthy in Babylon that they did not want to go back to their own land. But a faithful company led by men raised up by God were prepared to make the difficult journey, and to start to rebuild the Temple, and settle down to a new life.

They met with many difficulties, but God sent prophets to encourage and correct them; and the last three books of the Old Testament – Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi – are the writings of these prophets.

Through the prophet Micah (Micah, chapter 3, verse 6) God had spoken of a time when the "*sun should go down over the prophets*".

And from the time of Malachi onwards until the coming of John the Baptist, of whom we read in the New Testament, there was no word from God for the people, except what had already been written.

Yet the Jews were, and still are, God's people, and, in our next lesson, we will follow their history right up to the present day.

Summary

1. Thousands of years ago, God chose the Children of Israel to be His own special nation and obey Him.

2. He brought them into the land of Israel, and afterwards He gave them a king.

3. They became divided into two separate kingdoms, one called Israel and one called Judah.

4. Both Israel and Judah were carried away into captivity in foreign countries.

5. After 70 years, Judah went back to their own country, and – as we shall see in the next lesson – were there when Jesus was born among them.

No. 7

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How the children of Israel fit into God's Plan – 2

WEEKLY READINGS Genesis, chapters 21-23;
Luke, chapters 22-24.

READING FOR STUDY PAPER Deuteronomy, chapter 28;
Zechariah, chapter 8.

Between the Old and New Testaments

The Jews had come back from Babylon to the land of Israel after 70 years of captivity. Encouraged by the prophets, they rebuilt the Temple of God in Jerusalem. The last three books of the Old Testament – Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi – were written during these days.

Then there was a long period of time – 400 years – during which the Jews had no direct message from God. The prophet Amos had foretold this time. In Amos, chapter 8, verse 11 we read,
"*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord*."

This period of 400 years comes between the last book of the Old Testament and the first book of the New Testament.

No wonder that when John the Baptist appeared, there was a great stir among the people. After hundreds of years of silence, God had spoken again to His people.

The greatest Jew

But John the Baptist was sent by God to prepare the way for someone even greater. God was about to send His own Son to save His people. And so, in the land of Israel, nearly 2,000 years ago, the Lord Jesus Christ was born. We sometimes forget that Jesus was a Jew.

You know what happened. After hearing His words, and seeing the wonderful things He did, the Jews rejected Jesus. They persuaded Pilate to crucify Him. When Pilate said, "*I am innocent of the blood of this just person*", the Jews answered,
"*His blood be on us, and on our children*" (Matthew, chapter 27, verses 24-25).

They could not have committed a worse crime. They had shed the innocent blood of God's own Son. Yet, by the powerful preaching of the apostles, God gave them another chance. Most of them refused God's offer of mercy, and punishment had to come. A dreadful punishment it was!

A people without a home

Forty years later, the Roman army came and fought against those men and their children. (You remember they had said, "*His blood be on us, and on our children*".) It was a time of dreadful suffering for the Jews. The horrors of that war are some of the grimmest in history. The city was taken by the Romans, and those Jews who survived were scattered among all the nations of the earth.

God had warned the Jews long ago that this would happen if they forsook His ways. You have read in Deuteronomy, chapter 28, verse 64, "*The Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other.*"

And so, for nearly 2,000 years, the Jews had no land of their own. Worse than this, they have suffered many terrible persecutions, and the dreadful curses of Deuteronomy have been brought upon them. Some of these persecutions have happened within living memory. Many of us can remember the concentration camps of Hitler, and his persecution, in which over six million Jews were killed with a cruelty that shook the world. Read again Deuteronomy, chapter 28, verses 64-67, and you will marvel that these words, written by Moses over 3,000 years ago, have come to pass in our time.

It is a sad story, and it is not yet ended. We are bound to feel glad when we read from the Word of God that the ending will be a happy one.

Back to their own land at last

Turn to Jeremiah, chapter 30, and read the words of God to the Jews in verse 11,

"*Though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished*."

Again in Jeremiah, chapter 31, verses 10-11, we read,
"*He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.*"

And now, after nearly 2,000 years, God is gathering Israel. In 1917 the Balfour Declaration was signed. This was a promise that the British would make the land of Palestine (now called Israel) a national home for the Jews.

From that time onwards, the Jews have been going back to the land of Israel in great numbers, though Britain has not always been as helpful as she promised to be.

There was another step forward in 1948, when the State of Israel was formed.

Jerusalem – the future capital of the world

Today there is trouble in the Middle East. The little Jewish State has had to fight for its existence against great odds. Even now, surrounded by powerful and well-armed enemies, its future appears black.

But we read in Jeremiah, chapter 30, verse 7,
"*it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it*."

When the last great day of battle comes – and we can see from our daily papers that it cannot be far away – the Jews in Israel will be in a desperate position.

And at that time, the Lord Jesus will come again. He will save the land of Israel, and – at last – the Jews will recognise Him and accept Him. The prophet Zechariah tells us,
"*they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son...*" (Zechariah, chapter 12, verse 10).

Under Jesus, their King, the Jews will be the most exalted nation in the world, and the prophecy of Zechariah, chapter 8, verses 22-23, will be fulfilled,

"*Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you'.*"

This little table may help you

1. 3,500 years ago God brought the Jews out of Egypt. He gave them the land of Israel to live in, and taught them His ways.

2. The Jews forsook God's ways. Instead of showing the nations around how God wanted them to live, they copied those wicked nations.

3. 2,500 years ago God at last punished them by sending them into captivity. The Southern Kingdom of Judah was brought back to the land of Israel after 70 years, but they still went on disobeying God.

4. 2,000 years ago After the crucifixion of Jesus, the Jews were driven out of the land. For nearly 2,000 years they were homeless and persecuted.

5. Today God is again bringing them back to the land of Israel, and will shortly make them "*The head [of the nations] and not the tail*" (Deuteronomy, chapter 28, verse 13).

No. 8

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A Law that could not bring Life

WEEKLY READINGS Genesis, chapters 27-29;
1 Timothy, chapters 1-3.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Hebrews, chapters 9-10.

We must have laws

What would happen in one of our busy towns if every car driver drove his car just as fast as he pleased, and went anywhere in the road without considering other people? There would soon be many serious accidents.

Wherever men and women live together in towns and villages, they must have laws. They must have good laws, and there must be someone to see that these laws are kept.

The Law of Moses

You will remember how God brought the Jews out of Egypt; and how He gave them the land of Israel to live in. You will remember, too, from lesson 6, how He was their King, and how He gave them laws.

We usually speak of these laws as 'The Law of Moses'; because it was to Moses that God first gave them, and Moses passed them on to the people. Nearly everybody has heard of that most important section of the Law of Moses, called 'The Ten Commandments'.

Amongst these was the law of the Sabbath Day.

A law given by God

Because the Law of Moses was given by God, it is quite different from the laws which men make. We can divide the various commandments into two kinds.

First, there were the rules for everyday life. There were rules to say what the people should eat; the kind of clothes they should wear; and the way in which they should behave towards each other. In fact, these rules were to guide them in every way in their everyday life.

But there were other laws besides these. There were many laws telling the people how they must behave towards God, and the way in which they must worship Him.

When the people came to God to ask His forgiveness for their sins, or to offer Him thanksgiving and praise, they had to bring an animal – usually a lamb or kid – and kill it.

The animal sacrifices were to remind the Jews that they were sinners, and deserved to die. They were to remind them, too, that they must worship God in the way in which He commanded, and not in the way they chose themselves.

The Law was hard to keep

The Law of Moses, having been given by God, was a very good law. Paul tells us in Romans, chapter 7, verse 12, that,
"*The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good*."

But men are not naturally good. Many of the Jews didn't even try to keep the law; and even those who did try failed. The more they tried to keep the law, the more they realised that they were sinners.

We saw that the Law of Moses was necessary to govern the nation. But it did something else besides this. It made men realise that they were sinners, unable to keep God's law. And because they were sinners, they deserved to die.

Paul says in Romans, chapter 3, verse 19,
"*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God*."

A better way

The law taught men that they were sinners, and deserved to die. They needed someone to save them from their sins.

The law itself could not save them – it could only show them their sinfulness. So God, in His love, provided something better. God gave His own Son, Jesus Christ, to be a sacrifice for sin. We read in Psalm 40, verses 6-8,
"*Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; mine ears hast Thou opened: burnt offering, and sin offering hast Thou not required. Then said*

I, 'Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart'."

Jesus always did the things that pleased God, He was the perfect sacrifice, offering Himself for our sakes.

We no longer have to bring an animal to sacrifice, when we come to worship God.

But we have to come to Him through Jesus, who said,
"*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me*" (John, chapter 14, verse 6).

Lessons for us from the Law

The law helped sincere Jews to come to Christ, because it showed them how hopeless and helpless they themselves were. This is a hard lesson for men and women to learn; but we, too, have to learn it, before we can come to God, and ask His help.

The Law of Moses can help us in this. We are no better than the Jews – we would have failed just as they did. The law can teach us a great lesson: that God is holy, and we are sinful; and we can only come to Him in the way in which He has chosen – through the Lord Jesus Christ.

God does not expect us to keep all the details of the Law of Moses. But He has preserved it in the Bible for us, and, by reading it and thinking about it, we may learn more about His ways.

Summary

1. The Law of Moses was a law given to the Jews by God.

2. (a) It contained rules covering their daily life.
   (b) It also taught them how they must worship God.

3. The law was good; but men, being evil, could not keep it.

4. God provided a new way in Christ.

5. The Law of Moses is in the books of the Bible called Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. There are many things we can still learn from it today.

No. 9

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God's Promises to Abraham

WEEKLY READINGS Genesis, chapters 30-32;
1 Timothy, chapters 4-6.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Genesis, chapter 13;
Galatians, chapter 3.

About 2,000 years before Jesus was born, there lived a man named Abraham, who is spoken of in the Bible as the friend of God (Isaiah, chapter 41, verse 8).

He lived in the town of Ur, which was in the land we now call Iraq, about 800 miles to the east of the land of Israel.

The people of Ur knew nothing of the true God. They worshipped many false gods, chief of which was the moon. The ruins of a temple built to the moon-god have been found there.

A message from God

One day Abraham received a message from God. We can read this message in Genesis, chapter 12, verse 1,
"*Now the Lord had said unto Abram, 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee'*."

He was told to leave his own land, and his own people, and travel to a country that God would show him. I wonder how we should feel if we received such a message? (And of course travelling was far more difficult and far more dangerous in those days).

When He told Abraham to do this, God also told him (verses 2-3),
"*And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed*."

Abraham believed the promises that God had made, and he obeyed Him. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that Abraham "*went out, not knowing whither he went*" (Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 8).

At length he reached the land of Israel with his wife, Sarah, and his nephew, Lot. Now read Genesis, chapter 13, again. You will see how Lot chose the best of the land and Abraham was left to find pastures for his flocks and herds in the more barren parts of the country. But God was with Abraham, and enlarged upon the promises He had made to him in Ur,
"*All the land which thou seest, to thee will give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth* (Genesis, chapter 13, verses 15-16).

A wonderful promise

Did you notice that this time God promised Abraham the land for ever? To possess the land for ever, Abraham would have to live for ever, so God was really promising him eternal life.

Besides this, God promised it to Abraham's seed, or son. At that time Abraham and Sarah had no children. God promised him a 'seed', or son, who should share the land with him. He also promised that Abraham's descendants should become a great nation.

God makes a covenant with Abraham

Turn to chapter 15, and here you will find that God again repeats and enlarges upon His promises to Abraham.

Time had gone by and Abraham was getting old. The promised son had not been given. But once more God assured him that he should have a son, and that his descendants should be as great in number as the stars in the sky.

In verse 6 we read, "*Abraham believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness*."

Abraham, like us, was not free from sin; but he trusted in God and, because of this, God was pleased with him. This time we are told that God made a covenant with Abraham – that is a very solemn promise that can never be altered. You will read how this covenant was made in Genesis, chapter 15, verses 8-18. In the time of Abraham, a covenant was made by slaying an animal. Then the dead animal was divided, and the two people who were making the covenant walked between the

pieces. In this case, God Himself did not walk between the pieces, but Abraham saw a burning lamp pass between them.

The covenant was sure!

The promised child

Abraham was 100 years old, and his wife 90, when at last God fulfilled His promise and gave them a son, whom they called Isaac.

In Genesis, chapter 22, you will find a wonderful example of Abraham's trust in God, Read the first 14 verses. God told Abraham to offer up his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. And yet God had promised that through Isaac Abraham's descendants should become a great nation.

What did Abraham do? He knew that God would keep His promises, and so Hebrews, chapter 11, verses 17 -19, tells us
"*By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called. Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure*."

Abraham was prepared even to offer up his beloved son, knowing that God would restore him to life. No wonder God was pleased with his trust and obedience. Read in Genesis, chapter 22, verses 15-18, the promises which God again made to him.

A greater seed than Isaac

These things happened nearly 4,000 years ago, and at first they don't seem to matter very much to us.

But Abraham had a son who was greater than Isaac. The first verse of the New Testament (Matthew, chapter 1, verse 1) speaks of,
"*Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham*."

Jesus, too, was the promised son of Abraham. Paul tells us this in Galatians, chapter 3, verse 16,
"*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, 'And to seeds', as of many; but as of one, 'And to thy seed', which is Christ*."

So the promises made to Abraham that he should live for ever in the land of Israel and be a blessing to all nations, were also promises made to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When He comes again to rule from Jerusalem, we shall see these promises fulfilled.

We, too, may share the promises

If we believe in Jesus, and do what He asks us, we too may share these promises.

For if we belong to Christ, we too are Abraham's seed. We read in the last verse in chapter 3 of Galatians,
"*and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*."

Then we, too, may share the promises. We may have eternal life, and help Jesus Christ in the great work of bringing happiness to the earth.

For you will remember that one of the promises was,
"*And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*" (Genesis, chapter 22, verse 18).

This promise will be fulfilled when Jesus returns to set up the Kingdom of God.

What of Abraham?

But, you may be thinking, "What of Abraham? He never received the promises, and he is dead."

This is true. But God's promises cannot fail. When Jesus comes again, He will raise Abraham and Isaac from the dead – and many others besides – and they will live for ever upon this earth, enjoying those blessings which God promised them so long ago.

Summary

1. Abraham was called by God to leave Ur and go to an unknown country.

2. This country was the land of Israel, and God promised that Abraham should possess it for ever.

3. He also promised that Abraham should have a son; that his descendants should become a great nation, and that his son would be a blessing to all nations.

4. Abraham had a son, Isaac, born miraculously when his parents were very old. Jesus Christ is also a son, or descendant, of Abraham (and He, too, was born miraculously – of a virgin).

5. If we belong to Christ, we are counted as children of Abraham, and may share the promises made to him.

6. These promises will be fulfilled when Jesus comes back, and sets up the Kingdom of God.

A suggestion

All this about the seed of Abraham is somewhat difficult to understand the first time. But it is very important. Why not read this section through once again – now!

No. 10

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God's Promises to David

WEEKLY READINGS Genesis, chapters 33-35;
James, chapters 1-3.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER 2 Samuel, chapter 7.

King David was the second king to rule over the Jews. After many trials and adventures, David built a palace in Jerusalem, and there he lived and reigned.

When David thought about the way in which God had blessed him, and then thought about the Ark of God which was still kept in a tent, he wanted to build a fine Temple at Jerusalem in which the Ark could be kept. (The Ark was a special chest containing the Ten Commandments, and having a cover known as the Mercy Seat, upon which God's glory shone).

David told Nathan, the prophet of God, what he wanted to do. Nathan told David to go ahead; but that night God spoke to Nathan, giving him a special message for David.

God's message to David

Turn again to 2 Samuel, chapter 7. The most important part of God's message to David is in verses 12-16.

Here God promises David a son (again we get that Jewish word, 'seed', which means a son, or descendant).

He says of this promised son, "*He shall build an house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom FOR EVER*" (verse 13).

This was to happen after David's death, for it was to be "*When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers*" (verse 12).

More about the Son of David

Now David had a son called Solomon, who reigned after him in Jerusalem. But he was made king while David was still alive. And, of course, he did not reign for ever.

This promised son was to be a very special person, for God says of Him,
"*I will be His father, and He shall be My son*" (2 Samuel, chapter 7, verse 14).

Turn to the first chapter of Luke. Here we read of an angel coming to a young woman – one of King David's descendants – and telling her that she would have a son.

This son was to be born, not through an earthly father, as all other children are, but through the power of God; for the young woman, whose name was Mary, was told,
"*The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God*" (Luke, chapter 1, verse 35)

The angel also told Mary,
"*He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end*" (Luke, chapter 1 ,verses 32-33).

Now we can see how the promise which God made to David was fulfilled when Jesus Christ was born.

1. God was His Father.
2. He was to reign for ever.

The King of the Jews

Jesus was born to be a King. The wise men, when they came to worship Him, asked, '*Where is He that is born King of the Jews?*' (Matthew, chapter 2, verse 2)

When Jesus was arrested and taken before Pilate to be tried, Pilate said to Him, "*Art Thou the King of the Jews?*" Jesus answered, "*Thou sayest it*" (Mark, chapter 15, verse 2). That is the Jewish way of saying, "Yes, I certainly am."

As we have already seen, Jesus will come back to this earth to be King of the Jews, and to reign on David's throne.

A world-wide kingdom

Jesus is not only to be the King of the Jews when He comes back. He is to reign over the whole earth. God says of Him,
"*It is a light thing that Thou shouldest be My servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth*" (Isaiah, chapter 49, verse 6).

What about David?

Although David realised that this promise was not to be fulfilled for a very long time, he was full of thankfulness to God, and we can read his prayer of thanks in II Samuel, chapter 7, verses 18-29.

God had said,
"*Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever BEFORE THEE*" (2 Samuel, chapter 7, verse 16).

So David knew that when at last his great Son (the Lord Jesus) reigned in Jerusalem, he himself would be raised from the dead, so that he might share the joys of the kingdom.

David often thought about this solemn promise – or covenant – that God had made with him, and he speaks about it in the Psalms.

For instance, in Psalm 89, verses 2-4, we read,
"*For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for liver: Thy faithfulness shalt Thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David My servant, thy seed will establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations*."

David also speaks of these things in Psalm 16. He says,
"*Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell* [that is, the grave]; *neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption*" (verse 10).

Jesus was God's Holy One, and He did not "see corruption". His body did not decay, because God raised Him from the dead after three days.

Something to look forward to

The writer of Hebrews tells us in chapter 11, verses 39-40,

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

Now Abraham, and David, and many other faithful men, died knowing that in the day of Jesus Christ's coming they would be raised again and "made perfect" – given eternal life with all who belong to Jesus.

A key verse

We have seen that Jesus Christ is both the seed of Abraham and the seed of David.

The very first verse of the New Testament begins,
"*The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham*."

So we are only able to understand the New Testament, if we have read and understood the Old.

Summary

1. God promised David a son.

2. This son was to be the Son of God.

3. He was to reign on David's throne for ever.

4. This son was Jesus.

5. When He comes to reign, all God's faithful servants will be given eternal life, and will share His Kingdom on earth.

No. 11

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Bible teaching about Life and Death – 1

WEEKLY READINGS Genesis, chapters 36-38;
James, chapters 4-5.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Psalm 49;
Genesis, chapter 2.

"I can't do the things I used to when I was younger" – how often we hear those words! And how true they are! We don't have to wait until we reach our 70s to find our powers failing, either. Even in middle age we cannot move as fast or think as quickly as we did when we were young.

We spend our life growing old, and we know for a certainty – if we stop to think about it – that one day we shall die. The words of the Psalmist are true when he says,
"*The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away*" (Psalm 90, verse 10).

All men die. It has been truly said that the only certain thing about living is that one day we shall die.

The first man on the earth

Why is it that we all grow old and die? To find the answer we must turn to the first book of the Bible, and read about the very first man and woman.

God made the world as a very lovely place for men and women to live in. He created the plants and animals first, and then, when all was ready, He made a man.

It tells us in Genesis, chapter 2, verse 7 that,
"*The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground*."

With wonderful skill a human body was formed. We can picture that lifeless body lying on the ground. What

happened next? God "*breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul*" (Genesis, chapter 2, verse 7).

The man began to breathe. He was alive! He could see, and hear, and think and feel – surely he was the most wonderful of the things which God had made.

Adam is lonely

Genesis, chapter 2, verse 8,
"*The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed*."

Adam – for that was the name which God gave to this man – looked after the garden, He was told by God that he could eat any of the fruit he liked – except for one tree, which is called "*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*". God warned him,
"*In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*" (Genesis, chapter 2, verse 17).

Adam had only the animals for company; and they couldn't think in the same way as he could. He became lonely, and God said, "*It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him*" (Genesis, chapter 2, verse 18).

You will read in verses 21-23 how God put Adam to sleep, took one of his ribs, and shaped it into a woman – someone to be with Adam and share his life.

Adam and Eve break God's law

Now read Genesis chapter 3 verses 1-13 and you will see how the first woman, Eve, broke God's law by listening to the serpent, and how Adam also disobeyed God.

By breaking God's law they had sinned; and as we have already seen, the wages of sin is death, Adam and Eve knew that, too, for God had said to them,
"*In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*" (Genesis, chapter 2, verse 17).

The punishment

The serpent was punished for his part in causing the trouble. Adam and Eve were condemned to death, and driven out of the garden. Although they lived a long time after this, Adam and his wife Eve became

dying creatures – and, just like us, they would get tired and sick, and at last grow old and die, The words of God were certain:
"*Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*" (Genesis, chapter 3, verse 19).

You will remember how, when God made Adam, He "*breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul*" (Genesis, chapter 2, verse 7), All human beings are 'living souls', but when they stop breathing, their life has gone – they become 'dead souls'.

As the writer of the book of Ecclesiastes says:
"*For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun*" (Ecclesiastes chapter 9, verses 5-6).

Or, as we read in Psalm 146, verses 3-4,
"*Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish*".

Sin and death in the world

The apostle Paul helps us to understand how this affects us. In Romans, chapter 5, verse 12, he says,
"*By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*."

Adam and Eve became sinners. We are their children, and so we are sinners too.

Our very nature is a sinful nature; or as Paul puts it, we are by nature "children of disobedience". Like our father, Adam, we sin, and, like him, we die.

It is not our fault that we have a sinful nature, and it certainly is not God's fault. It was Adam's fault, and our misfortune. We are being very foolish if we blame God. Instead we should thank Him. We should thank Him because He has given us a chance to live at all, which we have no right to, really; and we should especially thank Him for giving us a way of escape from our hopeless plight. We are not blamed for being born with a sinful nature, but we deserve great blame if we neglect God's offer of a way of escape.

Summary

1. God made Adam from the dust of the ground.

2. He caused him to live, by breathing into his nostrils the breath of life.

3. God gave Adam a commandment. He told him that if he broke this commandment, the punishment would be death.

4. Adam and Eve broke God's commandment. They became dying creatures.

5. All men are descended from Adam; all are sinners, and all die.

6. As we shall see in the next three lessons, Christ brought men a hope of life.

No. 12

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Bible teaching about Life and Death – 2

WEEKLY READINGS Genesis, chapter 39-41;
Jonah, chapters 1-4.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Ecclesiastes, chapter 3.

Loving ourselves

Speaking of the great love which Jonathan had for his friend David, the Bible says,
"*The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul*" (1 Samuel, chapter 18, verse 1).

We all love our own soul, or self. Paul says in Ephesians, chapter 5, verse 29,
"*No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church*."

If we did not look after ourselves, and see that we had food and drink, we should soon die.

The serpent's lie

But most of us love ourselves too much. Yes, we think much too much of ourselves. Perhaps this is why men have always found it hard to believe that they die and corrupt in the same way as the animals do. They have preferred to think that they will go on living somewhere after death.

The serpent said to Adam and Eve, "*Ye shall not surely die*" (Genesis, chapter 3, verse 4). This was a lie, yet Eve chose to believe it rather than to believe what God had said.

And men have always chosen to believe the serpent's lie, and to make up all sorts of stories of what happens at death, rather than to believe God's words:
"*Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*" (Genesis, chapter 3, verse 19).

Like the beasts that perish

Yet the teaching of the Bible is quite plain. Turn to Ecclesiastes, chapter 3, and read the 19th verse,
"*For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast*."

When you see the body of a dead animal, you do not imagine that the most important part of that animal has gone to live in the heavens. You know that air that is left of the creature that lived and breathed and moved – however beautiful it may have been – is a dead body.

And it is exactly the same with men. When they die, all that is left is a lifeless body.

Did you notice verse 12 of Psalm 49, which says,
"*Man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish*."

Like the beasts? Yes, the writer leaves us in no doubt about it, for he continues in verse 14,
"*Like sheep they are laid in the grave*."

A wrong idea

Many people believe that, when we die, there is some spark of life in us that goes on living. They think men have an "immortal soul" which will live for ever in heaven. But souls are not "immortal".

Through the prophet Ezekiel, God says,
"*Behold, all souls are Mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is Mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Ezekiel, chapter 18, verse 4).

We have seen what the Bible means when it speaks of death. It means a complete end of life, so that body and mind decay, and return to dust.

Hell – where is it?

The Bible tells us,
"*The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath He given to the children of men*" (Psalm 115, verse 16).

We know that heaven is the dwelling place of God. And we know that God created the earth as a home for men. But what about hell? Where is it, and who lives there?

We have already seen that when a man is dead he returns to the dust of the ground. He can no longer think or feel – he has no more life than an insect that you have crushed between your fingers.

Some people have thought that the wicked are sent to a place of punishment when they die, and that this place is called "hell". But let us see what the Bible says about it.

The Old Testament was first written in the Hebrew language, and afterwards translated into English. The Hebrew word "sheol" means "a covered place" – and that is the word which has been translated "hell" 31 times. The covered place referred to is the grave; and it is interesting to note that the translators have actually put "grave" for "sheol" 31 times, too. Hell and the grave are one and the same place.

Hades

Just as the Old Testament was first written in Hebrew, so the New Testament was first written in the Greek language. One Greek word for "hell" is "hades", and it means exactly the same as "sheol" in the Hebrew.

Thus we read of Jesus that,
"*Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell*" (Acts, chapter 2, verse 27).

Jesus went to hell (hades) – in other words, the grave – but He was not left there. He was raised from the dead.

But what about hell fire?

In Mark, chapter 9, we read,
"*It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched*" (verse 43).

There is another Greek word for "hell" in verses like this: "Gehenna".

Gehenna is the name of a valley just outside Jerusalem – a place which would be well known to the Jews who listened to Jesus. It was the place where the rubbish from the city was burned. In times of siege and war, the bodies of the dead were also flung into Gehenna to be burned. It was a place of destruction; and so to cast into Gehenna meant to destroy utterly. Jesus was warning men to cut from their lives those things that tended to lead them away from God, and so avoid the complete destruction of everlasting death.

A gleam of hope

Perhaps you feel like shutting the Bible, and throwing this paper away. But wait a little while. The Bible is the Word of God, and what it says is true. We should be very foolish if we refused to believe the truth, just because it isn't very pleasant.

The same Bible that teaches that death is real, tells us also that there is a hope beyond the grave – the hope of resurrection. The Lord Jesus was restored to life by a bodily resurrection; and the day will come when those who belong to Christ will be brought forth from the grave as He was.

But this is the subject of another lesson!

Summary

1. The Bible teaches that men, when they die, perish and corrupt like animals.

2. The Bible gives us no hope of going to heaven.

3. When Jesus comes back to this earth, He will bring to life those who believe on Him.

No. 13

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Resurrection

WEEKLY READINGS Genesis, chapters 42-44;
Philippians, chapters 1-2.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER 1 Corinthians, chapter 15.

The word "resurrection" means coming back to life again. It must have been the most wonderful event in the history of the world, when Jesus Christ came out of the grave after being dead for three days.

When His disciples saw Him, they just couldn't believe their eyes. They thought it was a spirit, but Jesus said to them,
"*'Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have'. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, 'Have ye here any meat?' And they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it, and did eat before them*" (Luke, chapter 24, verses 39-43).

At last, they were convinced that He was really alive again. God had given Him eternal life. We read of Jesus saying – in Revelation, chapter 1, verse 18,
"*Behold, I am alive for evermore*."

Jesus will raise His followers

Jesus taught His disciples that they, too, would be raised from the dead. Look at the rest of the verse which we have just quoted. Jesus said,
"*I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell* [or, the grave] *and of death'*." (Revelation, chapter 1, verse 18).

Now, if you have the key to a door, it means you are able to open it. Jesus has the keys of the grave. This is a way of saying that He has power to open the graves, and set free those who are buried there.

This power has been given to Him by God. Read in John's gospel, chapter 5, verses 20-29. Notice particularly verse 21, which says,

"*For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will*."

To quicken is to bring to life; and God has given Jesus the power to bring men and women back to life again.

A hope shared by all faithful men

Men of God throughout the ages have died looking forward to the day when they would be raised again. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews tells us of some of these, that they
"*died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off*" (Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 13).

Further on he speaks again of these men, who
"*received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect*" (Hebrews, chapter 11, verses 39-40).

We see from this verse that the gift of eternal life is going to be given to all true worshippers of God at the same time.

The early Christians also looked forward to this time. When one of their number died, they spoke of him as having "*fallen asleep*", because, just as men wake up after sleeping, so the disciple would be "*awakened*" from the dead. In the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, which you have read, Paul says of the 500 disciples who saw Jesus after His resurrection, "*some are fallen asleep*" (verse 6).

When will the resurrection take place?

Nearly 2,000 years have passed since Jesus was raised from the dead.

When is He going to raise those who have "*died in faith*"?

The apostle Paul answers this question for us. He says in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15,
"*As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward – they that are Christ's at His coming*" (verses 22-23).

We have seen already that Jesus Christ is coming back to set up the Kingdom of God and reign over the whole earth. When He comes to do this, He will raise the dead. Then those who have been faithful will be

given eternal life, and will enjoy the great privilege of helping Jesus to rule the earth, as we read in Revelation, chapter 5, verses 9-10. Here we read the words of a song they will sing in that day,
"…*Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth*."

Some will be alive when Jesus comes

What of those who are still alive when Jesus comes back? Jesus said that, when He comes, He will,
"*...and His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other*" (Matthew, chapter 24, verse 31).

In 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4, verses 14-17, Paul tells us a little more about this. He says,
"*If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord*."

The dead will be raised, and the living will be gathered together, and all will appear before the Lord Jesus. Before He gives them eternal life, there must be a judgment – but you will hear more about that in your lesson next week.

Read again 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, verses 51-58. Here the apostle speaks of the time when the faithful Christians will be given that great gift of eternal life, or – as he calls it here – immortality.

As we look forward to that time, the apostle Paul tells us to be "*steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*" (verse 58).

Some points to remember

1. God has given Jesus power to raise the dead.

2. He will do this when He comes back to the earth again.

3. He will at the same time gather together those "in Christ" who are still living when He comes.

4. To those who have been faithful, He will give eternal life, and they will live and reign with Him.

No. 14

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The Judgment Seat

WEEKLY READINGS Genesis, chapters 45-47;
Philippians, chapters 3-4.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Matthew, chapter 25.

On the night that Judas betrayed Him, the Lord Jesus gave him one last warning:
"*Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had never been born*" (Mark, chapter 14, verse 21).

By betraying his master, Judas had deliberately turned against the Lord Jesus, and chosen the way of wickedness. There have been men in every generation who have willfully turned away from the Lord and chosen the way of wickedness. They have to bear the responsibility of loving darkness rather than light. They deserve a severe judgment.

That is why Jesus said of Judas, "*Good were it for that man if he had never been born.*"

There must be a judgment

If we think about this, we shall see the need for a judgment after the resurrection. God is loving; but He is also just and upright. He could not give eternal life to men and women who had despised His love, and who – knowing that Jesus had died for them – made no effort to serve and obey Him.

So Paul tells us, in Romans, chapter 14, verse 10,
"*We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.*"
and again in 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 10:
"*We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*"

A righteous judge

When Jesus comes again, He will raise the dead, and gather together those of His followers who are living at that time. There will be a time of judgment. After the judgment, those who have been accepted will be

given eternal life, and Jesus will say to them, as we read in Matthew, chapter 25, verse 34,
"*Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.*"

Jesus Himself will be the judge. In John, chapter 5, verses 28-30, where Jesus is speaking of the resurrection, we read,
"*...the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me*."

He will judge with the wisdom that God has given Him. We read in Isaiah, chapter 11, verses 3-4,
"*He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears. But with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.*"

Men can only judge by what they see and hear; but the Lord Jesus will know the hearts of men, and He will make no mistakes in His judgment.

Who will be at the judgment seat?

Those who have accepted God's gracious offer of life, and who have been baptised into Christ, will be gathered to the judgment seat of Christ. But they will not be the only ones. There will be faithful men of Old Testament times as well. And, of course, there will be some who have not been faithful. We read in Hebrews, chapter 10, verses 26-27,
"*For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries*."

Those who have never known about the true God, and His Son Jesus Christ, will not be raised to judgment. You may remember the verses in Psalm 49, verses 19-20, which say of such a man,
"*He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light. Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish*."

(If you read Isaiah, chapter 26, verses 13-14, you will see that the same thing is taught there, too.)

What will happen to those who are rejected?

We have seen that those who come before the Judgment Seat of Christ will be divided into two classes. Christ will accept some, and reject others. He will give eternal life to those He accepts. But what will happen to those who are rejected? What will their punishment be?

We do not know all the details of their punishment. But some things are quite certain. First, they will be made to see how foolish they have been; they will realize what they have lost; and this will cause them agony of mind. Jesus said of such people:
"*There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God – and you yourselves thrust out!*" (Luke, chapter 13, verse 28).

Finally, they will be completely destroyed. Jesus likened the Judgment to a harvest, where the good corn is separated from useless weeds. The corn is carefully preserved. But the weeds are destroyed in the farmer's bonfire (Matthew, chapter 13, verses 36-43).

Paul taught the same thing very plainly:
"*The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power*" (2 Thessalonians, chapter 1, verses 7-9).

Love or fear

There are some passages which seem to warn us not to be too confident about our position at the judgment; whereas other scriptures seem to encourage us to be brimful of confidence. There is no contradiction. We must have no confidence – in ourselves; we must have unbounded confidence – in the saving power of God.

Though we may begin by being afraid of God, we shall gradually learn to love Him and trust Him completely. And so John says:
"*Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment… There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear*" (1 John, chapter 4, verse 17-18).

Summary

1. There will be a judgment day.

2. It will be after the resurrection.

3. All who have known the truth of God will be brought to judgment.

4. Those who are accepted at the Judgment Seat of Christ will then be given eternal life.

5. Those who are rejected at the Judgment Seat will suffer agonies of mind, and then will be destroyed.

No. 15

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The Father and the Son

WEEKLY READINGS Genesis, chapters 48-50;
1 Peter, chapters 1-3.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Isaiah, chapter 45.

Once, when Jesus was praying to His Father, He used these words, "*This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent*" (John, chapter 17, verse 3).

We must therefore know God the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. Eternal life depends upon this knowledge.

And how else can we learn about God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, but by reading the Bible? It is impossible for us to know anything about God, unless we study the message which He Himself has given us.

God Himself has said,
"*My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts*" (Isaiah, chapter 55, verses 8-9).

One God and Father of all

What can we learn from the Bible about God? The apostle Paul, when writing to Timothy, speaks of Him as,
"*The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see*" (1 Timothy, chapter 6, verses 15-16).

If the Bible told us only of the power and holiness of God, we should certainly fear Him; but we might find it difficult to love Him. But God has shown us that He is also kind and merciful.

When Moses was leading the children of Israel through the wilderness, he became discouraged by the difficulties he had had to face;

and to help him carry on, he prayed to God, saying, "*I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory*."

We can read about this in Exodus, chapter 33, verses 17-23, and then in chapter 34, verses 6-7, where God revealed Himself to Moses in these words:
"*The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth*."

When we think about God's goodness, we may well say with the Psalmist,
"*Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name*" (Psalm 103, verse 1).

The Son of God

Right from the beginning, God planned to send His Son to be our Saviour. There are many prophecies of Jesus in the Old Testament, such as the one in Isaiah, chapter 7, verse 14, where we read,
"*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel*."

Immanuel means, "God with us", and God is here promising to send His own Son.

And so it came to pass. As the apostle Paul says,
"*When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law*" (Galatians, chapter 4, verse 4).

Before His birth, the angel said unto His mother,
"*The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God*" (Luke, chapter 1, verse 35).

Before He began His work of preaching, Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan. At this time, God gave Him the Holy Spirit, which meant that He had unlimited power; and God said to Him,
"*Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*" (Mark, chapter 1, verse 11).

The nature of Christ

Because Jesus was born of a woman, He had a nature just like ours.

In Hebrews, chapter 2, verse 17, we read,

"*In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren*."

Of course, Jesus was like us before His resurrection. After the resurrection, He was given a powerful immortal body.

Because Jesus was the Son of God, His character was perfect, even when He possessed a weak human nature.

A wrong idea

Many people have neglected the Bible teaching about God, and so they have come to believe in something which they call "the Trinity". They tell us that God consists of three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, all equal with each other. (We shall be considering the Holy Ghost, or more correctly, the Holy Spirit, in the next lesson.)

The word "Trinity" and the phrase "God the Son" do not occur in the Bible. Indeed, the whole idea is opposed to Bible teaching. In the same way that a son can never be equal with his father, so Jesus can never be equal with God. He never claimed to be, but depended on His Father for all things. He said,
"*The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do*" (John, chapter 5, verse 19).

It is true that Jesus once said,
"*I and My Father are one*" (John, chapter 10, verse 30).

But we also speak of being at one with a person if we agree perfectly with him.

In this sense, Jesus was also one with His disciples, for He prayed in John, chapter 17, verse 21 that,
"*…they (the disciples) all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us.*"

Turn to 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, and read verses 24-28. Notice particularly verse 28,
"*And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.*"

This verse tells us that, even at the end of His 1,000-year reign on earth, Jesus will be subject to His Father; and God alone will be all in all.

Where did belief in the Trinity come from?

The early Christians didn't believe in the Trinity. They believed what the Bible taught – that there is "*one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*" (1 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 5).

It was not until over 300 years after Jesus was born that Christians began to believe in "the Trinity"; and this belief was based, not on the Bible, but on the ideas of the Ancient Greeks, who knew nothing of the one true God.

The true belief of the First Christians

In the "Apostles' Creed", which was put together about 100 years after Jesus went up into heaven, and which sets out the beliefs of the early Christians, we read,

> "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary."

This is the true teaching of the Bible.

Summary

1. There is only one God.

2. God is not "three-in-one", The doctrine of the Trinity is not in the Bible.

3. Jesus Christ is not God; He is the Son of God.

4. Jesus is a man, but He is far, far greater than any other man.

5. His birth was a great miracle, because His mother was a virgin, His only father was God Almighty.

No. 16

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God's Holy Spirit

WEEKLY READINGS Exodus, chapters 1-6;
1 Peter, chapters 4-5.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Psalm 51

Power that cannot be measured

"*In the beginning God created the heaven and earth*." Think of all the work that has to be done in order to build a house. Think of all the planning and preparing; the need for men skilled in different trades, all working together. What a lot of thought and energy it takes!

How much thought and energy, then, must it have taken to create the heaven and the earth? Where did the power come from for this great work? We are told in the Psalms,
"*By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth; for He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast*" (Psalm 33,verses 6 and 9).

God's Spirit

The power of God, working out His purposes, is called in the Bible, His "Spirit". So we read in Genesis, chapter 1, verse 2,
"*The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*";
and in Job, chapter 26, verse 13,
"*By His Spirit He hath garnished the heavens*."

God's power was also used to direct the minds of the men who wrote the Bible. They did not write down their own ideas; but were used by God to write His words. So we read in 2 Peter, chapter 1, verse 21,
"*The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*"

(When we speak of "prophecy", we usually think of foretelling the future. But in the Bible the word "prophecy" means speaking God's words, whether they are about the past, the present, or the future.)

You may notice in the words of Peter that the Spirit of God is called His "Holy Spirit". The word "Holy" means "set apart" for a special purpose.

(In the King James Version of the Bible we read "Holy Ghost", but because the Greek word translated "ghost" is translated "spirit" in other places, and because the word "ghost" can be so easily misunderstood, it is better to refer to this great power of God as "The Holy Spirit", as all newer versions do.)

The Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus Christ

It was the Holy Spirit that brought about the birth of the Lord Jesus. So Mary was told by the angel,
"*The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God*" (Luke, chapter 1, verse 35).

You will see here that the "Holy Spirit" and the "power of the Highest" are one and the same thing.

At His baptism in the River Jordan, Jesus was given the Holy Spirit without measure. We read in John, chapter 3, verse 34,
"*He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him.*"

All power was given to Jesus. To other men of Old and New Testament times, God has given a portion of His power – but no other man has ever been fit to possess such power as God gave to Jesus.

The disciples were promised the Holy Spirit

Jesus promised His twelve disciples that they also would be given the Holy Spirit, after He had gone away from them. In John, chapter 14, verses 25-26, He says,
"*These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father… will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*"

Here Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as if it were a person; and some people actually think that it is a person – a God. But we have already seen quite clearly from the Bible that the Holy Spirit is the power of God; so we know this idea cannot be right. Why, then, in some places does Jesus speak of the Holy Spirit as if it were a person?

Just turn to Psalm 65, and read verse 13, which says,
"*The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.*"

Now when we read this, it gives us a beautiful picture of the ripe corn standing high in the valley; but we don't for one moment imagine that the valley is shouting and singing – that is just the Psalmist's way of describing the picture.

So when Jesus speaks of the Holy Spirit as if it were a person doing this or that, He is just showing us what a very real thing this Spirit or power of God is.

The Spirit comes to the disciples

We have seen that Jesus promised power to His disciples, before He went into heaven. He told them to stay in Jerusalem, and
"...*wait for the promise of the Father*" (Acts, chapter 1, verse 4).
and promised them that they should
"...*be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days hence*" (verse 5).

In Acts, chapter 2, we read how, as the disciples were waiting, the Holy Spirit came to them. Read verses 1-3. The Spirit came with a sound "...*as of a rushing mighty wind*", shaking the house where they were gathered together. Tongues of fire were seen over each one of them; and this was a sign that the Holy Spirit had been given to them. From then on, they were able to work many miracles, as Jesus had promised them.

The Spirit comes to us

We have seen that those who wrote the Bible did so by the power of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, Jesus once said,
"*The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*" (John, chapter 6, verse 63).

When we read the Word of God, we are in a sense receiving the Spirit of God. This can cause a wonderful change in our lives, helping us to grow more pleasing to God.

Let us, then, read the Word of God diligently and prayerfully, remembering the words of Peter in his first epistle,
"*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*" (I Peter, chapter 2, verse 2).

What have we learnt about the Holy Spirit?

1. The Holy Spirit is the power of God

2. The Bible was written by the power of the Holy Spirit.

3. Jesus was born by the power of the Holy Spirit.

4. All God's prophets had a measure of His Spirit, but to Jesus it was given "without measure".

5. After Jesus had gone into heaven, the Holy Spirit was given to His disciples.

No. 17

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Holy Spirit Gifts

WEEKLY READINGS Exodus, chapters 7-14;
Malachi, chapters 1-2.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Ephesians, chapter 4;
1 Corinthians, chapter 14.

Jesus promised His disciples that they would be given the Holy Spirit. He said to them,
"*These signs shall follow them that believe; in My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover*" (Mark, chapter 16, verse 17-18).

Why were these promises made to the disciples?

They proved that the message of the disciples was from God

Jesus had been crucified; God had raised Him from the dead. He had gone into heaven, leaving His little band of disciples to
"*Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*" (Mark, chapter 16, verse15).

It was a big task. Would people listen to them? Surely they would not believe the story of a man brought back to life after being dead for three days?

So the disciples were given the power to work miracles, as a sign that their message was from God. We read how, on the day of Pentecost (which we now call Whitsun), they preached to the Jews in languages that they had never learnt, and could not have spoken but for the power of God. This was called, "Speaking in tongues".

No wonder the people were amazed; and no wonder they listened.

The Spirit gifts helped to guide the Church

As a result of the preaching on the day of Pentecost, 3,000 men and women joined the disciples, and became Christians (Acts, chapter 2, verse 41). And so the Christian Church had made a good start.

But imagine the difficulties there would be. Such a big family of Christians would need some to guide and teach them, and to give them advice about the arrangements they would have to make. They could not learn from the New Testament, because it was not yet written.

So the gifts of the Spirit were sent, not only to convince outsiders of the truth of the apostles' message, but also to help and teach the early Christians, and to set the first churches in order.

What were these gifts?

In 1 Corinthians, chapter 12, verse 22, the apostle Paul shows how different members of the Church possess different gifts, and how each member was to work for the good of the others. Then in verses 28-29, he gives a list of the gifts,

"*And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues*."

The first three gifts – the most important – were for teaching the early Christians.

The end of the gifts

We have already seen that in the days of the first Christians, there was no New Testament – it had not then been written; and we have suggested that that is one reason why these gifts were so necessary.

We can read about the life of the Lord Jesus, and we can read the letters of the apostles. But they had no written record; so that apostles, prophets and teachers, with their Spirit gifts, were a very necessary help to the first churches.

When the writing of the New Testament was finished, there was no longer any need for this special help from God. All that Christians need to know is written down for them in the Bible. So the Spirit gifts were taken away.

The apostle Paul said this would happen. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, verse 8, we read,

"*Charity* [love] *never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail* [or be done away]*; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away*."

It would seem that the gifts were not suddenly taken away, at the exact time that the New Testament was finished: but that as time went on, those who possessed these gifts died, and they were not passed on to the Christians who followed them.

Does anyone possess these gifts today?

Some people do claim to have the gifts of the Spirit; especially they claim to be able to speak in tongues, and to heal the sick. How can we test those that claim to work miracles by the Spirit of God?

Firstly we remind ourselves that the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, that a time would come when the "gifts" would cease. If this period did not begin when the New Testament was completed, then when does it begin? Certainly not in the coming Kingdom, because there will be more gifts than ever then. (The Holy Spirit gifts are, in fact, called "*powers of the world to come*", and the early disciples had the "*firstfruits*" of these gifts.)

Secondly, we note that Holy Spirit gifts were given to help the true Church. The true Church believes and preaches the Word of God. Most of those who claim to have these powers today – if not all – preach things not taught in the Word of God. We must, therefore, reject these claims.

Thirdly, we have to confess that we are not impressed by many of the so-called miracles. Many of the cures are soon seen to be no cures at all; and others of them can be explained scientifically. Hypnotists can often get the same results.

Those who believe all that is written in the Bible will not claim to have Spirit gifts, for they know that these gifts were to vanish away when the writings of the New Testament were complete.

Finally, yet another reminder that when we read the Bible we are, in a very real sense, receiving the Spirit of God. If we want to be saved, let us show that we appreciate this wonderful gift of God to us, by reading it as much as we can.

Summary

1. Holy Spirit gifts were given to the early Christians.

2. They were for two purposes:
   (a) To be a sign to unbelievers,
   (b) To help to build up the early Church.

3. They were only given until the New Testament writings were finished: after this they were to "vanish away".

4. No one since has been able to work miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit.

5. Those men who claim to work miracles today may possess some strange power, just as hypnotists do. But it is not the power of the Holy Spirit.

No.18

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The Cross

WEEKLY READINGS Exodus, chapters 15-20;
Malachi, chapters 3-4.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Psalm 22;
Isaiah, chapter 53.

A prophecy of the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ

We can read about the sufferings of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels.

But we have a fuller picture if we read some of the prophecies of the Old Testament as well.

Turn to Psalm 22. This Psalm helps us to understand how Jesus felt during the crucifixion,
"*But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, 'He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him*'" (verses 6- 8).

Not only the pain, but also the shame of being crucified weighed heavily upon Him. Read this Psalm very carefully. Perhaps more than any other words in the Bible, these words help us to appreciate what Jesus went through for us. Look again at verses 15-16,
"*My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and My tongue cleaveth to My jaws; and Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death. For dogs have compassed Me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed Me: they pierced My hands and My feet.*"

Why did Jesus have to suffer so much?

As we think of Jesus hanging on that cross, and remember that He never sinned, but always did those things that pleased God, we ask ourselves, "Why did this have to happen to Jesus?"

One thing is certain: it was the only way by which men could be saved from sin. Jesus had prayed three times to His Father, "*If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me*" (though He was careful to add, "*Nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done*") (Matthew, chapter 26, verse 39). If it had

been possible, we can be sure that God would have spared His son the agony. But it was the only way.

A fight against sin

But still, we ask, why the suffering and disgrace of the cross? One answer is that as we look at Jesus hanging there, we see what human nature is really worth.

Let us try to explain. Jesus was a human being, just like us; and, just like us, He was constantly tempted to do and say wrong things.

We read that He was
"...*in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*" (Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 15).

Like us, He was tempted – but, unlike us, He never gave way to temptation. He never gave in to Himself, but always did what God wanted Him to.

Yet He still possessed a nature like ours – a nature that would have led Him into sin if He had not continually fought against it. By pronouncing the death sentence upon Adam, God showed that:
"...*the wages of sin is death*" (Romans, chapter 6, verse 23).

And by requiring the crucifixion of Jesus, this sinless child of Adam, God demonstrated that human nature at its best is only fit for shame and crucifixion.

Yet the character of Jesus had been faultless. He had never sinned in thought or deed. Because of this, God was able to raise Him to life without breaking the law that said that the wages of sin was death.

And so God gave Jesus a new nature – a nature that could never be tempted to sin, and that would never die.

The lessons of the cross

Through the death of Jesus on the cross, God showed us how evil we really are by nature. And we must know this before we can even begin to live a life that is pleasing to God.

But there are other impressive lessons. We do well to ponder the fact that the Lord Jesus was an acceptable sacrifice. He was like a lamb without blemish; and God was willing to accept this perfect sacrifice as

the offering of all those who believe in Jesus as "*The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*" (John, chapter 1, verse 29).

Another important lesson is this: the cross of Christ shows the extent to which God's love for us can go. Paul puts it like this:
"*He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*" (Romans, chapter 8, verse 32).

The cross is our way of life, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, verse 18,
"*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God*."

A new life

We are the children of Adam and, like Adam, we prefer our own ways to the ways of God.

But Jesus, when He gave Himself as a sacrifice for sin, made it possible for us to become the children of God.

Jesus said,
"*If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me*" (Luke, chapter 9, verse 23).

We must be crucified with Jesus

We have to crucify our sinful self. Instead of walking in our own sinful ways, we must die to sin, and walk with Christ in newness of life, always preferring God's way to our own. The apostle Paul tells us,
"*They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit*" (Galatians, chapter 5, verses 24-25).

Summary

1. Wicked men put Jesus to death by a slow torture called "crucifixion". He was nailed to a cross and left to die.

2. God allowed this to happen, because it was the only way to save us from our sins.

3. It was the only way to make us realise how utterly wicked and deserving of death we are.

4. The Bible tells us to be "crucified with Jesus". This means that our own sinful tendencies must be destroyed,

5. The crucifixion of Jesus also teaches us that, like Jesus, we must try to obey God always, however much it hurts.

No. 19

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The Devil of the Bible

WEEKLY READINGS Exodus, chapters 21-26;
Proverbs, chapter 3.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Hebrews, chapter 2.

I didn't do it!

A child had been playing, and had left a lot of torn paper lying untidily on the floor. His mother looked rather cross when she saw it. "Who did that?" she asked. The little boy answered promptly, "Daddy!"

We're all a bit like that little boy. We just don't like to admit when we've done something wrong. We like to blame someone else. But the apostle James tells us,
"*Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed*." (James, chapter 1, verse 14).

And we have to admit, if we are honest, that it is the evil thoughts in our own mind that make us do and say evil things. We cannot lay the blame for our sins on anyone else.

Who, then, is the Devil?

The Bible certainly speaks of a devil. If he is not a supernatural being, tempting men to do evil, we must ask the question, "Who is he?"

Let us see if we can find out from the Bible. First, look at 1 John, chapter 3, verse 8. This verse tells us why Jesus was sent.
"*For THIS PURPOSE the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*."

We have the same idea taken a little further in Hebrews, chapter 2, verse 14, where we read,
"*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*."

This second passage tells us that Jesus came to destroy the devil, and it explains how He did it. He came as a frail human being, and died in order to destroy the devil.

How strange! If the devil was a very powerful and deceitful monster, that would have been impossible. No – the devil of the Bible – the devil that Jesus destroyed by dying on a cross, was sin.

We read in Hebrews, chapter 9, verse 26,
"*Now. ..hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.*"

We have emphasized in an earlier lesson ("The Cross") that Jesus inherited a nature like ours. It was a nature that could be tempted by sin. Jesus fought against sin all His life, and finally destroyed sin completely by destroying the very nature that could be tempted. It was because of this that God raised Him from the dead and gave Him a "glorious body", free from all sin, and immortal.

The devil and sin

There is one simple way of showing that sin and the devil are the same thing. All that the Bible says about the devil, it says about sin.

- The devil is the enemy of God – so is sin.
- The devil is the tempter of man – so is sin.
- The devil is deceitful – so is sin.
- The devil causes death (Hebrews, chapter 2, verse 14) – so does sin.
- The devil was destroyed by the death of Christ – so was sin.

From these comparisons we can see that the devil and sin must be the same thing.

What does the word "devil" really mean?

The word "devil" really means "slanderer, or "false accuser". In 1 Timothy, chapter 3, verse 11, we read,
"*Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers*".

The word translated "slanderer" here is the same word that is translated "devil" in other places.

The word "satan" is also used – usually in the New Testament.

A "satan" is an adversary – one who opposes. So when Peter tries to persuade Jesus to turn aside from the way in which God has said He must go – the way of the cross – Peter becomes an adversary, and Jesus says to him,

"*Get thee behind Me, Satan*" (Matthew, chapter 16, verse 23).

Anything which works against God may be called "satan", so when Paul was prevented from going to see the Thessalonians, he wrote to them,
"*Satan hindered us*" (1 Thessalonians, chapter 2, verse 18).

There is one more passage – this time from the Old Testament – which we must look at, now, because some people think it teaches us that Satan is a fallen angel. It is in Isaiah, chapter 14, verse 12, and it reads,
"*How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!*"

But if we read the whole chapter, we find that this "Lucifer" is the King of Babylon, and the prophet is foretelling his downfall. In verse 15, Isaiah speaks of this king's death, and goes on to say, in verse 16,
"*Is this the man that made the earth to tremble?*"

Casting out devils

The writers of the New Testament, when telling us of the miracles of healing that Jesus performed, often use the expression, "He cast out devils". How are we to understand this?

In the days of Jesus, it was commonly thought that certain illnesses, and also afflictions, such as deafness and blindness, were caused by evil spirits which took possession of a man. It was natural, when the man was healed, to say that the "devil was gone out of him", and, in using this expression, the gospel writers were simply using a phrase which was common in those days. We do not imagine that, because they wrote in this way, they really believed that evil spirits dwelt in men.

The one great Creator

Belief in an evil being, who is God's great rival, is not new. In the days of Isaiah the prophet, the Persians believed in two great powers, corresponding to God and the devil. The first was supposed to be the creator of light and goodness, and the second of darkness, and all that is evil.

In answer to this wrong belief, God sent a message through the prophet Isaiah. We can read it for ourselves, in Isaiah, chapter 45, verses 5-7.
"*I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me: that they may know from the*

rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside Me. I am the Lord, and there is none else, I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. I, ***the Lord, do all these things***".

(The word "evil" here must not be confused with sin. It means "trouble" – that God brings upon sinners).

This passage proves to us finally that there is one great power in the universe, ordering all things – one great Creator, the Lord God Almighty. There is no creature that can challenge His power, and there is no powerful and deceitful monster, called the devil, who can dare to oppose Him.

One final word: You may want to ask why the Bible so often uses the word "devil" instead of just saying "sin"; and why it speaks of this devil as if it were describing a powerful and deceitful person. It is surely so that we can understand how powerful and how deceitful sin is. We must learn this lesson before we can appreciate fully how much we need to be saved from sin.

What we have learnt

1. The devil is not a great evil spirit.

2. The devil, or Satan, are just Bible names for what we now call "human nature".

3. That is where temptation comes from – from within our own sinful, human nature.

4. Men who give in to temptation, and behave wickedly, are sometimes called "Satan", too.

No. 20

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Baptism

WEEKLY READINGS Exodus, chapters 27-32;
Matthew, chapters 5-7.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Acts, chapter 8,
Romans, chapter 6.

A new start

Have you ever watched a small child, when he turns over to a new page of his writing book? The new page looks so clean and unspoiled, that he takes extra care, as he begins to write, that he doesn't spoil it. He makes a fresh start.

When we begin to understand how much Jesus has done for us, we shall want to "turn over a new leaf" and make a fresh start, too. We shall want to follow Him.

God's way

In Matthew, chapter 28, verses 19-20, we read that Jesus said to His disciples, before He went into heaven,
"*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, (or, make disciples of all nations) baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you*."

Read these verses carefully. You will notice that when they made disciples, they were to baptise them. Baptism is the way God has chosen for us to make a new start.

When we obey this commandment, God forgives us our past sins. Jesus Himself, although He had done no sin, set us an example by being baptised. Read in Matthew, chapter 3, verses 13-17, how Jesus came to the River Jordan, and how His cousin John baptised Him there.

Have you noticed that, when John said that he was unworthy to baptise Jesus, he was told:
"*Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness*"
(Matthew, chapter 3, verse 15).

He did not say "me", he said "us", showing that we too must be baptised. It is essential for salvation.

Burial in water

Baptism means a complete burial under water. It is as though, when we go under the water, we die, and when we come out of the water again, we are ready to begin a new life. In a way, we die with Christ, and then we rise with Him. Paul tells us this in the chapter you have read in Romans. Read again verses 3-4,
"*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*."

Christening and Baptism

Perhaps you have heard of babies being "baptised" or christened, when they are sprinkled with water on the forehead.

But this is not really baptism. You remember Jesus said, "*He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved*" (Mark, chapter 16, verse 16). We must understand and believe first, and a baby cannot do this.

And, of course, being sprinkled with water is not the same as being buried in it and coming up again out of the water. it cannot remind us in the same way of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

A man who believed and was baptised

You will notice in the reading in Acts, chapter 8, that the eunuch, a servant of the Queen of Ethiopia, said,
"*Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptised?*" (verse 36).

There was one condition. Philip said to him,
"*If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest*" (verse 37).

You will notice, too, that "*they went down both into the water*" (verse 38). That was necessary because Philip was going to baptize the eunuch by burying him completely under the water.

A big decision

Here is another very important passage about baptism:
"*But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women*" (Acts, chapter 8, verse 12).

We learn from this quotation that people should not rush into baptism before they are ready. The men and women of Samaria were not baptised until "*they believed...the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ*".

Deciding to be baptised is the most important decision of a lifetime. It is not a decision to make lightly. Before baptism, it is necessary to understand, and believe, the true teaching of the Bible. After baptism, it is necessary to fight against temptation and try to obey God's commandments always.

Without these things – belief of true Bible teaching first, and obedience to God afterwards – baptism is worthless.

Children of God

We are born the children of Adam. But when we are baptised we are taken into the family of God, and we become the children of God. Every man and woman is a child of Adam, and the Bible speaks of them as being "in Adam".

When we are baptised, we "put on Christ", and are spoken of as being "in Christ". Paul tells us in Galatians, chapter 3, verses 26-27,
"*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ*."

We have a new hope of life, for we read in 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, verse 22,
"*As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*."

Christ our Mediator

We make a fresh start at our baptism. But we cannot live without sinning. What happens if we sin, after we are baptised?

Because we are "in Christ", we have Jesus Christ to be our mediator, and to pray to God for us – and, if we are really sorry we have sinned, we may be sure that God will hear Him, and forgive us our sins for His sake. The apostle John writes,
"*If any man sin, we have an advocate* [or, a mediator] *with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*" (1 John, chapter 2, verse 1).

Summary

1. God has commanded us to be baptised.

2. Baptism is a complete burial in water.

3. Because baptism must follow belief, it is for adults, not babies.

4. In a figure, we die with Christ, and rise out of the water to a new life.

5. When we are baptised, we become the children of God, and the Bible speaks of us as being "in Christ".

No. 21

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Some Practical Problems

WEEKLY READINGS Exodus, chapters 37-40;
Revelation, chapter 20.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Romans, chapters 12 and 13.

Jesus said to His followers, "*If ye love Me, keep My commandments*" (John, chapter 14, verse 15).

You will remember how God, through Moses, gave the Jews a law which we call the "Law of Moses". In the Law of Moses there were rules to tell the people what they must do, and what they must not do; and these laws were to guide them in every way in their daily life.

This law could not bring life to the people because, as you will remember, they were unable to keep it. So God gave to them a "better way". He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to show us how to live. Jesus did not give His followers a complete list of rules, to tell them what they must do in every circumstance of life.

He told them the most important thing was to love God, and to show love to each other.

But both Jesus and the apostles gave some definite "do's" and "don'ts", which we must understand and obey.

We must obey our rulers

In Romans, chapter 13, we read, in verse 1:
"*Let every soul be subject to the higher powers*."

Whoever our ruler may be, he holds that position because God allows him to do so. (1 Peter, chapter 2, verses 13-15). This is true, too, of the people who are over us at work.

So we must obey those who have authority over us, even when they are unkind and unreasonable. So Peter tells us,

"*Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward*." (1 Peter, chapter 2, verse 18).

The only time this does not apply is when a ruler tells us to disobey God. Once, when the Jews forbade Peter and John to teach about Jesus and His resurrection, they answered:
"*Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*." (Acts, chapter 4, verses 19- 20).

Jesus Himself prayed for those who put Him to death. If we remember His example, we shall find it easier to return good for evil. We must leave to God the task of punishing the wicked. So the apostle Paul says,
"*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine; I will repay', saith the Lord*" (Romans, chapter 12, verse 19).

The disciple does not fight

We must obey our rulers in all things – except when their rules conflict with the law of God.

For example, in most countries in these days there are laws commanding all young men to serve for a period in the Army, Navy, or Air Force.

But God has said that His children must not fight. Jesus said,
"*...all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword*" (Matthew, chapter 26, verse 52).

He taught His followers to pray for their enemies, and so show them love, no matter what the provocation:
"*But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also*" (Matthew, chapter 5, verse 39).

So, although it may mean trouble, and even imprisonment, the Christian must always refuse to fight or to join the armed forces. This is not because wars are always wrong; when God orders men to fight, then it is right to do so. But His commandment for us in this age is, that we "*resist not evil*"; knowing that the day will come, when God Himself will execute judgment on the wicked.

Voting

Like the children of God in all ages, the Christians of these days are, "...*strangers and pilgrims on the earth*" (Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 13).

They are waiting for God's Kingdom to come; praying that they may have a place in that Kingdom.

They know that present-day governments will all pass away when that Kingdom comes. They take no part in the politics of this world. They do not vote, because their views of life are such that no politician could act as their "representative".

"*For our conversation* [citizenship] *is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*" (Philippians, chapter 3, verse 20).

Marriage – a partnership in Christ

There are two classes of people in the world. those "in Adam", and those "in Christ". The difference between these two classes is immense.

Those in Adam are selfish and worldly; those in Christ are the servants of God. Naturally, those in Christ will feel a great sense of unity, and will help each other to serve God faithfully. They will not mix with the people of the world, because their interests are so different.

Above all, they will show their separation from the world in their attitude to marriage. They will choose their marriage partners from the family of God, and not from the world. The apostle Paul emphasises the importance of this separation in 2 Corinthians, chapter 6, verses 14-16, "*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people*".

We can never be truly happy if we break God's laws; and experience has shown that it is a tragic mistake to marry an unbeliever.

God hates "putting away"

Marriage is a union for life. When God created Eve as a "help" for Adam, the principle was laid down:

"*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*" (Genesis, chapter 2, verse 24).

The Lord Jesus confirmed that marriage is for a lifetime by saying:
"'*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*'"
(Matthew, chapter 19, verse 6).

So the Lord Jesus forbids divorce. Even if a marriage is not going smoothly for the moment, a Christian must show patience and love. In Malachi, chapter 2, verse 16, we read that:
"…*Lord, the God of Israel, saith that He hateth putting away*".

Remember, we can never be truly happy if we break God's laws.

But…

We have talked about the importance of marrying only a believer. But it sometimes happens that a man or woman who becomes a disciple is already married. In this case, the believing partner is not called upon to leave the other. Of course, if would be difficult to stop the unbeliever from leaving, if he or she were intent on doing so. But the believer is expected to fulfill his or her part faithfully in trying to "make the marriage a success".

Many people have been won to Christ by the faithful example of their believing partners – just as Paul suggested they might be in 1 Corinthians, chapter 7, verse 16:
"*For what knowest thou, wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?*"

A word about polygamy

In some countries a man is permitted to have two (or more) wives at the same time. Like marriage to an unbeliever, and like divorce, this is a great mistake. It creates unhappiness, and tends to encourage unfaithfulness; and it sets aside the great Christian ideal of one husband and one wife; united in love:
"*Therefore shall a man...cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*" (Genesis, chapter 2, verse 24).

All one in Christ

The believers are all joined together as one body, with Christ as their Head. It is their duty to see that the truth revealed in the Bible is kept pure; and that none adds to it, or takes from it. It is their duty, too, to strive to keep the commandments of Christ.

If one of the members deliberately breaks these commandments, then the others must do all they can to help him to see his mistake, and return to the right way. If he still persists in acting wrongly, then his fellow-disciples have no choice but to separate themselves from him.

Fellowship in Christ

The disciples of Christ are scattered allover the world, but they serve the same Master, and share the same hope.

They are joined together in the bonds of love and fellowship – joined together in the work of preaching the gospel.

So Paul commands us,
"*Do all thing without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*" (Philippians, chapter 2, verses 14-16).

Summary

1. We must, obey our rulers, except when they tell us to disobey God.

2. We must not take an active part in politics or (worse still) in war.

3. A man must have only one wife, and stay with her for life.

4. It is a tragic mistake to marry an unbeliever.

No. 22

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Walking in Newness of Life

WEEKLY READINGS Psalm 119;
Philemon.
READING FOR STUDY PAPER Hebrews, chapter 12.

When we are baptised, we are born again. To Nicodemus, who came to Him by night, Jesus said,
"*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (John, chapter 3, verse 3).

Jesus goes on to explain that He is thinking, not of a natural birth, but a birth of the Spirit. He says in John, chapter 3, verse 6,
"*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*."

When a baby is born, a new life begins. And so, when we are baptised, we begin a new life – a life "in Christ".

The apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 17,
"*...if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*."

If we are to grow up in Christ Jesus, we have to do our part, striving continually. If we don't strive, that "old man" which we renounced when we were baptised will get the better of us.

Help in the way

If we had to struggle alone, we could never "grow up" in Christ. But God has given us all we need for our spiritual growth.

He has given us the great privilege of coming to Him in prayer, through the Lord Jesus. All our difficulties, our joys and our sorrows, we may confide in Him, coming to Him reverently, and asking Him to help us and hear us for Jesus' sake.

He has given us His Word, the Bible. We could have no better guide; it will teach us more about God's ways; it will help us to act as He would

have us do, and to grow up into that "new man" in Christ. We read in 2 Timothy, chapter 3, verses 16-17 that,
"*All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works*."

He has given us the ability to think about His Word and His ways.

It is written in the book of Proverbs, chapter 23, verse 7,
" *as he* [him that hath an evil eye – see verse 6] *thinketh in his heart, so is he*."

If we let our minds dwell more and more on the things of God, we shall gradually become better men and women.

Believing and doing

Reading and praying and meditating will help us to do the right things. Someone once asked Jesus,
" *'Which is the great commandment in the law?'*" (Matthew, chapter 22, verse 36).

We read the reply of Jesus in verses 37-39,
"*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*"

These commandments are not easy to keep. We shall only be able to love God with all our heart and soul and mind if we keep reminding ourselves how much God has loved us, and how much He has done for us.

He has done great things for us. How can we pay the great debt we owe Him? We can do nothing for Him.

But what does Jesus give us as the second commandment? "*Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*". Here is something we can do. We can help other people, and show them thoughtfulness and love, as God has shown love to us.

The greatest thing we can do for others is to pass on to them the good news of the Kingdom of God, which we ourselves have come to believe. As God has invited us to keep His ways, and to share in the joys of His Kingdom, so we must invite others to share the joy we have found.

Jesus once said,
"*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*" (Matthew, chapter 7, verse 12).

God will accept the acts of love which we show our fellow men as if they were done to Him. So there is something we can do to show our appreciation of His love to us.

The disciple and the world

There are many things in the world today which are ungodly. There are, for instance, many books, papers, pictures, which quickly turn our minds to things that are evil and impure; and sometimes these things appeal to us very much. But – however much they appeal to us – we just have to turn away from them; if we don't, they will turn us away from God.

Taking no part in the ungodly pleasures of the world will mean losing some of our friends – for they won't understand why we now refuse to do things which we once enjoyed.

But we shall find many new friends; for all who – like us – have separated themselves from the world, will be united together. They will be children of God, and brothers and sisters in Christ.

Remembering Jesus

Baptism gives us a fresh start. We set out, when we are baptised, on the strait and narrow way that leads to God's Kingdom. But we are still very human, and we soon forget how much Jesus did for us when He died on the cross.

Jesus knew how easily His disciples would forget: so He told them to do something to remind them. Turn to the gospel of Luke, chapter 22, and read verses 14-20. This is the story of what is usually called the "last Supper", because it is the last meal that Jesus shared with His disciples before His death.

See how the bread and the wine were to remind His disciples how Jesus gave His life for them. He said to them, "...*this do in remembrance of Me*". Now read I Corinthians, chapter 11, verses 23-28.

The early Christians met on the first day of each week to remember Jesus in the way in which He had commanded them.

True disciples of the lord Jesus will meet together, as the first disciples did (and usually Sunday is the most convenient day for such meetings), to break bread and to drink wine, remembering how Jesus' body was broken and His blood was shed for them.

As we grow up in Christ, remembering Jesus in this way will become more and more important to us, helping us to realise that He is with us all the time.

You must decide

And so, as you finish reading these papers, you will be like one who stands at the foot of a signpost. One way, you know, leads to death. The other is the way of life.

Along the way of life travel those who have believed the Word of God, and been baptised into Christ. Jesus Himself is with them as they travel. Will you join them, too? Will you believe the glorious message of the Word of God? Will you be baptised into Christ? Remember that Jesus said, "*He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"* (Mark, chapter 16, verse 16).

Summary

1. Every day we must try to read something from the Bible, and say our prayers.

2. After we have been baptised. we must try to meet with our fellow believers every week, to break bread and drink wine in memory of Jesus. (Of course, this may not always be possible, because there may not be people with the same beliefs in our part of the world).

3 WE must try to give up all things likely to make us sin.

4. We must try continually to do good to other people.

Multiple Choice Questions for the 22 Lesson Christadelphian Bible Course

Note – These are not exactly the same as the essay style questions which are included in some copies of the course.

Please choose 1 answer only.

1.1. Why is the Bible different from all other books?
(a) It is the oldest book known to man
(b) It is inspired, meaning God-breathed
(c) It is the biggest of holy books
(d) It is written in a sacred language

1.2 Which of the following is a reason to believe the Bible?
(a) Jesus said it was true, and lived by it
(b) Fulfillment of future prophecy
(c) Historical accuracy
(d) All three of the above

1.3 How many books are there in the Bible?
(a) 1
(b) 2
(c) 12
(d) 66

2.1 How did God punish Adam's disobedience?
(a) He was sent to hell
(b) He immediately died
(c) He was made to die later
(d) God did not punish Adam

2.2 Why do all men die?
(a) Because all men are children of Adam.
(b) Because men are born good but sin
(c) Because the body must die, but the spirit lives on
(d) Because we are punished for Adam's sin

2.3 What has God done to give sinful men hope of life?
(a) He has built a mansion in heaven
(b) He gave his Son to save those who believe in him
(c) He gave his Son to save everyone
(d) There is no hope for sinful men

3.1 What was the message of the angels to the disciples as they watched Jesus ascend into heaven?
(a) Jesus will come to earth again in the same way you saw him go
(b) Jesus has gone to where he was before he was born
(c) Jesus has gone to prepare a place for you in heaven
(d) Anyone who believes will also ascend in this way

3.2 Which of the following is NOT about the return of Christ?
(a) Acts 3:19-20
(b) 2 Peter 3:9-1 0
(c) Acts 2:34
(d) 1 Thessalonians 4:16

3.3 When will Jesus come back?
(a) Jesus has already come back and has now established his Kingdom in Heaven
(b) When all the world believes in him
(c) After 2000 years
(d) No man knows the day or the hour

4.1 Where did the Kingdom of God once exist?
(a) Rome
(b) Israel
(c) Eden
(d) Heaven

4.2 Why was it called the Kingdom of the Lord?
(a) Because God gave the kingdom to David
(b) Because it was a model of heaven
(c) Because God reigned as the king as Jesus will
(d) Because the kingdom is the church

4.3 Who will restore the Kingdom of God?
(a) the church

(b) Jesus
(c) the people of Israel
(d) It will not be restored

5.1 How far will the Kingdom of God reach?
(a) All the world
(b) Israel (modern boundaries)
(c) Israel (boundaries as in days of Solomon)
(d) Heaven

5.2 Which city will be the capital of the Kingdom?
(a) Babylon
(b) The city of God in Heaven
(c) Jerusalem
(d) Rome

5.3 What will the world be like when the Kingdom is established?
(a) Every country will have democracy
(b) The desert shall bloom
(c) Everyone living now will be made immortal
(d) The righteous will be taken by Jesus to heaven

6.1 Who was NOT a great man in the history of Israel?
(a) Moses
(b) David
(c) Rehoboam
(d) Hezekiah

6.2 What happened in the reign of Rehoboam?
(a) The Kingdom was divided into 10 tribes in the North and 2 in the South
(b) The northern kingdom fell to Assyria
(c) The temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar
(d) The Jews returned from Babylon

6.3 How was the Kingdom of Judah punished for their disobedience?
(a) Famine
(b) Flood
(c) Captivity
(d) Earthquake

7.1 What was the work of John the Baptist?
(a) He was to prepare the people for Jesus
(b) He was to establish the Kingdom
(c) He performed miracles and drove out demons
(d) He was to lead Israel against the Romans

7.2 What happened to the Jews because they rejected Jesus?
(a) God cast them off as his people
(b) A curse is on the Jews to this day
(c) No Jews believed in Jesus
(d) God used the Romans to scatter the Jews among all nations

7.3 What did the prophet Zechariah predict?
(a) The Jews will be rejected by Christ at the judgement
(b) The Jews will recognise Christ when he comes again
(c) Jerusalem will never be rebuilt
(d) Ten men will take hold of one Jew and beat him

8.1 What was the main purpose of the Law of Moses?
(a) To enable the King to govern wisely
(b) To teach men that they were sinners
(c) To establish public hygiene
(d) To maintain food laws

8.2 Why could the Law not save men?
(a) Because it was fundamentally mistaken
(b) Because it was only for Jews
(c) Because no one could keep the Law
(d) Because Israel disobeyed the Law

8.3 What better way of Salvation did God provide?
(a) A new moral law for Christians
(b) The sacrifice of Christ
(c) The New Testament
(d) The church

9.1 Which of the following was NOT promised to Abraham?
(a) That he possess all the land he saw
(b) That he would be a blessing to all nations

(c) That he would receive a place in heaven
(d) That he would have a son

9.2 Why was God pleased with Abraham?
(a) Because of his good works and charity
(b) Because he believed in God
(c) Because he was free from sin
(d) Because he sacrificed a sheep

9.3 How can we share in the promises made to Abraham?
(a) If we belong to Christ we can share in the promises
(b) If we are tested like Abraham
(c) We have already received what was promised to Abraham – Jesus Christ
(d) Christians do not need to share in these promises

10.1 What did David wish to do for God?
(a) He wanted to make Israel a great military power
(b) He wanted to destroy the Philistines
(c) He wanted to convert the Gentiles
(d) He wanted to build a house for God

10.2 Who was the son promised to David?
(a) Solomon
(b) Jesus
(c) Isaac
(d) Absalom

10.3 Of whom is Jesus Christ the "seed" or descendant?
(a) David
(b) Abraham
(c) David and Abraham
(d) God

11.1 How was the first man made?
(a) From dust
(b) From clots of blood
(c) From a monkey
(d) He descended from heaven

11.2 How were Adam and Eve punished when they broke God's law?
(a) Their clothes were removed
(b) They became dying creatures
(c) The earth was cursed for ever
(d) God withdrew his spirit

11.3 How does this affect us?
(a) The earth can never be restored to be like Eden
(b) Only the spirits of the righteous will go to heaven
(c) The devil is now free to torment the world
(d) Like Adam we will return to dust

12.1 What happens to man when he dies?
(a) The body returns to dust, the soul returns to heaven
(b) The good go to heaven, the wicked go to hell
(c) It is the same as the animals – the dead know nothing
(d) His spirit is reincarnated in another life

12.2 What is the hope of the man who believes in Christ?
(a) He sleeps in the grave till the return of Christ
(b) His spirit is conscious in underworld till the return of Christ
(c) He goes directly to be with Christ in heaven
(d) He is judged, and then goes to heaven

12.3 What does the Bible mean by Hell (Gehenna)?
(a) A place of fire where the devil torments sinners for ever
(b) A place for the purification of souls – purgatory
(c) A translation for the rubbish heap outside Jerusalem
(d) A figure of speech for human suffering in this life

13.1 Which of the following speaks specifically of the resurrection of Abraham?
(a) 1 Thessalonians 4:16
(b) John 5:21
(c) 1 Corinthians 15:22-23
(d) Hebrews 11:40

13.2 When will the resurrection take place?
(a) Immediately after death
(b) After the judgement
(c) After the descent of Christ, but before gathering of the living

(d) After both the descent of Christ and his gathering of the living

13.3 What will happen to believers who are alive when Christ comes?
(a) They will be gathered to be with Christ in heaven
(b) They will be gathered to be with Christ on earth
(c) They will be transformed into angels
(d) Christ will visit each one individually

14.1 When will the judgement be?
(a) Each man's own judgement is while he is alive
(b) The same day that a man dies
(c) Before Jesus returns to the earth
(d) After Jesus returns to the earth

14.2 Who will be judged?
(a) All who did not believe
(b) All who believed
(c) All who have known about God
(d) All men, whether they have heard about God or not

14.3 What will be the fate of the rejected?
(a) They will burn for ever in hell
(b) They will be given another life on earth
(c) They will be destroyed and cease to exist
(d) They will become demons

15.1 God is...?
(a) Three persons – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit
(b) Two persons – God the Father and God the Son
(c) One person – God the Father
(d) One, but with three aspects as a Trinity

15.2 Which best describes the relationship of Jesus to God?
(a) Jesus is greater than God
(b) Jesus is equal to God
(c) Jesus is lesser than God
(d) Jesus and God are the same person – coexistent and coeternal

15.3 Why is Jesus called Son of God?
(a) Before birth Jesus already existed in heaven as God the Son
(b) He was son of Mary, and Mary is the Mother of God

(c) He was Son of Man because of Mary, but Son of God by the Holy Spirit
(d) Although a normal man, He was adopted as God's son because of his goodness

16.1 What is the Holy Spirit?
(a) The power, or 'breath', of God by which he achieves his purpose
(b) The third person of the Trinity
(c) A power possessed by Christians
(d) The life force inside man

16.2 How is the Bible related to the Holy Spirit?
(a) The writers were moved by the Holy Spirit
(b) The words of the Bible are Spirit and life
(c) Both the above
(d) Neither of the above

16.3 What did the Holy Spirit NOT give the apostles?
(a) Power to do miracles
(b) Power to resist temptation and not sin
(c) Inspiration to write the New Testament
(d) Inspiration to prophesy

17.1 Why were the Holy Spirit gifts first given?
(a) Because the gifts are an essential part of the Gospel
(b) Because they helped the church before the New Testament was written
(c) Because the apostles were saints
(d) Because without the gifts the Jews and Greeks would not believe

17.2 What does Paul say about the gift of tongues?
(a) Tongues are a sign for believers
(b) Tongues would cease
(c) Tongues are a proof of a prophet
(d) Tongues cannot be interpreted by man

17.3 Does anyone possess the gifts today?
(a) Yes, Paul said that the gifts would never fail
(b) Only leaders in the church
(c) Only those who teach true doctrine
(d) No, but even if they did gifts still do not guarantee true teaching

18.1 How was Jesus tempted?
(a) He was tempted like us in some ways, but not in all points
(b) He was tempted in all points like us, but unlike us he never sinned
(c) He was tempted by the devil – a fallen angel who also tempts us
(d) He could not be tempted

18.2 Why was Jesus crucified?
(a) The Jews and Romans did this despite the will of God
(b) God allowed it to happen to save us from our sins
(c) To destroy his fleshly body, so that his spirit could enter heaven
(d) So that all who make the sign of the cross will be saved

18.3 What does "to take up one's cross" mean?
(a) To wear a cross around the neck
(b) To experience suffering in this life
(c) To deny oneself and follow Christ
(d) To confess Jesus as Lord

19.1 In what way did Jesus "destroy the power of the devil"? (1 John3:8, Hebrews 2:14)
(a) He drove the devil out of heaven
(b) He defeated sinful human nature in himself, and broke the pattern of Adam's children
(c) He destroyed the power of the devil over Christians, but the devil is still active
(d) It is prophetic of the last day when Jesus will cast the devil into a lake of fire

19.2 What is the relationship of God to evil?
(a) God makes both light and darkness, and causes both good and bad
(b) God causes only good, but permits the devil to cause evil for a time
(c) God cast the devil out of heaven after he tempted Adam
(d) God has imprisoned the devil until the last days

19.3 What does Satan mean?
(a) It is a word meaning 'slanderer' or 'false accuser'
(b) It is a word meaning 'great serpent' or 'dragon'
(c) It is a word meaning 'enemy' or 'adversary'
(d) It is the personal name of the chief of the rebel angels

20.1 How should we be baptised?
(a) By sprinkling water on the forehead of a baby
(b) By "burial" in water as an adult
(c) Not in literal water but by a confession of Christ
(d) By receiving the Holy Spirit

20.2 Who shall be saved?
(a) He who believes
(b) He who believes and is baptised
(c) He who believes and receives the Holy Spirit
(d) He who confesses that Jesus is Lord

20.3 What does baptism acheive?
(a) It identifies us with the death of Christ
(b) It cleanses us from all sin; past, present and future
(c) After baptism we can receive the Holy Spirit gifts
(d) It has no effect, it is only a symbol

21.1 What should be our attitude to the government?
(a) Vote to ensure a fair government
(b) Be a good citizen, including fighting if necessary
(c) The Christian is not bound by a non-Christian government
(d) The rulers are appointed by God, we must be subject to them

21.2 What does the Bible say about marriage?
(a) A man may marry an non-believing wife but a woman must marry a believer
(b) If the husband or wife of a Christian refuses to accept Christ they should be divorced
(c) The believer must not initiate divorce against their husband or wife
(d) The Bible requires that priests do not marry

21.3 What is fellowship?
(a) The joy shared with all Christians
(b) Relationship with other believers who share correct teaching and behaviour in Christ
(c) Only the direct relationship between the believer and Christ
(d) The highest position at a theological college

22.1 What are the two greatest commandments?
(a) Thou shall not kill & Thou shalt not steal
(b) Love God with all thy heart & Love thy neighbour as thyself
(c) Keep the Sabbath holy & Pray without ceasing
(d) There is no law, and there are no commandments for the Christian

22.2 How did Jesus command that we remember his death?

(a) By hanging a cross in the home
(b) By celebrating Easter
(c) By washing each others' feet
(d) By sharing bread and wine regularly

22.3 What is most important for believers after baptism?

(a) Prayer
(b) Bible reading
(c) Putting Christ's teaching into practice
(d) These are all equally important

General Questions:

23.1 How useful have you found this course?
(a) Not very useful
(b) Average
(c) Useful – but some problems (please specify below)
(d) Very useful

23.2 What further material would you like to be sent (you may select more than one)?
(a) Nothing, thankyou
(b) More detailed studies
(c) Magazine
(d) Other (please specify below)

23.3 If you were asked to name 3 parts of the course which you think are unclear, or disagree with, which would they be (please give lesson numbers and subject)?
Lesson No. ___ Subject:
Lesson No. ___ Subject:
Lesson No. ___ Subject: