

Discovery Lessons

An 18 Lesson Series

FOREWARD

Is a thorough knowledge of the Bible important for a Christian? The answer is "yes". The Apostle Peter writes, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:" (1 Peter 3:15).

There are many who do not know why they believe a certain way. They are unable to give an answer to those who ask why they are a Christian and why they believe as they do. Answers that are shallow or just clichés fail to impress others. Our answers should be based on the Bible, and they should be logical.

2 Timothy 2:15 tells us to, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Not only should our testimony be based upon the Bible but it should be based upon the Bible rightly divided. All Christian churches claim to use the Bible as their basis for doctrine. But too often they misinterpret the message of God.

A proper understanding of God's Word will only come as a result of study. These lessons are designed to assist you in understanding the basic doctrines of the Bible. Its goal is to enable you to give a Biblical answer to those who ask you what you believe and why. It should also add confidence and stability to your Christian life. Pray for God's guidance as you study these lessons. He wants you to learn these lessons, and He will help you learn them.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version, public domain.

We are pleased to share these lessons for your spiritual enrichment. As with the ACTS magazine, we would like to take a moment and remind our readers that the General Council Churches of God, (Seventh Day), is in a state of constant growth and we all have different backgrounds, it is possible that your views may differ somewhat from those presented in this study. We pray these lessons may be used as a point of entry for your own study.

"Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21 NKJV).

Lesson 1

THE WORD OF GOD

Memory Verse: *"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).*

INTRODUCTION: Apostle Paul states that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." Peter confirms this when he explains that "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21). Thus, the Bible is without contradiction and contains the whole council of God.

The Bible becomes the measuring rod for all beliefs and actions. Isaiah 8:20 states, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The Bereans were commended for when Apostle Paul preached the Gospel to them they compared what he preached with the Word of God.

Many people seem to think that if a person is sincere it doesn't matter whether or not he is right. The Bible admonishes us to be diligent in our study of God's Word so as to know the truth. It warns against refusing sound doctrine and states that wrong doctrines hinder our Christian growth and can cost us our salvation. Apostle Paul wrote that a wrong concept of the resurrection had overthrown the faith of some (2 Timothy 2:18).

We all start out as babes in Christ. From there we begin our growth in two areas: spiritual maturity and knowledge. The more spiritually mature and knowledgeable we become the stronger and more stable we are. We are to grow in knowledge until we can no longer be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.

We also have an obligation to be able to defend the truth. Apostle Paul admonished Titus thusly: "holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict" (Titus 1:9, New American Standard Version).

We are not saved by doctrine or our knowledge, but once we are converted it is important that we acquire a thorough knowledge of God's Word. We need this knowledge not only for our own protection and stability but to enable us to instruct others in the Word of God.

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. What is God's Word declared to be? John 17:17.
2. Why is it still beneficial for us today? Romans 15:4.
3. Who directed them as they recorded these words? 2 Timothy 3:16-17.
4. Is God particular regarding the accuracy of His Word? Revelation 22:18, 19. Why?
5. How long will God's Word last? Matthew 5:17, 18.
6. What will the truth do for us? John 8:31, 32.
7. How important is sound doctrine? 1 Timothy 4:16; Ephesians 4:14.
8. Is there a danger when we lose sight of the importance of truth? Hosea 4:6.
9. What are some characteristics of sound doctrine? 1 Timothy 6:3; Titus 2:1-12.
10. What are the benefits of knowing the truth? 1 Timothy 4:13-16.
11. What will knowledge of the truth enable us to do? 1 Peter 3:15.
12. List some areas of the Bible you feel you are capable of explaining.

Lesson 2

GOD THE FATHER

Memory Verse: *"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).*

INTRODUCTION: "God created man with an inborn ability to recognize His existence. When man under ordinary conditions seriously thinks about the universe, the recognition of God's existence naturally arises in his mind. When a child is taught that God exists, he spontaneously perceives this to be true. Man is so made that he is naturally religious. It is normal for man to believe in God; it is abnormal for him to be an atheist.

"One is not surprised to discover, therefore, that belief in the existence of a supreme being or beings is found among all men. Heathenism has corrupted the glory of God into idolatry and the truth of God into mythology, but the recognition of His existence is still there. The counterfeit proves the reality of the true. In every race and tribe on earth and in every civilization in history, the existence of a supreme being or beings has been recognized by men.

This amazing fact is a testimony to the existence of God" (Alva Huffer, Systematic Theology, The Restitution Herald: Oregon, Illinois, 1969, p. 43).

"Men can acquire definite knowledge concerning God's existence, nature, attributes, works, and plans for the future. Although we cannot know everything about God in all His infinite perfection and we cannot know everything that God himself knows, we can know about God because He has revealed Himself to man" (Ibid. p. 49).

"God is a living person. He possesses life, self-existence and character. The three elements of personality are intellect, sensibilities, and will. He who is a person has the ability to think, feel, and choose. The Bible proves that God is a person by ascribing attributes of personality to Him. God has the ability to think, feel, and choose. He sees, hears, knows, speaks, loves, wills, and works.

"True religion is made possible because God is a person whom the believer can love, worship, know, and obey. A personal relationship between God and man has been made possible because God is a person and man has been created in God's image. When a believer prays, he knows that God will see and hear and answer. Salvation is the process whereby sinners are brought into a redemptive relationship with this divine person through the mediatorial work of Jesus Christ" (Ibid. p. 53).

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. How important is belief in God? Hebrews 11:6.
2. Has God given us proof of His existence? Romans 1:18-20; Psalm 19:1-6.
3. What other proof of His existence does He give us? 2 Peter 1:19-21; John 14:6-9.
4. How many Gods are there? 1 Timothy 2:5.
5. How great is our God? Isaiah 40:21-26.
6. How do we compare to Him? Isaiah 55:8, 9.
7. What is a major characteristic of God? 1 John 4:7-9.
8. What relationship does He desire to have with us? Romans 8:14-17.

Lesson 3

JESUS THE SON OF GOD

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

INTRODUCTION: In the last lesson we considered God and found that He loved us enough to send His Son to die for us (John 3:16). But we should not forget that the Son loved us so much that He was willing to make the ultimate sacrifice.

Everything about Jesus was extraordinary, from His virgin birth to His miraculous resurrection. Because He was the Son of God with power to perform miracles, the wisdom to understand all things, and the promise of glory and authority in the future, we tend to overlook the fact that He was also human.

He grew up much like any other boy of His time. He faced problems and temptations like the rest of us. He had to choose between a life of ease and glory or one of privation and persecution. If we think that this was easy for Him then we haven't fully comprehended the scene in the Garden of Gethsemane. There He spent time on His knees in agony, pleading with His Father to find another way that He would not have to die on the cross.

We often think our problems are great and nobody has ever experienced the mental distress and agony that we have to endure. I have faced some difficult situations but never to the extent that I sweat "as it were great drops of blood." Why, then, should I feel that my problems are more difficult to face than the ones that Jesus faced?

Jesus could have accepted Satan's offer of the kingdoms of the world. He could have been an important man of authority and power. Yet, because of His love for us He was willing to sacrifice this and to die an agonizing death that we might have eternal life.

Yes, Jesus was, and is, the Son of God. He is worthy of our praise, and we can never glorify Him too much. Yet, I fear that we often forget His humanity. It is because He was human that we can relate to His perfect example and reach out in faith, knowing that, as a man, He, too, was tempted. If He could overcome them, with His help, we can as well. It is His humanity that proves His love for us. It might be easy for God to die for others, but we know how difficult it would be for us to die for those who are unlovely and who dislike us.

Thus, Jesus is a very unique person. He is both, the "Son of God" and the "Son of man." He can do all things, yet He understands how we feel as weak humanity. It is great to be a part of His family and fellow heirs of the kingdom of God. It is a privilege to acknowledge Him as our Lord and Master.

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. What phrase did Jesus use to describe Himself? Matthew 17:22; 19:28. [NOTE: The phrase "Son of man" is found 88 times in the Bible. It is usually used by Jesus in reference to Himself.]
2. Why do you suppose He wished to emphasize His humanity? Hebrews 2:14-18; Hebrews 4:15.
3. He was human, "the Son of man," but what else was He as well? John 3:16, 18.
4. Whom are we to pattern our lives after? 1 Peter 2:21; How did He live? Verses 22, 23.
5. What important characteristic did He have? Matthew 26:38, 39. How did He learn obedience? Hebrews 5:8, 9. Have we learned that lesson?
6. What role does He play at this time? Hebrews 7:24, 25.
7. What position does He hold in relation to the church? Ephesians 4:15, 16.
8. How does the truth of Jesus' headship relate to your personal life?

GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT

Memory Verse: *"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered"* (Romans 8:26).

INTRODUCTION: When our Lord Jesus Christ was preparing His disciples for His departure He promised them that He would not leave them forsaken. He promised to send them another Comforter, which was the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 17).

Down through the ages there has been much discussion and controversy over what the Holy Spirit is and what it will accomplish in our lives. In this lesson we will explore what God's Word has to say regarding the Holy Spirit.

A clue as to what it is may be found in noting how often it is referred to as God's Spirit and Christ's Spirit. The terms: "God's Spirit," and "Spirit of God," "Christ's Spirit," "Holy Spirit," "Holy Ghost," and the "Comforter" seem to be interchangeable. If you will notice in John 14:16-18, after promising them a comforter, Jesus says, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." It is evident from this and other scriptures that the concept of Jesus abiding in us is that He dwells in us through the agency of the Holy Spirit. In verse 23 Jesus pictures God as making His abode with us as well. This agrees with Ephesians 4:4 which states that there is only one Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is a must in our lives if we are to be fruitful in our Christian walk. It gives us strength to overcome sin, power to witness, and wisdom to know what to say in times of need and directions for our daily lives.

One of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to convict the world of sin. We can eloquently share our faith with others, we can prepare well-organized sermons, but if God doesn't bless with His Spirit and bring conviction then we are helpless to bring people into the kingdom of God. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). It should make us very humble to realize that we are dependent upon God's Spirit for everything we accomplish as Christians.

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. In what capacity do we find the first mention of God's Spirit? Genesis 1:2.
2. How many Spirits exist in God's design? 1 Corinthians 12:4, 8-11.
3. What did Jesus promise the disciples to take His place? John 16:7. What will this comforter do? John 15:26; John 14:26.
4. How will it help us in time of need? Luke 12:11, 12.
5. How is the Holy Spirit described in Luke 24:49? What did this power enable them to do? Verses 47, 48; Acts 1:8; John 7:37-39.
6. What are some ways in which the Holy Spirit will direct our lives? Acts 13:1-3; Acts 16:6, 7.
7. What are we individually and collectively supposed to be? 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; Ephesians 2:19-22.
8. Who does the Bible say is living in us through the Holy Spirit? 1 John 3:24; John 14:23.
9. What will the Spirit do for us? Ephesians 3:16-19. What kind of fruit will this produce? Galatians 5:22, 23.
10. If Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit, what does this make us? Romans 8:14-17.

Lesson 5

THE CRUCIFIXION

Memory Verse: *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8).

INTRODUCTION: The death of Jesus Christ is the pivotal point upon which the rest of the Bible hinges. From the very beginning when Adam and Eve sinned until the beginning of eternity, all mankind has needed a savior to rescue them from the lake of fire.

We may enjoy contemplating the pleasures in store for us in God's kingdom. We may love to discuss doctrine or study prophecy. We may receive a blessing by recalling what the Lord has done for us in our daily lives, but without the blood of Jesus Christ these other things are purely academic.

"Spectators at the crucifixion challenged Jesus to save Himself. The common crowd cried in derision, 'Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself, and come down from the cross' (Mark 15:29, 30). The Jewish rulers mocked, 'He saved others: himself he cannot save' (Mark 15:31). Superstitious ones who thought Jesus was calling Elias said, 'Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down' (Mark 15:36). The soldiers said, 'If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself' (Luke 23:37). One of the malefactors who were crucified with Him said, 'If thou be Christ, save thyself and us' (Luke 23:39). Everyone cried, 'Save thyself.' They should have cried, 'Save us.' It was not that Jesus could not save Himself; it was that He would not save Himself. Jesus could have saved Himself from crucifixion, but He did not want to save Himself. He wanted to give Himself in death as a sacrifice for sinners. Jesus knew that if He saved Himself, He would save no others. He was determined to die for the sins of the world.

"Christ's sacrificial death revealed the love of God and Christ for sinners. It was an act of grace that God planned salvation for men through the sacrifice of His Son. It was an act of unparalleled love that Christ consented to bear men's sins. The Father was not obligated to provide a sacrifice for sinners, and the Son was not obligated to be that sacrifice.

"Sinners do not deserve to be saved; they are worthy of death. God could have destroyed every sinner and they would have received what they deserved. God through love, however, gives men what they do not deserve. He offers them salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. This is grace! Grace is God's freely given love in its relation to the needs of sinful men" (Alva G. Huffer, *Systematic Theology*, The Restitution Herald: Oregon, Illinois, 1961, p. 279).

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. What was Jesus' primary purpose while on earth? John 1:29; Galatians 1:4.
2. Was the circumstance of His death prophesied in the Old Testament? Psalm 22:1, 7, 8, 16-18.
3. What Old Testament passage explains the purpose of His death? Isaiah 53. How many references are there in this passage to the fact that Jesus bore our sin?
4. Why was it necessary for Jesus to die? Romans 6:23; Hebrews 9:22.
5. Describe the agony involved in a crucifixion. Matthew 26:67, 68; Matthew 27:26-31.
6. What would have been our fate if Jesus had not died? Ephesians 2:12.
7. What transaction takes place as we accept His atonement? 2 Corinthians 5:21.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

Memory Verse: *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved"* (Romans 10:9).

INTRODUCTION: Jesus, speaking of Himself after the resurrection, said "because I live ye shall live also" (John 14:19). Our assurance of a future life would rest on shaky ground if it wasn't for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because He lives we know that we shall live as well. The same power that raised Jesus from death to immortality will also raise us to everlasting life at His appearing.

How do we actually know that He was resurrected? There are many proofs. The evidence of the empty tomb that was witnessed by a number of people; the soldiers who were as dead men and the fact that they had to be bribed to give a false report; and the many individuals who saw Him after His resurrection all prove that Jesus bodily arose from the dead.

The Apostle Paul records that over 500 brethren saw Him at one time. When this was written most of those 500 were still alive. The early church had many enemies and, if the resurrection was a farce, it would have been easy to demand the names of these witnesses and show the falseness of the church's claim. Paul was very confident of his statement, and the fact that it was not challenged at that time proves the validity of Christ's resurrection.

But the greatest proof is expressed in a song: "You ask me how I know He lives, He lives within my heart." The presence of Jesus Christ within is a Christian's greatest proof that He lives. The change in the lives of those who accept Him as Savior should convince others that He lives.

The assurance of eternal life through Jesus' resurrection is great, but there is another benefit that is often overlooked. He defeated Satan through His resurrection and thus assures us that we, too, can defeat Satan in our daily lives.

Apostle Paul illustrates this principle in the sixth chapter of Romans. Here he teaches that, as new converts, we should be dead to sin but alive to God. Just as Jesus arose victorious over death, we should, by the same power that raised Jesus, live a life of victory over sin. Apostle Paul vividly describes the struggle of a carnal man to live righteously and concludes that it can't be done outside of Jesus Christ (Romans 7:15-25). Apostle John adds his testimony: "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

Our salvation is dependent on the shed blood of Jesus Christ and its power to cleanse. But our hope of a future resurrection and the power to live a victorious Christian life is a result of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Yes, because He lives we will live also. We can live a life of victory now, and we will live with Him forever because He lives.

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. How important is Christ's resurrection to us as children of God? 1 Corinthians 15:14-18.
2. What proof do we have that Jesus rose from the grave? Matthew 28:9, 10; John 20:1-8; John 20:19-23.
3. How many saw Him at one time? 1 Corinthians 15:6. [NOTE: When Paul wrote this most of them were still alive and could testify to the fact that He arose.]
4. What did Jesus' resurrection further prove? Romans 1:3, 4. Was this already established before? Matthew 3:16, 17.
5. How does Jesus' resurrection assure us of a future resurrection? Romans 8:11.
6. Is a belief in Christ's resurrection important to our salvation? Romans 10:9.
7. What does the resurrection of Jesus symbolize in our Christian walk? Romans 6:4, 5, 11-13.
8. What is our source of strength to live an overcoming life? 1 John 4:4.

THE STATE OF THE DEAD

Memory Verse: *"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 5:28, 29).

INTRODUCTION: The Bible warns us against learning the ways of the heathen and accepting their beliefs (Jeremiah 10:2). Plato, (427-347 B.C.) the Greek philosopher, was a very influential person in his and succeeding generations. "Platoism was the dominating philosophy of European civilization for many centuries. It is asserted by many scholars that Plato has exerted a greater influence upon the thinking of man in the western world than any other person in paganism" (Alva Huffer, Systematic Theology, The Restitution Herald: Oregon, Illinois, 1969, p. 149).

"Plato believed in the pre-existence as well as the immortality of the soul. He believed that matter is evil. He taught that the soul is contaminated by the body and earth. Purification, he asserted, can be attained only when man's soul is released from the body and dwells apart from the earth" (Ibid. p. 150).

The concept of an immortal soul originated in paganism, yet it is held today by many churches. Plato's belief that matter is evil is often reflected in religious literature today. A typical article in referring to souls going to heaven at death might state, "as the egg shell cracks to release the chicken inside, so must your body give way to release the child of God inside ... as for those saints who have already died and been released from their bodies ... "

The Bible is very plain regarding the state of man in death. It teaches that death is as a sleep in which man cannot think, feel, or remember. This agrees with medical science for when a person's brain ceases to function all thought and feelings cease. There is no consciousness apart from an active, living brain.

The Bible has much to say regarding the reward of the saints. But, it all centers around Jesus' return and the resurrection. If the saints are presently enjoying the bliss of heaven, the resurrection would be only an anti-climax instead of the glorious homecoming of the saints. Going to heaven at death would be like arriving late at a celebration party after everybody had been celebrating for hours. The Bible has a much better program. We will rise together to meet Jesus, and all the saints of all ages will worship and rejoice together.

The Thessalonian saints were concerned regarding the fate of righteous loved ones who had died. Apostle Paul gave them comfort by explaining that they would rise to meet the Lord at His coming along with the living saints. If they were already in heaven, why didn't he comfort them with that thought? They weren't in heaven, so Paul pointed them to the glorious resurrection of all saints that will take place at His return.

LESSON QUESTION

1. How is death described in the Bible? 1 Thessalonians 4:13; Psalm 13:3.
2. What happens to our thoughts when we die? Psalm 146:3, 4; Ecclesiastes 9:4-6, 10.
3. A common belief is that the dead observe their loved ones from heaven. Does this agree with the Bible? Job 14:21.
4. David died about one thousand B.C. Where did Peter say he was in his time? Acts 2:29, 34.
5. How long will the saints remain in the grave? Job 14:12-14; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 23.
6. Who will cause the dead to rise? 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17.
7. Many people believe that those who have died are praising God in heaven at this time. What does the Bible say concerning this? Psalm 115:17.

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED

Memory Verse: *"And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell"* (Matthew 5:30).

INTRODUCTION: "The Bible doctrine of hell is a subject which is much misunderstood. A prevalent false theory is that hell is a place burning with fire and brimstone, where sinners are tortured after they die. According to this view, when the sinner dies, his invisible, immaterial, immortal 'soul' goes to this place of unending agony. The sinner, men who teach this theory assert, experiences indescribable pain and misery in hell fire torture during all eternity. This theory is untrue; it is unscriptural.

"The doctrine of the endless torture of sinners is based upon the false teaching of the immortality of the soul. Man does not have a conscious, immaterial nature which continues to live after death. Man is unconscious in death. A person must be alive to experience torture and pain. If such a burning hell existed and a dead person were placed in it, he would not know anything about it, because 'the dead know not any thing.' A living man can experience pain through the function of his nervous system and brain, parts of his body which are buried in the grave after death.

The sinner cannot feel any torture if his brain and nervous system do not function.

"The Bible mentions 'everlasting punishment' (Matthew 25:46), but not 'everlasting punishing.' The wicked will be destroyed for all eternity in the second death. They will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord' (2 Thessalonians, 1:9)" (Ibid. p. 160).

"Outside the walls of Jerusalem in the day of the apostles was a burning rubbish heap named 'the valley of Hinnom,' or 'Gehenna.' Gehenna was the city garbage incinerator for ancient Jerusalem. Rubbish, refuse, and dead animals were thrown into this valley to be consumed in the fire. The fire continued burning as long as there was material for it to consume. The rubbish itself was consumed, but the fire continued to burn as it consumed additional rubbish.

There is no fire in the valley of Gehenna today. It was extinguished centuries ago. The valley is no longer used as an incinerator.

"Gehenna fire was regarded as symbolic of judgment and destruction. Jesus used Gehenna fire as an illustration of the final destruction of the wicked. Gehenna fire refers to the lake of fire, which is the second death (Revelation 20:14, 15)" (Ibid. p. 163, 164).

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. What will be the final punishment of the wicked? Matthew 13:37-42.
2. What will be the result of this burning? Matthew 3:12; Malachi 4:1, 3.
3. What is the common belief regarding the punishment of the wicked? Mark 9:43-48.
4. Does this mean that the fire will never go out? Jude 7.
5. What will be the end result of the wicked on the day of judgment? Matthew 7:13; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10. What is this final destruction called? Revelation 20:14; Romans 6:23.
6. Are the wicked dead being punished now? 2 Peter 2:9.
7. The common belief is that only the soul is punished in hell. Does this agree with the Bible? Matthew 5:29, 30. What are the worms referred to in Mark 9:46?
8. What is another Bible name for this "hell?" Revelation 20:14, 15.

HOLY LIVING

Memory Verse: *"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God"* (2 Corinthians 7:1).

INTRODUCTION: God's greatest attribute is holiness. The angels and beasts around the throne of God cry "holy, holy, holy" (Revelation 4:8; Isaiah 6:1-3). When a man comes face to face with God he will fall down and worship Him. At these times he is usually impressed with his own sin and unworthiness in contrast to God's holiness.

"But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15, 16). In this passage God uses His holiness as a pattern for our lives. He is holy and, if we love Him, we will desire to be holy also. But more important is the fact that if we are not holy we will not see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). Apostle Paul on several occasions lists sins of wickedness and immorality and states that any who are guilty of such will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:17-21; Ephesians 5:3-5).

This life of holiness might seem unattainable, (and it is, in the natural) but Apostle Paul gives the answer in Philippians 4:13 where he says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Apostle John agrees with this when he says, "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

In the third, fourth, and fifth chapters of Romans Paul shows that God's grace is sufficient to cover all our sins. This is an amazing thing when we fully comprehend it. It is also very comforting, but Paul was concerned lest the saints in Rome would rely on God's grace rather than to develop holy lives.

If God's grace is abundant enough to cover every sin then why worry about holy living? Why not let God's grace cover our sin? This would be much easier than the struggle to develop a holy life.

Apostle Paul knew that we tend to be spiritually lazy, and so he dealt with this problem. He asks the question in Romans 6:1, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" He then answers his own question in a very emphatic way. "God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"

Are you progressing towards a life of holiness, or are you relying on the abundance of God's grace to see you through? Without God's grace to make up for our weakness we would all be lost. But, remember God has stated that without holiness we will not see Him. We need to seriously consider God's standard of holiness as it relates to our lives as individuals.

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. Why should we live holy lives? 1 Peter 1:15, 16.
2. How important is it that we live holy lives? Hebrews 12:14.
3. What are some of the things that we need to change? Colossians 3:4-9.
4. What should we guard against? Titus 2:11, 12. Are there certain sins peculiar to youth? 2 Timothy 2:22. What is provided in case we slip? 1 John 2:1.
5. Can we retain some of our worldly ways and still be saved? Matthew 6:24.
6. How can we tell if a person is righteous? Luke 6:43-45; 1 John 3:7.
7. What are some actions and traits that indicate a holy life? Psalm 15:1-5; Psalm 24:3-5.
8. How can we become holy? Philippians 4:8; 2 Peter 1:5-9. Are there fringe benefits to holy living? 1 Timothy 6:6.
9. What kind of people will be in the kingdom? Revelation 22:14. What kind of people will be left out? Revelation 22:15.

GOD'S CHURCH

Memory Verse: *"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5).*

INTRODUCTION: "The Church owes its existence to Christ. Christ is builder and foundation of the Church. His sacrificial death and resurrection to immortality provide the basis of salvation and foundation of the Church. If Jesus had not become man's sacrifice, there would have been no Church; sinners would have no salvation. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, the Church would have been without a living head; it would have no life. In Christ, the Church has its origin, growth, and hope of glory. The triumph of the Church during the Church Age is proof that Christ is alive and is working in His Church. The Church is able to fulfill its divine purpose because of its relation with Christ. It is able to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth because of its union with Him. The relation between Christ and His Church is vital, real, and personal.

"The Church equals the sum of its membership. The Church is spiritual if its members are spiritual. The Church is holy if its members are holy. The Church maintains a living contact with Christ only if its members have a redemptive relationship with their living Lord. The Church is the body of Christ because each member presents his body as a living sacrifice and permits Christ to be Lord and Master. The Church is the building of Christ because each member is a living temple, built upon the Lord Jesus Christ and indwelt by His presence. The Church is the bride of Christ because each member sustains a loving relationship with that divine Lover. Christ's union with the Church, therefore, is made a reality through His union with believers" (Alva G. Huffer, Systematic Theology, The Restitution Herald: Oregon, Illinois, 1961, p. 451).

"When Solomon built the temple at Jerusalem, the building was assembled without a sound of tool (1 Kings 6:7). Stones for the temple were quarried east of the Jordan River, carried to Jerusalem, and quietly assembled according to a pattern. In like manner, members of Christ's Church, His invisible temple, are being quarried out of the world, shaped into the moral image of Christ, and prepared for a glorious use. When Jesus comes, the stones will be assembled; all true Christians will be gathered together. They who have fallen asleep in death will be raised to immortality. Christians living when Jesus comes will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. The temple will not be completed and assembled until Christ returns. There is still opportunity for one to become a living stone in His glorious building, the Church" (Ibid. p. 454).

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. Upon what did Jesus say He would build His church? Matthew 16:15-18. [NOTE: It was Peter's declaration of faith which Jesus referred to as "this rock."]
2. Upon what conditions are members added to the church? Romans 10:9.
3. Who is the head of the church? Colossians 1:18.
4. Who else had a part in the foundation of the church? Ephesians 2:19-22.
5. What is God's ideal for His Church? Ephesians 4:11-16.
6. Do we each have our special place and job in the Church? 1 Corinthians 12:18-20.
7. What kind of church is Jesus coming back for? Ephesians 5:25-27.

Lesson 11

BAPTISM

Memory Verse: *"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).*

INTRODUCTION: Apostle Paul tells us that the things that can be seen are temporal, but the things which we cannot see are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:18). For this reason the Lord wants us to take our eyes off the tangible and reach out by faith to that which is eternal. We must learn to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Most people desire tangible things to hold on to, even in their spiritual lives. For this reason most religions have rituals to teach spiritual principles. But the Bible only teaches two: baptism and the Lord's Supper (the footwashing service is a part of the Lord's Supper).

Even though we are to walk by faith the Lord seemed to know that, as weak mortals, at times we need something tangible to illustrate a spiritual truth. Baptism is a very beautiful symbol of what Christ does for us through His spirit.

Baptism signifies three aspects of the work of Christ in our lives. First: It signifies the cleansing of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. Baptism does not remove our sins; it simply represents what has already happened when we accept Jesus as our Savior.

Second: It signifies our identifying with Jesus, especially in His death, burial and resurrection. Jesus' death purchased our salvation. His resurrection proved Him victorious over Satan and guaranteed that we, too, will be resurrected.

But it did much more than that. Jesus defeated Satan by His resurrection, and thus, if He dwells within us, we can overcome sin in our lives.

The sixth chapter of Romans explains how our baptism parallels the work of the spirit in our lives. When we ask Jesus to come into our heart and rule, our old man (or carnal nature) is crucified. At that point we are new creatures in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17). Baptism signifies the burial of the old man and the resurrection of the new creation.

Third: Baptism is the initiation ceremony in which we are placed into the body of Christ. The pagan religions of Paul's day had initiation rites whereby new converts were initiated into the heathen religions. He used this practice to illustrate how we are baptized into Jesus Christ and become a part of His body.

Symbolic ordinances have no inherent power and are effective only as they hold meaning to those who participate in them. Their significance is only in relationship to the spiritual principles they represent.

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. Where is baptism first recorded in the Bible? Matthew 3:1.
2. What was John the Baptist's basic message? Mark 1:4.
3. What is necessary for those wishing to be baptized? Matthew 3:6. What else is needed? Acts 8:35-38.
4. What does baptism accomplish? Acts 22:16; Acts 2:37, 38.
5. What else does baptism picture? Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:3-5.
6. What change should take place in our lives as the result of our conversion and baptism? Colossians 3:1-3.
7. Did Jesus set an example for us to follow in baptism? Matthew 3:13-17.
8. Where does baptism place us? 1 Corinthians 12:13.
9. What is the Biblical mode for baptism? Acts 8:36-39. Matthew 3:16. [NOTE: The word "baptizo" in the Greek means to dip or immerse.]

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Memory Verse: *"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world"* (John 6:51).

INTRODUCTION: There are great and significant events that happen in the life of nations as well as individuals that needs to be commemorated. The Lord instituted the feast of Passover as a memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. Each year they were reminded of their former slavery and how the Lord delivered them and started them on a new path.

As the children of God, we have a greater deliverance to commemorate in this dispensation. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, we were delivered from the bondage of sin and death and given the assurance of eternal life.

The night before His crucifixion, Jesus replaced the memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt with a greater memorial, our deliverance from sin through His blood. He asked us to remember His death by partaking of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. John 6 explains that the bread represents His sinless life as an example for us to follow. Verse 56 shows that this is not to be taken literally but represents our acceptance of His spirit in our life and our abiding in Him. In John 15 Jesus elaborates on this theme by illustrating our relationship with Him as a branch on a vine. We are dependent upon Him, and without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5).

It was the custom in those days for the host to appoint the lowest servant to wash the feet of his guests. Since they wore sandals and the roads were dusty, this was a welcome service. It has been suggested that, as only Jesus and the disciples were present, and that, for lack of a servant, their feet may not have been washed. It has also been suggested that a discussion of who should assume the role of a servant and wash the others' feet may have triggered the strife as to who was the greatest.

If this was the case, it would make Jesus' example more dramatic; but whether or not this was the case does not alter Jesus' lesson in humility. For Jesus to willingly take the place of a servant and begin to wash their feet was too much for Peter, and it was only because of Jesus' insistence that he allowed it. This, no doubt, was a perpetual reminder to them in later years to guard against pride.

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. What ordinance was given to Israel as a memorial of their deliverance from Egypt? Exodus 12:13, 14.
2. When was it to be kept? Exodus 12:5, 6; Leviticus 23:4, 5.
3. What ordinance did Jesus institute to replace the original Passover? Matthew 26:19-21, 26-29.
4. What does the bread represent? Luke 22:19. What does the cup represent? Verse 20.
5. What is the purpose for this service? Luke 22:19 [last part]; 1 Corinthians 11:24-26.
6. What did Jesus mean in John 6:47-58 regarding eating His flesh and drinking His blood? How important is this? Verses 50, 51, 53 [last part].
7. What other ordinance did Jesus institute the night He was betrayed? John 13:4, 5.
8. Did He intend for us to follow His example in this? John 13:14, 15, 17.
9. What did Jesus mean by "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me?" John 13:8.
10. It is evident that this washing had a much deeper meaning than the physical act of washing feet. What does it represent? 1 Corinthians 6:11.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Memory Verse: *"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7).*

INTRODUCTION: The Lord, referring to the Christian dispensation, said "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jeremiah 31:33). Apostle Paul refers to the same thing in 2 Corinthians 3 where he says, "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart," "But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of His countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory" (2 Corinthians 3:3, 7-9).

There is much confusion among churches today regarding these verses. Many interpret them to mean that the law has been abolished. But notice the subject of these verses and just what was to be changed. In Jeremiah 31 the Lord states that He would write His law upon their hearts. He says nothing about a change in law. He does state that there will be a new covenant. The major difference under this new covenant is that His laws are now written in our hearts.

Apostle Paul elaborates on this theme and explains that the law has been taken off stone and placed in our hearts. Once again, it is not the law that is changed but the ministration. Here in the United States we hold presidential elections every four years. This brings about a change in administrations. But just because we have had a change from a Republican to a Democratic administration does not change our laws or constitution. Why can so many people easily comprehend this and yet become so confused when the Bible deals with a similar situation?

How did this new covenant or change of administration affect God's basic law, the Ten Commandments? Well, it definitely did not abolish them as Jesus told the young man that he must obey them to receive eternal life (Matthew 19:16-19). Apostle Paul recognized that they are to be kept in this dispensation (1 Timothy 1:8) as did James (James 2:10-12).

Isaiah prophesied that the Lord would magnify the law and make it honorable (Isaiah 42:21). This is the greatest change that took place under the new covenant. It is not enough to refrain from killing, we must not hate. It is not enough to refrain from adultery or stealing, we must not even covet. So instead of doing away with the law, Jesus established and magnified it. In the very last chapter of the Bible it states that those who will enter the kingdom are those who keep the commandments. How, then, can some say they were abolished?

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. Was the law of God in existence before it was given to Moses? Genesis 26:5.
2. How many of the Ten Commandments were in force before Sinai as recorded in the Bible? Genesis 4:8-10; Genesis 31:19; Genesis 35:2; Genesis 39:7-9.
3. Did Jesus abolish this moral law? Matthew 5:17, 18. What is said about those who speak against the law? Verse 19.
4. What question was asked Jesus in Matthew 19:16? What was Jesus' reply? Verse 17.
5. To what law did Jesus refer to as being necessary for eternal life? Matthew 19:18, 19.
6. How is the law described in the Old Testament? Psalm 119:72, 97-104, 137, 138.
7. How are they described in the New Testament? Romans 7:12; Romans 8:4.
8. How does James describe the law? James 1:25; 2:12. Compare this to Psalm 119:44, 45.
9. To what law is this referring? James 2:10-11.
10. Will our obedience to the law affect our final destination? Revelation 22:14.

THE SABBATH

Memory Verse: *"And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made"* (Genesis 2:3).

INTRODUCTION: Last week we considered the Ten Commandments and found them to be still in force according to the Bible. In fact, Jesus Himself told the man in Matthew 19:15-19 to keep the Ten Commandments if he wanted eternal life.

In view of this, isn't it strange that the only part of this law that God explicitly commands us to remember is the part that most professing Christians want to forget? It is equally strange how flimsy and shallow are the reasons advanced by scholars promoting the change of the Sabbath to Sunday worship.

After presenting the Sabbath, its origin, purpose and importance in an excellent manner, The New Bible Dictionary by J. D. Douglas explains the change of the Sabbath as follows: "On the first day of the week the Lord rose from the dead, and the Christians began to assemble on that day for worship of the risen Christ. This day is the Lord's Day, and as such is the Sabbath which God had instituted at creation. The commands regarding it have never been abrogated. It belongs to God, not to the pleasure of man; it is for the benefit and blessing of man, and that blessing is obtained by a resting on the Sabbath from all one's regular secular toil" (J. D. Douglas, The New Bible Dictionary, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1975, p. 1111).

This is typical of the way most scholars treat this subject. He gives no Biblical instruction or example as to why it was changed. He simply states that it was in honor of Christ's resurrection. We realize that Jesus was not resurrected on Sunday, but, even if this were true, it would not be reason to change a command of God.

Notice that he wants to bring the rules and principles of the Sabbath over to Sunday. He even makes it the Sabbath of creation. How well Jesus described this when He said, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).

This law was written with the finger of God and given to Moses intact. It should stand or fall as a whole. Most churches attempt to abolish the Sabbath while retaining the other nine. But in the absence of a direct command from God we must recognize them as a whole. We cannot arbitrarily pick and choose from God's Word and reject or change what we dislike. It is His place to command and our place to simply obey.

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. When was the Sabbath Instituted and why? Genesis 2:1-3.
2. Of what great law is it a part? Exodus 20:8-11. Did Jesus recognize the importance of this law? Matthew 19:16-19.
3. Was the Sabbath made only for the Jews? Mark 2:27, 28.
4. Did Jesus keep the Sabbath? Luke 4:16. Are we to follow His example? 1 John 2:5, 6.
5. Did Paul follow Jesus' example? 1 Corinthians 11:1. What was Paul's custom regarding the Sabbath? Acts 17:1, 2; 18:1-4, 11.
6. How does Matthew 24:15-20 prove the Sabbath was still in force at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.?
7. How are we to keep the Sabbath? Isaiah 58:13; Jeremiah 17:21-27.
8. What blessings are promised to those who keep the Sabbath? Isaiah 58:14; Isaiah 56:1-7.
9. In what ways is the Sabbath a delight to you?

DIVINE HEALING

Memory Verse: *"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"* (James 5:16).

INTRODUCTION: The greatest blessing available to us as children of God is to be healed of our spiritual sickness and to receive the promise of eternal life. But it is also great to know that the One Who heals us spiritually can also heal our physical ills.

Even a casual reading of the Gospels will reveal the major role physical healing played in the ministry of Jesus Christ. As He beheld the great spiritual needs of the masses He couldn't help but see their physical needs as well, and He responded by healing them.

Adam and Eve were created with good health, and God has promised that there will be no sickness in His kingdom. In view of this, we can confidently conclude that it is not God's will for His children to be sick.

What, then, are the requisites for divine healing? In Matthew 17 we find the account of a man who brought his son to the disciples for healing, but they could not heal him. When Jesus arrived He rebuked them and called them a faithless generation. Jesus then proceeded to heal him. His disciples asked why they could not heal him. Let us notice Jesus' reply. "Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matthew 17:20).

It is evident from these verses that faith is a definite requirement for divine healing. John 15 adds another requirement for success. If we are to accomplish great things for God we must have a close relationship with Jesus Christ. We must abide in Him and His words must abide in us, for without Him we can do nothing. But with Him we can ask what we will and He will accomplish it.

There are several things that can cause our prayer for healing not to be answered. Among these are lack of faith, disobedience (Naaman had to dip in Jordan, the blind man had to wash in the pool of Siloam, etc.), and lack of faith in those observing (Jesus could do no mighty works in His home town because of the unbelief [Mark 6:1-6]).

The apostle James admonishes those who are sick to call for the elders to pray for them and promises that they will be healed. Notice how he relates sickness and healing to sin and forgiveness. Is he saying that our sickness may be a result of our sin and that spiritual healing should accompany physical healing? Why does he link confession of our faults with our healing? It is evident that all sickness is not a result of personal sin, but James indicates this to such an extent that we seriously need to consider the relationship between sickness and personal sin.

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. What promise was given the disciples in the great commission? Mark 16:18. Is divine healing one of the gifts of the Spirit? 1 Corinthians 12:9, 28.
2. Who is the source of this healing power? Exodus 15:26.
3. Did divine healing exist under the Old Covenant? 2 Kings 20:1-7; 2 Kings 5:10-15.
4. Was it an important part of Jesus' ministry? Matthew 4:23.
5. Did the apostles have the gift of healing in the early church? Acts 5:12-16. Did they have this power before the day of Pentecost? Matthew 10:1, 8.
6. Is it important that the one being healed have faith? Matthew 9:27-30.
7. Can unbelief in those observing hinder divine healing? Mark 6:1-6; Mark 5:38-42.
8. What instruction does James give to those who are sick? James 5:14.
9. What added blessing is promised? James 5:15 [last part]. What else are we admonished to do? Verse 16
10. Are there some prayers for healing that may not be answered even though those involved are righteous? 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. Why? Verse 7.

THE RESURRECTION

Memory Verse: *"For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:"* (Job 19:25, 26).

INTRODUCTION: "Christians can never see each other for the last time. Although they may be separated by years of time, distance of miles, or the shadow of death, they know that they will meet again because they have the promise of resurrection to immortality. The believer's blessed hope is to be raised from the dead to immortality when Jesus comes."

"What will believers be like after they have been made immortal? Will they be transformed into angels? Will they have bodies? If they have bodies, will they be immaterial, invisible, and ghostly? Will the redeemed become like some science fiction mythical creature from another solar system? Will they be reincarnated in another person? Speculation is unneeded. The Bible reveals what immortal believers will be like. In immortality, believers will have real, literal material bodies of flesh and bones. They will be like the glorified Christ. 'We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is' (1 John 3:2). He 'shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body' (Philippians 3:21)."

"One can know what Christians will be like in immortality by knowing what Christ is like. After His resurrection, Jesus had the same body He had before He died, except it had been changed from mortality to immortality. When Jesus appeared to His disciples, they recognized Him as their beloved Master who had risen from the dead. During the forty days between His resurrection and ascension, Jesus appeared to His disciples many times and revealed Himself in His resurrection nature. He wanted the disciples to know that He had really risen from the grave and that He had a real body. He told them that He was not immaterial, indistinct, and ghostly, but that He had a real body of flesh and bones (Luke 24:36-39). The disciples saw Him (Luke 24:40) and touched Him (Luke 24:39). He walked among them and talked with them. He ate fish and honey in their presence. He showed them the nail prints in His hands and feet.

"When believers become immortal in the first resurrection, they, too, will have real bodies. They will be able to walk and talk; they will recognize one another and will be reunited with loved ones. Suffering, sorrow, and sadness will be removed. The redeemed will have eternal joy in God's perfect eternity. God's plan of salvation for believers includes not a redemption from the body, but a redemption of the body. The believer's body will not be exchanged; it will be changed. Christians will be glorified, not apart from their bodies in some indistinct, misty, immaterial condition, but in their bodies which will be transformed from mortality to immortality" (Alva Huffer, Systematic Theology, The Restitution Herald: Oregon, Illinois, 1969, p. 501, 510, 511).

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. What assurance do we have that there will be a resurrection? John 14:1-3, 19; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23.
2. What will be the order in the resurrection? 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.
3. Will everybody that has ever lived be resurrected? 1 Corinthians 15:22; 2 Corinthians 5:10. What two divisions will there be in the resurrection? John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15.
4. Will we have physical bodies in the resurrection? Job 19:25-27; Luke 24:36-39. What kind of body will we have? 1 John 3:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 15:35-44.
5. Will we recognize each other after the resurrection? Luke 13:28, 29; 1 Corinthians 13:12.
6. Why is the resurrection so important? 1 Corinthians 15:12-19.
7. How many resurrections will there be? Revelation 20:1-6. How many years separate them? Verse 5.
8. What will happen to the living saints when Jesus returns? 1 Corinthians 15:51-54.
9. What class of persons will be raised in the first resurrection? Revelation 20:4.

THE SECOND RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST

Memory Verse: *"So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation"* (Hebrews 9:28).

INTRODUCTION: "The second coming of Christ is as certain as God's Word is true. He who acknowledges the authority and accuracy of the Bible must recognize the fact of Christ's return to earth. The second coming of Christ is a definite event that will occur in the future. Future events predicted by human philosophers are based upon speculation and are open to question. Future events described by prophets of God and recorded in the Bible are certain to occur. God's infinite wisdom and power guarantee that His promised blessings will be bestowed and that His predictions concerning the future will come to pass..."

"Bible prophecies concerning Christ's first coming and second coming are linked together. During His earthly ministry, prophecies concerning His first coming were fulfilled in minute detail. During His new earthly ministry in the future, therefore, we are assured that prophecies concerning His second coming will be literally fulfilled. At His first coming, Jesus was the suffering Sacrifice; at His second coming, He will be the reigning Sovereign. At His first coming, He was the Lamb of God Who was crucified on the cross; at His second coming, He will be the Lion of Judah reigning on His throne. The reality of Christ's future return to earth is definite and sure."

"The second coming of Christ is the open door to God's Tomorrow. The fulfillment of almost every Bible promise concerning the future of man and the earth is dependent upon this glorious event. Apart from the second coming of Christ, the Church would not be completed, the dead would not be raised, the Kingdom would not be established, the wicked would not be judged, and there would be no peace upon earth.

Wonderful blessings resulting from Christ's future rulership will become realities only because of the fact of His return to earth. The second coming of Christ, therefore, will mark the end of man's today and the beginning of God's Tomorrow..."

"The hope of Christ's return is an important motive for Christian living. Expecting the Bridegroom's return, the believer seeks to be 'all glorious within' and to be arrayed in garments of righteousness. Devout Christians so order their conduct that they would not be ashamed if He should appear at any moment" (Ibid. p. 482, 483).

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. What promise was given to the disciples regarding Christ's return? Acts 1:10, 11.
2. Will His return be personal and physical? 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 John 3:1, 2.
3. Will His return be a quiet, secret affair? Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:23-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:16.
4. What will be His destination when He returns? Zechariah 14:4.
5. How will His return affect the wicked? Revelation 6:15-17.
6. What warning is given in Mark 13:32-37? Need we be taken by surprise? 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6.
7. What is Christ's return called? Titus 2:13. Why is this a glorious hope? Philippians 3:20, 21; 1 Thessalonians 1:10.
8. What should this hope cause us to do? 2 Peter 3:10, 11; 1 John 3:1-3.
9. In what ways has the assurance of Jesus' return purified your life?

THE KINGDOM

Memory Verse: *"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God"* (Revelation 2:7).

INTRODUCTION: There is coming a time when the earth will be restored to its original beauty and productivity. Apostle Paul in Romans 8:19-23 pictures the whole creation waiting and longing for that day. When Adam sinned he not only brought a curse on himself and mankind, but this curse also included the animals, plants and even the ground itself. Weeds have come up where flowers should grow. Animals now hunt and are hunted with the entailing fear and suffering. Even the ground has been exploited by man.

When Jesus returns, not only will the saints be clothed with an incorruptible body, but the whole creation will be restored to its original state, which God Himself described as being "very good." In God's Kingdom there will be no sorrow, pain, or death. Even the animals will live together in peace.

One of the greatest blessings is eternal life. Much of the pressure in this life is a result of the brevity of life itself. There are so many things that we need to accomplish, along with the additional things that we wish to accomplish, that we seldom have time to relax. In the kingdom we will still build houses, plant vineyards, etc., but time will not be a factor: If you knew that you would live a thousand years in this life you would no doubt take more time to relax and enjoy life. Just think how good it will feel to know that you will live forever.

Some may feel guilty about anticipating and emphasizing the reward for righteous living, but the Bible records that Moses considered the reward when he made his decision to serve God. Peter desired to know what reward he and the disciples would receive for following Jesus. Jesus seemed to accept this as a legitimate question and described the reward in store for the disciples. Why would the Lord describe the future kingdom so vividly if He didn't want us to anticipate it?

Everybody enjoys a reward. We each have our dream of what it would take to make us completely happy. Children's fairy tales always end with "and they lived happily ever after." Well, the story of the children of God will end with "and they lived happily ever after," but it won't be a fairy tale-it will be for real!!

LESSON QUESTIONS

1. What did Peter say would happen when Jesus returns? Acts 3:20, 21.
2. Does this restitution include more than just our bodies? Isaiah 65:17.
3. Who will inherit this earth when it is made new? Psalm 37:9, 18, 29.
4. What changes will take place at that time? Revelation 21:4.
5. What change will take place in the animals? Isaiah 11:6-9.
6. What change will take place in the nations? Micah 4:1-3.
7. What are some of the things the Saints will do? Isaiah 65:21-24; Revelation 7:9-12.
8. Should we anticipate our reward as Saints? Hebrews 11:24-26; Romans 8:19-23.