

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE - LESSON 1 - The Bible

The Bible makes great claims. It clearly states that its author is God - the Creator of the universe. It claims to reveal God and His purpose and it speaks with authority. If this claim cannot be upheld, then the Bible is the greatest and the most cruel hoax which has ever deluded mankind. If the claims of the Bible can be supported, then we are in possession of the world's greatest treasure.

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

Let us look more closely at its claims.

Paul, writing of the Old Testament, says 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God' (11 Timothy 3 v 16). Every word of the original manuscripts was written under direct Divine guidance. The Apostle Peter stressed the same fact,

'For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke, being moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1 v 21).

These two apostles claim Divine authority for the writings of the Old Testament recorded centuries before their own days. 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 this way of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Old and New Testaments combine to present Jesus as the only Saviour of mankind.

'These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name' (John 20 v 31).

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 (11 Timothy 3 v 15-17). Finally, the Bible has been given to tell us, in broad outline, what the future holds, that we might be prepared for the coming of Christ (11 Peter 1 v 19).

THE CONTENTS OF THE BIBLE

The Bible is a collection of 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. There are 66 books altogether. 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.

All the books combine in 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 11 v 15).

THE OLD TESTAMENT

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

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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 tell how God called Abraham, made a covenant with him and with his descendants, brought them out of Egypt and gave them the land now called 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 in Hebrew (the language of the Israelites) in poetic form. They contain much important teaching 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 of God's requirements of man. The long 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 is telling the gospel (the good news) in his own way.

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

This was written by Luke and tells what happened after Jesus Christ was risen from the dead. We are told how the first churches were formed as the apostles carried the good news throughout the Roman Empire.

(c) THE LETTERS

These were written by some of the apostles to help the early believers in the small, scattered young churches.

(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 the Bible plan and when he was born the New Testament did not exist. The Scriptures which he used and studied were the Old Testament. Jesus believed these Scriptures, he based his teaching on them and accepted them as indisputable authority.

Look at these passages: John 5 v 46-47, Luke 24 v 27, Luke 24 v 44-48 Matthew 22 v 29, Mark 7 v 6-13

Jesus speaks of 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 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 by such people as Rawlinson, Layard, Smith, Woolley and Kenyon 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. 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.

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.

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 prophecy as a great proof of His infinite superiority over all other beings (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 replied, 'In Bethlehem of Judea' because hundreds of years before it had been prophesied in one of the books of the Old Testament (Micah 5 v 2).

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 30 v 10-11). If the Bible had been of mere human production, 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.

SUMMARY OF SOME OF THE REASONS FOR BELIEVING THE BIBLE TO BE 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 lessons).

CONDITIONS TO BE MET

If we are to understand the Bible, Jesus said we must become teachable as little children Matthew 11 v 25. We must want to find out for ourselves the truth and wisdom of God's Word (Proverbs 2 v 3-6). We must believe that God will reward us in our search (Hebrews 11 v 6).

We must be willing to bring our lives into harmony with God's commandments. Jesus said, 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them' (John 13 v 17) and 'Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven' (Matthew 7 v 21).

The Apostle Paul wrote,
'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling' (Philippians 2 v 12).

HOW SHALL WE STUDY THE BIBLE

As with any course of study, regular, planned reading is the most helpful. To begin, follow the suggestions for study enclosed with this lesson.

The Bible itself is its own best interpreter. Always consider passages in their context and compare scripture with scripture.

As you go through this course, you will see that every basic belief is supported by clear and positive scripture. With this foundation all apparently 'difficult' or contradictory' verses can be explained or harmonised.

A concordance, marginal references or Bible commentaries can sometimes be helpful, but it must be remembered that the compilers of these were not guided by Divine inspiration. If their conclusions contradict the teaching of scripture, they are in error (Isaiah 8 v 20).

The purpose of this course of lessons 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 FOR BIBLE READING

11 Timothy 3 11 Peter 1 Luke 24 Isaiah 8 v 20 Acts 28 v 23-31
Ephesians 4 v 21-32

CORRESPONDENCE COURSE - LESSON 1 TEST

Underline the correct answer to each question and then check your answers with those given at the end of the course.

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?
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 28 v 23-31?
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

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE LESSON 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 marvellously 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. The expanse shows his handiwork' (Psalm 19 v 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 v 9-10.

Some of these prophecies will be dealt with in future lessons. The purpose of this lesson 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 heaven and the earth' (Genesis 1 v 1).

'I have made the earth,, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded' (Isaiah 45 v 12).

God has revealed Himself as eternal. He has always been and always will exist.

'Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever you had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, you are God' (Psalm 90 v 2).

'Your throne is established from long ago. You are from everlasting' (Psalm 93 v 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 people are idols: but the Lord made the heavens' (1 Chronicles 16 v 26). God is all powerful. He knows all that is going on and is present everywhere by the power of His spirit.

'You know my sitting down and my rising up. You perceive my thoughts from afar.... And are acquainted with all my ways' (Psalm 139 v 2-3).

David in this Psalm says that our minds are too small to understand the greatness of God (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 take the wings of the dawn, and settle in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there your hand will lead me, and your right hand will hold me' (Psalm 139 v 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, 'I will in no way leave you, neither will I in any way forsake you' (Hebrews 13 v 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 up these verses - Isaiah 45 v 5; 1 Corinthians 8 v 6 and Ephesians 4 v 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 v 5).

Jesus himself emphasised the importance of this Bible doctrine when he said,

'This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ' (John 17 v 3).

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 should not perish, but have eternal life. ' (John 3 v 16).

The work of the Lord Jesus Christ forms the subject of another lesson. 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 v 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.

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 lesson. 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 lesson 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 of God, universally present.

'Where shall I go from your spirit? or where shall I flee from your presence? (Psalm 139 v 7).

'Uphold me with your free spirit' (Psalm 51 v 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 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 Revised Version used 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 that the Holy Ghost (Holy Spirit) would come upon her and Luke emphasises the meaning by repeating 'the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee'(Luke 1 v 35). Look at the verse. The angel is explaining that the birth of Jesus would be a miracle brought about by God's special 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 'the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit'. ('Holy Ghost' in the King James Version). 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 given by INSPIRATION of God (11 Timothy 3 v 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 v 20 tells us that the purpose of this was to enable the apostles to confirm the words that they spoke. 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 v 28-31 then 1 Corinthians 13 v 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 OF SOME IMPORTANT POINTS

- 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 the power of 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.

PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING

Genesis 1
1 Timothy 6

Isaiah 45

Acts 17 (Notice what those at Berea did)

Psalm 139

LESSON 2 TEST

Underline the correct answer to each question and then check your answers with those given at the end of the course.

1. How was the universe formed
(a) By chance (b) By accident (c) By the power of God (d) By evolution
2. The true God is:- (a) The God of the Bible (b) An Egyptian idol (c) We do not know (d) The image of Baal
3. Which of the following are evidence that God exists?
(a) National hymns (b) Bible prophecies (c) Traditional legends
4. In Psalm 139 v 6 the writer says:-
(a) 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me' (b) 'God sees and knows all things' (c) 'God is all powerful' (d) 'You know my downsitting and my uprising'
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 v 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
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 v 11 we read that those at Berea:-
(a) Sang praise to God
(b) Searched the scriptures daily
(c) Stirred up the people
(d) Set the city in an uproar

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE LESSON 3 - God's plan and purpose

The love of God has been stressed in the previous lesson - His love for the world in giving His only begotten 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 (Acts 2 v 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 'A false balance is an abomination to the Lord' (Proverbs 11 v 1).

Look at these verses.

'God is angry with the wicked every day' (Psalm 7 v 11).

'The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ' (11 Thessalonians 1 v 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 v 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 (Matthew 6 v 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 little stone strike the statue on the feet to bring it toppling to the ground. It was broken and the little stone 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 lessons. READ Daniel 2.

Daniel said,

'Because you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God has made known to the king what shall happen hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation of it sure.' (Daniel 2 v 45).

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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 days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever' (Daniel 2 v 44).

The little stone destroyed the image which represented human rule through the centuries and it grew into a great mountain which filled the earth. The little stone represented the Kingdom of God.

Daniel concluded the prophecy by saying, 'the dream is certain and the interpretation thereof sure'.

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 lessons -

Numbers 14 v 21 Acts 17 v 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 shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears; 4but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the humble of the earth' (Isaiah 11 v 3-4).

Then the words of Numbers 14 v 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, goodwill towards men' (Luke 2 v 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.

'And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God'.

'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away' (Revelation 21 v 3-4).

A REAL KINGDOM

Peter was the spokesman for the other disciples when he asked Jesus a question, 'Behold, we have left everything, and followed you. What then will we have?' (Matthew 19 v 27).

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

'Most assuredly I tell you that you who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on the throne of his glory, you also will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Everyone who has left houses, or brothers, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children..... will inherit eternal life. ' (Matthew 19 v 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,

'You men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven will come back in the same way as you saw him going into heaven' (Acts 1 v 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 lessons. 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 FOR BIBLE READING

Isaiah 11
Daniel 2

Isaiah 35

Matthew 19
Matthew 25

LESSON 3 TEST

Underline the correct answer to each question and then check your answers with those given at the end of the course.

1. God so loved the world that He ...
(a) Sent the seasons (b) Gave His only begotten 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 stone (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) There will be peace on earth
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 days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom ... and it shall stand
(a) for 6,000 years' (b) for a lifetime'
(c) for ever' (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
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

LESSON 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 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.

But these ideas cannot be proved from experience nor from the religious books of the world which, apart from the Bible (2 Timothy 3 v 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

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, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.'

'there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going' (Ecclesiastes 9 v 5, 10). (Sheol is the grave).

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, 'But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.' (Isaiah 66 v 2). The description 'humble' means that the man recognises that he has nothing of value while he is mortal. The word 'contrite' means dejected. 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 man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul' (Genesis 2 v 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 soul'.

THE SOUL

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 together constitute a 'living soul' or 'creature'. The word 'soul' 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

The statement in Genesis 2 v 7: "And man became a living soul", means that man became a living creature along with all the other creatures God had created. See Ecclesiastes 3 vs. 19-20:-

"For what happens to the children of man and what happens to the beasts is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and man has no advantage over the beasts, for all is vanity. All go to one place. All are from the dust, and to dust all return."

The word "soul" 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. 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 shall not surely die" - a direct contradiction of what God had said to Adam and Eve. Ecclesiastes 12 v 7 proves man's dependence upon God for his existence:

"Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." It does not prove that man goes to heaven when he dies. See John 3 v 13 and note in particular the words, "And no man has ascended up to heaven." Man dies because of sin: "...the soul that sins, it shall die." And in Romans 3 v 23 we read, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Therefore it follows that all die and become unconscious until the resurrection. 1 Corinthians chapter 15 deals with the hope of the resurrection in some detail.

MAN - A CREATURE TO GIVE GOD GLORY

Isaiah 43:6 “....bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the end of the earth; 7everyone who is called by my name, and whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed, yes, whom I have made.”

The purpose of man's creation was to give God glory, which means “honour”.

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 praise God.

Rev 4:11 “You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory, honour, and power, because you created all things, and they came into existence and were created because of your will.” (Gen 1:1; Acts 17:24; Eph 3:9; Col 1:16; Rev 5:12; 10:6)

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:

“Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: 17but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day that you eat of it you will surely die.” (Genesis 2 v 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 shall not surely die' (Genesis 3 v 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 you are dust, and to dust you shall return' (Genesis 3 v 19).

That is, when a man dies he ceases to exist and decomposes into the elements of which he was made. 'When his breath departs he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish' (Psalm 146 v 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, 'lest he ... live for ever' (Genesis 3 v 22).

SIN

Death is a punishment for sin. 'the soul who sins shall die' (Ezekiel 18 v 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.

'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3 v 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 'the flesh', or 'the carnal mind'. It can take many aspects,

'Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.' (Galatians 5 v 19-21).

These are the natural consequences of the way of life upon which Adam and Eve embarked nearly 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 Lesson 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, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts' (Isaiah 55 v 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 for ever. But two of God's many attributes are His mercy and His forgiveness.

'But with you there is forgiveness, *x4.2 that you may be feared. ' (Psalm 130 v 4).

There is a vital need for God's forgiveness, because man cannot stop sinning. 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves' (1 John 1 v 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 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen' (Hebrews 11 v 1).

Faith is not blind hope 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 chapter of the Letter to the Hebrews describes many practical examples of faith. Foremost among these is the faith shown by Abraham.

'He believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness' (Genesis 15 v 6).

His faith was then shown by his obedience to God. Read James 2 v 17-26.

Thus 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.

'The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Romans 6 v 23).

The way in which this has been made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is dealt with in a later lesson. Eternal life is to be given at a future time when there will be a resurrection of the dead.

'Many to them that sleep (that is, who are dead) in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life' (Daniel 12 v 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 shall descend from heaven...and the dead in Christ shall rise first' (1 Thessalonians 4 v 16).

Some of the signs which tell us that these momentous events are very near will be explained in Lesson 9 of this 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; this is man's only hope of obtaining immortality.

PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING

Genesis 2 and 3 Psalms 49 and 146 Ecclesiastes 9
Romans 5 and 6 1 Corinthians 15

TEST: Lesson 4.

Underline the correct answer to each question and then check your answers with those given at the end of the course.

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 complete unconsciousness?
(a) Proverbs 9v5 (b) Ezekiel 9v5
(c) Ecclesiastes 9 v 5 (d) Esther 9v5
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) part of the body that lives forever (d) an immortal being
6. Why was man created?
(a) To look after the animals (b) To cultivate 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 (c) They were stoned
8. What is sin?
(a)The carnal mind (b) Death (c) Transgression of God's Law (d) Human nature
9. Faith is ...
(a) belief of the impossible (b) knowledge of God's plan
(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

Lesson 5

The promises of God - 1

Lesson 4 outlined, from the Bible, why man dies, the nature of death and the only hope of salvation from an eternal grave. In Lesson 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:

'The Lord said unto the serpent ... I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel' (Genesis 3 v 14-15).

A full explanation of this promise is outside the scope of this lesson, 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 transgression of God's law, became the symbol for sin. Jesus used the same term for his enemies, addressing the Pharisees with the words, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers."

The bruising in the head, a fatal wound to a serpent, promises the utter destruction of sin and death. The seed of the woman is the destroyer, and in carrying out this work receives a bruise in the heel, 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, 15. in which he gained the victory over sin and death and has paved the way to everlasting life for all who believe in him.

A clue to the identity of the seed of the woman is given in the words, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

This was quoted in the message of the angel to Joseph telling him that his espoused wife Mary was to "bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet", and then follows the quotation from Isaiah 7. The Apostle Paul comments,

"When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law."

By Jesus' triumph over sin and death, the serpent (sin) was bruised in the head, i.e. utterly destroyed, 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 wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities."

The first stage of God's plan of redemption was thus completed. But Christ was only the firstfruits.

There is to be the harvest in two further stages which will accomplish the abolition of sin and death completely.

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 judgment and sin and death will be completely destroyed. "Christ must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." As unbelief brought death, so belief in the Gospel and obedience in baptism and continuance in well doing can bring everlasting life.

THE UNFOLDING PLAN OF GOD

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 lessons. In this lesson 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:

'... God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually' (Genesis 6 v 5).

Such was the state of mankind that

'... It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart' (Genesis 6 v 6).

Noah was the only man with whom God was pleased (see Genesis 6 v 9). God determined to make a fresh start with His creation and to use Noah in this purpose.

'And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth' (Genesis 6 v 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 v 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 (1 Peter 3 v 20), applies also to the far greater salvation from eternal death. Jesus Christ said:

'Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few' (Matthew 7 v 13-14 Revised Standard Version).

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:

'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee' (Genesis 12 v 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, believed and obeyed.

'By faith Abraham, when he was called ... obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went' (Hebrews 11 v 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 of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed' (Genesis 12 v 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 lesson 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.

1. Abraham's descendants to possess the land of Canaan

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 (see Genesis 15 v 18).

When Abraham reached Canaan God said to him, 'Unto thy seed will I give this land.' (Genesis 12 v 7).

The promise was repeated later, 'For all the land which thou seest, (Canaan) to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever' (Genesis 13 v 15).

Note particularly the addition of the words 'to thee' and 'for ever.' 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 of modern times and that 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 (Acts 7 v 2-5).

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

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 for ever (Matthew 8 v 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 v 2; Genesis 13 v 16; Genesis 15 v 5; Genesis 22 v 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 v 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, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all

children' (Romans 9 v 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, when Jesus returns 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, which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds, and people, and tongues ...' (Revelation 7 v 9).

Thus 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 v 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!

'And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen (nations) through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed' (Galatians 3 v 8).

JESUS CHRIST - ABRAHAM'S DESCENDANT

The central figure of the gospel and therefore of the promises to Abraham is Jesus Christ. He is preeminently the descendant of Abraham. The New Testament opens with these words, 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ ... the son of Abraham' (Matthew 1 v 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:

'Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ' (Galatians 3 v 16).

Jesus is revealed as more than just a natural son of Abraham; in the same letter it is stated that 'they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham' (Galatians 3 v 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 all the human race could truly say to his adversaries without fear of contradiction, 'Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?' (John 8 v 46 NIV).

The supreme message of the New Testament is that Jesus by his faith overcame sin and thus 'abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel' (2 Timothy 1 v 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 v 15).

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, nearly 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 (Galatians 3 v 27-29).

At that time the blessing of Abraham will come upon all nations through his descendant Jesus Christ (Galatians 3 v 14). Jesus will be king over all the earth and the Kingdom of God will be established, ushering in a time of blessing such as the world has never seen.

For this all Christians are taught to pray to God:

'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven' (Matthew 6 v 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.
10. The Kingdom of God will bring a time of blessing to the earth, which will then be filled with God's glory.

LESSON 5 TEST

Underline the correct answer to each question and then check your answers with those given at the end of the course.

1. What was the name of the man with whom God was well pleased as recorded in Genesis 6 v 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 for ever 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

Lesson 6 - The Lord Jesus Christ

This lesson 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 nearly 2,000 years ago. The name means 'Saviour' and the name was given as the angel instructed:

'You shall call his name Jesus, for it is he who shall save his people from their sins' (Matthew 1 v 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 lesson 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 lesson 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 magnifies the Lord. My spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour. He has given help to Israel, his servant, that he might remember mercy, As he spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his seed forever' (Luke 1 v 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 fulfilment of the words of the Old Testament prophets

Matthew 1 v 22

Matthew 2 v 5

Matthew 2 v 15 etc.

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 was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth' (John 1 v 14).

WHY DID JESUS COME?

A well-known verse quoted before in these lessons says,

'For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3 v 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 on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore also the holy one who is born from you will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1 v 35).

This, too, had been the subject of prophecy as Matthew records (Matthew 1 v 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 (Leviticus 1 v 3-4). Paul wrote, 'The wages of sin is death' (Romans 6 v 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 (Hebrews 10 v 3).
2. As the animals had done no wrong, they only represented the teaching, 'For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect' (Hebrews 10 v 1).
3. The sacrifice of animals could never take away sin. 'For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins' (Hebrews 10 v 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 this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God' (Hebrews 10 v 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 v 10).

Because Jesus lived a perfect life, when he died it was 'not possible' that he should remain dead (Acts 2 v 24). God raised him from the dead.

The contrast between the effect of Adam's disobedience and the effect of the obedience of Jesus is referred to many times:

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

'For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.'

'That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord' (Romans 5 v 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 shall all be made alive' (1 Corinthians 15 v 22).

FAITH NEEDED

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

'The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Romans 6 v 23).

So the salvation that God offers is conditional, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believee in him should not perish ...' (John 3 v 16).

This is why the Son of God was called Jesus:

'He shall save his people from their sins' (Matthew 1 v 21).

THE WORK OF JESUS NOW

After his resurrection Jesus ascended to heaven. At his ascension, two angels declared he would return again:

'This Jesus, who was received up from you into the sky will come back in the same way as you saw him going into the sky' (Acts 1 v 11).

Peter said that Jesus would remain in heaven until the 'restoration of all things' (Acts 3 v 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:

'There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus' (1 Timothy 2 v 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' (Hebrews 2 v 17) He can understand how we feel and can be sympathetic to our needs:

'For we don't have a high priest who can't be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one who has been in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace for help in time of need.' (Hebrews 4 v 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.

LESSON 6 TEST

Underline the correct answer to each question and then check your answers with those given at the end of the course.

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. In Micah 5: 2 the birthplace of Jesus is given as ...
(a) Nazareth (b) Bethlehem Ephratah
(c) Bethlehem Judah (d) Galilee
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 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

Lesson 7

God promised Abraham that in him and his seed (descendant) all families of the earth would be blessed. Lesson 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 (Galatians 3 v 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 recognize 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 to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne' (Psalm 132 v 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 fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and will establish the throne of his kingdom forever'. 'And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever' 2 Samuel 7 v 12-13 & 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 for ever. Although Solomon was noted for his riches and for his wisdom, he certainly did not reign for ever. In verse 14 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 shall be my son' (2 Samuel 7 v 14).
2. The king would rule on David's throne (2 Samuel 7 v 12).
3. God declares that He will bring it to pass (2 Samuel 7 v 12).

THE TEACHING OF THE PROPHETS

The same points are emphasized 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 child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for

evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this' (Isaiah 9 v 6-7 ESV).

The same points are stressed:

1. 'Of his government ... there shall be no end.'
2. 'Upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom.'
3. 'The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do 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 shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end' (Luke 1 v 32-33).

Notice the same three points again -

1. The kingdom would be established for ever.
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 realized 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, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.' (Luke 1 v 54-55).

THE KINGDOM

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 shall sit in the throne of his glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel' (Matthew 19 v 28).

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

'As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord' (Numbers 14 v 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 may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne' (Acts 2 v 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. 'This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses' (Acts 2 v 32).

Peter said that David understood that the time would come when the Almighty would say to the Lord Jesus Christ, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.' The apostle then said, 'Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified' (Acts 2 v 34-36 ESV).

GOD'S GUARANTEE

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

'because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.' (Acts 17 v 31).

SUMMARY

1. In the Bible God has revealed His purpose with the earth.
2. Abraham and David were told by God that the one through whom this purpose would be fulfilled would be their descendant.
3. Jesus was the one promised.
4. He will rule the world in righteousness when the kingdom of God is established.
5. This hope, based on the foundation of Old Testament teaching, was contained clearly in the message of Jesus and the apostles.

PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING

Isaiah 11
Isaiah 35

Acts 2
Psalm 132

Romans 4
Luke 19

LESSON 7 TEST

Underline the correct answer to each question and then check your answers with those given at the end of the course.

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

Lesson 8

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' (Acts 1 v 22).

The apostles were imprisoned because 'they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead' (Acts 4 v 2).

Paul was put on trial over the question of, 'the hope and resurrection of the dead' (Acts 23 v 6; Acts 24 v 21).

The letters of the New Testament are full of teaching about the resurrection of Jesus and its importance for all of us. This was emphasized by the apostle Paul when he said: 'And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain ... you are still in your sins' (1 Corinthians 15 v 14 & 17).

WHY DID GOD RAISE JESUS?

Earlier lessons have shown the work of Jesus as a sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 9 v 26). Lesson 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. Lesson 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, 'made of a woman, made under the law,' (Galatians 4 v 4) came under the same condemnation of death that we have inherited from Adam. He personally was free from sin, therefore death could not hold him, 'death no longer has dominion over him' (Romans 6 v 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, 'God raised him to life again, setting him free from the pangs of death, because it could not be that death should keep him in its grip' (Acts 2 v 24 NEB).

Lesson 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 only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life' (John 3 v 16).

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, 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad' (John 8 v 56).

Peter quoted the words of David, King of Israel:

'I foresaw the Lord always before my face... Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope.'

'He (David) seeing this before, spoke of the resurrection of Christ' (Acts 2 v 25-26 & 31 compare Psalm 16 v 8-11).

David also said, 'As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness; when awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness' (Psalm 17 v 15).

THE RESURRECTION - A FULFILMENT OF GOD'S PROMISES

As Lesson 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, 'For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God' (Job 19 v 25-26).

Isaiah said, 'Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, you that dwell in dust ... and the earth shall cast out the dead' (Isaiah 26 v 19).

Daniel was told that 'Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake' and that he personally would rest in the sleep of death and 'And you shall rest and shall stand in your allotted place at the end of the days' (Daniel 12 v 2 & 13).

The apostle Paul confirmed that this was the hope of those before Jesus: 'I continue unto this day ... saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people' (Acts 26 v 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 Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel' (2 Timothy 1 v 10).

IS RESURRECTION THE ONLY HOPE OF IMMORTALITY?

The life and immortality that Jesus has brought to light is the hope of a raising up from the dead, to stand on the earth.

Peter declared plainly that, 'David is not ascended into the heavens' (Acts 2 v 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. (Acts 2 30).

As Paul explained in his speech in Athens, referred to in Lesson 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 (Acts 17 v 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 said to him, I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day. Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live' (John 11 v 23-25).

WILL ALL BE RAISED?

The scriptures tell us that, 'The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Romans 6 v 23).

Those who do not seek God or who have no desire to serve Him, or understand His purpose through Jesus Christ, will not obtain the gift of God. The Bible plainly teaches that,

'One who wanders from the way of good sense will rest in the assembly of the dead' (Proverbs 21 v 16).

'A man who has riches without understanding, Is like the animals that perish' (Psalm 49 v 20).

'They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise' (Isaiah 26 v 14).

PROPER UNDERSTANDING NECESSARY

In contrast to those statements, Jesus gives us hope by saying,

'This is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and him whom you sent, Jesus Christ' (John 17 v 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 Lesson 11. Paul points out the importance of baptism to the true believer who wants to obtain resurrection:

'don't you know that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism to death, that just like Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will also be part of his resurrection' (Romans 6 v 3-5).

CHRIST THE FIRST TO RISE - OTHERS TO FOLLOW

Jesus was the first to rise from the dead to immortality. We read again, 'Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept' (asleep in the grave [1 Corinthians 15 v 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 every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming' (1 Corinthians 15 v 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 is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom' (2 Timothy 4 v 1).

Paul also wrote:

'But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first' (1 Thessalonians 4 v 13-16 ESV).

RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT

When Daniel was told that, 'many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake', he was also told that, 'some' would 'awake' to 'everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt' (Daniel 12 v 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: 'Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation' (John 5 v 28-29).

All responsible people (those with knowledge) 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. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live' (John 11 v 25).

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.

PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING

Psalms 49

Mark 16

1 Corinthians 15

Isaiah 26

Acts 26

John 11

LESSON 8 TEST

Underline the correct answer to each question and then check your answers with those given at the end of the course.

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 v 16)

6. Will everyone be raised from the dead?
(a) No (b) Yes (c) Probably (d) I do not know

7. When will the 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) Judgment
(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

LESSON 9 – The Return of Jesus

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, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven' (Acts 1v11).

The Purpose of Christ's Return

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

'Let your Kingdom come. Let your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth' (Matthew 6 v 10).

At this time the words of David will be fulfilled:

'The The righteous shall inherit the land, and live in it forever' (Psalm 37 v 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. For this reason the apostle Paul, in the first century A.D., encouraged Titus to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and rather to 'Live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' (Titus 2v12-13)

When Will Jesus Return?

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

'because he (God) has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained; of which he has given assurance to all men, in that he has raised him from the dead.' (Acts 17 v 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 the exact time of his return. In Mark chapter 13 Christ told his hearers of his return and gave them some indications as to the events that must precede it, after which he said:

'Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory' (Mark 13 v 26).
'But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father' (Mark 13 v 32).

Jesus to Return Unexpectedly like a Thief

Most people today find the idea of Christ's returning to the earth amusing, not to be considered seriously in view of the apparent permanence of our existence. The apostle Peter warned that men would think like this:

'There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation' (2 Peter 3 v 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 as a thief in the night' (2 Peter 3 v 10).

Please read the first ten verses of 2 Peter chapter 3 to follow the full argument put forward by the apostle.

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. 'Therefore also be ready, for in an hour that you don't expect, the Son of Man will come' (Matthew 24 v 44).

This teaches us that faith is required by believers in Christ's return, 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 Indication When Jesus Will Return?

The disciples were interested in this question and asked Christ privately whilst they sat on the Mount of Olives, 'Tell us, when will these things be? What is the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age' (Matthew 24 v 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 things were in Noah's days, so will they be when the Son of Man comes. In the days before the flood they ate and drank and married, until the day that Noah went into the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away. That is how it will be when the Son of Man comes' (Matthew 24 v 37-39 NEB).

For the background to the times of Noah please 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' (Genesis 6 v 11).

The press, radio and television daily reflect the similarity between the violent, Godless world of Noah 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 know this, that in the last days, grievous times will come. 2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 without natural affection, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; ' (2 Timothy 3 v 1-4 WEB).

A careful consideration of each descriptive word of the 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, it is recorded in Matthew 24v32-33. 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 putting forth leaves'.

This refers to the regathering of the Jews from all parts of the earth where they were scattered by God (Luke 21 v 24, Deuteronomy 28 v 25, 32-34, 37, 64-66). Many people today are witnessing the Jewish people in Israel 'putting forth leaves' as they continue to build their country since its establishment as a state in 1948.

The same event was prophesied by Ezekiel 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:

'These bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost' (Ezekiel 37v11).

Then the bones came together, are covered with flesh; breath is put into Israel and they live: 'And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land.' ..'I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they he gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land' (Ezekiel 37v14 & 21).

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?

'I will make a covenant of peace with them ... and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore' (Ezekiel 37 v 26).

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, and we are warned, 'When ye shall see all these things, know that it (margin 'he') is near, even at the doors' (Matthew 24 v 33).

Jesus made very clear predictions both as to the immediate future of his nation, and as 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:

'As for these things which you see, the days will come, in which there will not be left here one stone on another that will not be thrown down', 'And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations and Jerusalem shall be trodden of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled' (Luke 21 vs. 6 and 24).

This prophecy received its detailed fulfilment 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 Judaea. The name of Jerusalem was changed to Aelia Capitolina. There followed centuries of downtreading for the land and its people.

The 'Diaspora', or dispersion, became fact. The Jewish prisoners captured in innumerable wars were scattered about the world as slaves. Those fortunate enough to escape this fate became merchants and traders. The Jew was everywhere 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, thus 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 that miracle had been promised by God 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 - the treading down of Jerusalem ended as Jesus had prophesied.

Nothing could be clearer than the prophecy spoken through Jeremiah:

'Behold, I will gather them out of all the countries, where I have driven them in my anger, and in my wrath, and in great indignation; and I will bring them again to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely' (Jeremiah 32:37)

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 granted His people a remarkable victory. So what the prophets had declared would happen came to pass. Ezekiel chapters 36 and 37, contain a most remarkable prophecy that establishes beyond all doubt the overriding control of God in the affairs of nations. The prophet was given a vision in which God foretold the re-gathering of the nation back to their land, there to become a great army:

'For I will take you from among the heathen (nations), and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land...A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you...and ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers' (Ezek. 36:24,26,28).

Then, in the vision of the valley full of dry bones that became a valley filled with a mighty army, God gave further reassurance: 21, 'They stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army...I shall place you in your own land...I will take the children of Israel...and bring them into their own land' (Eze. 37:10, 14,21).

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 this dream. The interpretation by Daniel showed the course of world history. After the break-up of the Roman Empire we find ourselves today represented by the feet of the image, with nations some strong (iron) and some weak (clay) not able to join firmly together. Daniel continued: 'In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom' (Daniel 2 v 44).

This shows that there will be no further world empire containing Israel, until the final events will complete the fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy. Paul, the apostle, confident in the absolute fulfilment of the prophecy up to his time, was able to encourage the believers at Colosse because he knew of the certainty of Christ's return:

'When Christ, our life, is revealed, then you will also be revealed with him in glory' (Colossians 3 v 4).

4. The Sign of General World Unrest

Christ also told the disciples of the time just before his return when there would be general unrest and fear among people because of the trouble facing all nations:

'There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken' (Luke 21 v 25-26).

Christ is speaking in figurative language of ruling powers, with the sea and waves representing people (e.g. Isaiah 57 v 20). This sign gives a picture of the peoples of 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 of 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: 'then shall they see the Son of man coming' (Luke 21 v 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 Coming World Conflict

'And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming with power and great glory' (Luke 21:25-27).

The Jews' return to their own land and the restoration of Israel as a home for the Jewish people in 1948 is a fulfilment of prophecy already remarked upon earlier in this lesson. In the decades that have followed there have indeed been signs in 'the heavens' and among those symbols of the ruling powers of the nations, the sun, moon and stars. There is perplexity as to how the problems of the world can be solved by human government. Wars are continuous - they never cease and there seems no way out. This, said Jesus, would be another sign of his impending return.

The prophets of Israel have long spoken of the circumstances affecting Israel and ALL nations, just prior to the coming of Christ, in times known as 'the last days' or 'the latter days'. Consider the following example:

'Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophecy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD... (Ezekiel 38:2,3)'

Careful reading: of this chapter leaves us in no doubt that this group of nations - including Persia (Iran), Ethiopia and Libya (Ezekiel 38 v 5)- are to be compelled by God to attack the land of Israel.

For example in verse 8 we read this:

'in the LATTER YEARS thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations...' (Ezekiel 38:8).

This federation of nations is centred upon a power which is situated to the north of the Holy Land and it is interesting to note that Israel, both in the past and at the present time, has needed to look carefully to the security of her NORTHERN borders. The Syrians, of course, are a current threat in that direction, just as the Assyrians were some 2,500 years ago.

At that time God, speaking through the prophet Ezekiel concerning this 'northern' aggressor, said:

'And thou shalt come from thy place out of the NORTH parts, thou and many people with thee...And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be IN THE LATTER DAYS' (Ezekiel 38: 15, 16).

The identity of this federation to be gathered against Israel in the very near future is not difficult to assess. Gog, Magog, Meshech and Tubal are acknowledged by students of ancient history to be descendants of one of the sons of Noah, namely Japheth.

Persia (Iran), Ethiopia and Libya, for the most part antagonistic to Israel, are well known to us today, and the prophet Ezekiel, speaking with the authority of the Most High God, tells us they will be joined with the descendants of Japheth, the 'LATTER DAY' occupiers of the 'north parts'.

Directly to the north of Israel is Syria, one of Israel's many Arab enemies. Further north through Armenia we come to the troubled, now largely independent, states of the former USSR. We note with interest the high Islamic following that there is among this group of nations.

Now it would be foolish for students of prophecy to dogmatize on the outcome of Bible prophecy. God alone has the right to determine the outcome of His plan for the world, a plan, remember, which will be consummated in the establishing of God's Kingdom upon earth - the Millennium, or thousand year reign of Christ upon the earth. If we are true students of God's Word, then we are also watchmen. Christ's warning to his followers was that they should watch! - 'Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come' (Matthew 24:42).

As we survey the world scene, moving rapidly towards the end of the 20th century, what do we see? We see Israel, returned to their land in fulfillment of such prophecies as Ezekiel chapter 37. We see hostility towards Israel on every border, except, perhaps, towards the south where the peace treaty with Egypt holds good at the time of writing. The Arab (Islamic) nations are truly confederate against God's people, and have tried to push them into the sea:

'They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance' (Psalm 83:4).

A more detailed study of Psalm 83 will repay well the earnest student of Biblical prophecy, particularly the modern identity of the nations mentioned in this intriguing Psalm. They are the old enemies of Israel's early history and they find a territorial identity with the current enemies of God's people. The northern aggressor of Ezekiel chapter 38, in association with the clearly identified nations who currently have no time for 'the land brought back from the sword' are those whom GOD will bring in a final conflict against Jerusalem:

'For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle' (Zechariah 24:2).

'For behold in those days and at that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat...' (Joel 3: 1,2).

We are left in no doubt that this is the day when God will intervene in man's affairs once again and will cause HIS will to be done on earth:

'Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near...' (Joel 3: 14).

'The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more' (Joel 3:16, 17)

These, then, are the times which will see the return of Christ, the future ruler of the earth. These prophecies, and particularly those of Joel and Zechariah, together with the great prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, present to us GOD'S PLAN. As watchmen, we seek to analyse every step forward in this plan. For every step FORWARD brings even closer that day of final conflict, known in the Bible as ARMAGEDDON, when, in the words of Zechariah:

'...the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one'.
(Zechariah 14:9).

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 COME TO PASS, then look UP, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh' (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 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 'discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not' (Malachi 3:18).

Summary

The return of Jesus Christ is a fact.

This return was promised by the angels at his ascension.

Jesus is to return to establish God's kingdom on earth.

Only God knows the exact day appointed for Christ's return.

Clear signs indicate Christ's return is imminent.

The days of Noah are comparable to our own.

The restoration of the Jews in Israel is a living sign.

We live in the final phase of Nebuchadnezzar's vision.

World unrest precedes Christ's return.

The hostility of Israel's neighbours.

PASSAGES FOR READING

Ezekiel 37 Acts 3 1Thessalonians Ezekiel 38 Luke 21 2Thessalonians 1 Acts 1:1-12

To get to know God's word properly we need to read the Bible for ourselves. To help you read the Bible in a constructive way, the Bible Reading Tables are available.

LESSON 9 TEST

Underline the correct answer to each question and then check your answers with those given at the end of the course.

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 v 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 'the sea and the waves roaring' in Luke 21 v 25?

- (a) A holy people (b) The wicked (c) The rulers (d) The missionaries

8. Which nation is situated directly north of Israel?

- (a) America (b) Syria (c) Egypt (d) Russia

9. Who is 'Michael' referred to in Daniel 12 v 1?

- (a) Noah (b) Ezekiel (c) Daniel (d) Jesus

10. Which of the following signs that herald Jesus' return are to be seen today?

- (a) The restoration of the Jews in Israel (b) World unrest
(c) The attitude of Israel's neighbours (d) A time of violence
(e) Some nations strong and some nations weak

LESSON 10 - The Gospel

In this lesson we shall bring together many of the facts which we have learnt in earlier lessons.

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 his coming kingdom.

'And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom.' (Matthew 9 v 35)

'Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God.' (Mark 1 v 14)

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor' (Luke 4 v 18)

'*God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.' (John 3 v 16)

'You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world— to bear witness to the truth.' (John 18 v 37)

THE DISCIPLES TAUGHT THE GOSPEL

When Jesus had told the good news to the disciples, he sent them out to teach others.

'And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.' (Luke 9 v 2)

After his death and resurrection, Jesus told the disciples to go on with the same work, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' (Mark 16 v 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, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Romans 1 v 16)

We need to understand clearly the good news that Jesus and the apostles taught. Paul wrote again,

'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.' (Galatians 1 v 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, 'Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people ... we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel.' (Luke 24 v 19 & 21)

Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, 'they asked him, saying, Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' (Acts 1 v 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 times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.' (Acts 1 v 7)

GOD'S PROMISES

As the disciples watched Jesus ascending, two angels stood by them and told them,

'Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.' (Acts 1 v 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 GOSPEL 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 her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel. . ' (Genesis 3 v 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. Look up Hebrews 2 v 14-15.

THE GOSPEL TO ABRAHAM

We have studied God's promises to Abraham. The apostle Paul wrote,

'The scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all nations be blessed.' (Galatians 3 v 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. (Matthew 8 v 11)

THE GOSPEL TO DAVID

The good news of God's kingdom was told to David through the prophet Nathan - read 2 Samuel 7 v 12-16.

"I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. "

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. God, through the prophet Ezekiel, spoke to Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, 'I will overturn, overturn, overturn it (the Kingdom): and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.' (Ezekiel 21 v 27)

When Jesus came, the angel renewed the promise to Mary, 'He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest:

and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' (Luke 1 v 32-33)

THE GOSPEL 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 recognized 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 recognizes 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,

'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.' (Mark 1 v 15)

'Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus.' (Acts 3 v 19-20)

'The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed.' (Acts 17 v 30-31)

We need to follow Jesus - to change our hearts and minds - to be reborn through baptism,

and our next lesson will teach us what that means. This, too, is necessary,

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ ... And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.' (Galatians 3 v 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, 'Thy Kingdom come'.

"Our Father in heaven, May your name be kept holy. May your kingdom come. May your will be done on Earth, as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. Bring us not into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one' (Luke 11 v 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 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.

PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING

2 Samuel 7
Psalm 1

Psalm 96

Isaiah 55

Acts 9

LESSON 10 TEST

Underline the correct answer to each question and then check your answers with those given at the end of the course.

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) Matthew 1. 14 (e) Matthew 3. 16 (i) Matthew 4. 18
(b) Mark 1. 14. (f) Mark 3. 16 (j) Mark 4. 18
(c) Luke 1. 14. (g) Luke 3. 16 (k) Luke 4. 18
(d) John 1. 14 (h) John 3. 16 (l) John 4. 18
(m) Matthew 9. 35 (n) Mark 9. 35 (o) Luke 9. 35
(p) 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 our friends (b) Share all our 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) Gal 8. 3 (b) Gal 3. 8 (c) Rom 8. 3 (d) Rom 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 baptized as recorded in Acts chapter 9?
(a) Peter (b) Andrew (c) Ananias (d) John

LESSON 11 - Baptism

In our last lesson 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, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.' (Mark 16 v 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 (see Acts 10 v 2), yet God told him to send for Peter, 'This one will tell you what it is necessary for you to do.' (Acts 10 v 6) Peter came, and taught Cornelius about Jesus.

“He charged us to preach to the people and to testify that this is he who is appointed by God as the Judge of the living and the dead. 43All the prophets testify about him, that through his name everyone who believes in him will receive remission of sins.”

One thing still was necessary,

“He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” (Acts 10 v 42,43,48)

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. (Read Acts 2 v 37-38, 41; Acts 8:35-38; Acts 16 v 25-33)

BAPTIZE

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 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, 'They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptised him.' (Acts 8 v 38)

We read also of John the Baptist, that he baptised in Aenon near to Salim 'because there was much water there.' (John 3 v 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**

'Arise, be baptised, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' (Acts 22 v 16)
Or don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? -Such were some of you, but you were washed. But you were sanctified. But you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus' (I Corinthians 6 v 9-11)

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

'Wash yourselves, make yourself clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; Cease to do evil. Learn to do well.....Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' (Isaiah 1 v 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 we who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism to death, that just like Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we will also be part of his resurrection.' (Romans 6 v 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, 'unless one is born of water and spirit, he can't enter into the Kingdom of God.' (John 3 v 5)

Paul also wrote to the believers at Colosse of baptism, 'When you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. Even when you were dead because of your offences and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with him when he forgave us all of our offences.' (Colossians 2 v 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,

'For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all given to drink into one Spirit.' (1 Corinthians 12 v 12-13)

'therefore that those who are of faith, the same are children of Abraham. ... Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He doesn't say, "To seeds," as of many, but as of one, "To your seed," which is Christ ... For you are all children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to promise..' (Galatians 3 v 7, 16, 26-29)

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

'that you were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off are made near in the blood of Christ ... So then you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.' (Ephesians 2 v 12-13, 19)

4. A change of masters - a call to separation Read 2 Corinthians 6 v 14-18 | John 2 v 15-17
God is not pleased with the idolatry of the world. Men and women naturally are the servants of sin. When we are baptized we change our service:

'... that the body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be in bondage to sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. ... Thus also consider yourselves also to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Therefore don't let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts....Don't you know that to whom you present yourselves as servants to obedience, his servants you are whom you obey; whether of sin to death, or of obedience to

righteousness? But thanks be to God, that, whereas you were bondservants of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto you were delivered. Being made free from sin, you became bondservants of righteousness..' (Romans 6 v 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, being made free from sin, and having become servants of God, you have your fruit of sanctification, and the result of eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.' (Romans 6 v 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 unto 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 rest of the world were destroyed by the water of the flood, Noah and his family entered the ark and were saved.

'God waited patiently in the days of Noah, while the ark was being built. In it, few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. This is a symbol of baptism, which now saves you - not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, .' (1 Peter 3 v 20-21)

The judgment 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 v 1-27) Elisha the prophet, a man of God, told him to wash in the river Jordan to cure his leprosy. At first he refused, but when his servant persuaded him to obey the specific detail given by God, he was cured at once.

If we obey the word of God as closely as we can, we too can be cured and start afresh. But we may wonder about subsequent mistakes and sins, that is 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.

God has offered us this wonderful opportunity through His Word. Do you yet feel the need to start your life again? With your experience of the mistakes you have made and the desire to erase some of the dark patches of your previous life, here is a unique opportunity to start again, not this time on a life that leads to the grave but on the road 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 judgments.
5. Baptism is important for salvation.

PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING

Genesis 6, 7 and 8

Mark 16

Acts 8

Acts 22

Romans 6

LESSON 11 TEST

Underline the correct answer to each question and then check your answers with those given at the end of the course.

1. The word 'baptize' means:
(a) Sprinkling (b) Pouring (c) Immersing (d) Soaking
2. Who baptized 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 v 15 - 16 (b) Mark 16 v 15 - 16
(c) Mark 5 v 15 - 16 (d) Mark 6 v 15 - 16
4. Which three of the following were baptized?
(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
(d) 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 baptized?
(a) Yes (b) No (c) Not certain (d) Might do

LESSON 12 The Kingdom of God

When Christ returns - and an earlier lesson has shown this will be soon - his first work will be to raise the dead.

'Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.'
(Daniel 12 v 2)

'For this we tell you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left to the coming of the Lord, will in no way precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with God's trumpet. The dead in Christ will rise first.' (1 Thessalonians 4 v 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.

CONDITIONS IN THE KINGDOM

There will be no oppression (Psalm 72 v 4) and no more war,

'And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.' (Isaiah 2 v 4)

The reign of the king will be righteous and just.

'He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the humble of the earth.' (Isaiah 11 v 3-4)

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

'Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.' (Isaiah 35 v 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.

'In the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water.' (Isaiah 35 v 6-7)

'May there be abundance of grain in the land; on the tops of the mountains may it wave; may its fruit be like Lebanon;' (Psalm 72 v 16)

Finally, death itself will be destroyed

'Then the end comes, when he will deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father; when he will have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.' (1 Corinthians 15 v 24-26)

'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.' (Revelation 21 v 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 gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptised will be saved' (Mark 16 v 15-16)

It will be seen that baptism must follow a belief of the gospel. The verse continues - 'but he who disbelieves 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.

'Then they that gladly received his word were baptised ... And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.' (Acts 2 v 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 Christian, who is spoken of as 'risen with Christ', can wait confidently for the coming of the Lord.

'If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4When Christ, our life, is revealed, then you will also be revealed with him in glory.' (Colossians 3 v 1-4)

FORGIVENESS

When, during the time of this waiting for Christ, the Christian 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. (Hebrews 4 v 15) The Christian can be confident that his prayers will be heard.

'Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' (Hebrews 4 v 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 by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.' (Ephesians 2 v 8)

'The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' (Romans 6 v 23)

THE NEXT STEP

You have now completed the twelve lessons of Stage 1 of this correspondence course. You have read in these lessons 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 of

the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear you again of this matter.' (Acts 17 v 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, who 'searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.' (Acts 17 v 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,

'The day of the Lord will come' (2 Peter 3 v 9-10)

A SPECIAL MESSAGE FOR YOU

The apostle concludes this letter by saying that, as you know this, 'what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness?' (2 Peter 3 v 11)

This question must be left to each individual student to answer. We trust that you will

'be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.' (2 Peter 3 v 14)

PASSAGES FOR BIBLE READING

Isaiah 65 v 17-25 Romans 13 Ephesians 5 Isaiah 66 v 1-2 Colossians 3 II
Peter 3 Ephesians 2

WHO ARE THE CHRISTADELPHIANS?

The name 'Christadelphian' means 'brother of Christ', being derived from two Greek words 'Khristos' - Christ - and 'adelphos' - brother. In the American Civil War, in 1861, it was necessary for those conscientiously opposed to bearing arms to register, and to distinguish themselves from others calling themselves 'brethren', the name Christadelphian was used to give them a separate identity. Christadelphians have no central authority and no paid ministry. They are a small community, organized in small groups which they call 'ecclesias', rather than 'churches', a word which has been misused, ('Ecclesia' is the original Greek word). Although each ecclesia is independent, they all teach the same doctrines and uphold the same common principles, unlike Christianity at large which embraces many variations on the Christian theme.

The message of Christ was originally clear and simple, but during the early centuries after Christ, this message became corrupted. This corruption has led to the Christian confusion we find in the world today. Indeed, some of the world's tensions today have been caused by disagreements between Christian groups.

Christ brought a message of peace - it is man's misunderstanding of that message which has caused the strife. The Christadelphians endeavour to cut through this misunderstanding and try to be like the first followers of Christ. Those men lived by the prayer that Christ taught them: "Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. Let your kingdom come. Let your will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." (Matt 6:10-11) So the Christadelphians, like Christ's early followers, firmly expect his return to the earth to bring peace, establish order and reward his followers with a place in the Kingdom of God on earth. This is what Christ promised.

Christ also made it quite clear that to obtain such a reward a certain way of life and belief is required - that peace in Christ cannot be obtained by following our own ideas. Christadelphians have tried to find out what the correct way of life and belief is; in doing so they find a large gulf between what the Bible says and what Christianity at large practises. Hence their wish for a separate name and identity.

Here are some of those differences - and they are fundamental ones.

THE BIBLE

Sometimes it is said that a certain book is a particular man's 'bible'. Unfortunately today the Bible is not always the Christian's bible. To the Christadelphians, however, the Bible is the textbook for life. It is the word of God. The men who wrote the sixty-six books of the Bible were inspired to do so by God. The Bible to the Christadelphian is, therefore, to be completely trusted, because it is God's word, not man's.

GOD

Unlike some Christians today, Christadelphians believe in a supreme being - the God of the Bible. Christadelphians cannot deny that there is a God for many reasons. They see every day the living world; their intelligence is carried in a human body of great complexity; they see therefore the evidence of design in nature, and design needs a designer.

They study the Bible, its fulfilled prophecies, its internal harmony, its great code of life and, above all, its message of hope, and cannot believe that it did not have one Divine Author. Having arrived at this point of belief, Christadelphians acknowledge their debt to God, and recognize Him as the source of their life. They recognize, too, their own mortality.

MAN

Death is a subject on which most Christians misunderstand the Bible. For many, death is not death, but a time for the soul to be rewarded in heaven or punished in hell. Such theories are not to be found in the Bible and are, therefore, rejected by Christadelphians. To them the word of God is sufficient. Solomon said, "The dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten" (Ecclesiastes 9:5). Death is total oblivion. What hope then for man beyond his short life?

CHRIST

The apostle Paul, a close follower of Christ, wrote, "the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Christ, the son of God, the son of Mary. In this Christadelphians agree with all Christians that Jesus Christ is the pivot of their faith. The Bible does not mention the Trinity, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit. It states simply that God is the supreme being, that Christ is His son, conceived by the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the virgin Mary.

The Bible teaching is the firm belief of Christadelphians. And how logical that teaching is. This is the Christ who, as he left his disciples, promised to return to the earth to bring peace and to reward his followers, and as his friend Peter said on one occasion, "There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

YOU

How then can man have a part in the hope that Christ offered? He commissioned his followers to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to all men and women. He said, "He that believes and is baptised shall be saved". True Christian baptism, according to the Bible, is a total immersion in water, a symbolic act signifying both a washing away of sins and a change of heart to serve God. This act of baptism is the unvarying practice of Christadelphians. This is the way of salvation in Christ.

So these are just five major areas in which we believe Christianity diverges from the teaching of Christ and the apostles, as found in the Bible. We suggest that just as it would be arrogant for the Christadelphians to claim that only they have hope in Christ, so it seems to us presumptuous on the part of many Christian groups to seek that reward when the basis of their beliefs and practices is so adrift from the Bible.

So whatever name you choose to call yourselves by, if the true Bible message appeals to you, if you wish to take part in God's plan for the earth, then we hope you will study the Bible for yourselves, be baptised, and prepare for the return of Christ to his followers.

The Christadelphians humbly offer you their help to achieve this end.

These Study Notes are one way of helping you towards gaining a fuller understanding of the Bible. We will be pleased to help you further, if you desire.

WHAT HOPE HAVE YOU?

Perhaps you would have difficulty in expressing clearly any hope you may have concerning the future. Maybe you do not often think about it or talk about it to your friends. Yet definite information regarding the future can be obtained in the pages of the Bible.

You may think that it does not matter whether you know about the Bible hope or not, so long as you try to follow what are the generally accepted rules of a good life. If so, you are making a grave mistake. The hope set before us in the Bible concerning a future good provided by God has been made known for men to accept with earnestness and sincerity. God cannot be pleased with a light-hearted indifference about what He has promised, neither will He bestow His gift of a future life where

men are not interested in His purpose.

Consider carefully the following facts:-

1. Salvation depends upon our acceptance and permanent holding of the hope preached by the apostles:

"We are saved by hope" (in the original, 'the hope' [Romans 8:24]).

"Whose (Christ's) house are we, IF we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end" (Hebrews 3:6).

"If you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard" (Colossians 1:23).

The gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes" (Romans 1:16).

2. There is only one hope shown in apostolic teaching and not several various or conflicting hopes:

"you were called to the one hope of your calling" (Ephesians 4:4).

"The hope of the gospel" (Colossians 1:23).

"Looking for that blessed hope" (Titus 2:13).

"you heard about this hope in the word of truth, the gospel" (Colossians 1:5).

"If any man preach any other gospel unto you...let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:9).

3. This one hope is the hope of Israel, or the hope established in the Jewish nation, ages before Christ appeared, by the promises made to the fathers of that nation:

"For the hope of Israel I (Paul) am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:20).

Jesus Christ came "to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Romans 15:8).

"To them (the Jews) belong the promises (Romans 9:4).

4. This hope presents the prospect of certain good things to come, to be hoped for on the strength of the promise of God, whom we honour by believing His Word:

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for" (Hebrews 11:1).

"Hope to the end for the grace (or favour) that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

"Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Hebrews 13:14).

"Strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans 4:20,21).

5. It includes the hope of eternal life and inheritance of the Kingdom of God:

"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Titus 1:2).

"This is the promise that he has promised us, even eternal life" (1 John 2:25).

"Heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to them that love him" (James 2:5).

"For in this way you will be generously granted entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:11).

"Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34).

6. Without a belief in it - a hearty and joyful belief - we cannot be saved:

"Without faith (which is the substance of things hoped for - see verse 1) it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6).

"the one who doesn't believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

"Everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself" (1 John 3:3).

We must "hold fast our confidence and the glorying of our hope firm to the end" (Hebrews 3:6).

"We are saved by hope" (Romans 8:24).

To sum up, we can say that the true hope is the "hope of the gospel". The gospel which Christ preached concerned the Kingdom which he will establish on earth after his promised return from heaven. Those who hope for a reward after death in heaven are completely astray from Bible teaching. Jesus requires that we accept and believe from the heart the one true hope which he preached. This, we are told repeatedly in the New Testament, was the gospel (or good news) of the kingdom of God.

The promise of the New Testament is that those who have been baptised into this gospel will be raised from the dead at the Lord's coming, then judged, and if found worthy, will receive the gift of eternal life and will inherit the Kingdom to be established on this earth. This will be the grand realization of the One True Hope of the Gospel.

LESSON 12 TEST

Underline the correct answer to each question and then check your answers with those given at the end of the course.

1. 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
2. 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
3. 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
4. How should a baptized believer live his life?
(a) In a Monastery (b) In isolation
(c) In a way that pleases God (d) In an important job
5. How can a Christian seek forgiveness?
(a) By sacrifices (b) By tithes
(c) By offerings (d) By prayer
6. 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
7. What did the people at Athens do when they heard Paul preach?
(a) Stoned Paul (b) Said 'We will hear more some other time' (c) Praised Paul (d) Honoured Paul
8. 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
9. 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
10. Which apostle of Jesus told us to try to be blameless in our life before God?
(a) Paul (b) Philip (c) John (d) Peter

STANDARD ANSWERS

Lesson 1. -

Question 1, the correct answer is (C) God. 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God' (11 Timothy 3 v 16).

Question 2 the correct answer is (B) "the writings of Moses". Please read Luke 24v27 in your Bible and it will show you that this is correct.

Question 3 the correct answer is (C) "1947". This is the year that the dead sea scrolls were found in a cave, contained in earthen ware jars. This historic find proved the accuracy of the Bible we have today. This can be confirmed at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Sea_Scrolls](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dead_Sea Scrolls)

Question 4 the correct answer is (C) "Bethlehem" (Micah 5 v 2).

Question 5 the correct answers is (C) 1,500 years .

Question 6 the correct answer is (B) "If ye do them". Please read John 13v17 and it will show you this is correct.

Question 7 the correct answer is (A) "There are 66 separate books in the Bible". Some Bibles appear to contain more because they have the books of the apocrypha put in them as well, however these books are not part of the scriptures themselves.

Question 8 the correct answer is (C) "Of prophecy". Please read 2Peter 1v21 in your Bible which will show you that this is correct.

Question 9, the correct Answer is "Rome", as can be seen from Acts 28:16.

In Question 10 the correct answer was (D) "The Holy Bible". It is only the Bible which contains God's word. The scriptures are the only source from which we can gain knowledge about God, his purpose with the earth , and the way to salvation revealed in Jesus Christ his son. Please read the following passages from the Bible,- Isaiah 45v5-12: 2 Timothy 3v14-17: 1 Peter 1v20-21.

Lesson 2 -

1. How was the universe formed
(c) By the power of God
2. The true God is:-
(a) The God of the Bible
3. Which of the following are evidence that God exists?
(b) Bible prophecies
4. In Psalm 139 v 6 the writer says:-
(a) 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me'
5. The Bible teaches that:-
(b) God is a Unity

The bible does not teach that God is a trinity. If we are to understand the wonderful message of salvation contained in the scriptures, we must begin by gaining a true understanding what God has

revealed about himself. this is fundamental to our salvation that we understand correctly about our creator. As Isaiah 45v6 says: "I am the Lord, and there is none else"

6. By giving His son (John 3 v 16) God showed:-
(b) His love
7. What does God intend to do with this earth?
(c) Fill it with His glory
8. What is the Spirit of God?
(a) The power of God
9. By what means did God cause the Bible to be written?
(b) His Holy Spirit
10. In Acts 17 v 11 we read that those at Berea:-
(b) Searched the scriptures daily

Question 1. This question was concerned with how the universe was formed. You answered that it happened by random chance, yet the scriptures teach us that all was created by the power of God. If you would like to read the following passages from the Bible you can see what it has to say about creation: Gen1v1; Psalm 19v1; Isaiah 45v12; Psalm 90v2. The apostle Paul spoke to those in Athens saying of God "In him we move and have our being". This is most certainly true, we are totally reliant upon God for everything.

Napoleon is supposed to have once heard his officers discussing if there was a creator and coming to the conclusion that there was not. He gestured to the stars in the sky and said 'In that case gentleman who made these'. This is so true, if we look up on a clear night at the myriads of stars all in order, governed by precise laws of motion it speaks of an overruling intelligence at work. As the Bible says Psalm 19v2 "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows his handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world". If a man never having seen a watch discovered one, he would quickly decide that from its design and intricacy that it was made, so closer to home we have only to consider the wonderful intricacy of our own bodies to realise we could not have come about by random chance and have a Creator.

Lesson 3 -

1. God so loved the world that He ...
(b) Gave His only begotten son
2. Which was the second world empire represented in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream?
(d) Medo-Persia (Daniel 5v25-31.)
3. What did Nebuchadnezzar see strike the statue in his dream?
(b) A stone

Question 3 the correct answer is (B) "A stone". Please read Daniel 2v34-35 and Daniel 2v44-45 which will help you to understand the correct answer. The stone refers to Jesus Christ, who will return to the earth to set up God's Kingdom, destroying the kingdoms of man, grinding them to powder as in the dream by Nebuchadnezzar. Jesus is referred to in Isaiah 28v16 as "A tried stone" and a "precious

corner stone".

4. What did the angels sing about the conditions on the earth when Jesus is king?
(d) There will be peace on earth

Question 4 the correct answer is (D) " There will be peace on earth and goodwill toward men". You can read this passage in Luke 2v14.

5. Who is to rule the world in righteousness?
(a) The son of God
6. In the second chapter of Daniel we read, 'In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom ... and it shall stand
(c) for ever'

The correct answer to Question 6 was (C) "For ever". Please read Daniel 2v44 which will show you that this is correct.

7. Jesus promised his disciples that they would
(b) sit on thrones to judge the tribes of Israel

In question 7 the correct answer was that the reward of the disciples would be to "Sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel". Please read Matthew 19v27-29.

8. Does the Bible tell us that God intends the world to continue in its present state?
(b) No

In question 8 the correct answer was (B) "No". The Bible teaches that God intends to intervene in the affairs of the world and to put right all the evil and wickedness in the earth. It is God's purpose to set up his Kingdom ruled by Jesus Christ his Son. Please read Acts 17v31 and Matthew 6v10. The next lessons in the course will discuss this in greater detail.

9. Where is Jesus at the present time?
(b) In heaven
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?
(c) The resurrection of Jesus

Question 10. You answered that the guarantee that the world would be ruled in righteousness by the man that God has chosen was "The crucifixion of Jesus". The correct answer was (C). "The resurrection of Jesus". In fact if you read Acts 17v31 you will see that the guarantee spoken of by Paul was the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Lesson 4.

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

Question 1. There are in fact three answers that are correct, A) Death comes as a result of sin. B) All men sin. C) eternal life is a gift from God. If you read Romans 5v12 it says "sin entered the world through one man, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned". It is important that we understand our true position before God. The scriptures say that the wages of sin is death. Adam sinned and was justly condemned to mortality by God because of his disobedience, and in the course of time died. We inherit his nature, and die for that reason, but also we die because of our own sin, for as we read in Romans 3v23 "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God".

2. Which verse in the Bible shows that death is complete unconsciousness?
(c) Ecclesiastes 9 v 5
3. What human quality does God require of a person who is seeking salvation?
(c) Humility. In Isaiah 66v2 God says "This is the one I esteem. he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word".
4. The Bible teaches that God formed man from ...
(b) the dust of the ground

5. What is a 'living soul'?
(a) a living creature

Question 5. The correct answer is that the term "a living soul" in the scriptures refers to "a living creature". If you read the Genesis account of creation you will see Gen 2v7 that it speaks of man becoming a living soul. Now in Gen 1v21-25 you can read of the creation of all the creatures that are upon the earth, whether upon the land in the sea or that fly through the air, the same words are used referring to them as living creatures. If you read a Bible translated into modern english you will see that both man and beast are referred to as living beings or creatures. When we come to the account of the flood in Genesis 7v21-25 we can read that all living things upon the face of the earth died "Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in it's nostrils died. Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out, men and animals". There is then no distinction made between man and animal they are both living beings, and when they die return to the dust from which they came. Please read Ecclesiastes 9v4-6 and v10.

6. Why was man created?
(c) To give God pleasure
7. What was the punishment for the disobedience of Adam and Eve?
(a) They were condemned to die

Question 7. The correct answer is that Adam and Eve were condemned to die, because they disobeyed the command of God, their creator. You can read the account of what happened in Genesis 3v19. This sentence was not however carried out immediately, for God is merciful and rather than completely rejecting man, Adam and Eve were given a limited span of life, becoming mortal, and being given time to repent. We are also exactly of the same nature, mortal, but God our Creator, has given us a chance to seek out his ways, serve him, and receive the gift of life in his Kingdom. The Bible his word, offers a wonderful message of hope to all those who will respond to his mercy.

8. What is sin?

(c) Transgression of God's Law

Question 8 - you answered that sin is the carnal mind and human nature. In fact the scriptures teach that sin is disobedience of God's law. We read in 1John 3v4 "Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact sin is lawlessness". Adam and Eve disobeyed God's law and were condemned as it says in Romans 6v23 "The wages of sin is death. Now James writes ch 1v14 "Each one is tempted when by his own evil desire he is dragged away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full grown gives birth to death". Sin comes about then because of the carnal mind or human nature.

9. Faith is ...

(d) the substance of things hoped for,
the evidence of things not seen

Question 9. Please read Hebrews 11v1 where you will see that faith is defined as the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen".

10. The Bible teaches ...

(b) a resurrection from the dead

Question 10 - you answered that the Bible teaches immortality in heaven as the reward of the righteous. This however is not what the scriptures teach us. God's purpose is centred around the earth, the promises that were given to Abraham were that he and his descendant would inherit all the land that he saw, (Genesis 12v2-3; 13v14-17; 22v17-18). Now in Galatians 3v14-16 that descendant is identified as the Lord Jesus Christ, - "he redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ"....."The scripture does not say and to "seeds" meaning many people but "and to your seed" meaning one person who is Christ". We then through baptism as v26 goes on to tell us belong to Christ and are sons of God. We then become heirs also of the promises made to Abraham, Galatians 3v29 "If you belong to Christ, then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise". The reward of the righteous then is to inherit that land promised to Abraham. In proverbs it says "The righteous receive their due on earth", and in Psalm 37v29 it says "The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever". Finally though there are many more references in this context I will quote from Revelation 5v9 speaking of Jesus "You have made them (the righteous) to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God and they will reign on the Earth". If you have further questions or comments on this subject I shall be happy to go into it in greater detail if you wish.

Lesson 5-

1. What was the name of the man with whom God was well pleased as recorded in Genesis 6 v 9?

(b) Noah

2. How did God destroy the wicked people in the account contained in Genesis chapters 6 to 8?

(c) Flooding

3. How many people were saved in the disaster of Genesis chapters 6 to 8?

(a) 8

4. How were the faithful people protected in the disaster of Genesis chapters 6 to 8?

(a) They lived in an ark

5. Where did Abraham live before God spoke to him?

(d) Ur

6. To which land did God lead Abraham?

- (b) Canaan
7. Was the gospel message preached to Abraham?
 (a) Yes - John 8:56 "Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."
8. When will Abraham receive the final fulfillment of God's promise to him?
 (c) When Jesus returns to the earth to establish God's kingdom
9. Who was the greatest of Abraham's descendants?
 (d) Jesus
10. Which three of the following did God promise to Abraham?
 (a) His descendants would possess the land of Canaan
 (c) His descendants would become a great nation
 (e) Through one of his descendants all nations would be blessed.

Question 3. The correct answer is that 8 people were saved by God, in the Ark when the flood covered the earth. Please read Genesis chapters 6-8, and also 1 Peter 3v20.

Question 4. God protected the righteous from the disaster that came upon the earth in the time of Noah by means of the Ark. See Genesis 7v7 and Hebrews 11v7.

Question 5. The correct answer is that Abraham came from a place called Ur. You can read this fact in Genesis 11v29-31.

In question 6 the correct answer is Canaan, please read Genesis 12v1-15 to see for yourself that this is correct.

Question 7 You answered that the gospel message was not preached to Abraham. In fact the hope of the gospel lies in the promises that were made to Abraham, and so we read in Galatians 3v6-8 "Consider Abraham, he believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Understand then that those who believe are children of Abraham. 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"". Jesus is that promised descendent of Abraham, through whom we can find salvation.

Question 8. The correct teaching of the Bible, is that Abraham will receive the fulfillment of God's promises to him, when Jesus Christ returns to the earth to set up God's Kingdom. We can read in Genesis 25v7, that Abraham died when he was 175 years old, and so did not inherit all that God had promised to him. He must therefore be raised from the dead in order to receive all that was promised. The resurrection from the dead will take place when Jesus returns. Please read Acts 7v2-5 and Hebrews 11v8-10 plus verses 39-40.

Question 9. The greatest of Abraham's descendants is Jesus. If you read the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1v1-16 you will see that this is correct. We read in Galatians 3v16 "The promises were spoken to Abraham and his seed. The scripture does not say "and to seeds", meaning many people, but "and to your seed" meaning one person, who is Christ". So we see from this that Christ is the promised and thus greatest, descendent of Abraham.

Question 10. There are three of the answers that were correct relating to God's promises made to Abraham:-

- A) His descendants would possess that land of Canaan, of which part of the land is what we today call Israel. Please read Gen 13v15.
 B) His descendants would become a great nation. Please read Gen 12v2-3.
 C) Through one of his descendants all nations would be blessed. Please read Galatians 3v16.

Lesson 6 -

1. The Name 'Jesus Christ' means ... (c) Saviour Anointed
2. Who was the mother of Jesus?
(b) Mary
3. Who was the real father of Jesus?
(d) God
4. In Micah 5: 2 the birthplace of Jesus is given as ...
(b) Bethlehem Ephratah
5. Animal sacrifices in Old Testament times ...
(a) were a reminder that sin brings death
6. Why was Jesus sent 2,000 years ago?
(b) To be the perfect sacrifice for sin
7. Where is Jesus now?
(b) In heaven
8. Will Jesus Christ come back to the earth?
(a) Yes
9. What does Jesus do now?
(b) He acts as high priest before God
10. What is the gift of God through Jesus Christ?
(b) Eternal life in the future

question 1. The name Jesus Christ means "Saviour Anointed". Jesus means "Saviour" and Christ means "Anointed".

Question 3 . The real father of Jesus is of course God not Joseph. Jesus was conceived by the action of the Holy Spirit [Power of God] on Mary his mother. He was therefore the Son of God. Please read Luke 1v1-19.

Question 4. The correct answer is Bethlehem Ephratah, which you will see if you read Micah 5v2. It is essential to read the scriptures carefully in order to understand what the Bible teaches us correctly.

Question 6. The reason that Jesus Christ came 2000 years ago was to be the perfect sacrifice for sin. This is made clear if you read John 3v16 and Hebrews 10v12.

Question 8. The Bible teaches us quite clearly that Jesus Christ will return to the earth again, and this is the true hope of the gospel message that he will return and save his people, setting up God's kingdom on the earth. We read in Acts 1v11 that when the disciples saw Jesus ascending into heaven, they were told by the angels "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 that you have seen him going into heaven".

Question 9. Jesus acts as High Priest before God on behalf of his people. Jesus as we read in Paul's letter to Timothy is the mediator between God and man. Please read 1 Timothy 2v5 and Hebrews

4v15-16 and you will see for yourself that this is correct.

Question 10. The scriptures teach us that the reward of those who are faithful is to receive the gift of God which is eternal life in the future. We read in John 3v16 "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". Eternal life is something that we do not possess, for man does not have an immortal soul, but upon death, goes back to the dust from which he came. Life is a gift from God as a reward for faith, as we read in Romans 6v23 "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord".

Lesson 7.

1. Which descendant of Abraham will bring blessings on the earth?
(d) Jesus
2. In which country were the Israelites slaves?
(b) Egypt
3. Which book of the Bible tells us about the deliverance of the Israelites from slavery?
(b) Exodus
4. Who was the first King of Israel?
(a) Saul
5. What did David want to build for God?
(b) A temple
6. What did God promise David?
(c) That the throne of his kingdom would be established for ever
7. Which prophet of Israel said, "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse"?
(a) Isaiah
8. Who was the promised descendant of David who would rule on his throne?
(b) Jesus
9. Where will the promised kingdom of God be established?
(a) On this earth
10. What is the guarantee that God will carry out His promises that the Apostle Paul referred to at Athens?
(d) The resurrection of Jesus

Question 3. The book of the Bible that tells us about the people of Israel coming out of slavery in Egypt is the book of Exodus. The original meaning of the word 'Exodus' is 'departure'. If you read Exodus chapters 12-14 give the details of how the nation of Israel were brought out of slavery in Egypt by God. Please read these chapters if you do not mind.

Question 6. The promise that God made to David was that 'the throne of his kingdom would be established forever'. You can read of this promise that God made to David in 2 Samuel 7v12-13.

Question 7. The correct answer is Isaiah. You will find the reference in Isaiah 11v1.

Question 8. It is Jesus who is the promised descendent of David who will sit upon his throne. The promises refer to one who would sit on David's throne forever. Solomon died and so obviously it was not him. Solomon was a type or prefigured Jesus who was to come. Jesus is not yet of course sitting upon David's throne so must return to set up God's Kingdom for this prophesy to be fulfilled. If you read Luke 1v32-33 and Acts 2v30 you will see that Jesus is identified as David's promised heir.

All your answers were correct apart from question 9. God's Kingdom is to be upon this earth, not in heaven. This is a promise made constantly throughout the Bible. If you would like to read the following verses, you will see some examples where this promise is made by not only Jesus, but also by angels, prophets and the apostles:-

- a) By Jesus - John 14v2-3.
- b) By angels - Acts 1v10-11.
- c) By prophets - Daniel 2v44 and Zeckariah 14v9.
- d) By apostles - Acts 3v20-21 and 1 Thessalonians 4v16.

Question 10. The guarantee that Paul mentions that God will indeed carry out all his promises is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We read Acts 17v31 "Because he has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the man he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead."

Lesson 8.

1. The word 'resurrection' means:
(c) rising up from the dead
2. Who was the first person to have been raised to live for ever?
(d) Jesus
3. Why did Jesus die?
(a) Because he was of our nature
4. Why did Jesus live again?
(c) God raised him
5. Which three of the following can look forward to a future reward upon the earth?
(a) Abraham (b) David
(c) Daniel
6. Will everyone be raised from the dead?
(a) No
7. When will the dead be raised?
(b) When Jesus returns to set up the Kingdom
8. What will follow the Resurrection?
(b) Judgment
9. Who will be accepted by Jesus at the last day?
(a) Those who understand him, believe in him, and follow his teaching
10. Do you want to learn more of Jesus and share in His coming Kingdom on Earth?
(d) Yes

Question 3 asked why did Jesus die. You answered that "God forced him to", however this is not what

the scriptures teach. The Bible teaches that Christ died because he was of our nature, certainly it was in God's will that he should die, but not in the sense that he was forced to die. Jesus had free will and chose to lay down his life willingly in obedience to his Father. because Adam sinned he was condemned to die, in other words he became mortal. We are of his nature and sooner or later we all die, as Paul wrote Romans chapter 6 "The wages of sin is death". So we die 1) because we are the same nature as Adam 2) because of our own sin. However Jesus although exactly of the same nature as Adam and mortal, did not sin and so did not deserve to die. For this reason although the law of sin and death said he had to die, he did not deserve to die and so God could justly raise him to life again. Romans 6v9; Acts 2v24. Jesus willingly laid down his life both for himself: because we read "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God"; and secondly as a perfect representative of man. If we believe and have faith in him, God is willing to count our faith as righteousness.

Question 5. The three people who could look forward to a future reward in God's Kingdom are: Abraham, David and Daniel. If you read through Hebrews ch11 you will find there names in the list of faithful men and women of old.

Question 6. The question asked if everybody will be raised from the dead, the correct answer is no. It is only those who have heard the gospel message and understood it who will be raised to be judged according to how they have responded to what they know and have lived their lives. Knowledge brings responsibility to act upon what we have heard and do what God requires of us. Some will be raised to the reward of life in Gods Kingdom, others to condemnation. Please read the following passages Proverbs 21v16; Psalm 49v20; Isaiah 26v14.

Question 7 - You answered that you did not know when the dead will be raised. The Bible teaches us that the dead shall be raised when Jesus returns to set up God's Kingdom. The dead will be raised to judgement. The righteous will rise to everlasting life, the wicked will be condemned and return to the grave from which they came, never to be raised again. We read 2 Corinthians 5v10 "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." and in Philipeans 3v10 -11 Paul speaks of his desire to "attain to the ressurection from the dead." See also 1 Thessalonians 4v16 and 1 Corinthians 15v12-28.

Question 8. You answered that following resurrection will come baptism. The scriptures however teach that it is those who believe and are baptised who will be saved. (Mark 16v16) This takes place during the lifetime of the believer, and thus before death and resurrection. What we do learn from the Bible is that Jesus Christ is to return soon and the first thing that will then take place is the resurrection of the dead to judgement. The righteous will be rewarded with eternal life in Gods kingdom, the unrighteous be condemned returning to the ground from which they came.

Question 9. If you read these references - John 17v3 and Romans 6v3-5 you will see that it is those who understand him, believe in him and follow his teaching who will be accepted by Jesus.

Question 10 To question 10 you answered that it is to hard to learn more about the Bible. Is this becuae of lack of time? If so then just take you time and go through the course as you are able. There is a wonderful message of hope in the Bible which truly is God's word to us. If we look arround us at the world and all it's troubles, so many wars so much violence and crime,so much sadness, illness and disease, many people starving or without homes. We see so much misery and tragededy. Man just does not have the answers and most of his troubles come about through his own folly or inhumanity to his fellow man. God has promised a time when he will intervene in man's affairs and set up his Kingdom. A time when all the ills of this world will at last be resolved. We sincerely believ the time whe nJesus will return isvery close now and this is why we encourage as many people as possible to study the Bible for themselves, to learn about God our Creator and discover what God has in store for this world and how they can have a part in it. If there is anything in particular you find hard about studying then please let us know if there is anything we can do to help and we will do out

best to assist you.

LESSON 9. -

Question 1. (C) Jesus shall return to this earth once again just as the angels promised the disciples. We read in Acts 1v11 "Men of Galilee why do you stand gazing up into heaven. This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven." Upon his return Jesus will set up and establish God's Kingdom and bring peace to this troubled earth. Please read and compare the following passages from the Bible - 2 Samuel 7v12-13 and Acts 1v6-10. It is vital that we understand that Jesus will indeed return and God's Kingdom will be set up, because God's promise is that we can also have a place in his Kingdom if we are faithful, believing and acting upon his word.

Question 2. (C) It is only God who knows the exact hour of the return of Jesus. Please read Acts 1v17 and Mark 13v32.

Question 3. (A) We can find indications about the return of Jesus Christ to set up God's kingdom only in the Bible. These signs that we are able to see in the world about us show that his return is very close now. Some of the conditions mentioned are found in Matthew 24v37-39; 2Tim 3v1-5; Luke 21v25-26. These things are present in the world to an ever increasing extent and it is the great hope of all true believers that Jesus will indeed return very soon to set up God's kingdom and bring peace to this troubled world.

Question 4. (C) The correct answer to this question is 'a time of violence and pleasure seeking'. Please read Matthew 24v37-39 and Luke 17v26-27. To get the background to what Jesus is referring to please read Genesis 6v11.

Question 5. (B) The correct answer is a 'fig tree'. Please read Matthew 24v32-33 to prove this for yourself.

Question 6. (B) The correct answer is 'the feet part iron and part clay.' Please read the reference in Daniel 2v33 to see for yourself that this is correct. If you also read v34 and v44-45 you will see that the stone mentioned represents Jesus Christ.

Question 7. (B) You answered that the phrase "The sea and the waves roaring" referred to "A holy people". However the class of people referred to in this quote taken from Luke 21v25 does not refer to a holy people but rather to the wicked. In Isaiah 57v20 it says "The wicked are like the tossing sea which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud". This applied to the verse from Luke 21 shows that the seas and waves roaring refers to the many nations and peoples of the earth, who are in God's sight wicked because they refuse to accept or obey his law.

Question 8. (D) The correct answer to which nation is situated north of Israel is Russia. Although as you answered Syria is roughly north of Israel, the prophecies refer to a country further and more directly north. Many of the names mentioned about this invader who will come against Israel from the north prior to the return of Jesus, are old names referring to places and peoples that are in the lands forming part of what we know today as Russia.

Question 9. (D) The correct answer is Jesus. The name Michael mentioned in this question means 'who like God'. It is of course Jesus who is the one that is 'like unto God'. Jesus of course is the Son of God and if you read John 5v17-23 you will see there how Jesus speaks to the Jews of how he was indeed like his Father - God.

Question 10. (ALL) The signs that we can see around us in the world today that herald the close return of Jesus Christ to set up God's Kingdom are in fact all of the things mentioned in the Question. You answered two of them correctly, but to briefly mention them they are as follows.-

- 1) The nation of Israel being restored to their own land. - Ezekiel 37.
- 2) World unrest. - Luke 21v29.
- 3) A time of violence. - Matthew 24v29.
- 4) Nations some weak some strong. - Daniel 2v43.

Of these signs the most important one is the fact that Israel are once again back in their own land. In Isaiah 43v1&10-12 Israel are spoken of as God's witnesses in the earth and Jesus spoke about signs that would herald his return saying that when Israel were once again in their own land then the rest of the sign of which he spoke would also come to pass, and that his return would be very close. In the parable recorded in Matthew 24v32-33 the symbol that is used to refer to Israel is as you correctly answered the symbol of a fig tree, indeed trees in general in the scriptures are used to represent nations. So Jesus says that when the fig tree puts out its leaves (Israel back in the land, as a tree showing new growth) so then the signs he spoke of would also be close and so Jesus goes on v34 "I tell you the truth this generation (The one that sees Israel restored) will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened".

Lesson 10. -

1. The word 'gospel' means:
(b) Good news
2. Which of the following verses tell us that Jesus preached the Gospel of the Kingdom?
(b) Mark 1. 14. (k) Luke 4. 18 (m) Matthew 9. 35 (h) John 3:16
3. In addition to Jesus who also preached the Gospel?
(b) The Disciples
4. When will the Kingdom of God be set up on this earth?
(b) When Jesus comes back to the earth
5. Who told the disciples as they watched Jesus going to heaven that he would return?
(d) Two angels
6. How can you receive the promise of salvation offered in the Bible?
(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
8. Which verse in the New Testament tells us that the Gospel was preached to Abraham?
(b) Galatians 3. 8
9. Which prophet of God told David the good news of God's Kingdom?
(d) Nathan
10. Which disciple helped Saul (Paul) to be baptized as recorded in Acts chapter 9?
(c) Ananias

question 4 which asked when the Kingdom of God would be set up on this earth. You answered that "we do not know", however the scriptures teach us that Jesus Christ is to return to the earth in the same way that his disciples saw him go. If we read Acts 1v11 two angels told the disciples "Men of Galilee they said why do you stand here looking up 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". When Jesus returns he will first judge all those who have heard the gospel message of salvation and

had opportunity to respond to its message, as we read in Matthew 16v27 "For the Son of Man is going to come in his fathers glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done", and in 2Timothy 4v1 we also read "In the prescence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom,I give you this charge: Preach the word, be prepared in season and out of season". So the first task of Jesus will be to judge, then he will set up God's Kingdom on earth as we read in 1Corinthians 15v25 "For he must reign untilhe has put all his enemies under his feet, the last enemy to be destroyed is death". May I suggest that you read 1Corinthians 15v20-28, and Revelation 11v15.

Many believe that the Bible teaches immortality in heaven as the reward of the righteous. However the scriptures teach us that Gods purpose is centred around the earth, the promises that were given to Abraham were that he and his descendant would inherit all the land that he saw, (Genesis 12v2-3; 13v14-17; 22v17-18). Now in Galatians 3v14-16 that descendant is identified as the Lord Jesus Christ,- "he redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Jesus Christ"....."The scripture does not say and to "seeds" meaning many people but "and to your seed" meaning one person who is Christ". We then through baptism as v26 goes on to tell us belong to Christ and are sons of God. We then become heirs also of the promises made to Abraham, Galatians 3v29 "If you belong to Christ, then are you Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise". The reward of the righteous then is to inherit that land promised to Abraham. In proverbs it says "The righteous receive their due on earth", and in Psalm 37v29 it says "The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever". Finally though there are many more references in this context I will quote from Revelation 5v10 speaking of Jesus "You have made them to be a Kingdom and priests to serve our God and they shall reign on the earth".If you have further questions or comments on this subject I shall be happy to go into it in greater detail if you wish.

Question 6. The thing that is rquired of us that we may receive the promise of salvation is to 'Know believe and obey the gospel" Please read Mark 16v15-16; Acts 8v35-38 and Acts 16v30-34.

Question 7. It was the promise made by God to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden that foretold of the fact that one would come who would overcome the power of sin and death. Showing that it would be a struggle for mankind. Please read Geneses 3v14-19.

Lesson 11. -

1. The word 'baptize' means: (c) Immersing
2. Who baptized the Ethiopian eunuch? (c) Philip
3. Which verses in the Bible tell us of the instructions to the disciples regarding the preaching of the Gospel?
(b) Mark 16 v 15 - 16
4. Which three of the following were baptized? (b) Paul (c) Prisonkeeper at Philippi (d) Lydia
5. When can true Baptism take place?
(d) On gaining a full understanding & belief of God's plan of salvation.
6. What does the act of Baptism represent? (d) The death & resurrection of Jesus
7. Which chapter in the Bible explains the meaning of Baptism? (a) Romans 6

8. Which event is used by Peter to illustrate a parallel with the act of baptism?

(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?

(c) Belief & Baptism

10. Do you wish to learn more of God's message so that you will have the understanding to be baptized?

(a) Yes

Your answers were correct apart from question 4 which asked which three people in the list given were baptised, you got two correct; Paul and Lydia. The other person who was baptised was the prison keeper in Philippi. We can read of the baptism of Paul in Acts 9v17-19, "Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul [Paul's other name] he said, Brother saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, has sent me so that you may see again, and be filled with the Holy spirit. Immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptised". In Acts 16v30-34 we read of the prison keepers baptism, "The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, Sirs, what must I do to be saved". They replied Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household"....."The jailer took them and washed their wounds, then immediately he and all his family were baptised". Then in Acts 16v14-15 we read of Paul preaching to some people one of whom was Lydia - "One of those who was listening was a woman named Lydia a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptised she invited us to her home".

Question 5. True baptism can only take place upon gaining a full understanding of the gospel message of salvation. Belief as Paul says in any other gospel will not save, and so baptism based upon the wrong understanding is of no use. Please read Acts 8v37 and Acts 16v30-33.

In question 6 you answered that baptism represents the gift of God, however if we read Romans 6v3-4 it says "Don't you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus, were baptised 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". May I suggest you read the rest of Romans 6 please. The act of baptism then represents the death and resurrection of Jesus. If we are baptised into Christ then we have the hope of receiving the gift of God which is eternal life - Romans 6v23.

Question 8. The event that Peter uses to illustrate a parallel with the act of baptism is the provision of the ark by God and built by Noah at the time of the flood. Please read 1Peter 3v20-22.

Lesson 12.

1. What will be the first work of Jesus when he returns to the earth?

(b) To raise the dead

2. 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

3. On which feast day did the Apostle Peter tell the people about the second coming of Jesus as recorded in Acts 2?

(b) Pentecost

4. How should a baptized believer live his life?

(c) In a way that pleases God

5. How can a Christian seek forgiveness?

(d) By prayer

6. What is the gift of God referred to in Romans 6?

(a) Eternal life through Jesus

7. What did the people at Athens do when they heard Paul preach?

(b) Said 'We will hear more some other time'

8. What did the people at Berea do when they heard Paul preach?

(b) Searched the scriptures daily

9. Which of the following are human beings unable to prevent happening?

(b) The establishment of the Kingdom of God (d) The return of Jesus

10. Which apostle of Jesus told us to try to be blameless in our life before God?

(d) Peter

Question 2 In fact all four conditions will be fulfilled just as God has promised in the scriptures.-

No more war. - Isaiah 2v4

No more disease. - Isaiah 35v5-6

No more famine or drought. - Psalm 72v16.

No more death. - 1Corinthians 15v24-26.

In question 6 the gift of God referred to in Romans 6 is "eternal life through Jesus". Please read Romans 6v23.

Question 7. The attitude of the men of Athens to the message about the gospel that Paul preached was to say 'We will hear more some other time'. This sadly is the attitude many people have in our day. Please read Acts 17v32.

In question 9 the answers to which things human beings are unable to prevent happening are 1) The return of Jesus Christ. 2) The establishment of the kingdom of God. Both of these events have been promised by God and his word is sure. There is no power greater than his and man is utterly powerless to thwart his will. These things are certain and if we put our trust in God we can also be certain that all that he has promised to us will also come true. Please read Acts 17v29-31.