Articles of Faith Study – Part 1

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Alva Huffer, *Systematic Theology*, The Restitution Herald: Oregon, Illinois, 1969.
(Note: All *Systematic Theology* quotes use the King James Version.)

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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).

Introduction:

These lessons are the first of a two-part series that are based upon the tract "A Declaration of Things Most Commonly Believed Among Us." From time to time, it is good to review the basic doctrines that pertain to our faith. Peter and Jude thought it necessary to bring these things to the remembrance of the saints in their time, and it is just as needful in this present time. (2 Peter 1:12-13; Jude 1:3-5.)

Although this is not an exhaustive study, we pray that this will provide some fundamental information on the various subjects needed for a strong foundation that enhances your spiritual edification and growth.

Below this introduction, please find the opening statements of the Articles of Faith. For reference, each lesson contains the article of faith that corresponds or relates to the topic of that lesson.

We pray that you are blessed by these lessons.

ARTICLES OF FAITH

"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of
THOSE THINGS MOST COMMONLY BELIEVED AMONG US"
(Luke 1:1)

A. GENERAL STATEMENT

The Churches of God (Seventh Day) cherish liberty of thought as an essential condition for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we have no binding creed to which members must subscribe, however there are certain fundamental truths which have been binding upon Christians through all ages. Therefore, these are the historic doctrines taught by the Church of God, which we reaffirm as the fundamental principles of the faith.

These statements of faith approved by the General Council are passed on to the churches of God for such action as the Spirit of God may direct. It is believed that they will be helpful in giving Christian training to our children, in establishing our people in the faith, and making known our essential doctrines to others.

B. POLITY

The Church of God (Seventh Day) is historically, congregational in polity. We desire that our churches and their members continue to enjoy this blessed freedom of local autonomy. Therefore, the statements set forth here are simply an exhibition of the things most commonly believed among us and is not adopted as having binding force in itself, nor is the inspiration of the phraseology contended for.

Lesson 1 – The Word of God

Scripture Reading: Psalm 119:97-112.

Memory Verse: *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.* Romans 15:4

Article 1. THE BIBLE

We believe the Bible (both Old and New Testament) to be the inspired Word of God, containing the complete revelation of God's truth, given to man through the inspiration of God and His benevolence; that its historic statements are correct, and it is the standard for faith and practice. (John 17:17; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:15-16; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 3:16)

Introduction:

In this first lesson we will consider the "Word of God." A study of the Bible will show that the Lord wanted His laws and precepts recorded for succeeding generations. Rules handed down by word of mouth lose their accuracy, whereas the written word never changes.

Apostle Paul states that *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God"* (2 Timothy 3:16). Peter confirms this when he explains that *"holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Peter 1:21). Thus, the Bible is without contradiction and contains the whole counsel 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 do not speak 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. (Acts 17:11)

Today there are those who no longer believe the Bible to be inspired. They want to delete a portion here and another there, only to wake up to the fact that they have nothing solid to hang on to, because if part of the Bible is not inspired then how can we know for sure if any of the Bible is true.

Then there are those who ignore the Bible because they feel that they have had a special revelation that supersedes the Word of God. The Apostle Paul said that if he or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel let them be accursed. The Bible remains true, and regardless of our intellectual reasons or our spiritual experience, if our beliefs do not conform to the Bible it is because they are false.

Lesson Questions:

1. Did God see a need for His laws to be written down? Exodus 24:3-4; Deuteronomy 5:22.
2. Was this need to record God's Word limited to the law? Isaiah 30:8-11; Jeremiah 30:2.
3. How would these words be helpful in later years? Jeremiah 30:3; Daniel 9:2.
4. Why is the Bible still beneficial for us today? Romans 15:4.
5. Do you think these men expected their writings to be preserved this long? Job 19:23-24; Luke 1:1-4; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2.
6. Who directed them as they recorded these words? 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21.
7. Did they always understand what they were writing? Daniel 12:8. Who were these verses written for? Daniel 12:4, 9-10.
8. Is God particular regarding the accuracy of His Word? Revelation 22:18-19. Why?
9. What is God's Word declared to be? John 17:17.
10. How long will God's Word last? Matthew 5:17-18.

Lesson 2 – The Importance of Sound Doctrine

Scripture Reading: Titus 2.

Memory Verse: *Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.* 1 Timothy 4:16

Article 1. THE BIBLE
We believe the Bible (both Old and New Testament) to be the inspired Word of God, containing the complete revelation of God's truth, given to man through the inspiration of God and His benevolence; that its historic statements are correct, and it is the standard for faith and practice. (John 17:17; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:15-16; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 3:16)

Introduction:

When we think of truth or doctrine most of us think of subjects such as the "State of the Dead," the "Sabbath", "Heaven and Hell," etc. It is true that these are doctrines but so are the belief in God and the plan of salvation. Doctrine is what a person believes and teaches whether simple or complicated.

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. The 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. (Ephesians 4:14)

We also have an obligation to be able to defend the truth. The Apostle Paul admonished Titus thusly: *"holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict"* (Titus 1:9).

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. How do we attain the truth? John 16:13; 2 Timothy 2:15, 3:14-17.
2. What will the truth do for us? John 8:31-32.
3. How important is sound doctrine? Ephesians 4:14-16; 1 Timothy 4:16.
4. Is there a danger when we lose sight of the importance of truth? Hosea 4:6; Matthew 15:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.
5. Will there be those who refuse sound doctrine? 1 Timothy 4:1-2; 2 Timothy 4:2-4.
6. What is to be done to those who continue to resist sound doctrine? 2 John 1:9-10; Romans 16:17-18.
7. How can those who preach error affect others? 2 Timothy 2:16-18; Revelation 2:20.
8. What are some characteristics of sound doctrine? 1 Timothy 6:3; Titus 2:1-12.
9. What are some characteristics of those who will not endure sound doctrine? Ephesians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:3-4.
10. What are the benefits of knowing the truth? 1 Timothy 4:13-16.

Lesson 3 – God the Father

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 40:18-31.

Memory Verse: *"And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."* John 17:3

Article 2. THE GODHEAD

We believe,

a) In the one true God, Who is the eternal and supreme Deity. He is infinite in wisdom, love and power, the Creator and Sustainer of all things, in Whom we live, move, and have our being (Genesis 1:1; 1 Kings 3:28; Isaiah 40:28; Matthew 6:6; 22:29; John 3:16; Acts 17:28)

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).

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? John 5:19; John 14:6-9; 2 Peter 1:19-21.
4. How many Gods are there? Mark 12:32; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Ephesians 4:6.
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? John 3:16; 1 John 4:7-9.
8. Does He recognize our weaknesses? Psalm 103:13-14.
9. What relationship does He have with believer? Romans 8:14-17; 1 John 3:2.
10. As His children, how will we spend eternity and what will be our relationship with our God? Romans 8:16-17; Revelation 21:1-7.

Lesson 4 – Jesus The Son of God

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 4:14-5:10.

Memory Verse: *For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus.* 1 Timothy 2:5

Article 2. THE GODHEAD

We believe,

b) In Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, the only begotten Son of God; who came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost; we believe in His deity, His virgin birth, His sinless life, His miracles, His atoning death in our place, His bodily resurrection late on the Sabbath day, His ascension to the right hand of God in heaven, His ministry as our High Priest and Mediator, His personal return to earth at the end of this age, to establish His kingdom and rule this earth in great power and glory, judging the living and the dead. (1 Timothy 3:16)

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 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. How was the birth of Jesus foretold in the Old Testament? Isaiah 7:14. Did the circumstances of His birth agree with this? Luke 1:26-35.
2. In what ways was His childhood similar to other boys? Luke 2:40, 52; Hebrew 4:15-16.
3. What phrase did Jesus use to describe Himself and why? Daniel 7:13-14; 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.]
4. Why do you suppose He wished to emphasize His humanity? Hebrews 2:14-18; Hebrews 4:15; 1 Corinthians 10:13.
5. He was human, "the Son of man," but what else was He as well? John 3:16, 18.
6. Whom are we to pattern our lives after? Romans 8:21; 1 Peter 2:21; How did He live? 1 Peter 2:22-23; 1 John 3:5.
7. What important characteristic did He have? John 6:38; 4:34; Matthew 26:38-39. How did He learn obedience? Hebrews 5:8-9. Have we learned· that lesson?
8. What role does He play at this time? 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 7:24-27.
9. What position does He hold in relation to the church? Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:23-24.
10. What position will He hold when He returns? Matthew 25:31; Luke 1:32. What degree of authority will He possess at that time? Revelation 12:5; 19:15.

Lesson 5 – God's Holy Spirit

Scripture Reading: John 14:15-31.

Memory Verse: *Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.* Romans 8:26

Article 2. THE GODHEAD

We believe,

c) In the Holy Spirit, the Promised Comforter, sent by the Father and the Son to persuade the world of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come. By this same Spirit of God and the Son, we are sanctified and sealed unto the day of redemption. For those who diligently seek God, the Spirit will lead and guide into all truth and empower them for witnessing and service. (John 14:16, 26; 16:7-14: Ephesians 1:13-14)

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 the Holy Spirit 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 the Holy Spirit is may be found in noting how often the Holy Spirit 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 orphans; 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,' says 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. What did Jesus promise the disciples to take His place? John 16:7. What will the comforter do? John 14:15-17; 15:26; 16:8-14.
3. How will the Holy Spirit help us in time of need? Matthew 10:18-20; Luke 12:11-12.
4. How is the Holy Spirit described in Luke 24:49? What did this power enable them to do? Luke 24:47-48; John 7:37-39; Acts 1:8.
5. What are some ways in which the Holy Spirit will direct our lives? Acts 13:1-3; 16:6-7; 2 Peter 1:20-21.
6. What are we individually and collectively supposed to be? 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:5.
7. Who does the Bible say is living in us through the Holy Spirit? John 14:23; 1 John 3:24; 4:12-13.
8. What will the Spirit do for us? Ephesians 3:16-19. What kind of fruit will this produce? Galatians 5:22-23.
9. If Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit, what does this make us? Romans 8:14-17.
10. Have there always been those who have had the Spirit dwelling within? Genesis 41:38; Exodus 31:3; Numbers 27:18; Psalm 51:11.

Lesson 6 – The Crucifixion

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 53.

Memory Verse: *But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* Romans 5:8

Article 3. CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST
We believe the Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ was crucified in the middle of the week, on the day we call Wednesday towards sunset. He remained in the tomb for three days and three nights, and arose towards the sunset of the Sabbath day (Saturday), fulfilling the "sign" given by Himself. (Matthew 12:39 40; 28:1; Luke 23:54)

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; 1 Timothy 2:6.
2. Was Jesus aware of this purpose during His earthly ministry? Matthew 17:22-23; 20:17-19; John 12:23-27.
3. Was the circumstance of His death prophesied in the Old Testament? Psalm 22:1, 7-8, 16-18.
4. What Old Testament passage explains the purpose of His death? Isaiah 53. Take a moment and look for the many references in this passage that points to the fact that Jesus bore our sin.
5. Why was it necessary for Jesus to die? Hebrews 9:22; 10:3-4; Romans 6:23.
6. Describe the agony involved in a crucifixion. Matthew 26:67-68; 27:26-31.
7. What will be our fate if we haven't accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior? Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:12; Revelation 21:8.
8. What transaction takes place as we accept His atonement? 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.
9. What do we become as a result of accepting Jesus as our, Savior? Romans 8:14-17; Ephesians 2:12-13.
10. According to John 3:16 and 1 Corinthians 2:2, what is a primary message of the church today?

Lesson 7 – The Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-23.

Memory Verse: *That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.* Romans 10:9

Article 3. CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST
We believe the Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ was crucified in the middle of the week, on the day we call Wednesday towards sunset. He remained in the tomb for three days and three nights, and arose towards the sunset of the Sabbath day (Saturday), fulfilling the "sign" given by Himself. (Matthew 12:39 40; 28:1; Luke 23:54)

Introduction:

Jesus, speaking of Himself after the resurrection, said *"Because I live, you will 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; that change was proven in the lives of the Apostles who were willing to lay down their lives because of this truth.

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.

The 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. The 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). The Apostle John adds his testimony: *"He who is in you is greater than he who 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, 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; 1 Corinthians 15:22-23.
6. What warning does this give to the unrighteous? Acts 17:31; Jude 1:14-15
7. What is the importance of Christ's resurrection to our salvation? Romans 10:8-10; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.
8. What does the resurrection of Jesus symbolize in our Christian walk? Romans 6:4-5, 11-13.
9. What is our source of strength to live an overcoming life? Ephesians 3:17-21; 1 John 4:4.
10. What is the nature of Jesus' life since His resurrection? Romans 6:9; Revelation 1:18.

Lesson 8 – The Sign of the Messiah

Scripture Reading: John 19:30-42.

Memory Verse: "For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Matthew 12:40.

Article 3. CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST
We believe the Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ was crucified in the middle of the week, on the day we call Wednesday towards sunset. He remained in the tomb for three days and three nights, and arose towards the sunset of the Sabbath day (Saturday), fulfilling the "sign" given by Himself. (Matthew 12:39 40; 28:1; Luke 23:54)

Introduction:

During Jesus' ministry the religious leaders continually pressed Him for signs as proof of His Messiahship. Matthew 12:38-40 records one of these incidents. and Jesus' reply. "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. "

Notice that Jesus said that only **one** sign would be given, i.e., that He would be **three days and three nights** in the heart of the earth. His entire claim to being the Messiah rested on that sign. If this sign was not fulfilled then He Is not the true Messiah.

The popular teaching that Jesus was crucified on Friday and resurrected on Sunday morning does **not** fulfill this sign. The very most we can get from a Friday crucifixion and a Sunday morning resurrection is two full nights, a full day and two very small portions of other days. This is barely over half of the 72 hours required to make up three days and three nights. *"Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar"* (Romans 3:4).

When we rightly divide the word of truth we find that the day following the Passover was a high Sabbath. This Sabbath can fall on any day of the week. This High Sabbath fell on Thursday the year Jesus was crucified. Some teach that Luke 24:13-21 contradicts a Wednesday crucifixion. However, Dan 9:27 prophecies of a Wednesday crucifixion and Luke 24:13-21 are referring to a conversation on Sunday. When you count three days backwards it would be Thursday, however one must take into account that the day in Biblical times was counted from sunset to sunset (Genesis 1:5) so Thursday would have started on what we would refer to as Wednesday sunset.

Thus, Jesus was crucified on Wednesday and arose late on the Sabbath and perfectly fulfilled the only sign He gave. Once we understand this, all the apparent discrepancies disappear.

Is this really important? It was important enough that Jesus based His entire claim to being the Messiah on this sign, and the significant of us understanding its fulfillment seems obvious.

Lesson Questions:

1. What did the scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus to show them? Matthew 12:38-41; 16:1-4
2. How did the "sign of the prophet Jonah" prove that Jesus was the Messiah? ; Jonah 1:17; John 2:18-22
3. How long did Jesus say He would be "in the heart of the earth"? Jonah 1:17; Matthew 12:40.
4. Does a Friday crucifixion and Sunday morning resurrection provide three days and three nights? John 19:31; 20:1
5. What do Scripture's descriptions of a day and night tell us about the sign of Jonah? Genesis 1:5; Matthew 12:40
6. What evidence indicates there were two Sabbaths during the crucifixion week? Leviticus 23:5-7; Mark 16:1; Luke 23:54-56; John 19: 14, 31. [NOTE: Mark records the women purchasing spices after the Sabbath, while Luke records them preparing the spices and then resting on the Sabbath. This chronology supports an annual High Sabbath followed by a preparation day and then the weekly Sabbath.]
7. How was a biblical day reckoned, and how does that help us understand Luke 24:21? Genesis 1:5; Leviticus 23:32; Luke 24:13-21
8. When the women arrived at the tomb on the first day of the week, had Jesus already risen? Matthew 28:1-6; John 20:1
9. Why is the death and resurrection of Jesus essential to our faith? 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 12-17

Lesson 9 – The State of the Dead

Scripture Reading: Job 14.

Memory Verse: *"Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth--those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation."* John 5:28-29

Article 4. STATE OF THE DEAD

We believe that death is a condition of "unconsciousness" (sleep) to all persons, both the just and the unjust, a condition which shall remain unchanged until the great resurrection at Christ's second advent, at which time the righteous will receive eternal life, while at their appointed time it is said, the wicked will be punished with everlasting destruction. (Job 14:14; Ecclesiastes 9:5; Matthew 10:28; John 5:28-29; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)

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. The Bible is very plain regarding the immortality of the soul and the state of man in death. It teaches that death is as a sleep in which man cannot think, feel, or remember.

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 teaches that 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 Questions:

1. What does the Bible teach regarding the immortality of the soul? Genesis 3:22; 1 Timothy 6:14-16; 1 Corinthians 15:50-57.
2. How is death described in the Bible? 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14; Psalm 13:3; Daniel 12:2.
3. What happens to our thoughts when we die? Psalm 146:3-4; Ecclesiastes 9:4-6, 10. A common belief is that the dead observe their loved ones from heaven or that they are praising God in heaven. Does this agree with the Bible? Psalm 6:4-5; Job 14:21; Psalm 115:17. David died about one thousand B.C. Where did Peter say he was in his time? Acts 2:29, 34.
4. How long will the saints remain in the grave? Job 14:12-14; Revelation 20:4; 1 Corinthians 15:22-23.
5. Who will cause the dead to rise? John 5:28-29; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57.
6. What will He bring with Him? Matthew 16:27; Revelation 22:12. What kind of bodies will we have? Psalm 17:15; 1 John 3:1-2.

Lesson 10 – The Punishment of the Wicked

Scripture Reading: Revelation 20:7-15

Memory Verse: *"And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell."* Matthew 5:30

Article 4. STATE OF THE DEAD

We believe that death is a condition of "unconsciousness" (sleep) to all persons, both the just and the unjust, a condition which shall remain unchanged until the great resurrection at Christ's second advent, at which time the righteous will receive eternal life, while at their appointed time it is said, the wicked will be punished with everlasting destruction. (Job 14:14; Ecclesiastes 9:5; Matthew 10:28; John 5:28-29; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)

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)" (Alva Huffer, *Systematic Theology*, The Restitution Herald: Oregon, Illinois, 1969, 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? 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 1:7.
5. What was the end result of Sodom? Genesis 19:27-28; Luke 17:29-30.
6. 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? Romans 6:23; Revelation 2:11; 20:14.
7. Are the wicked dead being punished now? Job 3:11, 17; 2 Peter 2:9.
8. The common belief is that only the soul is punished in hell. Does this agree with the Bible? Matthew 5:29-30.
9. What is another Bible name for this "hell?" Revelation 20:14-15.
10. What else is translated "hell" in our Bible? Isaiah 14:15-17. Have righteous people been in this hell? Psalm 18:4-5; Jonah 2:2; Acts 2:25-27.

Lesson 11 – Man's Condition

Scripture Reading: Romans 3:9-23.

Memory Verse: *All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.* Isaiah 53:6

Article 5. MAN'S CONDITION

We believe man was created for immortality, but through sin he forfeited his divine birthright, and because of sin, death entered into the world, and passed upon all men. Only through faith in Jesus Christ can we become partakers of His divine nature and live forever. (Romans 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 51-54; 2 Timothy 1:10; 2 Peter 1:4)

Introduction:

"Sin is universal. All men are sinners; all of man is sinful. Sin is universal among men; it is total within man. If one drew a circle to indicate the righteous, it would be empty. All would be excluded. If one drew a circle to indicate sinners, it would be filled. All would be included.

"The universality of sin is clearly taught by direct statements in the Bible. All men by natural birth are sinners. it is apparent, of course, that Jesus is an exception. 'We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away' (Isaiah 64:6). 'The whole world lieth in wickedness' (1 John 5:19)." (Alva G. Huffer, *Systematic Theology*, The Restitution Herald: Oregon, Illinois, 1961, p. 191).

"Sin is a corruption of the nature of man, so that although by creation he was intended for fellowship with God and to reflect His nature ('In God's Image'), he now is not only unfit for that fellowship, apart from salvation, but without desire for it; indeed, he is in practice (though perhaps not consciously always) in rebellion against God. Sin is not a series of wrong acts or careless omissions, but the root of all these. Sin is not ugly ornaments hung on a Christmas tree, which can be removed one by one, it is rather what makes a poison bush produce poison berries. it is 'the way we are.' This human situation is universal; everyone is born into it. it is a predicament because man, left to himself, is more or less unaware of the actual trouble, and he is unable to help himself, because he lacks the perspective to see himself and the power to· set himself free from what destroys him. He is under the Impression that he needs to be saved from what makes him afraid-from danger, shame, failure, pain, and death. What he does not see is that he needs to be saved from himself." (Ibid. p. 199).

"Some men deny human responsibility for sin by locating sin in society instead of in the individual. They declare that a person may be a sinner, but that he is not responsible for his sins. His sinful condition is the fault of society as a whole. They assert, therefore, that no one will ever have to answer for any personal sin. According to this teaching, guilt is not an individual matter; sin is merely an unfortunate condition of society." (Ibid. p. 194).

The Bible, however, is very explicit on this point and states that we will each stand alone before the judgment seat of God to give an account of ourselves. We will be judged by the Word of God, and neither friends nor society can share our guilt or reward.

Lesson Questions:

1. In what circumstances were Adam and Eve placed in the beginning? Genesis 2:7-15.
2. How did they lose their right to paradise? Genesis 3:1-19.
3. What has been man's natural condition since Adam? Romans 5:12-14.
4. What is man's condition outside of Jesus Christ? Genesis 6:5; Romans 1:21-25.
5. Are we all like this, or are there some exceptions? Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:10, 23.
6. What is our natural tendency when confronted with our own sinfulness? Genesis 3:11-13; 1 Samuel 15:13-15.
7. At what point do we come under the penalty of sin? Psalm 51:5; Romans 3:23; Romans 5:12.
8. Where does this leave us regarding our relationship to God and eternity? Romans 1:32; Ephesians 2:1-3.
9. Is it possible to change our carnal nature by ourselves? Jeremiah 13:23; Romans 7:14-23.
10. What is our only solution to this problem? Romans 7:24-25; 8:1-4.

Lesson 12 – Salvation

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2.

Memory Verse: *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.* Ephesians 2:8-9

Article 6. MAN'S SALVATION

We believe that man is in a state of corruption and cannot save himself. Therefore God, in His love for mankind, has provided a way of salvation for him through Jesus Christ. It is a free gift received through faith and repentance and cannot be earned. The gift of salvation leads to a life of conversion, repentance, baptism and receiving of the Holy Spirit, the very heart and mind of God. (Mark 16:16; Luke 3:21-22; John 3:16; Acts 2:38; Hebrews 8:10)

Introduction:

When Adam and Eve were placed in the garden of Eden they were given everything necessary to lead a happy and prosperous life. They not only had everything to fulfill their physical needs but they could communicate on a personal basis with their Heavenly Father.

As a result of Adam and Eve's fall, they not only lost all this for themselves, but they doomed the whole human race to destruction. Adam and Eve's sin must have been a great disappointment to God, He had created them in His own Image as His greatest creation only to have them disobey Him. Things have not changed much since then. Men and women are still rejecting His ways to follow their own inclinations.

But God loves us enough that, in spite of our worthlessness, He sent His only begotten Son as a sacrifice to redeem us through His divine rescue mission, His Plan of Salvation. The only things He asks is that we believe and accept His gift and then follow His leading.

He has prepared a kingdom for those who will accept His gift.

> *And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.*
>
> *And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."* (Revelation 21:3-4)

Throughout eternity God will dwell among His people. This is what Adam and Eve forfeited, but through Jesus Christ our Lord paradise will be restored for the saints.

When we attempt to comprehend all the blessings in store for us we feel like David.

> *"When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor. O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!* (Psalm 8:3-5, 9)

Lesson Questions:

1. Why is man in need of a savior? Malachi 4:1; Romans 9:32; Ephesians 2:12.
2. With whom does salvation originate? Psalm 3:8; 98:2-3.
3. What motivates God to grant salvation to sinful man? John 3:16; Romans 5:6-10.
4. What part does Jesus play in our salvation? Hebrews 2:9, 14; 1 Peter 2:21-25.
5. What must we do to receive this blessing? Acts 2:37-38; 16:30-31.
6. What do we receive when we accept Jesus as our Savior? Romans 4:3-7; 5:10-11.
7. What does the blood of Jesus do to our sins? Psalm 51:7, 10-11; Isaiah 1:18.
8. What other benefits do we receive? Psalm 51:12; Isaiah 12:2-3; John 14:27; 2 Thessalonians 3:16.
9. What should this cause us to do? Psalm 107:2; Luke 8:38-40.
10. Should salvation bring about a change in the way we live? Romans 6:11-14; 1 John 3:2-7.

Lesson 13 – Holy Living

Scripture Reading: Psalm 15.

Memory Verse: *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* 2 Corinthians 7:1

Article 7. A HOLY LIFE AND SANCTIFICATION

We believe that God is holy and requires that His children be holy and sanctified. Sanctification means a cleansing from sin, separation from the world, and consecration to God. The sanctification of a Christian is attained through faith in the Word, faith in the blood of Jesus, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. Sanctification is affected instantaneously, at the time of conversion and continuously, each day as the believer walks with God. (1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:11; 1 Peter 3:15)

Introduction:

One of God's greatest attributes 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 stirred with his own sin and unworthiness in contrast to God's holiness, as was the case with Isaiah.

To be holy means to be set apart or separate from sin and evil. *"But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'"* (1 Peter 1:15-16 quoting Leviticus 19:2). 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 is only possible with God's help. The Apostle John states this when he says, *"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world"* (1 John 4:4). The Apostle Paul also speaks to this in Galatians 5:16, "*I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."*

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. *"Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"* (Romans 6:2).

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? Isaiah 6:1-3; 1 Peter 1:15-16.
2. How important is it that we live holy lives? 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 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? Romans 13:12-14; Titus 2:11-12 What is provided in case we slip? 1 John 2:1.
5. What are we declared to be collectively? Ephesians 2:19, 22; 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.
6. Can we retain some of our worldly ways and still be saved? Matthew 6:24; James 4:4.
7. How can we tell if a person is righteous? Luke 6:43-45; 1 John 3:7.
8. What are some actions and traits that indicate a holy life? Psalm 15:1-5; 24:3-5.
9. How can we become holy? Philippians 4:8; 2 Peter 1:5-9. Are there fringe benefits to holy living? 1 Timothy 6:6.
10. What kind of people will be in the kingdom? 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:27; Revelation 14:1-5; 22:14. What kind of people will be left out? Revelation 21:27; 22:15.