

## BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

### PART ONE

### STUDY 1

# Bible Light and Truth



**“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105**

**“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”  
John 17:17**

## SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Find time to read through the lesson carefully without rushing. Settle down comfortably and quietly for study.
2. When a passage from the Bible is quoted, look it up in your Bible and read the passage. Check for yourself that the verses are not taken out of their context. Look at the verses before and after those quoted and be certain that you understand what the passage teaches.
3. Try and set aside a little time each day for reading. Read the passages from the Bible that are suggested at the end of the studies.
4. Go through each Bible study more than once looking up the references for yourself.
5. Answer the questionnaire that is at the end of each study. Complete answering the questions then make a copy of your answers. Send one copy to your tutor and keep one copy with the study for future reference.
6. If you have any questions about anything contained in the Bible study, ask your tutor by writing your questions on one of the question sheets provided and enclosing it with your questionnaire.
7. We are told in the Book of Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament about Cornelius who was a good man and who lived uprightly. He wanted to learn more of God and of His will. He prayed to God for help and his prayers were heard and answered (Acts 10). We recommend that you begin your studies by first praying to God that He will guide your studies. Pray about any problems you may have in life and try to see how He is guiding you, through His word, seeking to bring you closer to Him.

### Bible Reading Hints

#### DO:

- Look first to the Bible for answers to questions
- Read all of the Bible to find answers to your questions
- Use clear passages to explain more difficult ones
- Write down any questions that you have from reading the Bible. It will help you to remember them for future study. Often answers to questions are discovered whilst following a plan of daily Bible reading.

#### Don't:

- Expect quick answers
- Look at isolated passages and draw conclusions

May God bless you in your studies of His Word.

## Bible Study 1: The Bible

The Bible makes great claims. It clearly states that its author is God - the Creator of all things and the source of all life. The Bible speaks with authority, claiming to be the sole source of revealing God and His purpose. If this claim cannot be upheld, then the Bible is the greatest and the cruellest hoax which has ever deceived mankind. However, if the claims of the Bible can be validated and supported, then we are in possession of the world's greatest treasure.

The Bible as the true Word of God contains the key to finding true peace and happiness. It answers the most perplexing questions concerning the meaning and purpose of our existence and predicts the final outcome of the struggle between right and wrong.

So let us look more closely at its claims. Paul, writing of the Old Testament, says *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God"* (2 Timothy 3v16).

Every word of the original manuscripts was written under direct Divine guidance. The Apostle Peter stressed the same fact,

*"For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."* (2 Peter 1v21)

These two apostles claim Divine authority for the writings of the Old Testament recorded centuries before their own days, just as indeed their own work was divinely inspired. This Divine authority is responsible for the complete harmony of teaching revealed in the Bible. The writers were separated by time, education, occupation, experience and social position, yet their writings all combine to form one united Book.

### Why the Bible Was Written

The Bible tells us how the human race began and how God's plan of salvation will lead to the final victory of right over wrong and the extermination of every trace of sin and evil. The chief purpose of the Bible is to make known to the condemned human race the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Old and New Testaments combine to portray Jesus as the only Saviour of mankind. Thus we read:

*"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."* (John 20v31).

In the pages of the Bible we find all the teaching necessary for man's enlightenment; The Divine definitions of right and wrong, and of man's duty to God and to his fellow-men (2Timothy 3v15-17). Finally, the Bible has been given to tell us, in broad outline, what the future holds, that we might be prepared for the return of Christ (2Peter 1v19).

### The contents of the bible

The Bible is a collection of 66 books divided into two main sections. The books of the Old Testament were written before the time of Christ and the books of the New Testament after the time of Christ. You will find a list of them at the front of your Bible. They were written by about forty different writers over a period of 1,500 years. They were written in a number of different countries - such as Israel, Egypt, Italy and Babylon. Yet all the books combine to teach one consistent theme, the theme of the working out of God's purpose with man, from the very beginning recorded in Genesis 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 11v15).

## The Old Testament

The books of the Old Testament fall into four main sections:

### (a) THE BOOKS OF MOSES

The first book is called Genesis, which means the beginning. It tells us about God's dealings with the first men on the earth. Then follow Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. They record how God called Abraham, made a covenant with him and with his descendants, brought them out of Egypt and gave them the land known today as Israel.

### (b) THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

These, from the Book of Joshua to the Book of Esther, are a record of the history of the Israelites (or Jews) and of God's dealings with them.

### (c) THE POETIC BOOKS

The books of Job, the Psalms, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs were written a poetic form. They contain a lot of important teachings about the ways of God and the feelings and duties of man.

### (d) THE BOOKS OF THE PROPHETS

The word prophet means seer - one who has insight or visions, not only of future events, but also about God's requirements of man. The longer prophetic books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are followed by a number of shorter ones.

## The New Testament

### (a) THE GOSPEL RECORDS

These are four separate accounts of the life of Christ, written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; each book presents a different aspect of the gospel record. By reading and comparing the four records we get a clearer picture of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### (b) THE BOOK CALLED 'THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES'

This was written by Luke and tells what happened after Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. We are told how the first churches were formed as the apostles taught the Gospel message throughout the Roman Empire.

### (c) THE LETTERS

These were written by some of the apostles to teach and guide the early believers in the small, scattered young churches. But the message in them is as relevant in our day as it was to them.

### (d) THE BOOK OF REVELATION

This was the last message of Jesus, given in vision to the Apostle John.

## Jesus Christ believed every word of the Old Testament

Jesus Christ is the central figure of God's purpose and the Scriptures which he used and studied were what we know today as the Old Testament. Jesus believed these Scriptures, basing all his teaching upon them and accepted them as having indisputable authority. For example read these passages:

**John 5v 6-47**  
**Luke 24v27**  
**Luke 24v44-48**  
**Matthew 22v29**  
**Mark 7v6-13**

Jesus speaks about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and Solomon, and of many other people about whom we read in the Old Testament and bases his teaching on the fact that these people were real, that they were part of God's purpose and that all of the Old Testament is the Word of God.

## The Bible cannot be proved false

All the developments of modern thought and technology have combined to establish that the Bible records are true. Many enemies of the Bible, including some very clever men, have tried to prove it wrong but they have all failed. Since truth cannot contradict itself, we should naturally expect the Word of God to be in harmony with observable scientific knowledge.

A further evidence of the authority of the Bible is the way in which it has been preserved over the centuries. The Bible has triumphantly withstood every effort of man to overthrow it. It has been suppressed and withheld from the common people; whole editions of it have been burned and many books have been written in attempts to disprove it. No other book has been subjected to such continuous and determined opposition: the Bible still stands, immovable and unconquerable.

The great antiquity of the Bible, its preservation and influence upon the human race are factors which cannot be ignored. The evidences of archaeological discoveries particularly over the past hundred years or so by various archaeologists working in Egypt, Nineveh, Assyria, Babylon, Ur and Israel are all striking confirmations of the truth of Bible history. Exhibits in museums all over the world clearly demonstrate this fact. The inscriptions of Nations which fought against Israel confirm the Bible accounts both of events and of ancient customs and local habits. Present day archaeology continues to add material supporting our reasons for believing the truth of the whole Bible. (For more information about the various discoveries, send for a free copy of the magazine 'Light on Archaeology'.)

Even the criticisms relating to the care taken by the Jewish copyists of the original writings are discounted with the discovery of ancient manuscripts. The remarkable discovery in 1947 of the Dead Sea Scrolls has provided yet more valuable evidence of the accuracy of the Bible. These manuscripts are some of the earliest available, dating back to the second century B.C. Despite their age, the slight variations that do occur are only in respect of spelling and do not affect the doctrine, prophecy or historical facts found in our present day Bible.

So the work of the archaeologist confirms in a remarkable way the truth and reliability of the Bible and thus, indirectly, that it is the production of Divine inspiration.

## Prophecy proves the Bible true

God himself has chosen to use prophecy as one great proof of His infinite wisdom, authority and supremacy (Isaiah 46 v 9-10; Isaiah 42 v 9).

The Bible speaks from time to time of events that would come to pass hundreds of years later. In Matthew 2 it is recorded that the wise men came to Jerusalem and asked. "*Where is he that is born King of the Jews?*" When Herod asked the chief priests this question, they at once were able to reply, "*In Bethlehem of Judea*" because hundreds of years before it had been prophesied in one of the books of the Old Testament (Micah 5v2).

In addition to prophecies about Jesus Christ, there are many relating to ancient nations and, in particular, to the Jews. Many of the ancient nations have disappeared from world affairs but the Bible said that the Jews would survive. The Jewish people still survive today in spite of many efforts to destroy them (Jeremiah 30v10-11). If the Bible had been of mere human origin, at any time in history such a declaration could have been found false. The Jews are still with us today with their own state, Israel, and its capital city Jerusalem now in their complete control.

The Bible gives us the reasons for these facts. This is a powerful proof that the Bible is Divinely inspired and therefore infallible. It is a collection of books that we can completely trust to teach us about God and His purpose with His creation. Only from its pages can we find the true path to salvation.

## SUMMARY

Some reasons for believing the bible is inspired:

1. The unity of its message in spite of the number of writers who worked over a great period of time.
2. Its miraculous preservation.
3. The evidence of the discoveries of the archaeologist
4. The fulfilment of Bible prophecies - (further examples will be given in later studies).

Some conditions required for salvation:

- If we are to understand the Bible, Jesus said we must become teachable as little children Matthew 11v25.
- We must want to find out for ourselves the truth and wisdom of God's Word (Proverbs 2v3-6).
- We must believe that God will reward us in our search (Hebrews 11v6).
- We must be willing to bring our lives into harmony with God's commandments, for as Jesus said:

*"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."* (John 13v17).

And

*"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven".* (Matthew 7v21).

The Apostle Paul wrote,

*"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling"* (Philippians 2v12).

The whole purpose of this course of studies is to help you to understand the Bible for yourself, so that you may accept it as it is, the Word of God, offering the hope of everlasting life to all who will hear and obey it.

## PASSAGES TO READ FROM YOUR BIBLE

2 Timothy 3, 2 Peter 1, Luke 24.

Look up these verses Isaiah 8v20, Acts 28v23-31, Ephesians 4v21-32

**BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE****STUDY 1 QUESTIONS**

Underline the correct answer to each question and send (address above) the loose copy to your tutor or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to your tutor. Please make sure you keep a copy of the questions and your answers for reference.

1. Who is the author of the Bible?  
(a) Paul                      (b) Moses  
(c) God                        (d) Daniel
  
2. What part of the Old Testament did Jesus use to begin explaining to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus about himself?  
(a) The writings of the prophets  
(b) The writings of Moses  
(c) The Psalms  
(d) The Proverbs
  
3. The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in:-  
(a) 1749                      (b) 1794  
(c) 1947                      (d) 1914
  
4. Where did Micah prophesy that Jesus would be born?  
(a) Jerusalem              (b) Bethel  
(c) Bethlehem              (d) Babylon
  
5. The books of the Bible were written over a period of:-  
(a) 50 years                (b) 15 years  
(c) 1,500 years              (d) 150 years
  
6. Jesus said, 'If you know these things, happy are you....  
(a) If you tell others'      (b) If you do them'  
(c) If you remember them' (d) If you are sure of them'
  
7. How many separate books does the Bible contain?  
(a) 66                      (b) 27                      (c) 39                      (d) 23
  
8. What was the sure 'word' that Peter referred to in his second epistle?  
(a) Of good conduct      (b) Of singing  
(c) Of prophecy            (d) Of talking
  
9. In which city was Paul living at the time recorded in Acts 28v23-31?
  
10. From where can we obtain a full understanding of God's plan and purpose with the earth?  
(a) The Dead Sea Scrolls   (b) The Jewish Law  
(c) The writings of archaeologists  
(d) The Holy Bible

## Bible Study 2 – GOD

There are a number of arguments for the existence of God.

### THE WATCH ARGUMENT

If we found a watch on the ground, having never seen a watch before, we might pick it up and examine it. We might open the back and look at the complicated mechanism. We would notice how the tiny wheels worked against each other and turned the hands on the face. We would know that such an intricate piece of mechanism must have been made. The watch must have been designed; it must have been planned. The watch could not have made itself. The parts could not have come together by accident.

The fact that the watch exists is evidence that there must be a designer - there must be a watchmaker. The universe is made up of millions of stars. The earth has a moon revolving round it. The sun and the planets are part of a marvelously intricate system of which every part is moving exactly along its appointed path. This is much more complicated than any watch. This did not happen by accident. There must be a designer. *'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.'* (Psalm 19:1).

### BIBLE EVIDENCE

One of the most powerful arguments for the existence of God is contained in the Bible. The Bible contains many prophecies about the rise and fall of kingdoms and nations; about individuals and about events. In many cases these prophecies were recorded hundreds of years in advance. This is something that man could not do. Only God, who controls all things could have caused these prophecies to be written. Look at Isaiah 46:9-10. "Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please." Some of these prophecies will be dealt with in future studies. The purpose of this study is to explain what God has revealed about Himself in the Bible.

### WHAT THE BIBLE TELLS US

God has revealed Himself as the Creator.

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' (Genesis 1:1). "It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts." (Isaiah 45:12) God has revealed Himself as eternal. He has always been and always will exist. "Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God." (Psalm 90:2). "Your throne was established long ago; you are from all eternity." (Psalm 93:2). There is only one God. Israel were reminded that the various gods the Egyptians

worshipped had no power and were no more than man-made images. "For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the LORD made the heavens." (1 Chronicles 16:26). God is all powerful. He knows all that is going on and is present everywhere by the power of His spirit. "You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways." (Psalm 139:2-3). David in this Psalm says that our minds are too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain." (verse 6). But if we know that God sees and knows all things it can be a great comfort and a source of strength.

"If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast." (Psalm 139:9-10) The Bible tells us that God's ear is always open to hear the cry of His children and God has declared, too, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5).

### THE UNITY OF GOD

The Bible teaching that there is one God is important, particularly as there are many who do not believe this. It is the clear teaching of both Old Testament and New Testament.

Look at these verses: "I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God." (Isaiah 45:5)

"Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live." (1 Corinthians 8:5-6) one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Ephesians 4:6) The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus himself emphasised the importance of this Bible doctrine when he said, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:3).

### IS THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY TRUE?

**Few doctrines are more generally accepted by the Christian world than that concerning the Godhead, known as the doctrine of the Trinity. Roman Catholics, the Greek Church, and almost all denominations of Protestants, they may differ upon some points, but agree on this. They believe that 'the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God, and yet there are not three Gods, but one God'. They further believe that all three are co-equal and co-eternal. Is this a true doctrine? If so, while we may not understand it, must we accept it? How are we to know? Obviously only by what God has been pleased to reveal in His Word. Therefore, to the Bible we go, and soon discover that THERE IS NO SUPPORT ANYWHERE IN ITS PAGES FOR THIS POPULAR DOCTRINE, BUT QUITE THE OPPOSITE. The Scripture always teaches the unity of God, not the trinity. The following quotations clearly show this:**

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!" (Deuteronomy 6:4)  
 'Jesus answered him, "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.'" (Mark 12:29)

I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God." (Isaiah 45:5)

"Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things." (1 Corinthians 8:6)

These are by no means isolated passages, but examples of many more might be quoted, all teaching that God is one, not three. The last of the above passages is strikingly significant. Christ had appeared, had died, been raised from the dead and is now at the Father's right hand. Yet Paul says there is ONE GOD! And who is this? The triune God of orthodoxy - the Father, Son and Holy Ghost? No! He is **THE FATHER**. He was the God whom Paul worshipped.

### IS JESUS GOD THE SON OR SON OF GOD?

What then, of Jesus Christ? Was he not 'God the Son'? In view of the frequent use of this expression today, it is **remarkable that such a phrase is not to be found in the Bible**. We read of the 'Son of God', but not 'God the Son'. The natural inference is that the doctrine involved by the expression is not a scriptural one. The Athanasian Creed says of the Father and Son that they are co-equal and co-eternal. Passing over the remarkable conception that a Father and Son can be co-eternal, what does the Bible say concerning the co-equality? It speaks most plainly on the matter. Was Christ the equal of the Father when he was here 2000 years ago? Let Him answer for Himself: "By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me." (John 5:30), "My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me." (John 7:16), for the Father is greater than I." (John 14:28). **JESUS IS NOT PART OF A TRINITY.**

The very fact that He was sent by the Father negates the theory of co-equality, whilst His lack of knowledge concerning the time of His second coming is an additional evidence against the popular belief, for one cannot imagine the Second Person of the Trinity being ignorant of anything. "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life." (John 5:24) "And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me." (John 5:37) Not only was there this absence of equality in the past, it is the same now. Ponder the words of Paul, when he speaks of the "The God and Father of the Lord Jesus.." (2 Corinthians 11:31), even as Jesus Himself, after His resurrection, referred to the Father as "My God" (John 20:17). The further fact that "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5), is another testimony the same effect.

### CHRIST'S FUTURE POSITION.

This line of evidence can be carried further. We look forward to the time at the end of Christ's reign on earth of one thousand years. What do we see?

Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. "For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all." (1 Corinthians 15:24-28)

We can see that in the past, the present and the future, high as the position God has given to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father is supreme and co-equality is never even suggested.

**Who, then, is Jesus Christ? The Bible teaches that *He is the Son of God, born of a virgin mother, 4,000 years after creation, as recorded in Matthew and Luke:***

"The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35)

Jesus lived as recorded in the Scriptures, was tempted, suffered and died, but was raised from the dead by the Father, and exalted to the Father's right hand as High Priest, and Mediator.

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5)

There He will remain until the time when He shall return to the earth to establish the Kingdom of God.

### THE LOVE OF GOD

If there is one attribute of the Almighty which shows that His character is different from the gods which have been invented by men, it is the love that He shows. Think of the love that a parent shows to his children. God shows all that love - and more - to us. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16).

The work of the Lord Jesus Christ forms the subject of another study. Man's need of salvation is also dealt with very fully later. But the purpose that God has with the earth and with man needs to be outlined here.

It is the clear teaching of the Bible that God intends in the future to change the world; to remove the evils which at present afflict the world.

### GOD'S PLAN FOR THE EARTH

Very early in the history of Israel, God declared, 'As truly, as I live, all the earth shall be

filled with the glory of the LORD' (Numbers 14:21).

The earth is certainly not filled with the glory of God now. But it will be. This is God's purpose.

The Apostle Paul spoke to the people of Athens and told them that one day the world would be ruled in righteousness by a king appointed by God and that this was guaranteed by His raising the one appointed from the dead, Jesus Christ.

The world is certainly not ruled in righteousness now, but it will be. When this time comes it will be called the Kingdom of God and Jesus will be the king. God's purpose with the earth is the subject of the next study. One of the sure ways in which God has shown His love for man is that He has made known His purpose in the Bible. His love is also shown in the provision of His own son as the centre of that purpose.

## THE SPIRIT

A study about God would not be complete without mentioning two words which are associated with the Almighty and His work.

The word 'spirit' is often used in the Bible to mean the power/breath of God, universally present.

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" (Psalm 139:7)  
".... grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. (Psalm 51:12).

## HOLY SPIRIT

The word 'holy' means special, set apart, sacred, consecrated. When we read of the Holy Spirit, the Bible is speaking of the Separate Power of God when used for a particular, special purpose.

The King James Version of the Bible sometimes has the word for spirit translated as 'Ghost' but the other versions use the word Spirit and if we look at some of the places where the words appear the meaning will be clear.

When Mary, the mother of Jesus, was told that she was to have a son who was to be called Jesus, she was told;

"The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35)

Luke emphasises the meaning by repeating "*the power of the Most High will overshadow you.*" Look at the verse. The angel is explaining that the birth of Jesus would be a miracle brought about by God's special/separate power operating upon Mary. Because of this, Jesus would be the Son of God.

## WRITING THE BIBLE

We have already looked at a verse in the second letter of Peter which says that "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." It was God's special power that caused the prophets to speak and the writers of the scriptures to set down God's Word. They were moved by the power of God.

The word 'spirit' is often a translation of a word in Hebrew (in the Old Testament) or a word in Greek (in the New Testament) that means breath. So when the Spirit of God moved a man, it could be said that 'God breathed into him'. This meaning behind the word makes some of the passages, which speak of the power of God particularly beautiful. This, too, is the reason that Paul, writing to Timothy, says the scriptures are God-breathed – "All Scripture is God-breathed." (2 Timothy 3:16).

The power of the Holy Spirit was given to Jesus as we read in the New Testament. The apostles later were also given this power that enabled them to perform miracles. The last verse in Mark 16 tells us that the purpose of this was to enable the apostles to confirm the words that they spoke.

"Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it." (Mark 16:20)

Paul speaks of the way in which the gifts of the Holy Spirit were used in the first century.

The greatest attribute above all gifts, which we should try to cultivate, is Love. Read 1 Corinthians 12:28-31 then 1 Corinthians 13:1-13).

"And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way." (1 Corinthians 12:28-31)

**"If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where**

there is knowledge, it will pass away. *(We do not have these gifts of the Spirit today, not even when we are baptised!)* For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:1-13)

God has shown His love for us in many ways. We can best show our love for Him by trying to live our lives in a way that pleases Him.

### SUMMARY

There is one God.

- He is the Creator. He is immortal - from everlasting to everlasting.
- God sees and knows all things.
- God is righteous. God is loving.
- God has revealed His purpose in the Bible.
- The power of God is described as His Spirit.
- The scriptures were written by men controlled by the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus was born as a result of the action of the Holy Spirit upon Mary.
- It is important to our salvation that we should understand the nature of God.
- We do not possess the Gifts of the Holy Spirit today

The whole purpose of this course of studies is to help you to understand the Bible for yourself, so that you may accept it as it is, the Word of God, offering the hope of everlasting life to all who will hear and obey it.

### PASSAGES TO READ FROM YOUR BIBLE

Genesis 1; Isaiah 45; Acts 17 (Notice what those at Berea did); Psalm 139; 1 Timothy 6

## BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

### STUDY 2 QUESTIONS

Underline the correct answer to each question and send (address above) the loose copy to us or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to us. Please make sure you keep a copy of the questions and your answers for reference.

1. How was the universe formed?  
(a) By chance (b) By the power of God (c) By evolution (d) By science
2. The true God is: -  
(a) The God of the Bible (b) An Egyptian idol  
(c) We do not know (d) The Trinity
3. Which of the following are evidence that God exists:?  
(a) National hymns (b) Bible prophecies  
(c) Traditional legends (d) The Prayer Book
4. What is the Holy Spirit?  
(a) The power of God (b) The Special/Separate power of God  
(c) The breath of God (d) The power offered to Mary
5. The Bible teaches that:-  
(a) God is a Trinity (b) God is a Unity  
(c) God is many gods in one (d) There is no God
6. By giving His son (John 3:16) God showed:  
(a) His hope (b) His love (c) His faith (d) His justice
7. What does God intend to do with this earth?  
(a) Destroy it (b) Leave it as it is  
(c) Fill it with His glory (d) Allow man to destroy it with nuclear warfare
8. What is the Spirit of God?  
(a) The power of God (b) The love of God  
(c) The freewill of God (d) The offering of God's son
9. By what means did God cause the Bible to be written?  
(a) His majesty (b) His Holy Spirit (c) His truth (d) His graciousness
10. In Acts 17:11 we read that those at Berea:  
(a) Sang praise to God (b) examined the Scriptures every day  
(c) Stirred up the people (d) Set the city in an uproar



## Bible Study 3: GOD'S PLAN AND PURPOSE

The love of God has been stressed in the previous study - His love for the world in giving His one and only Son. This love which God shows and which we are asked to show in return must not be confused with sentiment or 'softness'.

The Bible emphasises the righteousness of God and His justice. It was the absolute justice of God as well as His love for man that was the reason that Jesus rose from the dead. Because Jesus did no wrong it was not possible that he should remain dead. (Jesus of Nazareth) "But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."(Acts 2:24).

It would not have been right for Jesus to remain in the grave. God raised him from the dead.

In the same way, it is not right that the world should continue to be a place where wickedness flourishes and where so much that is wrong takes place.

The Book of Proverbs tells us "The LORD abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight."(Proverbs 11:1).

Look at these verses:

"God who expresses his wrath every day." (Psalm 7:11).

" ... The Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

This is the side of God's character that is often overlooked. The righteousness of God will not allow wickedness to continue. God is not going to permit the world to be ruled by men who may not set right standards. It is God's purpose that one day the world will be ruled in righteousness by the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31). When he is king, many of the problems that man faces today will be solved. This wonderful time is called the Kingdom of God.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray for the Kingdom to come so that His will would be done on earth even as the angels now obey Him in heaven.

" `Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:9-10.)

## THE VISION WHICH NEBUCHADNEZZAR SAW

In the days of the great Babylonian Empire - before the Roman Empire and before the Greek Empire - one of the greatest kings of Babylon was Nebuchadnezzar. He was a great builder and a great soldier and under his rule the Empire reached its zenith. Nebuchadnezzar wondered what was to happen to his kingdom after his time. Daniel records a wonderful vision that God gave Nebuchadnezzar, which provided an opportunity for Daniel the prophet to answer Nebuchadnezzar's question.

Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, a great statue made of metals. The head, chest, thighs and legs were each of different metals and the feet were made of a mixture of iron and clay (the vision is recorded in Daniel 2). In his dream the king saw a rock strike the statue on the feet to bring it toppling to the ground. It was broken and the rock grew and grew until it became a great mountain which filled the whole earth.

Daniel explained to the king what this dream meant. The head of the image, which was gold, represented Babylon. The next metal silver, of which the breast and arms were made, represented the Empire which followed - the Kingdom of the Medes and the Persians. The belly and thighs were of brass and this represented the Greek Empire, which followed in turn. Alexander the Great was its greatest ruler.

Rome followed Greece. This was represented by the legs of iron. After the break-up of the Roman Empire, there has been no fifth Empire to equal any of the preceding four. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome each ruled all the civilized world that included the Land of Israel. There has been no fifth Empire like them.

Men have tried to establish Empires, which would hold sway over all the world but since Rome there has been no universal Empire. Some kingdoms have been weak and some strong. They have not been united any more than iron and clay could be united. The state of the world today corresponds to the stage in the vision represented by the feet of the image.

### DANIEL'S EXPLANATION

This explanation is not the invention of the publishers of this course of studies. READ Daniel 2.

Daniel said:

"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever." (Daniel 2:44).

Just as Medo-Persia followed Babylon; just as Rome followed Greece; just as certainly as there has been no fifth universal Empire, so the last part of the prophecy will also be fulfilled.

"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever." (Daniel 2:44).

The rock destroyed the image, which represented human rule through the centuries, and it grew into a great mountain, which filled the earth. **The rock represented Jesus who will be King in the Kingdom of God.**

Daniel concluded the prophecy by saying, "The dream is true and the interpretation is trustworthy."

This is only one of many prophecies which give us confidence that God's purpose with the earth will be fulfilled.

### **THE TEACHING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW TESTAMENT**

Find in your Bible these two passages that you looked at in the last studies.

"...as surely, as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD" (Numbers 14:21)

"For he (God) has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:31)

When the Kingdom of God is established, there will be divine justice in the way the kingdom is ruled. There will be no oppression and no persecution.

He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth." (Isaiah 11:3-5)

Then the words of Numbers 14:21 will be fulfilled just as the angels sang at the birth of Jesus. When Jesus is king over all the earth, there will be "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men." (Luke 2:14).

In a very figurative language the last book of the Bible describes the state of affairs which will exist when God's purpose is fulfilled. , "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." (Revelation 21:3-4)

Peter was the spokesman for the other disciples when he asked Jesus a question, Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" (Matthew 19:27)

The reply of Jesus is important. He emphasised that the kingdom he taught was a real kingdom in which his disciples would share.

"You who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life." . (Matthew 19:28-29)

### **JESUS WILL COME AGAIN**

In order to establish a real kingdom on the earth, Jesus will come again. When he ascended to heaven at the end of his ministry, angels told the disciples,

"This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11)

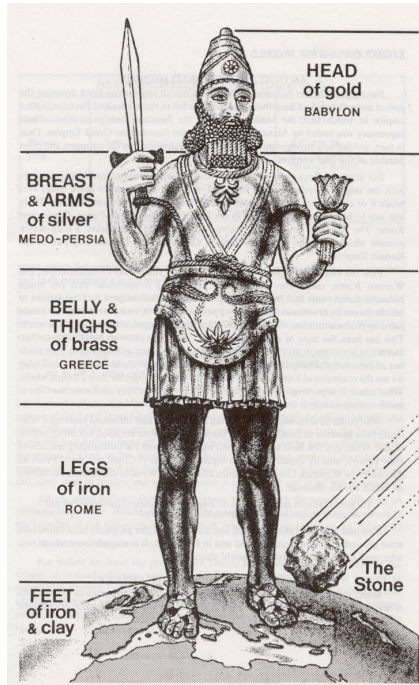
The return of Jesus to bring about the last stages of God's purpose with the earth is dealt with more fully in later studies. The teaching of many of the parables of Jesus shows that it is at his return that the righteous will be rewarded. It is, therefore, very important that we are ready for his coming

**SUMMARY**

- The Bible emphasises the righteousness and justice of God as well as his love. God does not intend to allow the world to continue in its present state.
- God will interfere in world affairs and divine rule will be established with Jesus as King.
- The outline of world events given in Daniel 2 gives us confidence that the final stages of God's plan will certainly come to pass. When Jesus returns to rule over the Kingdom of God, his followers will be rewarded with places in his kingdom, but they need to be ready for his coming.

**PASSAGES TO READ FROM YOUR BIBLE**

Isaiah 11; Isaiah 35; Matthew 19; Daniel 2; Matthew 25



“..the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this.” Daniel 2v45

**BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE****STUDY 3 QUESTIONS**

Underline the correct answer to each question and send (address above) the loose copy to us or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to us. Please make sure you keep a copy of the questions and your answers for reference.

1. God so loved the world that He ...
  - (a) Sent the seasons
  - (b) Gave His one and only son
  - (c) Provided the angels
  - (d) Gave the Law
2. Which was the **second** world empire represented in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream?
  - (a) Babylon
  - (b) Greece
  - (c) Rome
  - (d) Medo-Persia
3. What did Nebuchadnezzar see strike the statue in his dream?
  - (a) An idol
  - (b) A rock
  - (c) A hand
  - (d) A sword
4. What did the angels sing about the conditions on the earth when Jesus is king?
  - (a) Everybody will do as they please
  - (b) Everybody will be kind to each other
  - (c) No one will need to work
  - (d) And on earth peace to men
5. Who is to rule the world in righteousness?
  - (a) The son of God
  - (b) The apostle Paul
  - (c) The apostle Peter
  - (d) The prophet Elijah
6. In the second chapter of Daniel we read, "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom .... but it will itself endure for....."
  - (a) for 6,000 years'
  - (b) for a lifetime'
  - (c) forever'
  - (d) for 100,000 years'
7. Jesus promised his disciples that they would
  - (a) have wealth and prosperity
  - (b) sit on thrones to judge the tribes of Israel
  - (c) have success and happiness
  - (d) have long life
8. Does the Bible tell us that God intends the world to continue in its present state?
  - (a) Yes
  - (b) No
  - (c) I do not know
  - (d) The Bible does not say
9. Where is Jesus at the present time?
  - (a) On the earth
  - (b) In heaven
  - (c) In the grave
  - (d) In the land of Israel
10. Paul told the people of Athens (Acts 17) that God had given a guarantee that the world would be ruled in righteousness by the man that God had chosen. What was that guarantee?
  - (a) The birth of Jesus
  - (b) The crucifixion of Jesus
  - (c) The resurrection of Jesus
  - (d) The ascension of Jesus

## Bible Study 4 – Death

A disaster is invariably headline news. Sudden and violent death arouses curiosity; but the subject of 'death' itself is not news nor, strangely enough, does it generate much interest. Yet, in the time that it has taken you to read the previous two sentences, it is estimated that 25-30 people have died (that is, over 6,250 people an hour or 150,000 a day). One day you will be one of them! The chances are not that you will be involved in one of the disasters, which account for relatively few deaths, but that on one otherwise ordinary day your daily routine will cease and the world will carry on without you. This is why a study of the subject of death is of prime importance.

Thoughts of death give rise to the questions, 'What am I?' 'What happens to me when I die?' 'How do I fit in with God's purpose in creation?'

Basically there are three possible attitudes to death:-

1. *Ignore it*
2. *Take the view that it is not really what it seems to be*
3. *Face its stark reality and look for a way of escape.*

Let us look more closely at these three attitudes.

### 1. Ignore death

This is the attitude of a growing section of those who are influenced by Western culture. The goals of materialism, the philosophy which predominates in Western society, are centred in science. The scientific approach to the problems of life deals with these things which can be measured. Speculations such as 'What happens after death?' do not lend themselves to the scientific method and therefore they are largely ignored. Many people, dazzled by the bewildering array of marvels which science has produced, dismiss all thoughts of death from their minds as much as possible.

### 2. The view that death is not really what it seems to be

This is the age-old view taken by the vast majority of the world's religions. Death, it is said, is not the end of life but the gateway to eternity. At the root of the great variety of forms which this belief takes is the idea that man has an 'immortal/ever living soul'; that there is something in man which cannot die, but which at death is released from the body and lives on in another form. *These ideas are not true!*

These ideas cannot be proved from experience nor from the religious books of the world which, apart from the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16), are only the speculations of minds groping in the dark. The experiments in telepathy and extra-sensory perception may prove that there is more to man than science has yet discovered, but they do not prove that 'something' lives on when the body dies. Man needs a reliable revelation from God, his Creator, on the subject of death.

The Bible is the only book, which provides this. It demands that man must:

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### 3. Face the stark reality of death and look for a way of escape.

Nowhere in the Bible can be found the idea that man has an immortal soul which lives on after death. This may come as a shock to those who hold orthodox Christian beliefs. But the Bible says,

"For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing; Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going. ..." (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10)

This fact may not be very comforting to contemplate but it should be a cause for humility and should provoke a realization of man's urgent need for a way of escape.

### SALVATION COMMENCES WITH HUMILITY

God has declared "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word." (Isaiah 66:2) The word 'contrite' also means humble. Man recognises that he has nothing of value while he is mortal/human.

Man is naturally a proud creature. The idea of having an immortal soul appeals to his inborn pride. But if we want the whole truth, we do well to cast aside all preconceived ideas, however flattering, and to consider carefully what God has revealed about man's natural condition.

### THE NATURE OF MAN

The Bible goes to the very root of this vital subject. It tells how, in the beginning of human existence, death came about. The record of the first human beings, Adam and Eve, is no myth! Consider the deep significance of the facts recorded in the opening chapter of the Bible.

"The LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." (Genesis 2:7).

Adam's body was made from the elements, which form the basis of all matter. These elements were shaped by the all-powerful Creator into the marvellous complexity of the human body, with all its delicate and interrelated organs. In principle the same marvel occurs today in the development of a baby in the womb. Adam's body of dust was given life from God who 'breathed into his nostrils the breath of life' and what otherwise would have been a lifeless body 'became a living being (creature)'.

### THE SOUL / CREATURE

Life is a mysterious, indefinable, but readily recognizable quality imparted to dead matter. There is no evidence to suggest that life can exist independently of the body. The Bible reveals and experience shows the 'body' and 'life' are interdependent and

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together constitute a 'living soul' or 'creature'. The word 'soul' or 'being' is widely applied in the Bible both to man and to the animal creation. It is translated, 'mind', 'beast', 'man', 'creature', **but it is never connected in any way with the idea of immortality.**

### A LIVING SOUL / BEING

The statement in Genesis 2:7: "And man became a living being (or soul)", means that man became a living creature along with all the other creatures God had created. The word "soul" or "being" means "creature". The soul is the man. The soul cannot live on separately from man or animal. The verses quoted show that man is entirely dependent upon God for his life. If God withdraws the breath, or spirit, of life from a man, he becomes a dead creature.

"Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless. All go to the same place; all come from dust, and to dust all return." (Ecclesiastes 3:19-20)

It is essential to understand this, **as many Christians hold the view that man has an immortal soul that lives on after death. This is not taught in the Bible.** This was, in fact, the serpent's lie in the garden of Eden. He said to Eve, "You will not surely die" - a direct contradiction of what God had said to Adam and Eve. Ecclesiastes 12 proves man's dependence upon God for his existence: "The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:7) The 'breath' or 'vapour' does not live on.

"No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven--the Son of Man." (John 3:13) Look at John 3:13 and note in particular the words, "No one has ever gone into heaven."

This is very clear – no-one goes to heaven when they die, it is God's dwelling place.

Man dies because of sin: For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son--both alike belong to me. **The soul who sins is the one who will die.** (Ezekiel 18:4)

In Romans 3 we read, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23). Therefore it follows that all die and perish until the resurrection. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 deals with the hope of the resurrection in some detail.

**Hell simply means – the grave – where we ALL go when we die – we perish, return to dust, until Jesus returns *and those RESPONSIBLE will be raised. A body corrupts in the grave and perishes – it turns to dust – Genesis 3v19 – dust cannot scream or shout or be tormented. No everlasting torments. Grave, the unseen state.*** Ecclesiastes 9v2-3: Psalm 16v10: Psalm 49v15.

### MAN - A CREATURE TO GIVE GOD PLEASURE

The purpose of man's creation was, as with that of all creation, to give God pleasure "The LORD works out everything for his own ends--." (Proverbs 16:4) 'You created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created' (Revelation 4:11 KJV)

Unlike the animal creation man was given free will to obey or to disobey, so that he could exercise a certain degree of choice over his behaviour. We can appreciate how much more pleasure man could give God by using his free will to please God and not himself. It is a pleasure, which on a lower scale, parents gain from children who voluntarily obey and respect them.

### MAN'S FAILURE

To test man's response to the use of his free will, God gave a simple test to Adam and Eve. They were told: , "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."(Genesis 2:16-17)

Man failed and so brought upon himself the sentence of death. Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent's suggestion that they would be as gods, knowing good and evil, and because the fruit looked tempting and good to eat. In this way their pride and lust overcame them. These two characteristics have formed the basis of human behaviour ever since. Note carefully the words of the serpent tempting Eve: You will not surely die. (Genesis 3:4) **This was a lie, a denial of God's word, the lie which has formed the basis of man-made religions ever since.**

### MAN'S CONDEMNATION

Adam and Eve were subjected to the just condemnation of God. The words of the sentence pronounced upon them are significant for they give us the basic definition of death. "for dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:19) That is, when a man dies he ceases to exist and decomposes into the elements of which he was made.

"When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing." (Psalm 146:4)

Death is a punishment for disobedience. After God had pronounced this sentence, He set a guard to prevent man from eating of the tree of life, "He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."(Genesis 3:22).

### SIN

Death is a punishment for sin. "The soul who sins is the one who will die." (Ezekiel 18:4).

There is a simple logic in this statement. Sin brings death. It is therefore of the utmost importance to find out what 'sin' is if we are to find a way to escape eternal death. Sin is the disbelief of God's Word and disobedience to His will. Its effects are universal "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.." (Romans 3:23)

Adam and Eve have passed on this fatal tendency to all their descendants. This flaw in man constitutes 'human nature' or what the Bible calls 'sinful desires'..

It can take many aspects, "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19-21)

These are the natural consequences of the way of life upon which Adam and Eve commenced six thousand years ago. Obstinate disregard for God's way of love has brought the world to its present troubled state.

### THE ONLY HOPE

In Study 2 some of God's characteristics were examined. Some of man's have now been briefly considered. The obvious and startling contrast is expressed by God in these words:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9).

It is clear then not only why man dies but why he must die. God is just and His justice cannot permit sinners to live forever. But two of God's many attributes are His mercy and His forgiveness. "But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared." (Psalm 130:4)

There is a vital need for God's forgiveness, because man cannot stop sinning. "But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared." (1 John 1:8)

The Bible describes in detail God's way - the only way to be set free from the vice-like grip of sin and death. The Way, in a phrase, is 'through faith'. The faith which God requires is a very special quality. It is defined as: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1)

Faith is not blind credulity or belief in the absurd. It is complete trust in God and the firm belief that He really means to carry out what He has promised, even if its fulfilment appears to be an impossibility.

Our faith then has to be demonstrated by obedience to God's commands. The eleventh Study 4 of Part 1

chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews describes many practical examples of faith. Foremost among these is the faith shown by Abraham. "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness." (Genesis 15:6)

His faith was then shown by his obedience to God. Read James 2:17-26. In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless." "Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?"

You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend.

You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." (James 2:17-26) Faith and obedience can, in God's mercy, secure the forgiveness of our sins and, in consequence, death also can be overcome.

This is the only hope man has of attaining immortality. Eternal life is, in truth, a gift. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

The way in which this has been made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is dealt with in a later study. Eternal life is to be given at a future time when there will be a resurrection of the dead. "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake (that is those who are dead): some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:2)

Then those who are worthy of this precious gift will be changed into immortal beings. The resurrection of the dead may sound incredible but it is one of those things, which God requires us to believe. We know that all things are possible with God. The resurrection will occur when Jesus Christ returns to the earth.

"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first." (1 Thessalonians 4:16)

Some of the signs, which tell us that these momentous events are very near, will be explained in Study 9 of this Bible Course. We need to be ready for that day.

**SUMMARY**

1. Death is the end of life, not the gateway to eternity.
2. Salvation begins with humility.
3. Death is caused by sin.
4. Sin is disbelief of God's Word and disobedience to His will.
5. Man cannot stop sinning.
6. Man can obtain forgiveness by belief in God's Word and obedience to His will.
7. Faith is belief of God's Word and is shown by obedience to it.
8. Eternal life is the gift of God, to be given to His faithful children.
9. Eternal life will be given at the resurrection, when Jesus Christ returns to the earth. Jesus will judge the raised responsible believers. This is man's only hope of obtaining immortality.

**RELEVANT PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING:**

Genesis 2 and 3; Psalms 49 and 146; Ecclesiastes 9; Romans 5 and 6; 1 Corinthians 15, and the Supplement Below;

**STUDY 4 QUESTIONS**

Underline the correct answer to each question and send (address above) the loose copy to us or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to us. Please make sure you keep a copy of the questions and your answers for reference.

1. Which of the following statements are true'?  
(a) Death comes as a result of sin (b) All men sin  
(c) Eternal life is a gift from God (d) Good men do not die
2. Which verse in the Bible shows that death is a complete cessation of life?  
(a) Proverbs 9:5 (b) Ezekiel 9:5 (c) Ecclesiastes 9:5 (d) Esther 9:5
3. What human quality does God require of a person who is seeking salvation:  
(a) Pride (b) Wealth (c) Humility (d) Happiness
4. The Bible teaches that God formed man from  
(a) another kind of creature (b) the dust of the ground  
(c) the water (d) He did not form him
5. What is a 'living soul'?  
(a) A living creature (b) An eye  
(c) A part of the body which lives for ever (d) An immortal/everlasting being
6. Why was man created?  
(a) To look after the animals (b) To work the ground  
(c) To give God pleasure (d) To please himself
7. What was the punishment for the disobedience of Adam and Eve?  
(a) They were condemned to die (b) They were beaten  
(c) God completely rejected them (d) They were stoned
8. What is sin'?  
(a) The sinful mind (b) Death  
(c) Breaking God's Law (d) Human nature
9. Faith is...  
(a) belief of the impossible (b) knowledge of God's Plans  
(c) trust in the unknown (d) the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen
10. The Bible teaches...  
(a) there is no hope (b) a resurrection from the dead  
(c) a life beyond the grave for all (d) immortality in heaven for the righteous

**SUPPLEMENT: WHERE DO WE GO WHEN WE DIE? –**

If you accept the religious beliefs held by many, you will answer this question by saying, 'It all depends; if we have done the right thing while we live, we shall go to heaven; and if not, then to.. Here, perhaps, you falter. You are not sure, but you think 'to hell'.

Will it surprise you to be told that the answer is entirely untrue; that, in point of fact, when we die, we are DEAD and do not go anywhere except to the grave? It may even make you angry. But if you are of a reasonable mind, you will cool down and ask, 'Is it indeed a fact?'

The answer, based on Bible teaching, is an emphatic 'yes', and the only life after death of which the Bible speaks is that which follows the resurrection of the dead at the return of Christ from heaven. If you seek the evidence, you will find it in the Bible, and an earnest search will be rewarding. You will discover [Hell = the grave]:

1. That the body of man is man: "God formed the man from the dust of the ground." (Gen. 2:7). "God formed the man from the dust of the ground." (1 Cor. 15:47). I (Abraham) am nothing but dust and ashes." (Gen. 18:27). "For he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust." (Ps.103:14). "For dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:19).

If the body of a man is man, then it follows that when the body dies, man dies and that, consequently, it is impossible for a man at death to go to heaven or to hell [the grave]

2. That the life of man, or the spirit of man, is not man, but the breath of man vitalised by the invisible yet real energy or power of God: "He himself gives all men life and breath and everything else." (Acts 17:25). "In his hand is the life of every creature and the breath of all mankind." (Job 12:10) "Man's fate is like that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: ..... All have the same breath." (Ecclesiastes 3:19) "The spirit returns to God who gave it." (Ecclesiastes 12:7) If the life and spirit of man are not the man, but the power of God enabling him to breathe, it follows that the return of that life to God when death occurs, is not the going back of the man, but the going back of the energy which existed before the man was made.

3. That the Scriptures nowhere promise heaven as the reward of the righteous:

"For David did not ascend to heaven." (Acts 2:34). "The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given to man." (Psalm 115:16). If David has not ascended to heaven, how can we hope to do so?

4. That, according to the Scriptures, the dead have not yet entered into a state of reward: "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth." (Hebrews 11:13).

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his

Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." ... your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints." (Rev. 11:15,18)

If the dead are not in a state of reward, how can the popular doctrine be true which sends a man to his reward when he dies?

5. That, according to the Scriptures, the dead perish – they cease to exist: "but the dead know nothing; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. Their love, their hate and their jealousy have long since vanished" ; (Ecclesiastes 9:5,6) "No one remembers you when he is dead. Who praises you from

"I the grave?" (Psalm 6:5). It is not the dead who praise the LORD, those who go down to silence;" (Psalm 115:17) "For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness." (Isaiah 38:18) If the dead perish, and have not even any remembrance of God, they cannot be enjoying heaven, or suffering in hell, as popular theology teaches.

6. That, according to the Scriptures, the time for the dead to be judged and rewarded is at the resurrection, when Christ comes again to the earth: "...you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." (Luke 14:14) "The Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done." (Matthew 16:27) "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom." (2 Tim. 4:1) Jesus said: "Come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned." (John 5:29) "Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to eternal life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:2) If the dead are not to be judged until Christ comes, what room is there for a doctrine that sends them straight away to be rewarded as soon as they die?

7. That the reward of the righteous, besides immortality of nature, is inheritance of the earth: 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.' (Matthew 5:5) "Those the LORD blesses will inherit the land." (Psalm 37:22) "For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land." (Psalm 37:9) "The righteous receive their due on earth,..." (Proverbs 11:31) Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession." (Psalm 2:8) "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." (Revelation 5:10)

If the reward of the righteous is the inheritance of the earth, clearly it is wrong to believe that their reward is to go to 'mansions above the skies'.



## Bible Study 5 – THE PROMISES OF GOD

Study 4 outlined, from the Bible, why man dies, the nature of death and the only hope of salvation from an eternal grave. In Study 5, by considering some of God's promises, we shall gain a greater understanding of the development of the scriptural revelation concerning that salvation.

### A PROMISE OF DELIVERANCE

In the beginning, after the disobedience of Adam and Eve, in the curses that God pronounced in consequence of man's sin, a short but wonderful promise provided a ray of hope. It comes in a verse that is not easy to understand "So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:14-15) A full explanation of this promise is outside the scope of this study, but, as we gain a greater knowledge of God's plan of salvation, it is clear that here there is the first promise that sin would ultimately be overcome by one of Eve's descendants. Sin would be dealt a mortal blow but the descendant who did this would only be wounded temporarily (in figurative language - a wound in the head and a wound in the heel). It is a promise of the coming Saviour, and the Bible leaves no room for doubt that this Saviour is Jesus Christ to whom all the promises of God point.

### GOD'S PROMISE IN EDEN

The serpent, because of the part it had played in Adam and Eve's sin of God's law, became the symbol for sin. Jesus used a similar same term for his enemies, addressing the Pharisees with the words, 'You snakes, you brood of vipers!' (Matthew 23:33) The bruising in the head, a fatal wound to a serpent, promises the utter destruction of sin and death. The seed of the woman(Jesus) is the destroyer, and in carrying out this work receives a bruise in the heel(death for three days in the grave) a wound from which there can be recovery.

A careful reading of the Bible will show that this parable of the seed of the woman speaks of the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, in which he gained the victory over sin and death and has paved the way to eternal life for all who believe in him.

A clue to the identity of the seed of the woman is given in the words."The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) This was quoted in the message of the angel to Joseph telling him that his espoused wife Mary was to: "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:" , (Matthew 1:21-22)

Then follows the quotation from Isaiah 7. The Apostle Paul comments, "When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law." (Galatians 4:4)

By Jesus' triumph over sin and death, the serpent (sin) was bruised in the head, i.e. utterly destroyed. (Death finally to be destroyed at the end of the Millennium.) As far as Christ was concerned; in the process he received, by his death on the cross and his short stay in the tomb, a bruise in the heel, as the prophet Isaiah had foretold, "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities;" (Isaiah 53:5)

The first stage of God's plan of redemption was completed. But Christ was only the firstfruits. There is to be the harvest in two further stages, which will completely remove sin and death.

The second stage will be completed when Christ returns to reward his friends - who will be those who have done whatsoever he has commanded them. These he will raise from the dead, and will bestow on them eternal life, to be enjoyed on the earth as rulers with Christ over the nations who submit to him at his coming, this stage lasting a thousand years.

The third and final stage will be at the end of the thousand years, when there will be a final judgement and sin and death will be completely destroyed. "For he(Jesus) must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death." As unbelief brought death, so belief in the Gospel and obedience in baptism and continuance in well doing can bring eternal life.

As the Bible unfolds God's plan, the theme of salvation is developed in many ways. Outstanding among these are the character studies of selected individuals whose lives were either good or bad examples of faith (that is those who either believed and obeyed God, or those who did not).

To many of the faithful God made remarkable promises which will be considered in this and later studies. In this study we shall look at two important characters, both supreme examples of faith, whose lives are recorded in the Book of Genesis.

### NOAH

As the descendants of Adam and Eve increased, the tendency to sin, which they had inherited from their wayward parents, began to show itself. Genesis Chapter 6 records: "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." (Genesis 6:5) Such was the state of mankind that: "The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain." (Genesis 6:6) Noah was the only man with whom God was pleased. "Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God." (Genesis 6:9)

God determined to make a fresh start with His creation and to use Noah in this purpose, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth." (Genesis 6:13)

### THE FLOOD

God chose to flood the earth so that all air-breathing creatures, including man, would be drowned. The Genesis record of the Flood is considered by many to be a mythical story. But if we examine it carefully we shall find that there is much scientific evidence to support the truth of the Bible record. The Bible uses the account of the Flood to teach powerful moral lessons. The life of Noah stands out as a shining example of faith in contrast with the unbelief of his age.

### GOD'S PROMISE

The Almighty at this time declared that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood. God has a purpose with the earth and God promised that for all time the seasons would follow in their turn and that day and night would succeed each other without interruption in this way again.

Look at Genesis 8:21-22. "The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: "Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done. "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease." (Genesis 8:21-22)

### FEW ARE SAVED

A further lesson taught by this record is the Bible truth, that it is only relatively few who are prepared to believe God and consequently few who will be saved. This principle, so vividly displayed in the account of the Flood, applies also to the far greater salvation from eternal death. "Who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water." (1 Peter 3:20)

Jesus Christ said: "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." (Matthew 7:13-14)

This and many other Bible examples and statements, casts doubts upon world religions which claim the adherence of millions of 'believers'.

The Bible teaches that salvation from eternal death is a highly individual matter, and that few have been, and are, prepared to accept the challenging requirements, which God demands - the hard, narrow way of faith.

### ABRAHAM

Abraham is an outstanding example of a man who was prepared to **accept** and successfully endure many rigorous tests because of his faith in God's word.

### ARCHAEOLOGY BRINGS THE BIBLE TO LIFE

Abraham lived about 2,000 B.C. in an ancient city called Ur, which was situated near the head of the Persian Gulf. The site of Ur has been excavated by archaeologists in recent times. Their discoveries show that the city was part of a highly advanced civilisation capable of building large houses, palaces and temples and of producing exquisite works of art.

Archaeology aids the study of the Bible by giving us a vivid picture of bygone ages. It certainly aids the appreciation of the greatness of Abraham's faith, because God commanded him:

"Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you." (Genesis 12:1)

From the archaeological evidence we know that God was asking Abraham to leave behind a life of comparative ease and security to face the dangers of the unknown, in which God alone would be his guide. Abraham, unlike Adam and Eve, obeyed and believed: "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going." (Hebrews 11:8)

### THE PROMISES TO ABRAHAM

Abraham's faith was founded upon promises of blessing which accompanied God's command. He realised that when God, the All-powerful and All-wise Creator, makes promises, then they are certain to be fulfilled. God said to him: "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:2-3)

Throughout Abraham's long life these promises were repeated many times, and each time something was added to the original promise. For the purpose of this study we will consider the most significant aspects of the promises under the following headings:-

1. Abraham's descendants to possess the land of Canaan.
2. Abraham's descendants to become a great nation.
3. Through one of Abraham's descendants all nations to be blessed.

The land to which God eventually led Abraham was called Canaan in ancient times. It is an area which at the present day roughly coincides with the modern states of Lebanon, Israel, Syria and Jordan at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea 'On the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates--." (Genesis 15:18)

When Abraham reached Canaan God said to him, The LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring I will give this land." (Genesis 12:7). The promise was repeated later, 'All the land which you see (Canaan) I give to you and your offspring for ever.' Note particularly the addition of the words 'to you and 'forever.'

If it were not for these two important factors, we might understand the promise as referring to the conquest and possession of Canaan by the Israelites in ancient times as recorded in the book of Joshua. This was, however, only a partial fulfilment because, first, the promise was to Abraham, as well as his descendants, and, secondly, possession was to be enjoyed for ever.

On the first point, the Bible reveals that while in Canaan, Abraham was like a Bedouin and when his wife died he had to buy a piece of land in which to bury her. Finally he died, not having received the promised inheritance of the land.

The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, and said to him, 'Leave your country and your people,' God said, 'and go to the land I will show you.'

"So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living. He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land..." (Acts 7:3-5)

On the second point, it is clear that neither Abraham, or his descendants, the nation of Israel, who have spent a great part of their national existence exiled from Canaan, have obtained possession of it for ever.

## THE RESURRECTION PROVIDES THE ANSWER

1. Clearly then, the complete fulfilment of this promise must still be future. It requires no lesser event than the resurrection of Abraham and of his true descendants, whom the Bible defines as those who are like Abraham in showing faith and obedience to God's commands. After the resurrection they, as immortal beings, will take possession of Canaan forever I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 8:11) These facts will become clearer as the other promises are considered.

2. Abraham's descendants to become a great nation. This promise is found throughout the record of Abraham's life, and has, to a large extent, been fulfilled as the Bible shows (Genesis 12:2; Genesis 13:16; Genesis 15:5; Genesis 22:17).

The Book of Genesis records that Abraham's son Isaac and his grandson Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel) became the original ancestors of the nation of Israel. They lived in Canaan until Jacob, in the time of famine, took his family into Egypt.

The book of Exodus tells how Jacob's descendants increased into a nation of more than two million and became enslaved by the Egyptians. About 1,500 B.C. God sent Moses to free them and lead them to Canaan.

The book of Joshua, Moses' successor, tells how the twelve tribes of Israel conquered Canaan.

Later books of the Bible describe how Israel developed until, about 1,000 B.C. it became a great and prosperous kingdom, during the reigns of David and Solomon.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT EXPLAINS THE PROMISE

The Bible shows that after the death of Solomon, Israel declined and was eventually exiled from Canaan because the people were, generally speaking, faithless and disobedient to God. (Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

It is in the New Testament that we find a wonderful exposition of the promise to Abraham. In the letter to the Romans the apostle Paul makes it clear that, 'They are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." (Romans 9:6-7)

This introduces an important principle briefly referred to in the consideration of the first promise. The great nation, which was to be descended from Abraham, was not to be composed of faithless natural descendants but of those who showed a similar faith to Abraham. In each generation they have been few, but when they are raised from the dead, at the return of Jesus to the earth, they will be gathered together into one great nation. Then Abraham will see his immortal descendants, praising God for their salvation, forming, "A great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language." (Revelation 7:9)

The promise will be fulfilled in a far more wonderful way than it was in the past.

3. Through one of Abraham's descendants all nations to be blessed. However, mankind has not yet received the greatest of all blessings with which this promise is concerned - the deliverance from the universal curse of sin and death.

The Bible reveals that there is a time coming when, 'All the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord' (Numbers 14:21). There is little room for God's glory while man fills the earth with violence and oppression and while sin and death remain. A great change is obviously necessary to bring about this wonderful time of blessing, which we read of in many Bible prophecies (Psalm 72; Isaiah 32). However great the change, its realisation is certain!

This is the message of the gospel (good news) which is taught throughout the Bible. Few realise that the promise made to Abraham 2,000 years before Christ, is the foundation of the gospel!

"The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles (nations) by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, : "All nations will be blessed through you." (Galatians 3:8)

### **JESUS CHRIST - ABRAHAM'S DESCENDANT**

The central figure of the gospel and therefore of the promises to Abraham is Jesus Christ. He is pre-eminently the descendant of Abraham.

The New Testament opens with these words, "A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:" (Matthew 1:1). It goes on with a genealogy, which traces Jesus' descent from Abraham and this theme is found throughout the New Testament. Paul points out in his letter to the Galatians that one particular descendant is referred to in the promise and that this one is Jesus: "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed.

The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ." (Galatians 3:16)

Jesus is revealed as more than just a natural son of Abraham; in the same letter it is stated that 'only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.' (Galatians 3:7).

When we remember the Bible definition of faith as belief and obedience to God (the very opposite of sin), it is clear that Jesus was the greatest of all Abraham's many sons. He alone of the entire human race could truly say to his adversaries/opposers without fear of contradiction, 'Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?' (John 8:46).

The supreme message of the New Testament is that Jesus by his faith overcame sin and thus: "It has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Timothy 1:10)

### **THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO ALL NATIONS**

In Old Testament times the message of salvation (the gospel) was the privileged possession of the nation of Israel, but they failed to respond to the demands of faithful obedience to God. Then Jesus came and sent his apostles to preach the gospel of salvation to every nation (Mark 16:15). "He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

Many see this as the fulfilment of God's promise that all nations should be blessed in Jesus Christ, Abraham's descendant. It was, however, only a step, although a great one, in God's unfolding plan to fill the earth with His glory.

Jesus knew that relatively few would accept this wonderful message, because it involves entering the narrow gateway of faith; and now, over 2,000 years later, the preaching of the gospel has not brought about the blessing of all nations.

### **THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH**

Nevertheless this glorious time is coming!

Jesus Christ will return to the earth to raise all who are responsible, including those who have 'put on Christ' and who therefore have become heirs of the promises to Abraham. "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:27-29) At that time the blessing of Abraham will come upon all nations through his descendant Jesus Christ.

"He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus.." (Galatians 3:14)

Jesus will be king over all the earth and the Kingdom of God will be established, bringing in a time of blessing such as the world has never seen. For this all Christians are taught to pray to God:

'Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' (Matthew 6:10).

### **SUMMARY**

1. A promise of ultimate deliverance from sin and death was made immediately after Adam and Eve's fall.
2. God's plan of salvation is revealed in the promises He made to the faithful.
3. The record of the Flood demonstrates that few will be saved.
4. The findings of archaeology confirm the accuracy of the Bible.
5. God made great promises to Abraham because of his faith.
6. None of these promises has been completely fulfilled.
7. The promises point to Jesus Christ, who overcame sin and death.
8. Jesus Christ can save from eternal death all those who, like Abraham, believe and obey God.
9. The promises will be fulfilled when Jesus returns to the earth to establish the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God will bring a time of blessing to the earth, which will then be filled with God's glory.

### **RELEVANT PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING:**

Genesis 6, 12, 13, 15, 17, 22; Deuteronomy 28; Psalm 72; Isaiah 32; John 8; Acts 7; Romans 4; Galatians 3; Hebrews 11

**BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE****STUDY 5 QUESTIONS**

Underline the correct answer to each question and send (address above) the loose copy to us or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to us. Please make sure you keep a copy of the questions and your answers for reference.

1. What was the name of the man with whom God was well pleased as recorded in Genesis 6:9?  
(a) Adam            (b) Noah            (c) Enoch            (d) Abel
2. How did God destroy the wicked people in the account contained in Genesis chapters 6 to 8?  
(a) Earthquake    (b) Famine            (c) Flooding            (d) Disease
3. How many people were saved in the disaster of Genesis chapters 6 to 8?  
(a) 8                (b) 18                (c) 88                (d) 80
4. How were the faithful people protected in the disaster of Genesis chapters 6 to 8?  
(a) They lived in an ark            (b) God hid them  
(c) They lived on a high mountain    (d) God took them away
5. Where did Abraham live before God spoke to him?  
(a) Babylon            (b) Bethel            (c) Sodom            (d) Ur
6. To which land did God lead Abraham?  
(a) Egypt            (b) Canaan            (c) Edom            (d) Salem
7. Was the gospel message preached to Abraham?  
(a) Yes            (b) No            (c) Probably            (d) We do not know
8. When will Abraham receive the final fulfilment of God's promise to him?  
(a) He already has received it    (b) We do not know  
(c) When Jesus returns to the earth to establish God's kingdom  
(d) Abraham died so he will not receive the fulfilment of the promise
9. Who was the greatest of Abraham's descendants?  
(a) Judas            (b) Jacob            (c) Joseph            (d) Jesus
10. Which **THREE** of the following did God promise to Abraham?  
(a) His descendants would possess the land of Canaan  
(b) He would live forever in heaven  
(c) His descendants would become a great nation  
(d) He would have great riches immediately  
(e) Through one of his descendants all nations would be blessed.  
(f) All his descendants would be faithful to God  
(g) His descendants would always remember the faith of Abraham

## Bible Study 6 – THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

This study will consider the Lord Jesus Christ - the centre of the purpose of God. Jesus was the name given to the little babe born at Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago. The name means 'Saviour' and the name was given as the angel instructed:

'You shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.' (Matthew 1:21)

'Christ' is really a title and means 'anointed', therefore 'Specially chosen'. Jesus was The Christ just as John was spoken of as The Baptist.

### GOD'S PURPOSE IN THE BEGINNING

In the last study it was shown that God planned in the very beginning, in Eden, to provide a Saviour – one who would overcome the power of sin. The study showed that the one who would bring such blessing upon the human race would be in the line of Abraham.

Mary recognised that her son was the one promised and in her Song of Rejoicing she sang,

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior... He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever.." (Luke 1:46-47, 54-5)

### OTHER PROMISES

The prophet Daniel spoke of the time when the Messiah would appear. The prophet Micah wrote of the place of his birth. Matthew records the visit of the Wise Men to Herod. Notice how many times Matthew records that events happen in fulfillment of the words of the Old Testament prophets:

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel." (Micah 5:2)

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, "God with us." (Matthew 1:22-23)

"So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son." (Matthew 2:14-15)

It was God's purpose from the beginning to send Jesus and, when the right time came, God's purpose was put into effect. John wrote;

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14).

### WHY DID JESUS COME?

A well-known verse quoted before in these studies says;  
"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

Jesus was given to the world by God in a very real sense. The angel Gabriel had appeared to Mary to tell her she was to have a son. Mary asked how this was possible, as she was a virgin. The angel replied;

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35) (Jesus was born 4,000 years after creation) This, too, had been the subject of prophecy as Matthew records;

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"--which means, "God with us." (Matthew 1:22-23)

### SACRIFICE

You may know that in Old Testament times, animals were sacrificed as a continual reminder of the consequence of sin and of a way of deliverance. The man who offered, recognised that death was the result of sin, and sometimes he had to associate himself with the death of the animal as a sign that he recognised this principle

"If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to offer a male without defect. He must present it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting so that it will be acceptable to the LORD. He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him." (Leviticus 1:3-4)

Paul wrote;  
"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

In the Letter to the Hebrews, three points about sacrifices are made very clearly:

- 1 The sacrifices in Old Testament times provided a reminder of the principle that sin brings death - a principle established in the beginning- "But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins." (Hebrews 10:3).

- 2 . As the animals had done no wrong, they only represented the teaching, "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship." (Hebrews 10:1).
- 3 . The sacrifice of animals could never take away sin. "Because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins." (Hebrews 10:4) The Bible makes it clear that what the sacrifice of animals could never do, Jesus was able to by giving his life as a perfect sacrifice: "But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God." (Hebrews 10:12)

### A NEW BEGINNING

The Bible shows that as Adam brought sin and, therefore, death into the world by his disobedience, so Jesus by his perfect life, "brought life and immortality to light." (2 Timothy 1:10).

Because Jesus lived a perfect life, when he died it was 'impossible' that he should remain dead God raised him from the dead.

"God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him." (Acts 2:24)

The contrast between the effect of Adam's disobedience and the effect of the obedience of Jesus is referred to many times: "Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned - "For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous." "But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 5:12, 19, 21).

As we follow the pattern set by Adam, so we can be related to the pattern set by Jesus. We can be related to the life he came to bring:

'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all will be made alive.' (1 Corinthians 15:22).

### FAITH NEEDED

Study 4 explained that man naturally is mortal/human and dies and that faith is needed to relate him to the life that God has offered. That study pointed out that this has only been made possible by the work of Jesus:

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our  
Study 6 of Part 1

Lord." (Romans 6:23) So the salvation that God offers is conditional, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish." (John 3:16). This is why the Son of God was called Jesus: because he will save his people from their sins," (Matthew 1:21).

### THE WORK OF JESUS NOW

After his resurrection Jesus ascended to heaven. At his ascension, two angels declared he would return again: "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11)

Peter said that Jesus would remain in heaven until he 'restores everything'. "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you--even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets." (Acts 3:19-21)

Jesus will return to fulfil the rest of God's purpose in him. Meanwhile, He is a mediator - one who is in between God and man. He is described as a High Priest who can intercede for us to the Almighty:

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus..." (1 Timothy 2:5)

The Letter to the Hebrews explains that because Jesus lived his life on earth and was made in every way 'like unto his brethren' He can understand how we feel and can be sympathetic to our needs:

"For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people." (Hebrews 2:17)

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need." (Hebrews 4:15-16)

**SUMMARY**

1. Jesus was born by the action of the Holy Spirit upon the virgin Mary. He was, therefore, the Son of God.
2. The name 'Jesus' means 'Saviour', and it was the purpose of God from the beginning to provide a way of escape from the natural consequences of man's sin.
3. The wages of sin is death. The sacrifice of animals provided a regular reminder of this principle, but could never 'take away sin'.
4. Jesus provided the perfect sacrifice.
5. Jesus is now in heaven where he is able to be a merciful High Priest because he understands from his own experiences.
6. God has promised to send Jesus Christ back to the earth to complete His purpose in him when he comes to be King.

**RELEVANT PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING:**

Matthew 1:18-25; Matthew 2; Luke 1:26-38; Luke 2; John 1:1-14; Romans 5

**BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE****STUDY 6 QUESTIONS**

Underline the correct answer to each question and send (address above) the loose copy to us or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to us. Please make sure you keep a copy of the questions and your answers for reference.

1. The Name 'Jesus Christ' means  
(a) Saviour (b) Anointed (c) Saviour Anointed (d) Anointed Saviour
2. Who was the mother of Jesus?  
(a) Elizabeth (b) Mary (c) Martha (d) Ruth
3. Who was the real father of Jesus?  
(a) Joseph (b) David (c) Abraham (d) God
4. Jesus was born  
(a) 1,000 years after creation (b) was not born but was God  
(c) 4,000 years after creation (d) was born before creation
5. Animal sacrifices in Old Testament times ...  
(a) were a reminder that sin brings death  
(b) were to appease an angry God  
(c) were the result of superstition (d) were to provide salvation
6. Why was Jesus sent over 2,000 years ago?  
(a) To save the Jews (b) To be the perfect sacrifice for sin  
(c) To feed the poor (d) To establish the kingdom
7. Where is Jesus now?  
(a) In the grave (b) In heaven (c) On this earth (d) We do not know
8. Will Jesus Christ come back to the earth?  
(a) Yes (b) No (c) We do not know (d) Possibly
9. What does Jesus do now?  
(a) He controls our lives (b) He acts as high priest before God  
(c) He controls the governments (d) We do not know
10. What is the gift of God through Jesus Christ?  
(a) Prosperity (b) Eternal life in the future  
(c) Long life now (d) Peace and quiet now



## STUDY 7 - THE PROMISES OF GOD - 2

God promised Abraham that in him and his seed (descendant) all families of the earth would be blessed. Study 5 showed that the one descendant who would bring blessing to the earth was Jesus. This is the subject of clear teaching in the New Testament.

*"The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say 'and to seeds,' meaning many people, but 'and to your seed,' meaning one person, who is Christ." (Galatians 3:16)*

Abraham is used as an example of faith, and we are told that if we want to show our faith we must live our lives as Abraham did, trusting God and being obedient to His will.

The nation of Israel who descended from Abraham were slaves in Egypt. They were led out of Egypt by Moses after ten terrible plagues had forced the Egyptians to recognise that there was a God in heaven who was in control of world affairs. The Book of Exodus (the name means 'departure') tells us about these events

At last the nation of Israel settled in the land of Canaan where Abraham had lived. Their first king was Saul, and the second was David, who wrote many of the Psalms.

### THE PROMISE TO DAVID

In the Psalms David says that God had made a special promise to him.

*"The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke: "One of your own descendants I will place on your throne—" (Psalm 132:11)*

David, when his kingdom was established and the nation was at peace, wanted to build a temple or a house of worship for God. The prophet Nathan was sent to David to tell him that although God did not want him to build a house, God would establish David's royal house, and one in his royal line would rule over his kingdom for ever

*"When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever." (2 Samuel 7:12-16)*

There are three important points in these verses:-

1. The promise did not refer to Solomon, David's son, because God said that the 'throne of his kingdom' would be established forever. Although Solomon was noted for his riches and for his wisdom, he certainly did not reign forever. In verse Nathan the prophet tells David that God would be the father of this great king who would come in his line. *'I will be his father, and he will be my son'* (2 Samuel 7:14).

2. The king would rule on David's throne

*'When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.'* (2 Samuel 7:12)

3. *God declares that He will bring it to pass* (2 Samuel 7:12)

4.

### THE TEACHING OF THE PROPHETS

*The same points are emphasised throughout the Bible. Read the following passage from the book of the prophet Isaiah which is often quoted at Christmas time and see the same three points.*

*"For to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this." (Isaiah 9:6-7)*

The same points are stressed

1. *'Of his government ... there will be no end.'*

2. *'On the throne of David and over his kingdom.'*

3. *The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this'.*

### JESUS WAS THE ONE PROMISED

There is no doubt as to who the great king in the line of David will be. The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary before the birth of **Jesus** and told her,

*'He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.'* (Luke 1:32-33)

Notice the same three points again:

1. The kingdom would be established forever.

2. He would rule on David's throne.

3. God would bring it to pass.'

### MARY'S SONG OF REJOICING

Later in the same chapter Luke records a wonderful song of rejoicing in which Mary praised God for His promises. A remarkable feature of it is that although the angel told Mary that the child would be born to fulfil the promise God made to David, Mary thanked God for the promise that He had made to Abraham. She must have realised by her understanding of the purpose of God that both of these promises would be

fulfilled in the same individual.

*"He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers."*(Luke 1:54-55)

There can be no doubt that the kingdom, which Jesus came to proclaim, was a real kingdom on the earth. He would be the king and his followers would also have positions of rulership. Jesus told his disciples:

*'When the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'* (Matthew 19:28)

It was the purpose of God in the beginning to fill the earth with His glory and with peace:

*".. as surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD"* (Numbers 14:21)

This will happen when Jesus returns to the earth as King.

One of the main points that Peter made in his address on the Day of Pentecost was that Jesus was the great descendant of David that God had promised. Peter referred to the Psalm we have already quoted to show that David looked forward to the establishment of the Kingdom with Christ as king:

*"Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne"* (Acts 2:29-30)

The apostle also explained that the resurrection of Jesus was a sure sign that the promise God had made to David would be fulfilled.

*"God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact."*(Acts 2:32)

Peter said that David understood that the time would come when the Almighty would say to the Lord Jesus Christ:

*"The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*(Acts 2:34-36)

**GOD'S GUARANTEE**

Paul summed up the wonderful hope, which the Bible offers when he was speaking to the people of Athens:

*"For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."*(Acts 17:31)

**SUMMARY**

- 1. In the Bible God has revealed His purpose with the earth.

- 2. God told Abraham and David that the one through whom this purpose would be fulfilled would be in their line.

- 2. Jesus was the one promised.
- 3. He will rule the world in righteousness when the kingdom of God is established.
- 4. This hope, based on the foundation of Old Testament teaching, was contained clearly in the message of Jesus and the apostles.

**RELEVANT PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING:**

Isaiah 11; Acts 2; Romans 4; Isaiah 35; Luke 19

**BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE**

**STUDY 7 QUESTIONS**

*Underline the correct answer to each question and send (address above) the loose copy to us or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to us. Please make sure you keep a copy of the questions and your answers for reference.*

- 1. Which descendant of Abraham will bring blessings on the earth?  
(a) Isaac (b) Joseph (c) David (d) Jesus
- 2. In which country were the Israelites slaves?  
(a) Africa (b) Egypt (c) Canaan (d) Italy
- 3. Which book of the Bible tells us about the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery?  
a) Genesis (b) Exodus (c) Leviticus (d) Numbers
- 4. Who was the first King of Israel?  
(a) Saul (b) David (c) Solomon (d) Samuel
- 5. What did David want to build for God?  
(a) A palace (b) A temple (c) A city (d) An altar
- 6. What did God promise David?  
(a) Great wealth (b) Long life and good health  
(c) That the throne of his kingdom would be established for ever  
(d) Happiness and prosperity
- 7. Which prophet of Israel said, "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse"?  
(a) Isaiah (b) Samuel (c) Obadiah (d) Hosea
- 8. Who was the promised descendant of David who would rule on his throne?  
(a) Solomon (b) Jesus (c) Hezekiah (d) Rehoboam
- 9. Where will the promised kingdom of God be established?  
(a) On this earth (b) In heaven  
(c) In the hearts of human beings (d) In space
- 10. What is the guarantee that God will carry out His promises that the Apostle Paul referred to at Athens?  
(a) The seasons (b) The birth of Jesus  
(c) Day and night (d) The resurrection of Jesus

## STUDY 8 - THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

The word resurrection means 'rising up from the dead'. It is translated from the Greek word 'anastasis' in the New Testament which means 'rising up' or 'standing again'.

The resurrection of Jesus from the grave is an undeniable fact of history. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the focal point of the whole purpose of God with the human race. The Christian faith is built round it, Christianity exists upon the basis of Christ's resurrection from the dead. This was the driving force in the lives of the disciples in the 1st century A.D.

### MAIN TOPIC OF THE APOSTLES' TEACHING

When the apostles chose another to take the place of Judas, they chose one, Matthias, who they said must be 'a witness with us of his (Christ's) resurrection'. *"Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."* (Acts 1:21-22)

The apostles were imprisoned because they taught about the resurrection: *"The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead."* (Acts 4:1-2).

Paul was put on trial for the same reason: 'When Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, , *"My brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead."* (Acts 23:6)  
*"...these who are here should state what crime they found in me when I stood before the Sanhedrin-- unless it was this one thing I shouted as I stood in their presence: 'It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.' "* (Acts 24:20-21)

The letters of the New Testament are full of teaching about the resurrection of Jesus and its importance for all of us. The apostle Paul emphasised this when he said: *"And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith... if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins."* (1 Corinthians 15:14 & 17)

### WHY DID GOD RAISE JESUS?

Earlier studies have shown the work of Jesus as a sacrifice for sin: *Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself."* (Hebrews 9:27)

Study 4 explained how Adam brought sin and death to mankind by his disobedience to God's commands. In contrast, Jesus kept all God's commandments and lived a perfect life. Study 6 dealt with this. The death of Jesus, however, could have no force at all as an effective sacrifice, if he had not been raised from the dead. Jesus, 'born of a woman, made under the law,' came under the same condemnation of death that we have inherited from Adam. *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law,.."* (Galatians 4:4)

He personally was free from sin, therefore death could not hold him, *"For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him."* (Romans 6:9)

### GOD'S LOVE AND JUSTICE

The righteous principles of God could not allow such a man, who had perfectly kept His laws, to remain subject to the law of sin and death. The apostle Peter tells us, *"But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him."* (Acts 2:24)

Study 3 showed how it was through the absolute justice of God as well as through His love for man that Jesus rose from the dead "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) *God raised Jesus because he did not sin – 1 Peter 2:22*

### WAS RESURRECTION A NEW BELIEF IN THE FIRST CENTURY A.D?

We learn from the Bible that a rising again from the dead was the hope of the faithful in the ages before the time of Jesus. This is why Jesus said, *Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."* (John 8:56)  
Peter quoted the words of David, King of Israel:

For David says concerning Him: *"David said about him: " 'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;...he, (David) Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay."* (Acts 2:25-26 & 31)

Compare this verse with Psalm 16: *"I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand"* (Psalm 16:8-11)

David also said, *"And I--in righteousness I will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness."* (Psalm 17:15)

## THE RESURRECTION - A FULFILMENT OF GOD'S PROMISES

As Study 5 pointed out, Abraham and David expected to be raised from the dead to enjoy the promises of God. They were not alone in this hope. Job said, *"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;"*(Job 19:25-26)

Isaiah said,  
*"But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth."* (Isaiah 26:19)

Daniel was told:  
*"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt"... "... You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance."* (Daniel 12:2 & 13)

The apostle Paul confirmed that this was the hope of those before Jesus:  
*"But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen-- that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."*(Acts 26:22-23)

## CHRIST THE FIRST TO RISE TO EVERLASTING LIFE

The Bible clearly shows that Jesus was the first to rise from the dead to immortality. Paul wrote, *"...our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."* (2 Timothy 1:10)

## IS RESURRECTION THE ONLY HOPE OF IMMORTALITY?

The life and immortality that Jesus has brought to light is the hope of a rising up from the dead, to stand on the earth. Peter declared plainly that, *"For David did not ascend to heaven.."*(Acts 2:34). We have seen that this was not David's hope. God had promised that he would see Christ sitting on His (David's) throne in Jerusalem..  
*When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom"*  
*"Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."* (2 Samuel 7:12, 16)

*"...But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne."* (Acts 2 30)

As Paul explained in his speech in Athens, referred to in Study 7, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was an assurance from God that Christ would rule the world in

righteousness, at an appointed date in the future:

*"For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."* (Acts 17:31).

## RESURRECTION - THE TRUE HOPE

Martha was a follower of Jesus. We can see clearly her hope of a future life. When her brother Lazarus died, Jesus said to her, *"Your brother will rise again."* Martha answered, *"I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."* Jesus said to her, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"* (John 11:23-25)

## WILL ALL BE RAISED?

**The scriptures tell us that only the 'responsible' will be raised from the dead.**  
*"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 6:23).

Those who do not seek God or who have no desire to understand His purpose or serve Him, will not obtain the gift of God. The Bible plainly teaches:  
*"A man who strays from the path of understanding comes to rest in the company of the dead.."* (Proverbs 21:16)

*"A man who has riches without understanding is like the beasts that perish."* (Psalm 49:20)

*"They are now dead, they live no more; those departed spirits do not rise"* (Isaiah 26:14)

## PROPER UNDERSTANDING NECESSARY

In contrast to those statements, Jesus gives us hope by saying,  
*"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."* (John 17:3).

If we want to become related to God's purpose we must have understanding. We must know the true God and possess a proper understanding of His Word. With this knowledge and a belief of the truth of these matters, we can take the next step of baptism into Christ, which will be dealt with fully in Study 11. Paul points out the importance of baptism to the true believer who wants to obtain resurrection:  
*"..don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live*

*a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.*" (Romans 6:3-5).

### CHRIST THE FIRST TO RISE - OTHERS TO FOLLOW

Jesus was the first to rise from the dead to immortality. We read again, *"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep."* (1 Corinthians 15:20)

The first fruits are the first results of the harvest, a sign of many more good things to come. Paul uses this figure of the harvest to show the order of resurrection: *But each in his own turn: Christ, the first-fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.*" (1 Corinthians 15:23).

### SECOND COMING OF CHRIST TO RAISE THE DEAD

The Second Coming of Christ is bound up with the resurrection in the last days. Paul wrote of, *"..Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom,.."* (2 Timothy 4:1).

Paul also wrote:

*"Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first."* (1 Thessalonians 4:13-16).

### RESURRECTION AND JUDGEMENT

When Daniel was told that, 'many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake', he was also told that, 'multitudes' would 'awake' to 'everlasting life, and others to shame and everlasting contempt'. Those responsible will be raised with mortal/human nature and then be judged by Christ.

*"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt."* (Daniel 12:2).

This speaks of the assembling together of the raised and those living at the return of Christ for judgement and of the possibility of rejection by Jesus. Jesus taught the same: *"Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned."* (John 5:28-29).

All responsible people (those with knowledge of God's Word/Law – whether they have been faithful or not) must appear at the judgement seat of Jesus Christ. Those who trust in God, with a knowledge of His love and mercy, who have tried to please Him and follow the example of His beloved Son will, in the mercy of God, receive the gift of eternal life in that day.

Jesus speaks to all of us when he says, , *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;"* (John 11:25). He was born of a woman meaning that he had the same mortal nature as we have.

### SUMMARY

1. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a fact.
2. The resurrection of Jesus is the main teaching in the New Testament.
3. Jesus was raised because of his perfect character. Therefore the righteousness and justice of God brought him out of the grave.
4. The hope of resurrection has been the hope of all the faithful before and after the first advent of Jesus.
5. Eternal life is not ours now, for there would be no need for God to promise it, or for it to be a matter for hope.
6. Man has no natural immortality; if he had, Christ had no need to be a sacrifice to bring salvation to mankind.
7. Resurrection after death is the only hope of obtaining immortality.
8. Not all will be raised; those without understanding will remain in the grave.
9. Understanding, belief and baptism are necessary to be related to Christ and resurrection.
10. Christ was the first to rise to immortality; we can be like him if we follow his example.
11. The resurrection and judgement will take place when Jesus returns to the earth.

### RELEVANT PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING:

Psalm 49; Isaiah 26; Mark 16; John 11; Acts 26; 1 Corinthians 15

**BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE****STUDY 8 QUESTIONS**

*Underline the correct answer to each question and send (address above) the loose copy to us or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to us. Please make sure you keep a copy of the questions and your answers for reference.*

1. The word 'resurrection' means:  
(a) lying down (b) lifting up (c) rising up from the dead (d) waking up
2. Who was the first person to have been raised to live for ever?  
(a) Lazarus (b) Jairus' daughter (c) Stephen (d) Jesus
3. Why did Jesus die?  
(a) Because he was of our nature (b) He was sinful  
(c) God forced him to die (d) The Jews wanted him out of the way
4. Why did Jesus live again?  
(a) He did not die (b) He revived after the crucifixion  
(c) God raised him (d) He only swooned on the cross
5. Which three of the following can look forward to a future reward upon the earth?  
(a) Abraham (b) David (c) Daniel (d) Jeroboam (1 Kings 14:16)
6. Will everyone be raised from the dead?  
(a) No (b) Yes (c) Probably (d) I do not know
7. When will the responsible dead be raised?  
(a) They continue to live on after death  
(b) When Jesus returns to set up the Kingdom  
(c) Do not know (d) The Bible contains no promise
8. What will follow the Resurrection?  
(a) Baptism (b) Judgement (c) Studying the Bible (d) Singing praise
9. Who will be accepted by Jesus at the last day?  
(a) Those who understand him, believe in him, and follow his teaching  
(b) Those who do good and help everyone (c) Those who are alive  
(d) Those who were unbelieving and are now in the grave
10. Do you want to learn more of Jesus and share in His coming Kingdom on Earth?  
(a) No (b) I am not sure (c) It is too hard (d) Yes

## **STUDY 9 - THE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is an historical fact on which the hope of all mankind depends. As certain as the fact of the resurrection, is God's promise that His Son will return to the earth. After Christ was raised from the dead, he ascended to heaven, and angels gave his disciples this assurance:

*"This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."* (Acts 1:11)

### **THE PURPOSE OF HIS RETURN**

In the Lord's prayer Jesus taught his followers to pray for the establishment of God's kingdom, on earth:

*"Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10)

At this time the words of David will be fulfilled: *"The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever."* (Psalm 37:29).

Christ is to return to the earth to establish God's kingdom by overthrowing the present human systems of government. He will rid the world of wickedness and fill the earth with God's glory as the divine solution to all its present problems, *"As surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth."* (Number 14:21)

For this reason the apostle Paul, in the first century A.D., encouraged Titus to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and rather to *"..say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ"* (Titus 2:12-13)

### **WHEN WILL HE RETURN?**

From the beginning, God appointed a particular day when Christ would return to judge the earth. Paul spoke of this:

*"For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."* (Acts 17:31)

Christ, in his preaching, made it quite clear that, although God's plan was made, and events would follow a set pattern, not even he knew time of his return. In Mark chapter 13 Christ told his hearers of his return, and gave them some indications as to the events which must precede it, after which he said:

*"At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory."*(Mark 13:26). *"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."* (Mark 13:32).

## **CHRIST'S RETURN LIKE A THIEF IN THE NIGHT**

Most people today find the idea of Christ's returning to the earth amusing, not be considered seriously, in view of the apparent permanence of our existence. The apostle Peter warned that men would think like this: *"First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation."* (2 Peter 3:3-4).

So we are, given the assurance that God is not slow in fulfilling His promises, but that this world-shattering event will take place at the time that He has appointed for it: *"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief."* (2 Peter 3:10)

As Christ pointed out, the precise hour of his coming is not known to anyone except God, and cannot be worked out from the scriptures. *"So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him."* (Matthew 24:44)

This teaches us that believers in Christ's return require faith, for only God knows the specific day when this will happen. To those who are not looking for this event, his appearance will be as unexpected as that of a thief in the night

### **IS THERE NO SIGN WHEN CHRIST WILL RETURN?**

The disciples were interested in this question and asked Christ privately whilst they sat on the Mount of Olives, "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:3),

Christ's reply to this question, and many other passages of Bible prophecy, clearly show the likely time period when this return will be fulfilled. These Signs of the Times have been given to encourage Christ's followers, that they may be ready for him.

### **SIGNS OF CHRIST'S RETURN**

#### **1. THE SIGN OF NOAH**

In his answer, Jesus reminded his disciples of the Bible account of the days before the flood, as similar circumstances would be seen in the days just before his return:

*"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man."* (Matthew 24:37-39)

For the background to the times of Noah read Genesis chapter 6, where it shows

plainly why God destroyed mankind, and saved only, eight people. Such wickedness was evident in the thoughts and deeds of men and God saw that The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God said to Noah, "... *God saw how corrupt the earth had become, ... So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, ... So make yourself an ark of cypress wood;"* (Genesis 6:11-14,).

*"God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,"* (1 Peter 3:20)

The press, radio, television, the internet daily reflect the similarity between the violent, Godless world of Noah's day and the violent, Godless world of our times. They reflect in many instances the apostle Paul's description of men in the last days prior to Christ's return:

*"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God-- having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them."* (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

A careful consideration of each descriptive word of that Bible prophecy will show that these descriptions fit our age more than any before.

## 2. THE JEWISH SIGN

Jesus also spoke a short parable as an additional sign, to tell his disciples when he would return. *"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door."* (Matthew 24:32-33)

The prophet Jeremiah gives us a clue to the identification of the fig tree as he uses the same symbol in chapter 24 when he refers to the people of Israel. We must look then for the symbolic fig tree, Israel, *tender and its leaves come out.*

This refers to the regathering of the Jews from all parts of the earth where they were scattered by God.

*"Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods--gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart."* (Deuteronomy 28:64-65)

*"..then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. He will make you more prosperous and numerous*

*than your fathers."* (Deuteronomy 30:3-5)

Today the world is witnessing the Jewish people in Israel '*its leaves come out*', as they continue to fight for their country which was re-established as a state in 1948. However, the Jewish people still have their eyes closed to the gospel message. But all that is soon to change:

Ezekiel prophesied the same event in the first fourteen verses of Chapter 37. This time the Jewish nation is likened to a collection of bones. The prophet saw a valley of dry bones:

*The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry."* (Ezekiel 37:1-2)

Then the bones came together, were covered with flesh; breath was put into them and they lived.

*"Then he said to me: "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel.... I will put my Spirit in you and you will live, and I will settle you in your own land. Then you will know that I the LORD have spoken, and I have done it, declares the LORD."* (Ezekiel 37:11, 14)

So we see in figurative language Israel being brought into the land as promised by God; a young nation, sprouting forth as a budding tree.

What follows this regathering? The Jewish sign tells us the establishment of God's kingdom. The exciting aspect of this prophecy is that we can see' God's hand at work, as the Jews return and build up their land. We are warned:

*"..when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door."* (Matthew 24:33)

### Jesus' Prophecy Concerning Israel

Jesus made very clear predictions both as to the immediate future of his nation, and to its long-term destiny. The leaders of the nation failed to see the hand of their God stretched out to them. He had sent them His only son as their Messiah, and they demanded his death. Just prior to his arrest and crucifixion, Jesus and his disciples stood on the mount overlooking Jerusalem, and the beauty of the temple caused the disciples to exclaim in wonder; but Jesus saw only the punishment to be meted out to his people:

*"Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down.... They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."* (Luke 21:6 and 24).

This prophecy received its detailed fulfillment in A.D. 70, when the Roman Empire sent an army, under Titus, to put down a rebellion. The city of Jerusalem was destroyed and the ground was actually ploughed over. Deuteronomy chapter 28 was further fulfilled, and the scattering of the nation was complete. No Jew was permitted to



remain in the land. In A.D. 135 a decree was issued expelling the surviving Jews from Judea. The name of Jerusalem was changed to Aelia Capitolina.

There followed centuries of down-treading for the land and its people. The 'Diaspora', or dispersion, became fact. The Jewish prisoners captured in innumerable wars were scattered to the Four Corners of the world as slaves. Those fortunate enough to escape this fate became merchants and traders. The Jew was everywhere around the world, except in Israel, so thoroughly did God fulfil His word. Settlements were to be found throughout the world, but God had decreed no comfort for them. Persecution and anti-Semitism became their way of life. For 2,000 years the land and its people were very effectively crushed and a miracle would be needed to revive them. But God had promised that miracle through many of His prophets. In 1967 the Israelis captured Jerusalem and for the first time in 2,000 years Jerusalem came under Israeli control.

### Israel Reborn

Nothing could be clearer than the prophecy spoken through Jeremiah:

*"I will surely gather them from all the lands where I banish them in my furious anger and great wrath; I will bring them back to this place and let them live in safety. They will be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop doing good to them, and I will inspire them to fear me, so that they will never turn away from me."* (Jeremiah 32:37-40)

God had said He would give them a new heart and spirit to bring about the revival, and the amazing truth is the way the nation seemed to gather inspired strength and courage. For 2,000 years of captivity the Jews had been weak and unresisting. God had taken away their will and their ability to fight. But when the time came for the prophecies concerning their restoration to their land to be fulfilled, then this new spirit came into the nation. They waged a war to ensure they took possession of their land and Britain, the occupying power, was only too pleased to hand over. Then, against all odds, the nation became a fighting machine, to defeat the combined strength of the Arabs and Egyptians. 650,000 Jews faced 40,000,000 Arabs and; as of old, God led His people to victory. So what the prophets had declared would happen came to pass.

Since 1948 over five million Jews have returned to Israel. The next major event will be Christ's return to establish his Kingdom in Israel, and thence throughout the whole world.

### 3. THE SIGN OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM

Study 3 dealt fully with the image seen in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. *"The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay."* (Daniel 2:32-33) Daniel's interpretation showed the course of world history. The iron represents the Roman Empire, which reigned supreme in the world for hundreds of years. Originally it was ruled from Rome. Then the emperor himself moved to Constantinople in the fourth century AD and the empire became separated into two halves, east and west,

representing the two legs of the image. The iron component continues right down through history to this day. It is now represented by Eastern and Western Europe.

At the present time the toes are forming: The toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. (Daniel 2:) Clay does not adhere to iron and is associated with the seed of men. Clay is a symbol used in the Bible to represent mankind. , *"O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."* (Isaiah 64:8)

Clay makes up the dust of the streets and represents ordinary common man. In some counties, where they have no kings or monarchs, governments may be greatly influenced by ordinary men and women. *"Just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay."* (Daniel 2:43)

We are to look for a group of nations, some strong (iron) and some weak (clay), forming an alliance which, because of the mixture of nations will not be very stable. It is in the days of these kings, that God will intervene in the affairs of mankind, sending the Lord Jesus Christ back to this earth. In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom (Daniel 2:44)

### 4. THE SIGN OF GENERAL WORLD UNREST

Christ also told the disciples that the time just before his return would be of anguish, perplexity and fear among people caused by the distressing signs in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth:

*"There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken."* (Luke 21:25-26).

Christ is speaking in figurative language of ruling powers (sun and moon), with the sea and waves representing people: *"But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud."* (Isaiah 57:20)

This sign gives a picture of waves, people on the earth roaring, using their collective voice to exert power over events and situations, and to shake the security of rulers., The prevailing mood is of distress among the nations, which makes thoughtful people fearful as to the outcome of all the world's disturbances and problems. Surely the picture presented could be the caption for a survey of the current world situation! Once again, Christ tells us that when world events are like those described by him, we must expect his return: *"At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."* (Luke 21:27).

The establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth lies at the centre of His purpose,

as we have seen. It requires the return of Jesus Christ to the earth to fulfil all the promises of God. Jesus himself spoke, in prophecy, about the events, which would precede his return to earth.

## 5. THE RUSSIAN SIGN

In our comments on the Jewish sign we referred to Ezekiel 37, which speaks of the restoration of the nation of Israel to their own land. In the following chapter we read of their invasion by Russia: *"The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, set your face against Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal; prophesy against him." (Ezekiel 38:1-2)*

The name 'Russia' comes from 'Rosh', 'Rus' or 'Ros', ancient names for the tribes, which live in the area of Russia and much of the former USSR.

**The events of Ezekiel 38 will take place immediately before Christ's return and we read that Russia will lead a confederacy of nations against the land of Israel to take a spoil.**

Russia is situated to the north of Israel, with Moscow on the very same line of longitude as Jerusalem. She will be the leader of this aggressive pack, as the prophet states:

*"You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army. You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land. In days to come, O Gog, I will bring you against my land, so that the nations may know me when I show myself holy through you before their eyes." (Ezekiel 38:15-16)*

Triumph will seem certain by this powerful invader, but God will bring His power to save His people: 'And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say: *"Son of man, prophesy against Gog and say: "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. I will turn you around and drag you along. I will bring you." (Ezekiel 39:1-2)*

The instrument of this power used by God is the Lord Jesus Christ, termed by Daniel, *'Michael, the great prince'*. Michael means 'who like God' and is a reference to Jesus, who was 'like unto his Father'.

*"At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1)*

At the moment it would seem unlikely that Russia would be in a position to lead such an invasion. It should be noted, however, that Russia has a relatively large Jewish population, which has been treated very harshly. Also, for hundreds of years she has longed for a warm water port to the south.

Russia is very much in a state of flux following the fall of Communism. There are a number of prominent leaders, who, have shown indications that should they ever come to power, they could very well fulfil the role which Bible prophecy has assigned to this

country. All will be revealed in God's good time.

## CHRIST'S RETURN A FACT

The Signs of the Times make up an unmistakable pattern of the shape of things to come. The preliminaries for God's intervention are almost complete and Jesus Christ is at the door, ready to take the world by surprise.

Seeing the signs and knowing their meaning, can we afford to remain unmoved by them? We can be like those who foolishly close their minds to these things and do nothing. The return of Christ will come to such like a thief in the night.

Alternatively, we can regard the signs and heed the warning before it is too late. Jesus said, *"When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." (Luke 21:28)*

Instead of being downcast by present conditions, we can look up and see the need for redemption, through Christ our Redeemer. We can be wise and seek sanctuary in the Christ-Ark, before the *'great day of God Almighty'* engulfs the wicked.

It is in our power to treat this subject as of great importance, remembering that it involves our life and destiny. The Bible offers us the hope of eternal life and a place in God's Kingdom - a Kingdom where Christ will reign in righteousness and peace; not a *'reign of grace in the heart'*, but a literal kingdom upon-earth. The wise will reach this conclusion:

- \* that the coming of Christ is a vital matter
- \* that the warning from God's Word should not be ignored
- \* that our present life gives no lasting satisfaction
- \* that belief of the Gospel (good news) of the Kingdom of God and that baptism into the saving name of Christ are imperative.,

It is for us individually, to decide if we desire to 'abide the day of his (Christ's) coming, when He shall .. *"And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not." (Malachi 3:18).*

## SUMMARY

1. The return of Jesus Christ is a fact.
2. The angels at his ascension promised this return.
3. Jesus is to return to establish God's kingdom on earth.
4. Only God knows the exact day appointed for Christ's return.
5. Clear signs indicate Christ's return is imminent.
6. The days of Noah are comparable to our own.
7. The restoration of the Jews in Israel is a living sign.
8. We live in the final phase of Nebuchadnezzar's vision.
9. World unrest precedes Christ's return.
10. Russia's role in God's plan tells us Christ's return.

## RELEVANT PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING:

Ezekiel 37, 38 and 39; Luke 21; Acts 1:1-12; Acts 3; 1 Thessalonians 5; 2

**STUDY 9 QUESTIONS**

*Underline the correct answer to each question and send (address above) the loose copy to us or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to us. Please make sure you keep a copy of the questions and your answers for reference.*

1. Why is Jesus going to return to this earth?  
 (a) He is not going to return                      (b) To stop war  
 (c) To establish God's Kingdom                      (d) To cure disease
2. Who knew the exact date when Jesus would return?  
 (a) The angels      (b) Jesus                      (c) God                      (d) Paul
3. Where can we find indications that Jesus will return soon?  
 (a) In the Bible      (b) In the newspapers:  
 (c) In the stars      (d) In the Jewish Law
4. What conditions in the world did Jesus compare with the times of Noah?  
 (a) The return of Israel to their land  
 (b) The uprising of a northern aggressor  
 (c) A time of violence and pleasure seeking  
 (d) Some nations strong and some nations weak
5. Which figure is used to indicate Israel in the parable contained in Matthew 24:32-33?  
 (a) A valley of dry bones      (b) A fig tree                      (c) A candlestick      (d) The ark
6. What part of Nebuchadnezzar's vision portrayed the time before Jesus' return?  
 (a) The head of gold                      (b) The feet part iron and part clay  
 (c) The legs of iron                      (d) The belly and thighs of brass
7. Which class of people are referred to in the phrase 'at the roaring and tossing of the sea.' in Luke 21:25?  
 (a) A holy people      (b) The wicked/people      (c) The rulers      (d) The missionaries
8. Which nation is situated directly north of Israel?  
 (a) Syria                      (b) Russia                      (c) Egypt                      (d) Jordan
9. Who is Michael' referred to in Daniel 12:1?  
 (a) Angel                      (b) Ezekiel                      (c) Daniel                      (d) Jesus
10. Which of the following signs, which tells us Jesus' return are to be seen today?  
 (a) The restoration of the Jews in Israel                      (b) World unrest  
 (c) The position of Russia                      (d) A time of violence  
 (e) Some nations strong and some nations weak



## STUDY 10 - THE GOSPEL

In this study we shall bring together many of the facts which we have learnt in earlier studies. The English word 'gospel' comes from two old English words, 'god spell' meaning 'good news', or, as it is sometimes used in the New Testament, 'glad tidings'. This is a good translation of the Greek word 'enaggelion'.

### THE CENTRE OF CHRIST'S TEACHING

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all tell us that Jesus went throughout the land of Israel preaching the gospel - the good news - of God's coming kingdom.  
*"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom."* (Matthew 9:35)

*"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God."* (Mark 1:14)

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor."* Luke 4:18)

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:16)

*"Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."* (John 18:37)

### THE DISCIPLES TAUGHT THE GOSPEL

When Jesus had told the good news to the disciples, he sent them out to teach others.  
*"Jesus sent them [the disciples] out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick."* (Luke 9:2)

After his death and resurrection, Jesus told the disciples to go on with the same work, He said to them, *"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."* (Mark 16:15-16)

From these last words we see that we need to know, believe and obey the gospel in order to receive salvation.

### THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Because of this, the apostle Paul wrote, *"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."* (Romans 1:16)

We need to understand clearly the good news that Jesus and the apostles taught. Paul wrote again,  
*"Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!"* (Galatians 1:8)

### WHAT DID THE DISCIPLES UNDERSTAND BY 'THE GOSPEL'?

The disciples went out preaching the good news of the kingdom of God before the crucifixion of Jesus. What did this 'good news' mean to them? When two of them spoke to Jesus after his resurrection, they told him, *"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel."* (Luke 24:19 & 21)

*Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples asked Him, saying, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"* (Acts 1:6)

They expected Jesus to set up the kingdom of God there and then. It was such good news that they wanted it immediately. Jesus told them that the time had not yet come.  
*"It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."* (Acts 1:7)

### GOD'S PROMISES

As the disciples watched Jesus ascending, two angels stood by them and told them,  
*"This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."* (Acts 1:11)

This promise is the repeated theme of the apostles' teaching as we read it in the Acts of the Apostles, and their letters. They looked for the return of Jesus to fulfil all of the promises which God had made concerning His kingdom. For, although the word 'gospel' is only to be found in the New Testament, the good news of the kingdom of God is the basis of all God's promises from the beginning.

### THE PROMISE IN EDEN

In the beginning, after Adam and Eve had disobeyed God's commandment, we remember His words to the serpent,  
*"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."* (Genesis 3:15)

This was the good news, that the power of sin and death would eventually be destroyed. This was the work that Jesus came to do.  
*"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death - that is, the devil - and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death."* (Hebrews 2:14-15)

**THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM**

We have studied God's promises to Abraham. The apostle Paul wrote, *"The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you."* (Galatians 3:8)

When Jesus returns, he will raise Abraham from the dead, and all God's promises to Abraham will be fulfilled in every detail. These promises were confirmed to Isaac and to Jacob, and they too will be raised from the dead at the return of Jesus, and will receive places of honour in God's kingdom.

*"Many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."* (Matthew 8:11)

**THE PROMISE TO DAVID**

The good news of God's kingdom was told to David through the prophet Nathan:

*"When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."* (2 Samuel 7:12-16.)

Although the Israelites later forsook God, He did not forget His promises. We find them over and over again in the Psalms of David, and in the writings of the prophets. Through the prophet Ezekiel, **God spoke to Zedekiah, the last king of Judah,** *"A ruin! A ruin! I will make it a ruin! It will not be restored until he comes to whom it rightfully belongs; to him I will give it."* (Ezekiel 21:27)

When Jesus came, the angel renewed the promise to Mary, *"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."* (Luke 1:32-33)

*"The LORD swore an oath to David, a sure oath that he will not revoke (cancel): "One of your own descendants I will place on your throne...."* (Psalm 132:11-12)

*" He (David) was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne."* (Acts 2:30)

**THE PROMISE TO US**

This is the good news of God's kingdom that comes to us in the Bible message. Jesus will soon be back on earth to set up God's kingdom. Read Matthew 25. The three parables in this chapter teach us to watch, to work, to reflect the love of Christ if we too would have a part in God's Kingdom.

1. Parable of the ten virgins  
Those who prepared themselves and kept a close watch were invited into the marriage feast but those whose oil had run out found the door closed.

2. Parable of the talents  
The use of our abilities will be recognised by Jesus and he will reward those who have used their knowledge and opportunities while they could.

3. Parable of shepherd dividing the sheep  
The Good Shepherd recognises his sheep and understands their efforts. He knows those who have tried to help their fellows and accepts such assistance as being done to him.

**WHAT MUST WE DO?**

We have to repent, to change our ways, 'Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" (Mark 1:15)

*"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you--even Jesus."* (Acts 3:19-20)

*God commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."* (Acts 17:30-31)

We need to follow Jesus - to change our hearts and minds - to be reborn through baptism, and our next study will teach us what that means. This, too, is necessary, *"...for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. .... If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."* (Galatians 3:27-29)

This is the gospel, the good news of the kingdom of God. We, like the disciples, long for it to be fulfilled soon. This is why we pray, as Jesus taught his followers, 'Your Kingdom come'.

*"When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation."* (Luke 11:2-4)

**SUMMARY**

1. The word 'gospel' means 'good news'.
2. The good news of the coming kingdom of God was the main theme of the teaching of Jesus and his disciples.
3. Knowledge, belief of and obedience to the gospel are necessary to gain salvation.
4. The gospel is taught throughout the Scriptures, in Old and New Testaments.
5. The **Good News of the Kingdom of God** is still preached to us.
6. We can gain a place in God's kingdom if we hear, understand and obey the gospel message.
7. We have to make a positive response to the call of the gospel - just as Abraham and all the faithful servants of God in the past did.

**RELEVANT PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING:**

2 Samuel 7; Psalm 1; Psalm 96; Isaiah 55; Acts 9

**STUDY 10 QUESTIONS**

*Underline the correct answer to each question and send (address above) the loose copy to us or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to us. Please make sure you keep a copy of the questions and your answers for reference.*

1. The word 'gospel' means:  
(a) News                      (b) Good news      (c) God spell                      (d) Message
2. Which of the following verses tell us that Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom?  
(a) Mark 1. 14    (b) Luke 1. 14    (c) John 1. 14    (d) Matthew 3. 16  
(e) Mark 3.16    (f) Luke 3. 16    (g) John 3. 16    (h) Matthew 4. 18  
(i) Mark 4. 18    (j) Luke 4.18    (k) John 4. 18    (l) Matthew 9. 35  
(m) Mark 9. 35    (n) Luke 9. 35    (o) John 9. 35
3. In addition to Jesus who also preached the Gospel?  
(a) The Jewish priests                      (b) The Disciples  
(c) The Roman ruler                      (d) The Wise Men
4. When will the Kingdom of God be set up on this earth?  
(a) We do not know                      (b) When Jesus comes back to the earth  
(c) It already is                      (d) It will not be set up
5. Who told the disciples as they watched Jesus going to heaven that he would return?  
(a) God                      (b) An angel                      (c) Jesus                      (d) Two angels
6. How can you receive the promise of salvation offered in the Bible?  
(a) Do good to your friends                      (b) Share all your goods  
(c) Obey the laws of the country    (d) Know, believe and obey the gospel.
7. Which promise of God foretold that the power of sin and death would be a struggle for the human race?  
(a) The promise in Eden    (b) The promise to Abraham  
(c) The promise to Noah    (d) The promise to David
8. Which verse in the New Testament tells us that the Gospel was preached to Abraham?  
(a) Galatians 8.3    (b) Galatians 3.8    (c) Romans 8.3    (d) Romans 3.8
9. Which prophet of God told David the good news of God's Kingdom?  
(a) Daniel                      (b) Isaiah                      (c) Elijah                      (d) Nathan
10. Which disciple helped Saul (Paul) to be baptised as recorded in Acts ch. 9?  
(a) Peter                      (b) Andrew                      (c) Ananias                      (d) John

## STUDY 11 - BAPTISM

In our last study we saw that belief and understanding of the gospel, followed by obedience to God's commands were essential to salvation. We read the words of Jesus after his resurrection,

*"He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16)*

We see at once, then, that Scriptural baptism can only take place when a man or a woman is able to understand and obey the word of God. Then it is an essential condition of our acceptance with God.

We have the example of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, who was a 'good' man by any standard: *"At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment." He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly.*" (Acts 10:1-2)

Yet God told him to send for Peter, 'He will tell you what you must do.' (Acts 10:6)

Peter came, and taught Cornelius about Jesus.

*"He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."* (Acts 10:42-43)

One thing still was necessary,

*"He commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."* (Acts 10:44-48)

From this and the other records in the Acts of the Apostles it is plain that God has laid down three essential conditions for salvation: knowledge, belief and baptism.

*"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."* (Acts 2:37-38, 41)

*"Then Philip ... told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him."* (Acts 8:35-38)

### BAPTISE

This English word has been taken directly from the Greek word 'baptizo' which means to dip, plunge, or completely immerse in liquid. It is used in Greek in the art of dyeing. In order to dye material, it has to be completely dipped into the dye, so that the

Study 11 of Part 1

material is wholly changed in colour.

### BAPTISM

The use of this word throughout the New Testament makes it clear that sprinkling or pouring water is not sufficient. Scriptural baptism requires a complete immersion in water. So we read of Philip when he baptised the Ethiopian eunuch, *"Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him."* (Acts 8:38)

We read also of *"John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water..."* (John 3:23)

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

If we read the New Testament carefully we shall find that baptism has a four-fold significance.

#### 1. Washing away, cleansing

*"Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name."* (Acts 22:16)

*"Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?...And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."* (I Corinthians 6:9 & 11)

We find the same symbol used even in the Old Testament, together with the figure of a change of colour.

*"Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! ... Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."* (Isaiah 1:16-18)

#### 2. Association with the death and resurrection of Christ

As we are completely covered by water in the act of baptism, we symbolically die, and as we rise from the water, we symbolically rise to a newness of life. In this we associate ourselves with the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The apostle Paul writes of this:

*"Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection."* (Romans 6:3-5)

In baptism we undergo a figurative resurrection to newness of life, a change of outlook which is an essential part of our obedience to God. Jesus said, *"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."* (John 3:5)

Paul also wrote to the believers at Colosse of baptism,



"Having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins." (Colossians 2:12-13)

### 3. We are united by baptism into Christ

We are united by Baptism into Christ and so related to Christ and to the promises which God made through him,

"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink." (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

"Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham." ... The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ. ... through faith in Christ Jesus. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." □□ (Galatians 3:7, 16, 26-29)

Paul writes again of the change, which takes place at baptism,

*"Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household."* (Ephesians 2:12-13, 19)

4. A change of masters - a call to separation God is not pleased with the idolatry of the world. He calls upon all true believers to come out from among them, to be separate, and to have nothing to do with their evil ways:

*"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.' "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."* (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

*"Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of*

*God lives forever."* (1 John 2:15-17)

Men and women naturally are the servants of sin. When we are baptised we change our service:

*"For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin." "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires." Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey--whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness."* (Romans 6:6-7, 11-12, 16-18)

In baptism we begin a new life of obedience to God which relates us to the promised gift of God.

*"But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 6:22-23)

We reject utterly man's way, the way of the world. In baptism we turn unto God's way, obeying the gospel - 'the power of God to salvation.'

## THE EXAMPLE OF NOAH

This is what Noah did. The world of his day was filled with violence and wickedness.

Noah built an ark, and when the water of the flood destroyed the rest of the world, Noah and his family entered the ark and were saved.

*'In the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us -- baptism the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.'* (1 Peter 3:20-21)

The judgement of the wicked when Christ returns will be sudden and final as it was in the days of Noah. As Noah in the ark was saved, so we, if we are 'in Christ' shall be saved. We have seen that the way to be in Christ is through knowledge, belief, baptism and continued obedience.

## HOW IMPORTANT IS BAPTISM?

Many feel that provided that they change their way of life for the better there is no need to submit to this act. How wrong they are, how ineffective all their efforts to do right. Consider the case of Naaman the Syrian. (2 Kings 5) Elisha the prophet, a man of God, told him to wash in the river Jordan to cure his leprosy.

*'Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and*

*your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean."*

At first Naaman became furious because Elisha did not come to him personally, and he refused to go. But when his servant persuaded him to obey the specific detail given by God, he was cured at once.

*'So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.'*

If we obey the word of God as closely as we can, we too can be washed and start a new life. But we may wonder about later mistakes and sins, those committed after baptism. As we have seen earlier, in baptism we are associated with the death of Jesus Christ and this event was a once-and-for-all-sacrifice for sin, and those things which we do wrong in our new life in Christ are forgiven by prayer through our new-found Saviour. When we repent and ask for God's forgiveness, all our sins and errors are blotted out from the record and therefore we can go forward daily, confident that if we try to do right, God has promised to mercifully forgive us.

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9)

God has offered us this wonderful opportunity through His Word. Do you yet feel the need to start your life again?

You are no doubt aware of mistakes you have made of which God is not pleased. Do you desire to erase some of the dark patches of your previous life?

Here is a unique opportunity to start again. This time it is not a life that leads to the grave but starts you on the road which leads to immortality and the glorious kingdom of God. God's way is the only way by which you can be reconciled to your Maker.

This is the importance of baptism. It is an essential act of obedience, an essential part of God's way of salvation.

## SUMMARY

1. Baptism should only follow a full understanding and belief of the Gospel.
2. Baptism requires a complete immersion in water.
3. In the act of baptism -
  - (a) our sins are symbolically washed away
  - (b) we are associated with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ
  - (c) we are united in Christ, and so related to God's promises through Christ
  - (d) we change masters, serving God instead of serving sin, and separate ourselves from the world.
4. As Noah was saved by entering the ark, we must enter Christ through baptism in order to be saved from the coming judgements.
5. Baptism is essential for salvation.

## RELEVANT PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING:

Genesis 6, 7 and 8; Mark 16; Acts 8; Acts 22; Romans 6

**STUDY 11 QUESTIONS**

*Underline the correct answer to each question and send (address above) the loose copy to us or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to us. Please make sure you keep a copy of the questions and your answers for reference.*

1. The word 'baptise' means:  
(a) Sprinkling      (b) Pouring      (c) Immersing      (d) Soaking
2. Who baptised the Ethiopian eunuch?  
(a) Stephen      (b) Paul      (c) Philip      (d) Barnabas
3. Which verses in the Bible tell us of the instructions to the disciples regarding the preaching of the Gospel?  
(a) Mark 15:15 – 16      (b) Mark 16:15 – 16  
(c) Mark 5:15 – 16      (d) Mark 6:15 – 16
4. Which three of the following were baptised?  
(a) Pilate      (b) Paul      (c) Prisonkeeper at Philippi (d) Lydia
5. When can true Baptism take place?  
(a) At birth      (b) At death      (c) On leaving school  
(c) On gaining a full understanding & belief of God's plan of salvation.
6. What does the act of Baptism represent?  
(a) The gift of God      (b) The literal death of the person  
(c) Noah's Ark      (d) The death & resurrection of Jesus
7. Which chapter in the Bible explains the meaning of Baptism?  
(a) Romans 6      (b) Ruth 4      (c) Revelation 6 (d) Colossians 4
8. Which event is used by Peter to illustrate a parallel with the act of baptism?  
(a) The passing through the Red Sea at the Exodus  
(b) The crossing of the River Jordan into the Promised Land  
(c) The provision of water in the desert  
(d) The provision of an Ark by Noah at the time of the flood
9. What act of obedience does God require of you so that you may gain a place in His coming Kingdom?  
(a) Love      (b) Faith      (c) Belief & Baptism      (d) Honesty
10. Do you wish to learn more of God's message so that you will have the understanding to be baptised?  
(a) Yes      (b) No      (c) Not certain      (d) Might do

## STUDY 12 - THE KINGDOM OF GOD

When Christ returns - and an earlier study has shown this will be soon - His first work will be to raise the dead. *"Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt."* (Daniel 12:2)

*"According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first."* (1 Thess. 4:15-16)

The judgement will follow, and the reward of everlasting life will be given to the righteous who will then help with the government of the kingdom of God.

The Bible promises that the reign of Christ will see the end of the evils, which at present corrupt the world.

### THE KINGDOM OF GOD - GOD'S PROMISE IN THE BIBLE OF PEACE AND SECURITY

DANIEL, said, Daniel 2v44, *"In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a KINGDOM THAT WILL NEVER BE DESTROYED.. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever."*

JESUS said, Matthew 21v42-44, *"The STONE the builders rejected has become the CAPSTONE.... but he on whom it falls WILL BE CRUSHED."*

PETER said, Acts 4v11, *"THE STONE you builders rejected, which has become the CAPSTONE."*

THE ANGELS said at the ascension of Jesus,  
Acts 1v11 *"This SAME JESUS, who has been taken from you into heaven, WILL COME BACK IN THE SAME WAY you have seen him go into heaven."*

JESUS said, Matthew 6v9-10 *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, YOUR KINGDOM COME, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

HABAKKUK prophesied 2v14  
*the earth will be filled with the KNOWLEDGE OF THE GLORY OF THE LORD, as the waters cover the sea."*

## THE SETTING-UP OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

AUTHORITY from God, Luke 1v33 *"HE (Jesus) WILL REIGN ... for EVER, His KINGDOM WILL NEVER END."*

KING will be JESUS CHRIST, who said John 18v37, *"..for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world.."*

KINGDOM will be  
(a) NATION OF ISRAEL - Luke 22v30 *"I confer on you (twelve disciples) a KINGDOM, and sit on thrones, judging the TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL."*

(b) DOMINION of the WORLD. *"THE ROCK became a HUGE MOUNTAIN and filled the WHOLE EARTH."* Daniel 2v35

CAPITAL city will be JERUSALEM, Psalm 122v3-5 *"JERUSALEM is built like a city ... There the THRONES for judgment stand, the THRONES of the HOUSE OF DAVID."*

RULERS will be those MEN AND WOMEN who have been obedient to GOD in their lifetime,  
Revelation 20v4 *"I saw THRONES on which were SEATED THOSE who had been given authority to judge....They CAME TO LIFE and reigned with CHRIST a THOUSAND YEARS."*

SUBJECTS will be those PEOPLE who remain alive after the judgements of GOD have finished. Daniel 7v14 *"ALL PEOPLES, NATIONS AND MEN of EVERY LANGUAGE WORSHIPPED HIM."*

LAWS will be the Laws of God,  
Isaiah 2v3 *"The LAW will go out from Zion, the WORD OF THE LORD from Jerusalem."* (Not in heaven)

ENVIRONMENT will be such that PEACE, HAPPINESS, PLENTY, SECURITY, LONG LIFE and GOOD HEALTH will be experienced by ALL.  
Read Isaiah 65v17-25 for a word picture of this time God has promised.

LANGUAGE will be ONE for all.  
Zephaniah 3v9 *"Then will I PURIFY THE LIPS of the peoples, that ALL of them may CALL on the name of the LORD."*

RELIGION will be ONE.  
Revelation 14v6 *"I saw another angel had the ETERNAL GOSPEL to PROCLAIM to those who live on the EARTH - to EVERY NATION, tribe, LANGUAGE and PEOPLE."*

## CONDITIONS IN THE KINGDOM

There will be no oppression and no more war:

*"He will defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy; he will crush the oppressor."* (Psalm 72:4)

*"He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."* (Isaiah 2:4)

*The reign of the king will be righteous and just. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears;"* (Isaiah 11:3-4)

Sickness will be controlled and the curses of illness and disease will be removed:

*"Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy."* (Isaiah 35:5-6)

Many countries today suffer famine and thousands of people are dying daily from hunger. In that day there will be no famine. Springs of water in the desert will enable crops to grow where they cannot today.

*"Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling spring."* (Isaiah 35:6-7)

*"Let grain abound throughout the land; on the tops of the hills may it sway. Let its fruit flourish like Lebanon; let it thrive like the grass of the field."* (Psalm 72:16)

Finally, death itself will be destroyed: At the end of the 1,000 year reign of Christ as King

*"Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet." This is at the very end of the Millennium, not before or during the Millennium.* (1 Corinthians 15:24-26)

*"He [God] will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."* (Revelation 21:4)

It is clear why this teaching about the kingdom of God is called the Gospel - we have learnt that the word means 'Good news.'

## SALVATION

After his resurrection, Jesus sent his disciples out with these instructions,

*"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved."* (Mark 16:15-16)

It will be seen that baptism must follow a belief of the gospel. The verse continues - *"but whoever does not believe will be condemned."*

On the day of Pentecost the apostle Peter spoke about the resurrection of Jesus and the hope of his Second Coming. The people who heard the address were moved by what they heard, and asked what they should do. They were told to repent and be baptised. To repent means, to change your mind - to make a fresh start.

*"Those who accepted his message were baptized; ... They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."* (Acts 2:41-42)

Notice the same order - Understanding and belief (that is, faith), followed by obedience in baptism. Then follows a continued effort by the believer to live his life in a way that pleases God.

Then the baptised Believer, who is spoken of as 'risen with Christ', can wait confidently for the coming of the Lord.

*"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."* (Colossians 3:1-4)

## FORGIVENESS

*If, during the time of this waiting for Christ, the Believer does wrong, he knows that Jesus is a sympathetic advocate on his behalf, because he knows what temptation is like. In the Letter to the Hebrews, we are reminded that our High Priest was tempted in the same way as we are, although he was able to resist and did no sin.*

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are - yet was without sin."* (Hebrews 4:15)

The Believer can be confident that his prayers will be heard.

*"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."* (Hebrews 4:16)

## THE GIFT OF GOD

We cannot manage by our own effort. It is only by the love and the mercy of God that we can obtain salvation through Christ. So the apostle Paul wrote,

*"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith -and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God."* (Ephesians 2:8)

*".. the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 6:23)

**THE NEXT STEP**

You have now completed the twelve studies of Part 1 of this correspondence course. You have read in these studies a brief outline of what the Bible teaches about God and His purpose with the earth. You may be like some of the people of Athens, who listened to Paul and

*"When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." (Acts 17:32)*

In other words, they had been glad to listen, but were not very interested in continuing their studies.

You may be like the people of Berea that the apostle visited:

*"for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." (Acts 17:11)*

To whichever group of people you belong, the purpose of God will still be fulfilled. Peter wrote that in the last days people would scoff at the idea of the return of Christ. Peter said that they mocked at the preaching of Noah, but when the appointed day came, the rain began. In the same way, whether people take notice or not, *"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief." (2 Peter 3:9-10)*

**A SPECIAL MESSAGE FOR YOU**

The apostle concludes this letter by saying that, as you know this, *"Therefore, ... what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives." (2 Peter 3:11)*

This question must be left to each individual student to answer. We trust that you will, *"...make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him." (2 Peter 3:14)*

**RELEVANT PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING:**

Isaiah 65:17-25; Isaiah 66:1-2; Romans 13; Ephesians 2; Ephesians 5; Colossians 3; 2 Peter 3

**STUDY 12 QUESTIONS**

*Underline the correct answer to each question and send (address above) the loose copy to us or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to us. Please make sure you keep a copy of the questions and your answers for reference.*

- What will be the first work of Jesus when he returns to the earth?  
(a) To tell everybody he has come (b) To raise the dead  
(c) To give happiness to all (d) To destroy the wicked
- Which of the following conditions will exist in the Kingdom of God?  
(a) No more war (b) No more disease  
(c) No more famine or drought (d) No more death
- On which feast day did the Apostle Peter tell the people about the second coming of Jesus as recorded in Acts 2?  
(a) Passover (b) Pentecost (c) Purim (d) Tabernacles
- How should a baptised believer live his life?  
(a) In a Monastery (b) In isolation  
(c) In a way that pleases God (d) In an important job
- How can a believer seek forgiveness?  
(a) By sacrifices (b) By tithes (c) By offerings (d) By prayer
- What is the gift of God referred to in Romans 6?  
(a) Eternal life through Jesus (b) The creation  
(c) The Bible (d) The seasons
- What did the people at Athens do when they heard Paul preach?  
(a) Stoned Paul (b) Said, "We want to hear you again on this subject."  
(c) Praised Paul (d) Honoured Paul
- What did the people at Berea do when they heard Paul preach?  
(a) Sang praise (b) Searched the scriptures daily  
(c) Preached (d) Sold all their belongings
- Which of the following are human beings unable to prevent happening?  
(a) Pollution (b) The establishment of the Kingdom of God  
(c) Hatred (d) The return of Jesus
- Which apostle of Jesus told us to try to be blameless in our life before God?  
(a) Paul (b) Philip (c) John (d) Peter

**PART 1 - REVISION QUESTIONS**

- Q.1 God - is He One or Three - please quote two verses from the Bible to prove your statement
- Q.2 Is Jesus part of a trinity or the Son of God - please quote a verse
- Q.3 What does Holy Spirit mean?
- Q.4 Do we have the gifts of the Holy Spirit when we are baptised?
- Q.5 Tell me about Nebuchadnezzar's dream - and its meaning
- Q.6 Who is the 'rock' referred to in the dream?
- Q.7 Where do we go when we die
- Q.8 Explain what 'soul' is
- Q.9 Do we sin?
- Q.10 Why was Jesus born?
- Q.11 Why did God resurrect Jesus
- Q.12 Do we know exactly when Jesus will return?
- Q.13 What are some of the signs that Jesus' return will be soon?
- Q.14 What was the promise in Eden?
- Q.15 What was the promise to Abraham?
- Q.16 What was the promise to David?
- Q.17 Who will be raised at the resurrection
- Q.18 Describe the meaning of 'hell' in the Bible.
- Q.19 Where do we all go when we die?
- Q.20 What do we understand by '*The Gospel*'
- Q.21 Explain what Baptism is
- Q.22 Where will the Kingdom of God be established?
- Q.23 Who will be in the Kingdom of God?
- Q.24 Do you want to continue with this Bible Course?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Married \_\_\_\_\_ 1st/2nd \_\_\_\_\_ Children \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Baptised before? Yes/No \_\_\_\_\_ Tutor \_\_\_\_\_

Your Church or former Church? \_\_\_\_\_

Will you now attend your former Church? \_\_\_\_\_

Please send the Part 1 Revision Answers to:

**Dawn Christadelphian, 124 Mullum Mullum Road. North Ringwood 3134.  
Australia**

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