

Lesson 1

GOD AND HIS NATURE

The personality of God and its attributes

The absolute dominion of God

God – the Author, the Creator, and the Ruler of all existence

God is the One who created everything. Such is His nature that He exists independent of anything or anyone. He is everlasting. He was not created by anyone. God is the only Personage existing eternally.

Since God is the Creator and the Ruler of all things, He owns absolutely everything that exists. He possesses absolute authority and strength to control the whole universe.

Acts 17:24-28 “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; ²⁵ nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things; ²⁶ and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, ²⁷ that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and exist...”

Isaiah 40: 22-28 “It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. ²³ He it is who reduces rulers to nothing, who makes the judges of the earth meaningless. ²⁴ Scarcely have they been planted, scarcely have they been sown, scarcely has their stock taken root in the earth, but He merely blows on them, and they wither, and the storm carries them away like stubble. ²⁵ “To whom then will you liken Me that I would be his equal?” says the Holy One. ²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing. ²⁷ why do you say, O Jacob, and assert, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the Lord, and the justice due me escapes the notice of my God”? ²⁸ Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not

become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.“

The absolute dominion of God – an inseparable attribute of His nature

God's absolute dominion is a quality that integrally pertains to His nature. This dominion was not given to God by someone. It is a natural condition of God's essence. This truth is confirmed by multiple testimonies.

Biblical foundation

The Bible begins with God as an absolute and central Personage: “In the beginning God...”
Genesis 1:1

The Bible ends with God and His absolute and undisputed dominion: “the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.” *Revelation 1,21,22*

Logical objective

The existence of anything requires the existence of an absolute prime cause that is self-sufficient and perfectly sovereign in its existence. Such prime cause may only be the absolute and perfect God.

If God does not have the absolute dominion, then He is not really a God and, therefore, must have someone higher than Him controlling the universe.

Lexical basis

God's absolute dominion is expressed in His name, in which He opened up Himself to the nation of Israel, “I am who I am.” This is an expression of absolute self-sufficiency and independence. *Exodus 3:14, 6:3*

The absolute dominion of God existed and continues to exist without interruptions

Despite many situations in this world that may appear as a victory of evil, God has never lost his absolute dominion over the universe.

Psalm 145:13 “Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations.”

Jeremiah 10:10-13 “But the Lord is the true God; HE is the living God and the everlasting King. At His wrath the earth quakes, and the nations cannot endure His indignation. ¹¹

Thus you say to them, ‘The gods that did not make the heavens and the earth will perish from the earth and from under the heavens.’¹² It is He who made the earth by His power, Who established the world by His wisdom; and by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens.¹³ When He utters His voice, there is a tumult of waters in the heavens, and He causes the clouds to ascend from the end of the earth; He makes lightning for the rain, and brings out the wind from His storehouses.”

Lamentations 5:19 “You, O Lord, rule forever; Your throne is from generation to generation.”

God rules over all existence

The dominion of God extends throughout all ages and on all existence. God has enough power to control everything and everyone.

The sufficiency of God's power over everything – *I Chronicles 29:11-12* “Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Yours is the dominion, O Lord, and You exalt Yourself as head over all.¹² Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all, and in Your hand is power and might; and it lies in Your hand to make great and to strengthen everyone.”

The dominion over worldly powers

Nebuchadnezzar – *Daniel 4:34-35* “But at the end of that period, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever; for His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation.³⁵ All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’”

Proverbs 21:1 “The king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord...”

Dominion over Sheol – *Amos 9:2* “Though they dig into Sheol, from there will My hand take them; and though they ascend to heaven, from there will I bring them down.”

Dominion over devil – *Job 1:9-12* “Then Satan answered the Lord, ‘Does Job fear God for nothing?¹⁰ Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have

increased in the land. ¹¹ But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.’ ¹² Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.’ So Satan departed from the presence of the Lord.”

Dominion over everything – *Psalm 102:19* “The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all.”

The absolute goodness of God

God is an absolute Ruler representing absolute goodness. God is good; that is why His nature determines what is good.

Goodness – the essence of God's nature

Everything that God does is good. The word “good” is mentioned seven times in the first chapter of Genesis as a characteristic of that which God does. *Genesis 1:8,10,12,18,21,25,31*

The Bible directly confirms God's goodness

2 Chronicles 5:13 “In unison when the trumpeters and the singers were to make themselves heard with one voice to praise and to glorify the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice accompanied by trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and when they praised the Lord saying, ‘He indeed is good for His lovingkindness is everlasting,’ then the house, the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud...”

Psalm 25: 8 “Good and upright is the Lord; therefore He instructs sinners in the way.”

God – the true standard of goodness

The concept of “right” and “wrong”, “good” and “evil” differs among various cultures and groups.

In His essence, God represents goodness. Since God is goodness, everything that rebels against God and His nature is evil.

Being the only absolute and self-sufficient Personage and Creator, only God can truly define the standard of goodness.

God determines what is good – Genesis 1:4

God determines what is not good – Genesis 2:18

The absolute justice of God

God is the only absolute Lawgiver in the universe

Every law has a lawgiver. In order to be a lawgiver, one must receive such power from the higher authority. Since God is the Most Supreme and Absolute Authority, He Himself is the source of right for establishing laws.

Isaiah 33: 22 “For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; He will save us...”

James 4: 12 “There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?”

God is the only true standard of justice

Because God is absolute in His nature, He is the only standard of justice. He cannot be unjust. We might not understand some of God's actions because we do not possess either all the information or our criteria of justice is ruined by the influence of our sinful nature.

Exodus 18:19 Jethro Counsels Moses “Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people’s representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do.”

Psalms 19: 8-11 “The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.⁹ The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.¹⁰ They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.¹¹ Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”

Romans 1: 28 “And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper...”

Romans 9: 18-21 “So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires. You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?’ On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, ‘Why did you make me like this,’ will it? Or does not the potter have

a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?”

The laws of God are perfect. By His nature, God will fulfill each of His statutes.

God is a lawgiver as well as an executor of His laws. Because God is perfect, His laws cannot be not carried out. The Bible testifies very clearly about the invariability of God's laws.

Matthew 5: 18 “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the law until all is accomplished.”

Matthew 24: 35 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.”

Jeremiah 1: 12 “Then the Lord said to me, ‘You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it.’”

Assignment: Memorize Acts 17:24-28.

Lesson 2

MAN

Man was created in the image and likeness of God

Man is the only one who has been created “in the image and likeness of God”

Genesis 1:26-27 “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’²⁷ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Man was created as a person, having a unique relationship with God

Unlike other creation, man was created capable of having a relationship with God.

An intellect – an ability to think rationally

Intellect – an operational system in which man functions
God uses logic as a foundation of His communication with man

A will – an ability to realize and make decisions

Emotions – an ability to receive satisfaction from things existent around oneself

Esthetics – an ability to understand good and beauty

The ability to control

The qualities mentioned above allowed man to control and rule over a part of God's creation.

Primordial expression of God’s image in man

Apart from the rest of the creation, man held a special status before God because he was created in the image and likeness of God.

Man had the Spirit of God within himself from the beginning

Genesis 2:7 “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into

his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”

Man was a part of God's family from the beginning

Luke 3:23-38 “When He began His ministry Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli, ... the son of Adam, the son of God.”

Man had a right to rule over the land from the beginning

Genesis 1:27-28 “God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

These three qualities were lost by man at the moment of the fall (in more detail see section “Sin”).

Man's role in the absolute plan of God

Man was never the goal of the existence of the universe – he was always a creation and not the Creator.

Often people have an incorrect perception in this area. In some capacity recognizing God as the Creator, they think that God must act according to their standards.

Genesis 1:27 “God created man...”

Job 38:1-4 “Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said, ² ‘Who is this the darkens counsel by words without knowledge? ³ Now gird up your loins like a man, and I will ask you, and you instruct Me! ⁴ Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding...’”

Job 40:6-9 “Then the Lord answered Job out of the storm and said, ⁷ ‘Now gird up your loins like a man; I will ask you, and you will instruct Me. ⁸ Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified? ⁹ Or do you have an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like His?’”

Man was a conscious participant in Eden of God's perfect work.

The term “Lord” includes an element of personal relations between man and God

Second chapter of Genesis presents man as a conscious and voluntary partner in creative ministry of his Creator – God.

Genesis 2:4-8 “This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven. ⁵ Now no shrub of the field was yet in the earth, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth, and there was no man to cultivate the ground. ⁶ But a mist used to rise from the earth and water the whole surface of the ground. ⁷ Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. ⁸ The Lord God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there HE placed the man whom He had formed.”

Physical and intellectual voluntary labor in the Garden of Eden

Working in the Garden of Eden, man was a participant in the development of the entire project – the universe, which belongs to God. His life and harmonious interaction with God were a demonstration of God's greatness and glory.

Genesis 2:15 “Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.”

Genesis 2:19-20 “Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.”

The ultimate goal of the universe is the demonstration of the greatness and the glory of God. The ultimate goal of man is to glorify God, come to know Him, and rejoice in the fellowship with Him.

The Bible clearly states that only God and the triumph of His glory are the ultimate goal, the meaning of history, and the center of all existence.

Romans 11: 36 “For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”

The glory of God is the triumph of the majestic perfection of His Personage

God's glory is the demonstration of the magnificence of His perfect and absolute Personage. It is expressed in His existence, works, and relations with man.

God's glory is the ultimate goal of salvation and the moral good of man

Isaiah 43: 7 "...Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made."

Ephesians 1:4 "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

Glorification of God is the ultimate goal of a holy and Christian life

When man comes to God, he is enabled to demonstrate God's majesty and glory in his life.

John 15:8 "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."

1 Peter 4: 11 "Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Matthew 5: 16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

1 Peter 2: 11 "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation."

Glorification of God is a sacred duty of a Christian

1 Corinthians 6: 20 "For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."

1 Corinthians 10: 31 "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

Glorification of God is the ultimate blessing for man

2 Thessalonians 1: 12 “So that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Without God, the glory of man is impossible. The greater the glory of God, the more precious and brighter the glory of man is in Him.

Man suffers difficulties and anguish because he does not want to live for the glory of God

Romans 1:21-25 “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.²² Professing to be wise, they became fools,²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

God is an absolute perfectionist. Therefore, God does everything for His glory; He cannot be satisfied with anything that is not perfect. Hence, God's ultimate satisfaction can only be in the nature and the actions of His own personality.

*The ultimate goal of the universe is to demonstrate the glory and greatness of God.
The ultimate goal of man is to glorify God, come to know Him, and rejoice in the fellowship with Him.*

Assignment: Memorize Romans 1:21-25.

Lesson 3

THE FALL

The Bible describes how Satan rebelled against God and was cast down from heaven. Since God is the absolute good and perfection, everything else that rebels against God is evil. Therefore, the evilness of the devil was not in his primordial nature but in his reaction in regards to God. Being a creation, the devil rebelled against God trying to take over the Creator's place:

Isaiah 14: 12-15 “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations. ¹³ But you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, and I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High. ¹⁵ Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, to the recesses of the pit.”

Temptation

The Bible tells that some time after Satan was cast down from heaven, he came to man in order to entice him into doing the same thing that he did—rebel against God.

The purpose of temptation – a war against God and His creation

The devil knew that man is the crown and the ruler of the creation. Hence, the devil tempted him in order to become a ruler himself by seizing power from man.

Ephesians 2: 1-2 “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.”

John 12: 31 “Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”

The method of temptation – intricately woven lie

When the devil approached man, he did not openly offer him his plan. Instead, he disguised his actions in the form of an apparent concern for man. Seeking his own treacherous gain, the devil made his offer in a very appealing manner.

Apparent care for man (*Genesis 3:6*)

“...your eyes will be opened...”

“...you will be like God...”

“...knowing good and evil”

The wickedness of devil's deceit

A question that casts a shadow on God (an attempt to create an outlook with doubt towards God)

“Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?”

Devil offered man to doubt God's absolute good by asking this question. It was as if he was saying: Is it certain that God forbid the real enjoyment in life?

Being a very persistent and cunning tempter, the devil greatly appealed to man. The temptation was done in such a fashion that as a result man had to be responsible for the consequences. The subtlety of temptation was as follows:

The devil did not insist but merely offered the forbidden fruit to man but didn't force him to eat it.

While tempting man, the devil offered him an 'opportunity' to see the world apart from God's point of view. The alternative point of view was presented to man as an 'independent judgment.' In reality, nothing that exists in this world is independent. As soon as man declined to view the forbidden fruit from God's point of view, he began looking at it from the perspective of God's enemy – the devil.

Allowing given circumstances to take place, man stood on slippery slope that led him to destruction.

The nature of the fall

The fall began with distrust of God

The Fall is the violation of harmonious relations between man and God. The devil offered man to depart from God's peace and dominion trying to 'independently' evaluate God's commands and prohibitions.

Man allowed himself to look at things apart from God's point of view (allowed the possibility of another measuring criteria).

Genesis 3: 6 “...The woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise...”

Man allowed himself to consider the possibility of God telling untruth

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Genesis 2:17 “But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

Genesis 3: 4 “The serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely will not die!’”

Man allowed himself to consider that God deprived him of something better with His prohibition.

Genesis 3:5 “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

The Fall is a rebellion against God

The Fall of man is not at all an innocent fact of Adam and Eve eating some fruit (as some try to present it in such a way). The Fall is an uprising. Man attempted to be God. Since there can be only one God, with this decision man entered the feud with God.

The result of the Fall – death without God

In the very beginning, when God created man, He warned him of the fatal danger of sin.

Since God is the absolute, His absolute good, justice, harmony, and peace demand the presence of absolute holiness – control that has zero tolerance towards sin. Hence, sinful man could not remain in God's presence. Man was to be immediately destroyed by the fire of God's wrath; however, due to God's greatest love towards His creation, God preserves the universe to, in time, save those who believe in Him through the death of Jesus Christ.

Genesis 2: 17 “But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

The essence of death – a breach of the source of life

Man is not self-sufficient (in the true meaning of this word). He is in need of God as a source of life because he is a creation. When warning the first man of the danger of sin, God said they will be doomed to death if they violate harmonious relations with Him. The reason for this is that God is the only source of life.

Psalms 36:10 “O continue Your lovingkindness to those who know you, and Your righteousness to the upright in heart.”

John 1:4 “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.”

Spiritual death

Man died spiritually after committing sin. It means that he lost his harmonious relations with his Creator – God. The Fall placed man in the atmosphere of embarrassment, fear, deceit, strife, and deterioration. It is imperative to remember the essence of the Fall in order to correctly understand its implications.

The Fall has the pride of man as its foundation – that is, the striving to be independent of God.

Genesis 3:5 “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Proverbs 16:18 “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.”

Proverbs 21:4 “Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, is sin.”

1 John 2:16 “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.”

The Fall presents itself as the desire to establish man's power. It presents a right to do that, which man desires in his uncontrollable lusts.

Genesis 3:6 “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.”

The Fall led man to false standards – fraudulent knowledge.

Ephesians 4:17-18 “So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart.”

Man lost the point of evaluation for surrounding occurrences once he departed from under God's influence. Left without God, man lost all the true, absolute standards of truth and goodness. He substituted them with his own values and ideals that originated outside of God, defected by death and destruction in their core.

God is an absolute Personage and possesses absolute knowledge. First of all, God knows

himself absolutely. He is never in the process of learning something. He is eternally omniscient. Man is restricted in his knowledge as well as analytical abilities to correctly organize his existing knowledge. Fallen man created his own system of knowledge established outside of God because he desires to possess knowledge. Man's standard of knowledge is based on the assumption that he possesses the absolute truth. It was the result of man forgetting that he was a creation and not a Creator. (*Romans 1:20*)

The Fall resulted in man serving the wrong master – the devil. Man thought that he would become God. Instead, he withdrew from under God's influence by rebelling against Him. He joined the devil's camp, who leads all godlessness. Hence, the devil became the ruler over man.

2 Corinthians 4:4 “In whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

John 8:43-44 “Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. ⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

The Fall leads to an inevitable result – an eternal destruction without God.

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

There is no source of life outside of God. Therefore, everything that is outside of God will inevitably deteriorate and die.

Mathew 25:41 “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

Spiritual death applies to all persons living on this Earth.

Romans 3:10-18 “As it is written, ‘There is none righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is non who understands, there is non who seeks for God; ¹² all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is non who does good, there is not even one. ¹³ Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, their poison of asps is under their lips; ¹⁴ whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; ¹⁵ their feet are swift to shed blood,

¹⁶ destruction and misery are in their paths, ¹⁷ and the path of peace they have not known.
¹⁸ There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Romans 5:12 “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned...”

Egoism is the drive of the fallen man to exult his interests above all.

Romans 1: 21-25 “For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. ²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator...”

Physical death

Being under man's rule, the Earth was subject to fatal actions of sin because the man departed from under God's influence and came under the authority of the devil. Therefore, all living things on Earth are inevitably approaching death. Deterioration and degradation are the natural condition of this world after the Fall. The cause of all this is the curse of man's sin.

Genesis 3:17-19 “Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all days of your life. ¹⁸ both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; ¹⁹ by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.’”

The state of man after the Fall

Man cannot be neutral but in one of two states: acceptance of God's dominion and obedience to Him or obedience to the devil who is the initiator of this animosity.

Often the devil presents himself as the angel of light; therefore, he can allow his people to do a lot of «good» and at the same time oppose God, hence continuing to be servants of the devil.

After man sinned, he lost the ability to understand the existence of good and evil. Quite the contrary, the devil promised that man will learn the distinction. (Genesis 3:5) Yet the problem is that man refused God's sole standard of goodness, His right for that standard, and substituted it with his own. Without God, man creates his own system of goodness and justice. In fact, every culture and civilization has its own moral standards that differ from one another. All of these moral standards differ because they are created by different people who have the final word and authority.

These systems of moral values often consider Biblical principles but in their essence are independent of God. For example, the concept of “if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat” was taken by communists from II Thessalonians 3:10. Some elements of man's standards quite often coincide with God's standard. For example, some unbelievers sacrifice themselves for the greater good of others. Of course, these are great concepts but the problem is that they are created within the system of moral standards by man who continuously rebels against God. The people who create these standards do not acknowledge the absolute right of God to determine the sole system of moral principles in their lives. Seeing their high worth, the people agreed with God on some of the aspects but continued to resist obeying Him.

The fall resulted in man losing some elements of God's image that characterized him primordially:

Instead of Spirit of God, man is influenced by the power of the evil spirit

Ephesians 2:2 “In which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.”

Instead of being a son of God, man became a son of wrath

Ephesians 2:3 “Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”

Instead of ruling, man became a slave

Romans 6:17 “But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed...”

Assignment: Memorize Romans 3:10-12 and Romans 5:12.

Lesson 4

THE NECESSITY OF SALVATION

The destruction without external source of salvation

Man rebelled against God and was cut off from the source of life. Due to this reason, the universe is ruled by death. Everything in this world is rushing towards disintegration. The world is infected with sickness and catastrophes. Plants perish. Animals perish. Humans perish. Every man knows that sooner or later he will die. Sin brings along death and demolition. Like an aggressive virus that kills every cell in the organism, sin affected every element of the universe that was given by God to man's disposal.

Romans 8:20-22 “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.”

The degradation through sin occurs not only in the physical world. It is very aggressive in moral and social relations among men. Inspired by man's pride, evil, violence, and uncontrolled passions bring pain and sufferings, poisoning their social life. All the calamities of today's world reflect inevitable consequences of sin: deceit, betrayal in personal relationships, international terrorism, global wars, etc.

Moreover, every person, born of Adam and Eve, was born in the rebellious atmosphere against God. Hence, everyone is affected with the virus of sin that inevitably kills. The Scriptures clearly talks about it:

Romans 3:9-18 “Both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; ¹⁰ as it is written, ‘There is none righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is non who understands, there is non who seeks for God; ¹² all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is non who does good, there is not even one. ¹³ Their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep deceiving, their poison of asps is under their lips; ¹⁴ whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; ¹⁵ their feet are swift to shed blood, ¹⁶ destruction and misery are in their paths, ¹⁷ and the path of peace they have not known. ¹⁸ There is no fear of God before their eyes.’”

Thus, humanity, descended from Adam and Eve who rebelled against God, and has the nature of opposition towards God. This nature seeks self-assertion and elevation and

personal interests above the absolute interests of God and other people. This concludes the desires of first man to “be like God.”

Genesis 3:4-5 “The serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”

Every man that descended from Adam and Eve possesses the dominant desire to take God's place. It is the desire to have the power and authority to do whatever he regards as necessary and independently determining what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong. The given condition is inseparable from human nature. Hence, the pain, sufferings, deterioration, and death are the inevitable reality of humanity and the individual.

The necessity of retribution for sin

Apart from deterioration of the human race expressed through pride, sin inevitably brought man to another problem – his fault before God. Sin of Adam and Eve, sin of every man represents direct violation of God's laws. Thus, every descendant of Adam and Eve is lawfully guilty before God.

Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

The nature of God's justice cannot be changed. The wages for sin are mandatory. Every man will be held responsible for his sin.

Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Man's attempts of salvation

For many centuries, people tried to solve the problems caused by sin: sickness, catastrophes, social hostility, and injustice. They bring much suffering to man, forcing him to search for a way out of these situations. History provides evidence of a multitude of human attempts for freedom from the consequences of sin.

Religion – Finding redemption from the problems of sin through religion must be the most ancient attempt. Understanding their dependence on the higher power, people created gods along with ways of worshiping them. All existing religions are built on the principle of man achieving gods' favor through fulfillment of specific ceremonies and conditions. For example, ancient shamans convinced people that the sacrifice of a certain animal was necessary for the gods to bless their hunt, family, or health. Buddhists affirm that man advances towards the deity when he cleanses his body with a special diet and cleanses his mind with special meditations. Muslims say that it is necessary to pray five times a day

facing Mecca, to fast, and visit holy places at least once in their lifetime in order to win Allah's favor and get into paradise.

The problem of all religions is in their attempt to “improve” a spoiled, in his own nature, man. Thus, all religions try to make man better but fail because they are unable to resolve the main issue – the change of the heart of man.

Philosophy – This is another attempt to resolve the problem of the consequences of sin. The main idea of philosophy is an assumption that all the problems of man are from poor education; in other words, if man will possess true knowledge and learn to think correctly then his problems will be resolved. In spite of the existence of thousands of different philosophical systems, not a single one could provide the desired result. In fact, it cannot provide such results because philosophy, as well as religion, attempts to deal with the consequences of sin yet ignores the sin itself.

Besides religion and philosophy, people sought many other means to solve their problems. Among them were politics, psychology, sociology, and even bioengineering that offered to remove the genes of evil from man's DNA. All these attempts failed due to the following reasons:

Firstly, man attempts to remove the consequences of sin without changing his attitude towards sin and in turn towards God. Man's attempts to solve the problems of society are built on assumptions that man himself is good and simply needs to improve and be retrained. People try to remove the consequences of their rebellion against God yet keep themselves on the throne and challenge Him.

Secondly, the reason of the failure of man's attempts of redemption from consequences of sin is the ruined and sinful nature of man. This nature is filled with sin. Fulfillments of complicated religious rituals do no free man from high-handedness or pride. In such a case, religion represents an attempt to speak with God ‘as equals.’ It is in a way a bargain: I give you, you give me.

Thirdly, every living man on earth is entirely defeated with the virus of sin. People make use of the same infected material of the human sinful nature trying to build something new. As a cancerous growth, sin is intertwined with every fiber of man’s soul that its destruction is impossible without the death of man himself.

Thus, no human attempts can redeem people from fatal consequences of sin. The direct interference of God is imperative to provide a solution.

The necessity of a new nature

As the Bible states, the only solution to man's sin is the birth of the Spirit.

John 3:5-6 “Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’”

From the Old Testament days, God told Israel that He will make a new covenant with His children. The essence of the new covenant is the change of heart apart from outward demands.

Jeremiah 31:33 “‘But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’”

The only way for a man to be saved from sin is to receive a new nature, that is, be born again.

The required qualities of the Savior

To make the salvation possible for man, the following conditions must be fulfilled:

The punishment for man's sin

Man must be punished for his sins which means he must die (*Romans 6:23*).

The provisions of needs for new birth

As Adam became the father of the fallen human race, there must be one from who will descend those who have new nature – the nature of submission instead of resistance towards God.

The only way these conditions could be fulfilled is if a Man, free of sin, would agree and be able to take upon Himself the sin of all humanity, giving them his sinless and godly life.

God miraculously fulfilled these conditions in Jesus Christ.

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

Assignment: Memorize John 3:16 and Jeremiah 31:33.

Lesson 5

GOD'S PLAN FOR SALVATION – Part I

As we mentioned in the last lesson, a unique Personage was necessary for man's salvation from sin and its consequences. That Personage must contain man and God within Himself. That is the reason why God, in his love and wisdom, undertook this step: being an inseparable part of the Trinity, His only begotten Son became a Man and gave His life as a payment for man's sins.

1 Timothy 3:16 “By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh.”

John 1:14 “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

The nature of Christ

The uniqueness of Christ is primarily revealed in His nature. No one was able to carry out the function of the Savior of mankind but the One who was complete God and complete Man.

Absolute God

Christ is the source of life.

The absolute Deity of Jesus Christ plays a very important role in our salvation. In order to free man from the deadly grasp of sin, the Savior had to be free from the effects of the sin. In order to give life to people who are dead in sins and trespasses, He had to have life within Himself. This is the reason why John begins his epistle talking about Jesus Christ:

John 1:1-4,14 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. ... 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Jesus Christ had the source of life due to His sinless nature. If Christ had His sin and guilt, He would not have been able to take the sins of this world upon Himself.

1 John 3:5 “You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is not sin.”

1 Peter 2:21-22 “For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,²² Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth.”

Christ – the Conqueror of the devil

Aside from bringing life in the man’s kingdom of death, the Savior had another task – He was to defeat the devil that took over the rule of man and his world by deceit. Only God’s Son, Jesus Christ had enough power for the victory over the one, who considers himself to be “the ruler of this world.”

Colossians 2:9-10 “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form,¹⁰ and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.”

Ephesians 1:20-22 “Which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.²² And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church...”

Absolute man

Jesus Christ was a complete God. If He presented in Himself anything less, He could not have been the Savior of mankind. Yet besides His absolute Divinity, Christ had to be an absolute man also. Otherwise, He would not have been able to pay the price for man’s sin and become the progenitor of the new family of born again people.

The uncorrupted birth from man

To solve the problem of sin of mankind, God did one of the greatest miracles that ever took place in the universe: Incarnated Son of God, Jesus Christ was born of virgin Mary by Holy Spirit without any relations with a man.

Mathew 1:20-21 “...An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.²¹ She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for

He will save His people from their sins.’”

Thus, God resolved one of the most complex problems of mankind. Son of God belonged to a human race yet did not have any sin that defeated the mankind within Himself.

Experienced everything that man experiences

Another reason Christ had to be a complete man was His role in the redemption of man from sin. When liberating man from sin, Christ does not take him away from the sinful world just yet. When He lived on earth as a man, Christ demonstrated the example and ability of a God-fearing life contrary to rebellion against God.

Hebrews 4:14-15 “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”

The ability to take the sin of man upon Himself

Being a sinless man, Jesus Christ was able to take upon Himself the sin of mankind and die for it, giving man His righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5:21 “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

The feat of Christ

The salvation of man would be impossible without incarnation of Jesus Christ, His life on earth, and His death on the cross.

Intervention of life in the kingdom of death

Without Christ, mankind represented the kingdom of death where everything was subject to deterioration. Absolutely all the efforts of man to be released from under the influence of death were useless due to total defeat by sin. Only the intervention of life existing externally of man’s kingdom of death could bring people hope of redemption and eternal life.

1 John 1:1-2 “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life – ² and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us...”

Irreproachable life

Jesus Christ lived an irreproachable and sinless life on earth and showed people and angels the possibility and the advantage of a life submissive to God.

The voluntary limitation of His Divine power

Being a complete God, Jesus Christ always had the opportunity to use His own supernatural attributes that could substantially lighten His earthy life. Yet being a complete man, Jesus Christ voluntarily limited Himself in use of His supernatural abilities to protect Himself.

Philippians 2:6-8 “Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

Matthew 26:51-54 “And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear.⁵² Then Jesus said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.⁵³ Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?⁵⁴ How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?’”

The real life of worship and devotion to God

Jesus Christ demonstrated constant submission to His Father throughout His life on Earth. The rebellion against God is the core of sin. Because Christ was sinless, He has the nature of complete agreement with the heavenly Father.

John 5:30 “I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

Even when the submission to the will of the Father was bringing suffering from the world’s point of view, Christ chose the will of the Father because it was the natural state of His inner nature.

Luke 22:41-42 “And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and began to pray,⁴² saying, ‘Father if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.’”

The substituting death on the cross

Perhaps the most significant role in the feat of Christ was His death on the cross. Jesus Christ was righteous and was not supposed to die. He died only because He had to die instead of us.

The voluntary sacrifice – the payment of the price of sin

Christ gave Himself to death voluntarily to pay the price for your and my sins. He did it only because he loved us, perishing people.

1 Peter 3:18 “For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.”

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

Titus 2:13-14 “Our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”

The imputed righteousness

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Calvary is not only the price for our sins but the righteousness of Jesus Christ that is available to every one of His believers. Taking upon Himself the sin of man, Jesus Christ gave those who believe in Him His righteousness. As soon as man turns to God in repentance, Christ clothes us in His righteousness. Man does not earn this righteousness; it is the righteousness of Christ that was given to man through second birth.

1 Corinthians 1:30-31 “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, ³¹ so that, just as it is written, ‘Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.’”

Philippians 3:8-9 “More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith...”

The victory of resurrection

Apart from paying the price for our sins on the cross and granting us His righteousness, Jesus Christ defeated the devil through His resurrection. Because Jesus Christ was absolutely obedient to His heavenly Father, God resurrected Him from the dead and granted Him a grand victory over the devil. Therefore, all the believers in Jesus Christ today are not slaves to sin and the devil, but their nature finds complete satisfaction in submission and service to God.

Ephesians 1:19-21 “And what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might²⁰ which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.”

Through His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ granted man the victory over sin and death.

1 Corinthians 15:22-25 “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming,²⁴ then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.²⁵ For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.”

Assignment: Memorize I Corinthians 1:30-31.

Lesson 6

GOD'S PLAN FOR SALVATION – Part II

As we have already seen in the previous lesson, salvation became possible only due to the wonderful work of God. He granted atonement from the faults of sin and redemption from the deadly consequences of sin through Jesus Christ's incarnation, His life on earth, and His death on Calvary. In order for salvation in Christ to become a reality for any given man, faith is required. The Bible says:

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”

The saving faith has two sides. First of all, it becomes available only due to the work of the Holy Spirit. Along with that, the saving faith directly relates to man himself, his attitude towards his sin, and his attitude towards God. In this lesson we will first examine the process of salvation – the way it is seen from man's point of view.

The way of man to salvation

The Bible says that salvation begins from the Holy Spirit confronting man in his sin. This is what Jesus Christ said about the ministry of the Holy Spirit shortly before His death and resurrection:

John 16:8-11 “And He, when He comes, will conduct the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; ⁹ concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰ and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; ¹¹ and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.”

In this text, Jesus clearly states that one of the first tasks of the Holy Spirit is to expose people in their sin before God. The fallen man needs the intervention from above to see himself perishing and guilty before God.

Although people commit many different sins, the Holy Spirit primarily exposes them in the chief sin from which other sins follow. This sin is unbelief. Sometimes nonbelievers are condemned by their consciousness for their crimes. In such cases, people usually feel uncomfortable and seek relief from the guilty feeling. Some people even confess in order to find relief. They confess their actions before a priest, before the one whom they sinned against, and even before God. Nevertheless, this confession does not mean they are ‘born again.’ Jesus Christ said that the Holy Spirit exposes man ‘concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me.’ To be born again is possible only when man confesses himself as a rebellious against God sinner and turns to Jesus Christ as a personal Savior,

acknowledging Him as his own Lord.

Man's side of repentance may be illustrated very well by the story of the prodigal son, which Jesus Christ once told. Please carefully read this story in *Luke 15:12-24*.

The story starts with a young man who thought he could arrange his life better if he was independent of his father. He took everything that, in his opinion, belonged to him and left his home in search of happiness. The central problem of actions of the prodigal son was his attempt to oppose his father. He rejected his father and his lifestyle, choosing independence and self-confidence.

Realization of sin

The first important step of repentance is the realization of sin. When the prodigal son left his father, he did not see his happiness in his paternal home but in the world where he pressed on with all his energy. This is very similar to the state of man without God. Nonbelievers seek happiness elsewhere but in God. The reason for this is the requirement to acknowledge God's power and submit to Him in order to turn to Him. Man wants his independence. In other words, man wants the right to feel that he is the absolute ruler of his life and that he has the right to determine his fate.

God



“phantom of
happiness”

Trying to catch up to the phantom of happiness outside of God, man makes desperate attempts and tries many new versions. At first, the prodigal son had money and possibly friends who, he thought, would bring him happiness. His imagination drew marvelous pictures of delight before him. He thought he could obtain delight in the world of independency away from his father. Yet, as it usually happens, as soon as man achieves what he pursued, he is disappointed in it. Many hope to receive satisfaction in good education yet they continue to feel emptiness and senselessness after receiving it. Then another goal arises: they seek their happiness in a good job. However, reaching this goal the happiness seems to move farther and farther away. After getting a job their goal is marriage, a house, position in society, and many other goals. Just like all the other goals, they promise satisfaction but in the end, there is disappointment, emptiness, and senselessness.

The journey of the prodigal son for his happiness ended in the greater disappointment instead of satisfaction and joy. At first, he probably lost his fortune; along with that he most

likely lost his friends, and then his job. During this time the prodigal son probably thought, “Should I return home to my father?” But his pride did not let him return. His return would be a full defeat because he left his father as an independent hero. This continued until the prodigal son came to the point of full disappointment. The economic fall in the country forced him to see subsistence by working as a shepherd of pigs. Wages for his labor was permission to eat from a trough, where the pigs ate. One day, sitting by the trough, the prodigal son suddenly realized that the happiness he had pursued was actually in his father’s home. Suddenly, he acknowledged his full defeat and his fault before his father:

Luke 15:17-19 “But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! ¹⁸ I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.”’”

Realization of your fault before God is a very important step. Conversion begins with this step. Repentance means a 180-degree turn in the direction of life. It begins with a change of inner attitude towards God. Before repentance, man sees the phantom of happiness outside of God and pursues it. At repentance, man sees his future and his happiness only in Jesus Christ and turns his face towards God. He admits that life without God is meaningless. He then makes a practical action to go to Him.

God

♀)

Repentance is the most important event in man’s life. Through repentance, man admits that without God he approaches ultimate death. Apostle Paul emphasizes the importance of repentance and pleads with every man to reconcile with God.

2 Corinthians 5:19-20 “...God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

Confession of sin

The realization of sin is the first step of repentance. Nevertheless, true repentance not only has the inner realization of the fault before God, but also an open recognition of the need

for the Savior and confession of His dominance.

The life of the prodigal son would not have changed by much if he had only changed his opinion of his father and did not get up and go back to his father confessing his faults before him. For repented man, the relationship with God becomes the first priority. He is no longer ashamed to admit his need in the Savior and desires that everyone around may see him bow down before the absolute greatness of God, who gave him salvation in Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:9-11 “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.’”

Quite so the reason, repentance includes an open confession of sin and recognition of the need in the Savior. Man can repent anywhere, (Jonah repented in the belly of the whale), but if repentance really happened, born again man will not be ashamed of his Savior, concealing the event from others. He will tell his family about it. He will seek fellowship with other born again people.

The acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life

Another important element of repentance is the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as your Lord. When the apostle were asked, “What must I do to be saved?” they always replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.” *Acts 16:31* God grants salvation to man only when he confesses his full bankruptcy and accepts complete dominance of Christ.

People rose against God’s authority and sinned in the Garden of Eden. They wanted to become gods. In other words, they wanted to claim their own authority. The claim of his authority and independence from God is the core of the first-born sin, which was inherited by every man. Therefore, redemption of man from the influence of sin means the acknowledgment of God’s absolute authority. Repentance returns man to the state of harmonious relationship with God. That means that man acknowledges the absolute position of God as the Creator of the universe, accepting the saving sacrifice of Jesus Christ by faith, reconciles with God, and entrusts Him with his life.

The acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life brings you to some important changes in your life:

Born again man acquires an inner desire to submit to Jesus Christ in everything at all times. This desire is the foundation of the process of sanctification, which we will talk about later.

Jeremiah 31:33-34 “‘But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, “Know the Lord,” for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,’ declares the Lord, ‘for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.’”

Born again man acknowledges the absolute greatness of Christ. Therefore, he desires to be in the likeness of his Savior and Lord.

Philippians 3:7-10 “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.”

Born again man admits that Christ, and only Christ, is the One who has the right to determine what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil. Therefore, he builds his life in accordance to Christ’s teaching in His Word, acknowledging the absolute authority and truth of His World.

John 17:17 “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.”

Recognition of Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life means to despise sin. Living on the sinful earth, born again man gets into situations at times in which he sins. A true Christian differs in such situations because he cannot live in sin. Born again man will repent and stand up to continue following Christ.

1 John 3:9 “No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

The work of Holy Spirit in salvation

The Bible says that man is dead in his own sins and transgressions. Therefore, his realizations of sin, confessions, and acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as Lord are impossible without the work of the Holy Spirit. Although repentance is the responsibility of man, no one can view his repentance as his own achievement. Firstly, the true repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit in man. Secondly, the true repented man admits that God is

the beginning and the end (this contains the true meaning of repentance and regeneration). Therefore, man can never boast in himself but praise the Lord in his humbleness.

Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Above, we looked at the process of salvation as man views it. Now, we will look at the same process from God’s point of view.

Bringing man to the grief of sin and the repentance

Talking about the prodigal son, we observed the external side of the spiritual development of man. At the same time, in the spiritual development of man a more important process takes place. It is the process of the works of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a sinner.

God abundantly blesses all people - people who do not deserve his blessing. He orders the sun to rise over the evil and over the good. He provides all the necessary conditions for man’s life on earth. Apart from those blessings, God also demonstrates His grace to mankind by sending the Holy Spirit to show the way to God and to regenerate man. The Bible clearly says that salvation is impossible without the Holy Spirit:

John 3:5 “Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.’”

John 6:44 “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him...”

1 Corinthians 12:3 “...No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”

The regeneration

Apart from God, sinful man seeks his personal dominion. Even when he talks about good or about religion, his nature remains unchanged. He considers himself the standard of everything. Therefore, in order to change this position, only one resolution is possible – a new birth. Jesus Christ states very clearly that salvation is possible only in the case of new birth (*John 3:5*). Man needs a new nature. Contrary to his old nature, the new nature finds happiness in submission to God. The new nature becomes a possibility for man only in the result of new birth.

Romans 8:9 “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

Romans 8:14-15 “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’”

Conversion is a unique work of the Holy Spirit that regenerates the heart of man and gives him a new life in Christ. Regeneration occurs at the moment of repentance. The Spirit of Christ indwells in man and redeems him from the faults of sin.

Ephesians 1:13-14 “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.”

At conversion, the Holy Spirit unites a new believer with the rest of the believers by joining everyone as one in Christ. The Bible calls this act as the baptism by the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:13 “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

The ability of a Christian to live a holy and godly life is provided by the Holy Spirit as well. Born again man is enabled to grow in a Christ-like attitude toward God and life. The Holy Spirit dwells in man and changes his perspective on the surrounding world. He gives him the ability to understand and accept God’s Word.

1 Corinthians 2:14-16 “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.¹⁵ But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.¹⁶ For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.”

Romans 8:10 “If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.”

Apart from all, regeneration is the reason and the assurance of the resurrection.

Romans 8:11 “But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.”

The clothing in the righteousness of Christ

Besides exposing sin and the work of regeneration, the Holy Spirit has another important task at the conversion of man. Through the Holy Spirit, man puts on the righteousness of

Christ. We already talked about the fact that Jesus Christ took man's sin and the punishment upon Himself to redeem man from his sin. Since man does not have his own righteousness, his salvation becomes possible only through Christ granting His righteousness.

1 Corinthians 1:30 "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption."

Philippians 3:8-11 "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."

Titus 3:5-7 "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by this Holy Spirit,⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,⁷ so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."

The only way man will be justified before God is through the righteousness of Christ. We did not earn this righteousness; Christ Jesus bestows it upon every true believer.

Assignment: Memorize Philippians 3:7-10.

Lesson 7

SANCTIFICATION

As we have seen in the previous lesson, salvation that is granted by Christ to the born again man is the completely finished action. It is perfected by Christ and is independent of achievements of man. Moreover, Jesus Christ says that God the Father guarantees salvation Himself:

John 10:27-29 “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;²⁸ and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.”

Here Christ says that being born again is a one-time event in the life of man, result of which provides man with a new nature and the righteousness of Christ. From the moment of man becoming a child of God, words of Jesus Christ, mentioned above, apply to him.

Firstly, a man born of the Holy Spirit is characterized by the fact that he is attentive to the voice of his Lord, Jesus Christ, and obediently follows his Savior.

John 10:27 “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

Secondly, if a man is truly born again, Jesus Christ grants him eternal life. Eternal life lasts forever from the moment of one's spiritual rebirth. This means that God's children, having a new nature, are being held in His hands safely. There are no existing powers that are capable of taking a man from God's hands because God is greater and stronger than all.

These two points are to be addressed more thoroughly below.

1. The life of sanctification

A born again man is the one who received a new nature that seeks God and submits to Him. Nevertheless, it does not mean that born again people absolutely do not sin.

1 John 1:8-10 “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and his word is not in us.”

The fact of the matter is that man who received a new nature of God continues to live in the

mortal body that bears the tendency to sin. Those who accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior submit themselves to Him day after day and grow in the likeness of Christ. The Bible calls this process sanctification.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 “For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.”

Atonement and justification of God’s children occurs once at the moment of their repentance and spiritual birth. On the other hand, sanctification is the process that takes place throughout life. When writing to Titus, apostle Paul describes this process as follows:

Titus 2:11-14 “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, ¹² instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, ¹³ looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, ¹⁴ who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”

This text says that God’s grace, giving salvation to man, simultaneously trains him to ‘deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.’ This means that at repentance, the Holy Spirit, settles in man and joins with his spirit for encouragement and training in holy life. Sanctification is a process of submission of man’s life to his new nature that resulted at spiritual birth. This process is illustrated as such:

Chart A

Chart B

Chart A shows that result of regeneration is the origination of Christ's nature in the heart of man. During the course of life, as a Christian's knowledge of Jesus Christ through His Word increases, he submits his life all the more to his Lord. Chart B illustrates one of the steps of sanctification. Every step towards the likeness of Christ consists of two levels – death to self and obedience to Christ.

In Ephesians, the Bible explains this process as follows:

Ephesians 4:21-29 “If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus,²² that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit,²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,²⁴ and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.²⁵ Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.²⁶ Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,²⁷ and do not give the devil an opportunity.²⁸ He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.²⁹ Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”

Sanctification is the righteousness of Christ given to man at repentance. It penetrates sphere after sphere in his life and submits him to Christ. In *Ephesians 4*, the process of sanctification consists of two parts:

Put off the old self

When a Christian draws near Jesus Christ through prayer and knowledge of His Word, he becomes aware of his wrong actions. Due to his loyalty to Christ and aversion to sin, the first thing that man does is seek freedom from his sins. Some specific sins are mentioned in the text above: reject falsehood, who steals must steal no longer, let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth. This means that a Christian has to undertake specific actions to turn away from the sins in his life. These actions always result in death to self. In the Chart

B, the bold horizontal line represents this action. In order for our lives to be submitted to Christ more, there must be less influence of our 'self.'

Put on the new self

The second level of every step of sanctification includes the obedience to Jesus Christ in the specific sphere of life. Aside from the necessity of man forgoing the sinful actions, he must learn to do good that fills the freed space. The Bible says: "laying aside falsehood, speak truth," "he who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor," "let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification." The process of substitution of sinful actions by good deeds composes a very important part of the sanctification process. This step is reflected in Chart B by the bold vertical line. It indicates our submission to Christ in every particular instance.

The process of sanctification continues throughout the life of a Christian. This is process of spiritual growth and real knowledge of Christ. In order for him to develop, a Christian must get constant nourishment through the Word of God, exercise himself in godliness through submission to Christ, and render love to his neighbors.

1 Peter 2:1-2 "Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,² like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation."

Romans 6:12-13 "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts,¹³ and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."

2. The assurance of salvation

The reason of certainty – being born again

1 John 3:9 "No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

If we have the desire for sanctification and are unable to abide in sin then we have the testimony of the Holy Spirit:

Romans 8:15-16 "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba Father!'¹⁶ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God."

1 John 5:10-13 “The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. ¹¹ And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. ¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

Our salvation is based on God’s power and His authority

John 10:28-30 “And I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one.”

Romans 8:31-39 “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? ³³ Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yet, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written, ‘For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ ³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor power, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Biblical warnings to be sober

God keeps our salvation through faith

1 Peter 1:3-5 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Assignment: Memorize Titus 2:11-12 and John 10:27-30.

Lesson 8

THE BIBLE

For the spiritual development of every Christian, it is very important to constantly be nourished by the truth of the word of God.

1 Peter 2:2 “Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation.”

Psalm 1:1-3 “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ² But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night, ³ he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.”

Aside from being spiritual nourished, the word of God is an authorized proclamation of the necessary divine truth for man. Furthermore, the Bible contains absolutely everything necessary for a Christian to conduct a godly life.

The authority of the Bible

God speaks to man through two major channels – General revelation and Special revelation.

General revelation is accessible to all men, where God speaks through His creation.

Romans 1:18-20 “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made It evident to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

General revelation gives each man a general evidence of God, which is sufficient for man to carry a responsibility before God.

Special revelation is used by God to communicate specific and necessary truths to people. In the history of His relationship with men, God used several methods for special revelation. In the special moments of human history, God chose particular people to speak through to others.

The Old Testament prophets

Isaiah 6:1-9 “In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of his robe filling the temple.² Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew.³ And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.’⁴ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.⁵ Then I said, ‘Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.’⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs.⁷ He touched my mouth with it and said, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.’⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’⁹ He said, ‘Go, and tell this people: “Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand.””

The New Testament prophets

Luke 1:30-33 “The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.’³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;³³ and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

I Corinthians 11:23-24 “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’”

The apostles and prophets have a special status before God. They served the church in the transitional period of its formation. Hence, they were granted special gifts of miracle performance and direct revelations from God.

Ephesians 2:19-21 “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household,²⁰ having been built on the foundation

of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord.”

After the formation of the New Testament, God’s revelation obtained a complete form. It contains all the necessities for our salvation and Christian life. This tells us that nowadays God’s special revelation is reflected through the Bible only.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

John 20:31 “But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

The apostles testify about the superiority of the authority of Holy Scriptures over the supernatural phenomenon.

2 Peter 1:16-19 “For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷ For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, ‘This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased’ – ¹⁸ and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹ So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.”

The inspiration of the Bible

The Bible is a unique book that has no equivalent existent on earth. Its uniqueness comes from the fact that God created it and let it be expressed through people. The Bible is comprised of 66 books: 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament. God used over 40 authors to write the Bible throughout the 1500 years before the birth of Christ (Pentateuch) to 90 A.D. (Revelation).

The Bible was written in such a way that the style and character of each author are preserved. The Old Testament is written in Hebrew. The New Testament is written in Greek. It is amazing to see how God preserved the absolute true meaning of each word and each phrase in Holy Scriptures. This is possible through the inspiration of the Scriptures by God.

“Inspired by God,” means “exhaled or breathed out by God.”

2 Peter 1:21 “For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

Due to the God-inspired Bible, we can be certain of the following:

The Bible is absolutely true and infallible

Matthew 5:18 “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”

Psalms 119:138 “You have commanded Your testimonies in righteousness and exceeding faithfulness.”

The Bible contains all the necessities of our lives

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

Psalms 19:7-11 “The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. 9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether. 10 They are more desirable than gold, yet, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.”

The canonicity of the Bible

The canon means the standard. It is known that the Bible was written in the span of 1600 years by different authors living in different areas. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the books of the Bible were summoned together. When we talk about the canonicity of the Holy Scriptures, we are saying that there are no other God-inspired books besides the 66 books in the Bible.

The canon is determined by God

Since God is the author of the Bible, He determined which books to include as a part of the

Bible to preserve His word.

Jeremiah 1:12 “Then the Lord said to me, ‘You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it.’”

Psalms 119:89 “Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven.”

The Old Testament canon was formed and recognized by all Jews a few centuries before the coming of Christ. The books of the New Testament were spread to local churches upon their composition. Through the Holy Spirit, God gave His children the ability to distinguish the God-inspired books from the foreign. Afterward, a list of the New Testament books, recognized by local churches, was confirmed at a general church assembly. It is important to note that Church did not make the books canonical. It simply recognized the existing fact. The authority of the Bible and its canonicity belongs to God and not the Church.

The testimony of the apostles about the New Testament (*II Peter 3:15-16*)

Peter

2 Peter 3:15-16 “And regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,¹⁶ as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

Paul

1 Timothy 5:18 “For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,’ and ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages.’”

Here Paul quotes the book of Deuteronomy and the Gospel of Luke, calling both the authoritative word of the “Scripture.”

Deuteronomy 25:4 “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.”

Luke 10:7 “Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.”

The study of the Bible

In order to have a practical use and help from the Bible, a Christian must read, study, and apply these truths.

Joshua 1:6-8 “Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. ⁸ This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”

Ezra 7:9-10 “For on the first of the first month he began to go up from Babylon; and on the first of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, because the good hand of his God was upon Him. ¹⁰ For Ezra has set his heart to study the law of the Lord and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.”

The reading of the Bible

"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth..."

God expressed His truth to people through the language of their understanding (Hebrew – Old Testament, Greek – New Testament). Man must read God’s truth in order to understand it.

The Bible must be read attentively. Although the Bible is written rationally and understandably, it contains an enormous richness of God’s truth. In order to understand the Bible, one must consider every detail attentively.

Try to determine the amount of squares in this drawing.

In order to see all the possible squares, one must be very attentive. All the squares are objectively here. We are not making them up; they only need to be identified.

The Bible must be read continually. Primarily, it is necessary to have good knowledge of the general context in order to understand the Bible correctly. The better you know the Bible, the easier it will be for you to understand the meaning of its distinct texts.

Aside from that, a constant reading of the Bible is necessary for our constant need of spiritual nourishment. In order to make right decisions, we must have constant access to God's truth.

The most realistic way of communicating with God is by reading the Bible. God speaks through the Bible. A Christian is the one who listens to what God says in order to know Him better and submit to Him.

Different methods of reading the Bible

Read the Bible through in a year
A book of the Bible in one time
Reading for research and study

The study of the Bible

“...but you shall meditate on it day and night...”

In order to understand the truth in the Bible, it is necessary to study it. God conveyed the meaning of his truth through the human language. There are some simple rules to studying the Bible:

The determination of the meaning of the words

Each word has its own meaning. The meaning may change depending on where it is used.

For example: *Joshua 1:6* “Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.”

What do these mean: “give this people,” “possession of the land,” “which I swore to their father to give them.”

The determination of the meaning of the sentence/phrase

The meaning of the words often depends on the grammatical form, the order in the sentence, and their relationship with one another.

For example: *Ephesians 5:18-21* “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,¹⁹ speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord,²⁰ always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;²¹ and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”

“And **do not get** drunk with wine, for that is dissipation,
but **be filled** with the Spirit,
speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord,
always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God,
even the Father;
and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.”

The determination of the meaning of the paragraph/verse in the context

The correct interpretation is impossible if you do not determine the meaning of the text in context. There are different levels of context:

The nearest context

Determine the role the text plays in the general thought development

For example: Determine the meaning of *1 Peter 2:15*

“For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.”

These are instructions of proper behavior of a Christian among nonbelievers
– *1 Peter 2:11-14, 18, 3:1-7*

The context of the book

Instructions for Christians in dispersion and persecutions
1 Peter 1:1-2, 4:4, 13-16

The context of the New and the Old Testaments

The epistle of Peter – Practical instructions for Christians

The context of the entire Bible

The New Testament teaching concerning the church

The application of the Bible

Even the exact interpretation of the Bible will not bring success if the revealed truth will not be applied in life practically.

“...so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”

The task of those studying the Bible is to understand the principles founded in the Biblical text and to determine the form of its practical application in the life today.

2 Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness...”

When you study the Bible, ask yourself the following questions:

What does the give text teach you?

What does it rebuke you in?

How does it suggest correcting your problems?

What are the instructions that are necessary for your spiritual growth?

The translations of the Bible

God made sure that His authoritative word reaches us through the Bible. Originally, the Bible was written in Hebrew (the Old Testament) and in Greek (the New Testament). Today, there are many different translations:

Literal translation

Young’s Literal Translation

Most closest to the translation yet readable translation

New American Standard Version

New King James Version

New International Version

Paraphrasing

New Living Translation

The most widespread Russian translation of the Bible is the Synodal translation. The translation of the New Testament was done in 1822 and of the Old Testament in 1876. The principle or translation is very similar to the English version of King James. There are several new translations of the Bible in Russian. Unfortunately, there are not any among them yet of sufficient quality.

Before reading and studying the Bible, it is necessary to remember the main purpose of the Bible:

John 20:31 “But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

Therefore, one needs to approach any reading or study of the Bible with prayer and humility before God, ready to submit yourself to God’s will.

Assignment: Memorize 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Lesson 9

PRAYER AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Prayer is one of the most important elements of a Christian life. God talks to us through the Holy Scriptures. We talk to God through prayer. Christians have the necessity from the very beginning to come before God in prayer. Christianity starts with a prayer – a prayer of repentance.

Acts 2:42 “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Prayer is the real communication with God. It is the realization of our need in God.

The essence of prayer

Glorification of God

Glorification of God is remembrance and proclamation in prayer of different areas of God’s greatness, power, and wisdom. It is a humble astonishment of His wonderful works. To glorify God is to see His hand and express the gratitude for His infinite supremacy.

Psalms 145:1-7 “I will extol You, my God, O King, and I will bless Your name forever and ever. ² Every day I will bless You, and I will praise your name forever and ever. ³ Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable. ⁴ One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts. ⁵ On the glorious splendor of Your majesty and on Your wonderful works, I will meditate. ⁶ Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts, and I will tell of Your greatness. ⁷ They shall eagerly utter the memory of your abundant goodness and will should joyfully of Your righteousness.”

Matthew 6:9 “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.’”

Psalms 135

Thanksgiving to God

To thank God is to agree with His will and our satisfaction in Him. To thank God in prayer is to realize all the goodness we possess in God and express our gratitude for it. In the prayer of thanksgiving, we acknowledge God’s right to determine and rule our lives. The

prayer of thanksgiving is a conscious acknowledgment of God as our Father, Shepherd, Rock, Strength, and Lord.

Matthew 6:10 “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

1 Thessalonians 5:18 “In everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

Confession of our sins and God’s righteousness

There must be an admittance of our sins before God. Confession is a grief over sin. It is a humbled admittance of one’s own sin and claim of responsibility for it (*Luke 18:9-14 – Pharisee and tax collector*). Confession is the expression of our need in the purifying power of the Savior. It is the realization of His power, love and goodness toward us that makes forgiveness and purification from sin possible for us.

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Psalms 51:1-12 “Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgression. ² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. ³ For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. ⁴ Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge. ... ¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ... ¹² Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit.”

Matthew 6:12 “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

Petition for personal needs

Being our Father, God wants us to come to Him in prayer with our daily personal needs.

Philippians 4:6 “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”

Matthew 6:11 “Give us this day our daily bread.”

Our requests to God express our dependence on Him. Surely, God knows all of our needs. When coming before God in prayer, a believer does not reveal anything unknown to God. He simply presents his heart, his sorrow, and his worries in order to entrust it to God and

rest peacefully in Him.

Psalm 56:1-13 “Be gracious to me, O God, for man has trampled upon me; fighting all day long he oppresses me. ² My foes have trampled upon me all day long, for they are many who fight proudly against me. ³ When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. ⁴ In God, whose word I praise, I God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me? ⁵ all day long they distort my words; all their thoughts are against me for evil. ⁶ They attack, they lurk, they watch my steps, as they have waited to take my life. ⁷ Because of wickedness, cast them forth, in anger put down the peoples, O God. ⁸ You have taken account of my wanderings; put my tears in Your bottle. Are they not in Your book? ⁹ Then my enemies will turn back in the day when I call; this I know, that God is for me. ¹⁰ In God, whose word I praise, in the Lord, whose word I praise, ¹¹ in God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. What can man do to me? ¹² Your vows are binding upon me, O God; I will render thank offerings to You. ¹³ For You have delivered my soul from death, indeed my feet from stumbling.”

God guarantees that He hears the prayers of His children and is always ready to answer them. Nevertheless, His knowledge is infinite and he knows much more than people do. Therefore, He does not always answer our prayers the way we want it. The closer we draw to God, the better we understand His will and more powerful and more effective our prayers are.

John 15:7 “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”

1 John 5:14 “This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.”

The intercessions for others

By having close relations with God and sensitivity toward the needs of others, believers will always intercede for others. God gave believers a right to pray for each other and nonbelievers.

Ephesians 6:18-19 “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹ and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with oldness the mystery of the gospel.”

1 Timothy 2:1-2 “First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.”

The Bible contains many examples of intercessory prayers:

Jesus Christ prayed for his disciples and for those who would believe as a result of their preaching (*John 17*)

Paul prayed for the believers he addressed his epistles to (*Colossians 1:9-15; Ephesians 1:16-23*)

Daniel prayed for his nation (*Daniel 6*)

The types of prayer

Prayer can take on different forms, at different times, and different circumstances. The Scriptures talk about the necessity of praying “all types of prayer.”

Ephesians 6:18 “With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.”

Different types of prayer

Personal (time in your room)

Congregational (group prayer, support)

Public (one representing others)

In thoughts (constant meditation)

Learn to constantly come before God in prayer. Watch your thoughts. Instead of wandering and dreaming, train yourself to think about God, admire his works, thank Him, ask Him of your needs, and intercede for the needs of others.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 “Pray without ceasing.”

Romans 12:12 “Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulations, devoted to prayer.”

“The habit of prayer is good, but spirit of prayer is better. We must regularly find time for prayer, yet the constant fellowship with God needs to be our goal. Fellowship is no longer a must – it becomes an instinct. This is a habit of our new nature.” (Charles Spurgeon)

Jeremiah 33:3 “Call to ME and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”

The knowledge of God

Besides the study of the Bible and the prayer, the Scriptures talk a lot about the need to know God. The knowledge of God is an opportunity to know our Creator and Savior better. People are limited in time, space, and matter. God is unrestricted and unlimited. He exceeds our dimensions. To be more precise, the dimensions of our world are in God. Nonetheless, God wants people to know Him and it is possible only when man is born again.

The study of God is not some mystical process founded in philosophy. It is practically applicable and is necessary for every Christian. It is comprised of the following steps:

The knowledge of God's grace – the salvation

Before man is able to know God, he must acknowledge himself as a sinner and his need in the Savior, Jesus Christ, who died for him on the cross and took upon Himself man's sin and gave him His righteousness.

Colossians 1:6 "Which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth."

The knowledge of God's will

The knowledge of God's Will is primarily expressed through the understanding of practical truths in the Holy Scriptures that apply in specific areas of your life.

Colossians 1:9 "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding."

"Wisdom", in this verse, is a good knowledge of Biblical truths and facts.

"Spiritual discernment" is an ability to see practical value of these truths in your life.

In order to utilize the God-given right to make decisions in a more useful fashion, the following method may be used: On a blank piece of paper draw two columns. On one side record all the positive aspects of your decision. In the second column record all the negative consequences of your decision. Do so with every possible decision option. Then compare all positive and negative sides and choose the best option.

After you have made this decision, trust in God. If you do everything genuinely seeking

His will to implement it, you may ask God of His blessing in your decision.

The knowledge of God

The knowledge of God becomes the result of our knowledge of His will and obedience to Him.

Colossians 1:10 “So that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

Apostle Paul saw the only and absolute meaning of life in the knowledge of God.

Philippians 3:7-14 “But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ,⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.¹² Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.¹³ Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Assignment: Memorize Matthew 6:9-13.

Lesson 10

THE CHURCH

The nature of the church

The spiritual life of a Christian has a very unique beginning and a unique form of its expression. The salvation of every man is an individual act, (i.e. the salvation is possible only through the personal faith in Jesus Christ as the Lord and the Savior). Nevertheless, from the moment of regeneration, every true believer is immediately united in one family with millions of other children of God. This family is called the church.

The Bible talks about two aspects of the church: the universal church and the local church. These elements of the church functions are very important. Every Christian must understand the relationship to them.

The universal church

The universal church is a spiritual union of all born again children of God who lived and are living throughout the world. It is one body of Christ, spiritually joined with its Head. The universal church is unified in the Spirit of Christ and is not limited by political, national, or any other boundaries.

Matthew 16:18 “I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”

The creation of the church was a vital goal of the first coming of Jesus Christ to earth.

The creation of the universal church

Individual members of the church of Jesus Christ unite by the Holy Spirit that inhabited the heart of a Christian during regeneration.

1 Corinthians 12:13 “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

Ephesians 1:13 “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

The creation of the church of Jesus Christ was only possible after the Pentecost. It was when the Holy Spirit descended for the purpose of uniting all believers into the body of Christ.

The local church

Besides the spiritual union of all born again believers into the universal church, there is another level of union of the children of Christ – the local church.

The local church is created by God as a necessary medium for the practical expression of the spiritual union of the Christians.

The New Testament lists many local churches:

The church in Jerusalem (*Acts 2:42*)

The church in Corinth (*Epistles to Corinthians*)

The church in Rome (*Epistle to Romans*)

Etc.

The local church is necessary for the following reasons:

A place for service to each other

Ephesians 4:16 “From whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

A place for mutual accountability

Matthew 18:15-17 “If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. ¹⁶ But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

A place for mutual assistance

Galatians 6:2 “Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”

Romans 15:1-2 “Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. ² Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification.”

The membership of a church

The church of Jesus Christ is the spiritual organism. Therefore, the membership is determined by spiritual conditions firstly. That which is seen expresses spiritual conditions.

Matthew 7:21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.”

The conditions

In order to belong to a church of Jesus Christ, one must be born again

Romans 8:9 “But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

1 Corinthians 12:13 “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

Conversion is expressed through the following:

Admitting oneself as a sinner in need of salvation

Understanding the essence of the Gospel

Acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord

Conversion always will be expressed through a changing life

Luke 9:23 “And He was saying to them all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.’”

John 10:27 “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”

The visual signs

Besides the inner rebirth, the Lord established two other signs that testify to the occurring changes and confirm the belonging to the church. These two signs are the baptism and the communion.

The baptism

Jesus Christ commanded to all who believed in Him to be baptized.

Matthew 28:19-20 “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

The baptism is an external confirmation and testimony of the spiritual changes in man. It is

accomplished by complete submersion into water. When the baptized is submerged into water, he testifies of his renouncement from the life of sin and selfishness – death to sin. When the baptized is risen from the water, he is raised to new life devoted to the new Lord – Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:3-5 “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.”

Notice, the baptism does not carry any mystical meaning. It presents the external testimony of occurrences in born again man.

The communion

The second visual sign of membership to the church is the communion.

The communion was commanded by Jesus Christ to be performed through the time of the church on earth.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ ²⁵ In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ ²⁶ For as often as you eat His bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”

The establishment of the Lord’s communion was related to the remembrance of the escape of Israel from Egypt – the Passover.

Luke 22:15-20 “And He said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; ¹⁶ for I say to you I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ ¹⁷ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, ‘Take this and share it among yourselves; ¹⁸ for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.’ ¹⁹ And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ ²⁰ And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup which is poured out for us is the new covenant in My blood.’”

The meaning of the Lord's Supper in the remembrance of the sacrifice of substitution Jesus Christ offered for us.

Some churches, such as Orthodox and Roman Catholic, teach that bread and wine turn into flesh and blood of Jesus Christ when they are blessed during the communion. They think that whoever partakes of the communion receives special grace from God. In reality, no mystical activity occurs during the communion. The bread remains as bread, the wine remains as wine. We only remember the sacrifice of Jesus Christ with trembling and by this testify to others of His death.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'²⁵ In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'²⁶ For as often as you eat his bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

The attitude towards communion

Even though there is no mysticism in the communion, the Lord commanded for every partaker to have a responsible attitude towards it.

First of all, the participants in the communion must reason and meditate on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the salvation granted through Him.

1 Corinthians 11:29 "For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly."

Secondly, every participant in the communion must examine himself before taking of bread and wine.

1 Corinthians 11:28 "But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup."

To examine yourself means to check your motives – is there truly an absence of pride and self-exultation? Moreover, to examine is to present oneself to the judgment of Christ, realize complete dependence on Him, and be fully submitted to Him.

1 Corinthians 11:31 "But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged."

Participation in the communion is an expression of gratitude to God for the wonderful gift of salvation.

The practice of the church

Many churches today have different forms of conducting the church service. In the first church, the Scripture does not assign a specific order at the church service. At the same time, the Bible teaches us of some integral principles that must be present at church.

Basic principles of life within the church are described in the first church in Jerusalem:

Acts 2:42 “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Firstly, the main priority for the church must be a clear proclamation of the Bible (the instruction of the Apostles). Without it, the members of the church are unable to conduct a correct life and the church cannot function properly.

Secondly, the members of the church must have fellowship amongst each other. Particularly in the fellowship, they can support each other, correct each other, serve each other, and together serve God.

Thirdly, it is imperative that communion is conducted in the church. It is an inseparable part of the Christian life. People are capable of forgetting the reason of their salvation. Therefore, it is necessary for us to part in the Lord’s Supper.

Fourthly, the Church is a place where people pray to God. When gathering together, we praise God, thank Him, bring before Him our needs, and plead for others. Prayer is a very important part of the church’s life. It allows us to have a close fellowship with God and one another.

The structure of church management

Representing a spiritual organism, the church of Jesus Christ has a clear structure of church leadership established by God.

First of all, the head of the church is Jesus Christ

Ephesians 1:22 “And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church.”

To become a Christian is to accept the full lordship of Jesus Christ. The will of Jesus Christ is expressed through His word – the Bible. Therefore, a Christian is accountable to God’s word.

Every man is directly subjected to Jesus Christ. However, God placed people in the church

that have specific spiritual gifts and qualities that can serve Him and the church.

In the New Testament, these men are called ‘pastors, shepherds, bishops, and teachers.’

1 Peter 5:1-3 “Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,² shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;³ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.”

Because God gave these people more experience and more spiritual gifts, they are the spiritual leaders for all the members of the church.

Pastors in the church can be only those men who reflect special qualities in their lives that are listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

Timothy 1:6-9 “If any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. 7 For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, 8 but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, 9 holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.”

The responsibility of the pastors is to study the word of God in prayer, be involved in discipleship with the members of the church, preparing them for the ministry, and to provide spiritual leadership.

The members of the church must be obedient to their pastors, respect them, and care for them.

Hebrews 13:17 “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 “But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, 13 and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.”

Usually churches have several pastors, one of which is a ‘senior’ or ‘leading’ pastor. All of these pastors compose a Church Board that carries the responsibility for the overall

structure of the church.

Aside from pastors, the church selects deacons. Their role is to assist pastors in any possible way. Deacons also have specific qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-9.

1 Timothy 3:8-9 “Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain,⁹ but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience.”

The church selects pastors and deacons. The church expresses its trust in ministers through ordination. It is a service of celebration where ministers are blessed for the ministry through the laying of hands for the work set before them.

Assignment: Memorize Matthew 28:19-20.

Lesson 11

THE LIFE AND THE SERVICE OF A CHRISTIAN IN TODAY'S WORLD

A Christian and the church

Every Christian has the privilege and the responsibility to serve the Lord by building-up His church on earth and proclaiming the gospel to those who do not know it.

Ephesians 4:14-16 “As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; ¹⁵ but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

Every Christian received unique gifts from God through which he can serve others. These gifts differ from one another yet each one of them is important in God's eyes. God gave you specifically those gifts that you can use for the common service for the body of Christ.

1 Peter 4:10 “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in the serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

The service of a Christian consists of work directed to achieve God's interests on earth. One of the most important and necessary conditions for one to be a born again Christian is to accept the lordship of Jesus Christ.

Financial service

Financial service is required of every Christian.

God grants us physical strength and ability to obtain financial welfare.

Everything that we have is given to us by Christ to use for His glory.

Deuteronomy 8:18 “But you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth...”

1 Corinthians 4:7 “For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you have not received it?”

In the Old Testament, Israel was required to bring the tenth part of everything they acquired

to the temple. In addition to that, they were required to bring many specific sacrifices and offerings.

Deuteronomy 12:5-6 “But you shall seek the Lord at the place which the Lord your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come. ⁶ There you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock.”

Financial service law violations were one of the reasons of God's punishment. *Malachi 3:6-12*

Malachi 3:7-10 “From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you,’ says the Lord of hosts. ‘But you say, “How shall we return?” ⁸ Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, “How have we robbed You?” In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.’”

Financial service has a significant role in the New Testament.

2 Corinthians 9:6-9 “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; ⁹ as it is written, ‘He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, his righteousness endures forever.’”

Train yourself to dedicate the tenth part of everything you make to God. Do it firstly. In addition to that, give to missions, to the poor, etc.

How to determine your spiritual gift?

The Bible does not teach about specific ways to discover spiritual gifts. Different methods that are offered nowadays most likely have a psychological or mystical foundation instead of Biblical.

The Bible does not say that it is mandatory to know one's gift before doing anything. In the

proverb about the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:29-37*), Christ taught to use any opportunity that God gives to serve. In every situation that God places you, do everything that is possible. In time, you and those around you will see where your service is most effective.

Feed yourself with the Word of God and use every opportunity to practice this Word. This will show you the meaning of Christian service.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 “All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

A Christian and the world

A Christian’s influence in the world

One of the ways a Christian is to serve is through his influence in this world. Christ chose life and testimonies of Christians to be one of the primary ways to spread the Good News among the people.

Matthew 5:13-16 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. ¹⁴ You are the light of the world, A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵ nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

This influence is accomplished in two ways: by our testimony and your life.

A testimony through proclamation

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

Not only those who have special training are able to be Christ’s witnesses. Absolutely everyone who is a born again believer is able to share the gospel with others.

Mark 5:19 “And He did not let him, but He said to him, ‘Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.’”

A testimony through a lifestyle

1 Peter 2:11-16 “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. ¹² Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. ... ¹⁵ For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. ¹⁶ Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.”

Besides the responsibility to spread the influence of the Good News around us, we are charged by God to preach the gospel to all the nations.

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In order to spread the Gospel throughout the whole earth, Christians must:

Pray for missionaries and missions
Financially support the missionary service
Directly participate in the missionary service

The hostility of the world

In the moment of repentance, a Christian is set free from the rule of the devil and becomes subjected to Jesus Christ. However, we are bound to live here on earth amidst people who have a different master.

John 15:20 “Remember the word that I said to you, ‘a slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you...”

2 Timothy 3:12 “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

The world opposes the Good News and those who present it because people do not want to leave their sinful, self-centered nature and submit to Jesus Christ

John 3:19-20 “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.”

Being moved by the ideas of the devil and unwilling to submit to God, this world strives to make Christians live by their measurements and standards.

1 John 2:15-17 “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”

It is imperative for a Christian to withstand the ideology of this world because its nature is the supremacy of man and rejection of God’s sovereign dominion.

Psalms 1:1-3 “How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! ² But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. ³ He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.”

Assignment: Memorize 1 John 2:15-17.

Self

Regeneration

Self

Regeneration