

**REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND**



**SENIOR  
TEACHER'S  
HANDBOOK**

**Book 3**

REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

**SABBATH SCHOOL  
TEACHER'S  
HANDBOOK**

SENIOR GRADE  
BOOK 3

Copyright  
Committee on the Instruction of the Young  
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland  
Revised 1999

# CONTENTS

## Studies in the Shorter Catechism

|    |                                  |    |
|----|----------------------------------|----|
| 1. | The Third Commandment (1) .....  | 1  |
| 2. | The Third Commandment (2) .....  | 4  |
| 3. | The Fourth Commandment (1) ..... | 7  |
| 4. | The Fourth Commandment (2) ..... | 10 |
| 5. | The Fourth Commandment (3) ..... | 13 |
| 6. | The Fifth Commandment (1) .....  | 16 |
| 7. | The Fifth Commandment (2) .....  | 19 |

## Studies in the Psalms

|    |  |    |
|----|--|----|
| 8. | God's Eternity and Man's Frailty (1) ..... | 22 |
|----|--|----|

## Basic Truths

|     |  |    |
|-----|--|----|
| 9.  | Does God Really Exist? .....           | 25 |
| 10. | God has Spoken .....                   | 27 |
| 11. | God's Word Without Error .....         | 30 |
| 12. | Scripture and Science .....            | 32 |
| 13. | What is Sin? .....                     | 35 |
| 14. | The Wages of Sin .....                 | 39 |
| 15. | Man as He Really Is .....              | 42 |
| 16. | The Call of God .....                  | 45 |
| 17. | Salvation by Grace through Faith ..... | 47 |

## Worshipping God

|     |   |    |
|-----|---|----|
| 18. | The Meaning of Worship .....                  | 49 |
| 19. | The Marks of a True Worshipper .....          | 52 |
| 20. | The Place of the Word of God in Worship ..... | 54 |
| 21. | The Spirit's Work in Worship .....            | 56 |
| 22. | The Principal Elements of Worship .....       | 59 |
| 23. | Preaching and its Purpose .....               | 61 |
| 24. | Praying Together .....                        | 65 |
| 25. | Praising God .....                            | 68 |
| 26. | The Offering .....                            | 70 |
| 27. | The Symbolism of Baptism .....                | 72 |
| 28. | Coming to the Lord's Table .....              | 75 |

## Coming to terms with the world

|     |                                  |    |
|-----|----------------------------------|----|
| 29. | The State of the World .....     | 77 |
| 30. | Who Rules the World? .....       | 81 |
| 31. | Resident Aliens .....            | 84 |
| 32. | Citizens of Heaven .....         | 87 |
| 33. | Lighting the World .....         | 90 |
| 34. | Salting the World .....          | 92 |
| 35. | Putting First Things First ..... | 95 |
| 36. | The Other Priority .....         | 98 |

# P R E F A C E

## THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF IRELAND

Sabbath School Materials Published by

The Committee on the Instruction of the Young

Senior Course - Age 16 - 19

These materials form part of a three year course for senior students and are designed to reach their minds and hearts with the Bible's message of salvation through Jesus Christ and to give them an understanding of the Word of God as their only infallible rule of faith and life.

Each lesson takes account of the two-fold aspect of teaching - the teacher's preparation and the classroom presentation. A proportion of the material for each teaching period is devoted to helping the teacher master the biblical subject matter and to see that subject as it relates to the student. Also included is a suggested lesson presentation and while not intended to be given verbatim to the class, it discourages the verse by verse lecture method of teaching and provides a framework within which the teacher can effectively communicate the truth to the student. Student hand-outs are available with each lesson to be used either in class or at home. This material is brief and aimed at securing the student's interest and enforcing the lesson with particular directness.

The Committee sincerely thanks the many members of the church who prepared these materials for publication. It is our earnest prayer that they will be used by the Holy Spirit to fulfil their aim.

## LESSON 1

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

### THE THIRD COMMANDMENT (1)

Catechism Questions - 53, 54

Scripture Text - Lev. 19: 12; Ps. 29: 2; Eccl. 5: 1 - 7

#### AIM OF LESSON

To show the positive side of our response to God's revelation of Himself, particularly in our speech and in our worship.

#### BACKGROUND NOTES

Catechism

Question 53 - Note the link with the first and second commandments. The first commandment is concerned with the object of worship: God alone is to be worshipped. The second commandment is concerned with the manner of worship: it should be only in the way which God has commanded. The third commandment is concerned with the spirit of worship: it should be reverent.

'The Name' - A name distinguishes one thing from another, and the Name of God means that by which He is distinguished, and includes everything by which He makes known to us what He is in Himself and what He is to us.

'In vain' has two meanings - falsely, as is seen in passages like Lev. 19: 12, where swearing by God's name falsely and profaning God's name are the same thing; and Ps. 24: 4, where to lift up one's soul unto vanity is parallel to swearing deceitfully: and lightly, or to no purpose. The commandment forbids both perjury and profanity.

'The Lord will not hold him guiltless' - this addition to the commandment shows how seriously God considers any breach of it.

Question 54 'Names, titles, etc.' All these are summed up in Question 55 as 'anything whereby God maketh himself known.'

'Attributes' are the qualities which are characteristic of God's nature. Refer to Question 4.

'Ordinances' - These are divinely ordered and appointed, and include praise, prayer, the Word and the Sacraments.

Scripture:

Lev. 19: 12 links profaning God's name with swearing falsely.

Ps. 29: 2 teaches that worship is one way in which we give to the Lord the honour due to His name. 'In the beauty of holiness' probably means in the splendour of His holiness.

Eccl. 5: 1 - 7 Two things are stressed in the passage, both of them directly related to the third commandment. One is the need for reverence as we come to worship God: irreverence can be shown by a hasty rushing into God's presence with thoughtless words. The second emphasis in the passage is on the importance of keeping our vows to God: as the lesson makes clear, a most serious way of taking God's name in vain is to make promises in His presence and not keep them. 'Messenger' in v. 6 probably refers to the priest before whom the vow was made. It is no use telling them that you did not mean it!

## SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

### Introduction

How do you answer the telephone or identify yourself when you make a call? The most irritating people are those who say 'Hello' and give no indication of who is speaking. Or perhaps worse still is the person who asks, 'Can you guess who is speaking?' The instructions of the telephone people are that you should immediately give your name as a means of identification. This is what a name does: it identifies a person. It used to be that it did even more: it told something about the person. John Smith in the old days was called John Smith because he was a smith: John Stevenson was the son of Stephen: John Crookshanks presumably had crooked legs!

Biblical names always had a meaning. Samuel was 'asked of God'. Jacob 'the supplanter' became Israel 'a prince with God'. Peter was 'the rock'.

We can understand, therefore, that the name of God means all that God is in Himself and all that He means to His people. And this third commandment tells us that we must not take the name of the Lord our God in vain. What is meant by 'in vain'? (See Background Notes)

In this lesson we will deal with two areas to which this commandment applies - speech and worship.

### 1. Speech

Most people think of this commandment as forbidding swearing and profanity. It does that, as we shall see in the next lesson, but it also commands us to keep the promises that we have made in the presence of God. That is, indeed, its primary significance - see Lev. 19: 12, and note that it is this aspect of the commandment that Christ underlines in Matt. 5: 33f: 'You have heard that it was said to those of

old, “You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.” When we make a promise in God's name, then any failure to keep that promise is a breach of this commandment. This applies to the promises which parents make at the baptism of their children, and to the promises that young people themselves make when they come into communicant membership of the church.

Christ, as always, takes it a stage further. Even when we have not explicitly brought God's name into our promise or our declaration, we are still bound to keep it. Christ says, ‘Do not swear at all . . . But let your “Yes” be “Yes” and your “No” “No”.’ The Christian's word is his bond, because every promise we make is made in God's presence and in God's name, whether that name is specifically mentioned or not. To break a promise is to take God's name in vain. Why are marriage promises, contracts between employer and employee, and the ordinary promises of every day, so frequently broken? Because failure to keep them is more than merely to treat them as empty things; it is to treat God's name as an empty thing as well.

## 2. Worship

‘In vain’ means literally ‘in the emptiness or unreality’. If our worship in God's house is empty or unreal, are we not taking God's name in vain? In our praise, for example, if we are not singing, or if we are singing with no thought of the words, or with no real praise in our hearts to God, we are taking God's name in vain. If we use the language of prayer with no adoration, no thanksgiving, no real desire for God in our hearts, we are taking God's name in vain.

When our reading and hearing of the Word is an empty, meaningless thing; when we are inattentive and unresponsive, we are taking God's name in vain.

Study the passage in Eccl. 5, and show, as in Background Notes, how it underlines these two things required in the third commandment - reverence in worship and honesty in speech.

## APPLICATION

The application should be made throughout the lesson. Stress should be laid particularly on the importance of reverence in every part of worship and of reliability in every part of life.

## FURTHER READING

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| PACKER, J. I.     | The Ten Commandments (pamphlet)        |
| WATSON, Thomas    | The Ten Commandments                   |
| WILLIAMSON, G. I. | The Shorter Catechism questions 53, 54 |

## LESSON 2

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

### THE THIRD COMMANDMENT (2)

Catechism Questions - 55, 56

Scripture Text - Lev. 24: 10 - 16; Mal. 1: 6 - 8, 12 - 14; II Sam. 12: 9 - 14

#### AIM OF LESSON

To teach what is forbidden in the third commandment, and to show the practical implications of this for the Christian.

#### BACKGROUND NOTES

Catechism

Question 55. To 'profane' something means to treat what is holy with irreverence. It can be illustrated from the description of Esau in Hebrews 12: 16 as a 'profane person', which does not necessarily mean that he used profanity in speech, but that he despised a holy, spiritual thing - his birthright - and sold it to satisfy his physical appetite: he treated a holy thing with irreverence. So the commandment forbids the irreverent or improper use of anything by which God makes Himself known. (Note that 'anything whereby God makes Himself known' gives a good definition of God's name).

Question 56. God's concern for His holy name means that inevitable punishment will come on those who break this commandment. We may escape the judgement of men but we cannot escape the judgement of God.

Scripture

Leviticus 24: 10 - 16 shows the seriousness of the offence that was committed when a man blasphemed the name of the Lord.

Malachi 1: 6 - 8, 12 - 14 God's name is profaned not only by blasphemy but by treating His worship as something that does not matter: to offer 'defiled food' meaning imperfect sacrifices or blemished animals, is to despise God's name, for it shows how little the worshippers think He is worth ('worship' is really 'worth-ship').

II Samuel 12: 9 - 14 The worst feature of David's sin was that it gave an opening to the enemies of the Lord to speak evil of Him. A Christian's sin injures the good name of his God.

#### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

J. P. Struthers of Greenock was once walking with a friend in the country. As they walked his friend swung his walking-stick and cut off the heads of some flowers blooming by the roadside. Struthers rebuked him and said, 'That is breaking the third

commandment'. 'How?' asked his friend, and Struthers replied, 'The third commandment forbiddeth all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God maketh Himself known.' There are many ways of breaking the third commandment. The teacher may wish to elaborate on the story to make the point that twentieth-century man's misuse and pollution of his environment is a breach of this commandment.

In the previous lesson we considered two areas to which the third commandment applies - speech and worship. In this lesson we will be concerned with profanity and conduct.

1. Profanity

The most usual application of this commandment is to the use of bad language, meaning particularly the use of God's name or Christ's name or holy things in profane swearing. One of the hardest things that a long-term Christian patient in hospital has had to bear - worse than her physical disability - is the use of Christ's name in blasphemy by another patient. Christians have a positive stand to take when we hear words like God, Christ, Heaven, Hell, Damnation, used in blasphemy. And we must be meticulously careful that nothing even faintly resembling them crosses our lips.

The members of the class might discuss what action Christians should take when God's name is taken in this way in their hearing. J. P. Struthers' friend, A. D. Grant, made it his practice, whenever he heard Christ's name used in blasphemy, to take the first opportunity to speak it reverently and lovingly and tenderly.

2. Conduct

Paul in Romans 2: 24 says one of the most terrible things that can be said about taking God's name in vain: 'The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you'. God's name was being blasphemed - taken in vain - because of the lives of His people. One of the saddest illustrations of that comes from the story of David's life in the incident recorded in II Samuel 11. Nathan the prophet gives God's view of David's sin in chapter 12, and drives the message home in vs. 9 - 14. David repented and was forgiven, and yet he could not escape punishment, because, as Nathan said, 'you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme'. God's name is besmirched by every sin and failure of His people.

#### APPLICATION

The four areas referred to in the two lessons on the third commandment indicate four positive applications that must be made. The Christian, keeping this commandment, will keep his promises; he will offer real and sincere worship to God; he will use speech that is always wholesome; and he will live in such a way as to bring honour to God's name.

The word translated 'take' - 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain' - means literally 'lift up'. And if the commandment forbids us to lift up God's name in any vain, unreal or empty way, then it commands us to lift up God's name in a positive, real and God glorifying way. We can lift up God's name in our homes by asking His blessing at every meal and by uniting in the reading of the Word and family prayer. We can lift up God's name in our daily living by bringing God and His Word into every experience of life; by showing on the Sabbath Day that God means more to us than anything else, and by witnessing of Him to others. The Christian should seek to lift up the name of Christ by endeavouring to honour Him in every aspect of life.

#### FURTHER READING

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| PACKER, J. I.     | The Ten Commandments (pamphlet)        |
| CATHERWOOD, Fred  | First Things First                     |
| WATSON, Thomas    | The Ten Commandments                   |
| WILLIAMSON, G. I. | The Shorter Catechism questions 55, 56 |

## LESSON 3

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

### THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT (1)

Catechism Questions - 57, 58

Scripture Text - Ex. 20: 8 - 11; Deut. 5: 12 - 15; Gen. 2: 2, 3; Ex. 31: 13 - 17

#### AIM OF LESSON

To show the implications of the truth that the Sabbath is sacred to God.

#### BACKGROUND NOTES

Catechism

Question 57. Note that this commandment begins differently from all the others, with the word 'Remember'. The Larger Catechism (Q. 121) gives several reasons why 'Remember' is put at the beginning of the fourth commandment, e.g., 'because we are very ready to forget it, for . . . it restraineth our natural liberty in things at other times lawful . . . and Satan with his instruments must labour to blot out the glory, and even the memory of it, to bring in all irreligion and impiety.' If Satan can make us forget the Sabbath, he will soon make us forget everything else in true religion.

The positive form of this commandment, 'Remember' rather than 'Thou shalt not', should correct the negative approach which many people have to the Sabbath, thinking of it as a day of things which are forbidden. Note the concern in the commandment for employees and even for animals serving man.

Question 58. It is God Who appoints the times to be set apart as holy to Him: the Sabbath is a 'set time' in a more definite and sacred sense than any other.

Scripture:

Compare the two forms of this commandment given in Exodus 20: 8 - 11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15. They are virtually the same, but the commandment in Deuteronomy 5 begins with 'Observe' rather than 'Remember' and adds the phrase 'as the Lord your God has commanded you', stressing that this is a renewal of a commandment already given and already forbidden. Deuteronomy 5 is concerned for all who serve, including the animals; 'that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you' is an important principle, for it safeguards the right to Sabbath rest of those who serve others. Deuteronomy 5 gives an additional reason for obeying the Sabbath law, namely, God's redemption of His people from Egypt, as well as the reason in Exodus 20, that God rested from His work on the Sabbath.

Exodus 31: 13 - 17 gives a further reason for keeping the Sabbath: it is a distinguishing

sign of God's people.

Genesis 2: 2, 3 underlines the fact that the basic meaning of the word 'Sabbath' is 'rest'. The word 'Sabbath' comes from a Hebrew verb meaning 'to rest'.

#### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

'Is it right to watch T.V. on Sabbath?' 'Is all work prohibited on the Sabbath?' Such questions arise when the fourth commandment is mentioned. And very often people are left with the impression that the Sabbath is a day when we must not do certain things. Maybe that was why God did not begin, as with most of the other commandments, 'You shall not. . .' He said, 'Remember. . .', immediately giving this commandment a positive rather than a negative emphasis. It might be helpful to look at the reasons which the Larger Catechism gives for the use of the word 'Remember' (See Background Notes): the Sabbath reminds us of the completion of creation, when 'on the seventh day God ended His work which he had done; and He rested . . .' (Genesis 2: 2); and it reminds us of redemption. The people of Israel were to keep the Sabbath remembering that they had been slaves in Egypt and that God had delivered them. We are to keep the Sabbath, remembering the far greater redemption that Christ accomplished for us. In this lesson we are concerned to underline the truth that the Sabbath is sacred to God.

'Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy'. God has made it holy: we must keep it holy. 'Holy' in the Bible means 'separate' or 'set apart'. A holy place is a place set apart from other places (Ex. 28: 29): holy garments are garments set apart from ordinary garments (Ex. 28: 2); a holy mountain is a mountain set apart for God (Zechariah 8: 3; Joel 3: 17): and a holy day is a day, set apart from other days for God. So when we are commanded to keep the Sabbath day holy, it means that we must treat this day as different from the other days of the week.

Why? The commandment itself gives us one reason: God made it a different day for himself: 'for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it' (i.e., made it holy, set apart). God did not rest because He was tired: He simply ceased from what He was doing. He made it a different day, and so must we.

A second, very important reason why the day is holy to the Lord is that God considers His people as holy. See Exodus 31: 13, 14 - 'I am the Lord who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath therefore: for it is holy to you.' Quite simply, the holiness, separateness, of the Sabbath is a sign that God's people are holy, separate to Him. All of our life, all of our time, are His: and the Sabbath is an indication that this is so. The Sabbath is like the

luggage label attached to my case: it says that it belongs to me. God says to His people, 'You belong to Me; and in token of that you will keep the Sabbath Day.'

The Sabbath is sacred to God: it must be sacred to us, if we are His people.

#### APPLICATION

If the Sabbath is to be kept holy, that is, separate and different, then we must be on our guard against anything which would make it just like any other day. All unnecessary work will be avoided: and the day will be devoted to the worship or service of God. This implies that activities that would be legitimate on week-days will not be engaged in on the Sabbath. The students can think of positive ways in which the Sabbath can be seen to be different from other days.

#### FURTHER BACKGROUND READING

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| PACKER, J. I.     | The Ten Commandments (pamphlet)        |
| WATSON, Thomas    | The Ten Commandments                   |
| WILLIAMSON, G. I. | The Shorter Catechism questions 57, 58 |

**LESSON 4**

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

**THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT (2)**

Catechism Questions - 59, 60

Scripture Text -

Neh. 13: 15-22; Isa. 58: 13, 14; Lev. 23: 3; Mk. 2: 23-28; Acts 20: 7; I Cor. 16: 1, 2

**AIM OF LESSON**

To show that God gave the Sabbath for man's good.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

Catechism

Question 59. The change from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week for the weekly Sabbath seems to have taken place almost imperceptibly. Very early in the history of the Church as recorded in Acts we find Christians meeting together on the first day of the week (see Acts 20:7). Paul in I Corinthians 16: 2 seems to assume that the Christians will be coming together on the first day of the week. Matthew 28: 1 can be translated, 'In the end of sabbaths as it began to dawn towards the first of sabbaths,' suggesting that the change to the first day of the week was recognised immediately.

The Sabbath in the Old Testament marked the end of the work of creation: it also commemorated Israel's redemption from Egypt (see Deut. 5: 15). The New Testament Sabbath marked the completion of a work of no less magnitude, the work of salvation, and commemorated a redemption greater than that from Egypt. It was entirely fitting, therefore, that the day of Christ's resurrection, the first day of the week, should become the Christian Sabbath.

Question 60. 'Worldly' in this answer means to do with this world, and refers to the employments and recreations of ordinary days. 'the whole time' - This means that the whole day belongs to God. We have no right to use any part of it for our own purposes. The Sabbath was not only for rest; it was for 'the public and private exercises of God's worship'. Leviticus 23: 3 makes it clear that the day was for a holy calling together of worshippers. 'Works of necessity and mercy' may be illustrated from Christ's own teaching and practice. See Mk. 2: 23, 27; Lk. 13: 15; Lk. 14: 5; Mk. 3: 1 - 4.

Scripture

Nehemiah 13: 15 - 22 Nehemiah did not hesitate to use strong measures against those who wanted to carry on worldly employment on the Sabbath. Note (v. 22) that action against Sabbath violation was a specifically religious duty: 'I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should go and guard the gates . . .'.  
Isaiah 58: 13, 14 Here we are taught that God will bless those who keep this commandment

and whatever losses may be sustained in the short term ultimately those who are obedient will not be the losers.

Mark 2: 23 - 28 In the eyes of the Pharisees plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath was reaping! Christ answered them by showing from the history of David that human need has precedence over a ritual restriction. The Son of Man declares that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, and therefore He the Lord of the Sabbath is the sole authority on the observance of the Sabbath.

Acts 20: 7 and I Corinthians 16: 1, 2 indicate that the change from the seventh day of the week to the first day had been made.

### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Why do employers have to pay double-time for work done on Sabbaths? In former days when there was a greater respect for the Word of God, the Sabbath was regarded a safeguard for man. It restrained the exploitation of labour, and ensured that, except in exceptional circumstances, workers got what they were entitled to and needed - one day's rest in seven. The Sabbath is not only sacred to God (see previous lesson); it is serviceable to man. Christ put it simply and finally when He said, 'The Sabbath was made for man . . . !'.

What does the Sabbath do for man?

1. The Sabbath gives man rest  
The word 'Sabbath' comes from a Hebrew word which means 'cease' or 'rest', and the first reason for the Sabbath is that God ceased or rested from His work on the seventh day (Gen. 2: 2). So the Sabbath law reads, 'The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall do no work . . . !'. Has a shorter working week had a bad effect on Sabbath observance, in making people fail to appreciate one day's rest from work?

Rest is commanded for others as well as for ourselves: 'You shall do no work, you nor . . . your manservant, nor your maidservant'. That must be decisive in our thinking about Sabbath work. Anything, apart from works of necessity and mercy, which makes work for other people and denies them their right of rest and worship, is forbidden.

2. The Sabbath gives man renewal  
We need more than rest for our bodies and our minds; we need spiritual renewal. Leviticus 23: 3 makes it quite clear that the Sabbath was not only a day of rest; it was a day for a holy calling together of worshippers. The Sabbath gives the opportunity of spiritual renewal through 'the public and private exercises of God's

worship'. Lying in bed all day on Sabbath is not keeping the fourth commandment! The Catechism stresses that the whole time is to be spent in the public and private exercises of God's worship. That means that we are to consider the whole day as belonging to God, and to be used for our spiritual nourishment and growth, and for works of necessity and mercy. To keep a 'partial Sabbath' is to retain for oneself part of what belongs to God.

3. The Sabbath gives man a reminder of redemption  
Deuteronomy 5: 15 gives Israel's redemption from Egypt as a reason for keeping the Sabbath Day. We have a greater motive than they had for keeping the first day of the week holy to God. (See Background Notes to Question 59 for a discussion of the change from the seventh day to the first day.) Having been redeemed, we cannot consider that our life, including our time, is our own. Keeping one day holy to the Lord acknowledges that all our time is His. What that means for us may be considered in the application of the lesson.

#### APPLICATION

Our attitude to the Sabbath may be taken as one test of our spiritual condition. Isaiah 58: 13 sets it out inescapably: 'If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honourable, and if you honour it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words . . .'

1. Sabbath-keeping will mean renunciation - 'not going your own way, not doing your own pleasure, not speaking your own words . . .'. This is the real test for us all; only the grace of God can make us willing to lay our own desires aside for Him.
2. Sabbath-keeping will mean rejoicing - 'if you call the Sabbath a delight'. Here is a test of our spiritual condition. Isaiah 58: 13, 14 clearly links together delight in the Sabbath and delight in the Lord: if one is absent, can the other be present?

#### FURTHER READING

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| PACKER J. I.      | The Ten Commandments (pamphlet)        |
| WATSON, Thomas    | The Ten Commandments                   |
| WILLIAMSON, G. I. | The Shorter Catechism Questions 59, 60 |

**LESSON 5**

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

**THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT (3)**

Catechism Questions - 61, 62

Scripture Text - Ex. 31: 12 - 17; Eze. 20: 12, 20; Isa. 58: 12 - 14; Heb. 4: 4 - 11

**AIM OF LESSON**

To show that the Sabbath is a sign of the relationship between God and His people.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

Catechism

Question 61. Note that the answer is concerned first with the omission or careless performance of the duties required. These are forbidden just as surely as active desecration of the Sabbath. The Larger Catechism (Q. 119) adds a significant phrase - ' . . . and being weary of them.' To consider the Sabbath a weariness (see Malachi 1: 13) is to break the fourth commandment.

It is possible to profane the day by idleness. The Scripture proof attached (Acts 20: 7) is an interesting evidence that Paul certainly was not idle on the first day of the week; he continued his sermon till after midnight!

Note that thoughts, as well as words and works, about our worldly employments and recreations are forbidden. Amos 8: 5 gives a picture of people who longed for the Sabbath to be over so that they could get back to business again.

Question 62. Not all the commandments have reasons annexed, i.e., reasons given for obeying the commandment; so when they are given, they must be important.

Four reasons are given here:

1. God's gracious generosity in giving us six days for our own employments.
2. God's claim to special ownership of the Sabbath. ('propriety' means 'ownership' just as a proprietor is an owner)
3. His own example, since He rested on the seventh day.
4. His bestowing of a blessing with the Sabbath.

Scripture:

Exodus 31: 12 - 17 vv. 16, 17 indicate that the Sabbath was a sign of the special covenant relationship between God and Israel.

Ezekiel 20: 12, 20 This passage, like the passage above, suggests that the Sabbath was a

sign to the people of Israel reminding them that the Lord was their God. v. 12b - 'that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them.' ('sanctify' means 'to make holy' and 'holy' means 'separate'). The Sabbath therefore is a sign that the Lord has made Israel a separate people.

Note that Ezekiel was writing at the time of the Exile, reminding the people in exile in a foreign land that the Sabbath had always been a sign of Israel's separation to the Lord.

Isaiah 58: 12 - 14 Isaiah 40 - 66 gives the promise of God's restoration of His people from exile: there will be repair and rebuilding and alongside that, a new joy in the observance of the Sabbath, which, once again, will be the evidence of God's special relationship with His people.

Hebrews 4: 4 - 11 The word translated 'rest' in v. 9 means 'a Sabbath-rest', and in this passage the writer of the epistle sees the Sabbath rest as symbolising two things:

1. Our ceasing from our own works as God ceased from His works on the seventh day (v. 10). Just as we lay aside unnecessary work on the Sabbath, so we must cease from our work in the sense of trying to earn our salvation and enter into the rest and peace which come through being justified by faith alone.
2. The rest that still awaits the people of God in the world to come. Heaven will be an eternal Sabbath rest, a rest from toil and a rest in God.

#### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Suppose you were transported to a land where there was no church building, and you were surrounded by pagans who did not believe in your God. Can you think of a simple way in which you could show to those around you your faith in God and your love for Him? One possible way would be consistently to keep the Sabbath day holy. People would see especially on one day in seven that you were different.

When the people of Judah were carried away captive into exile in Babylon, it might have seemed that there was no way in which they could maintain their separate existence and witness for God. The Temple in Jerusalem lay in ruins; no sacrifices could be offered in a strange land. But one thing that remained was the Sabbath. From the time of the Exile, there was a realisation that the Sabbath, which they had often broken in the past, could now be a means of witness to their faith in God. They were reminded of something that God had said to them centuries before, that the Sabbath was a sign. See Exodus 31: 16, 17 and Ezekiel 20: 12, 20. So today in our largely pagan society a Christian can use the Sabbath to declare to everyone that he is the Lord's.

The Sabbath is not only sacred to God (see Lesson 3), and serviceable to man (see Lesson 4): it is a sign to the world.

A sign of what?

1. It is a sign, to ourselves as well as to the world, of our commitment to be the Lord's. Exodus 31: 16, 17 and Ezekiel 20: 12, 20 make it quite clear that for Israel the Sabbath was a sign of the special covenant relationship between God and His people. Isaiah 58: 13 faces us with a decisive test: 'If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord, honourable; and shall honour Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words: then you shall delight yourself in the Lord . . .' Our delight in the Sabbath is the evidence of our delight in the Lord. If I do not keep the Sabbath, then in effect I am saying, 'I want to do what pleases me, I want to have my own pleasure, I want to live my own life in my own way,' and that is the rejection of Christ's claim upon my life. Salvation is to commit our lives completely to Christ: one sign of that is our keeping of the Lord's Day.
2. It is a sign to the world of victory. God's resting on the seventh day was a sign of His successful completion of His task of creating the universe: Christ's rising from the dead on the first day of the week was a sign of His successful completion of the task of redemption. Now the Christian Sabbath is a proclamation to the world that Christ is risen and that sin and death are vanquished. Every Sabbath can be for the Christian a proclamation of His victory.
3. It is a sign of the final victory and perfect rest for the believer in Heaven. See Background Notes on Hebrews 4: 4 - 11.

#### APPLICATION

Does our keeping of the Sabbath show our full commitment to Christ? Does the fact that we keep the Sabbath provide an effective witness to our neighbours?

Are we looking forward to the eternal Sabbath in Heaven?

#### FURTHER READING

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| PACKER, J. I.     | The Ten Commandments (pamphlet)        |
| WATSON, Thomas    | The Ten Commandments                   |
| WILLIAMSON, G. I. | The Shorter Catechism Questions 61, 62 |

**LESSON 6**

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

**THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT (1)**

Catechism Questions - 63, 64

Scripture Text -

Ex. 20: 12; Col. 3:18 - 4:1; Roms. 12: 10; 13: 1-7; I Thes. 5: 12, 13; I Pet. 2: 13-18

**AIM OF LESSON**

To teach the duty of submission to authority.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

Catechism

Question 63. The Hebrew word translated 'honour' in the fifth commandment means literally 'to give weight', and that gives us a key to what is involved in this commandment. To honour parents (and all in authority) is to give due weight to their position, that is, to reverence them; to give due weight to their word, that is, to obey them; to give due weight to their claims, that is, to promote their welfare. 'Honour' includes both reverence and affection.

Question 64. The Catechism applies this commandment to all our relationships - with superiors, inferiors and equals. The Larger Catechism (q. 124) states that 'By father and mother, in the fifth commandment, are meant, not only natural parents, but all superiors in age and gifts; and especially such as, by God's ordinance, are over us in place of authority, whether in family, church or commonwealth.'

Note that we have responsibilities to equals as well as to superiors and inferiors: the proof text for this is significant: Romans 12: 10 'Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love; in honour giving preference to one another'. We are equal as brothers, but we are still to give honour to one another.

The Larger Catechism (q. 127) gives a list of the duties owed by inferiors to their superiors: it is significant that one of these is 'bearing with their infirmities, and covering them in love'.

Scripture:

Exodus 20: 12 Note that 'honour' means 'to give due weight to'.

Colossians 3: 18 - 4: 1 This passage teaches the importance of an ordered and disciplined family and an ordered and disciplined society: husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees, all have their respective duties and responsibilities. Note that in every case these duties and responsibilities are set in the context of a right relationship to

the Lord: see chapter 3: 18, 20, 22, 23, 24; chapter 4: 1.

Romans 12: 10 Our duty toward equals involves putting others before ourselves.

Romans 13: 1 - 7 Here is the clearest possible statement of the obligation to submit to authority. 'The powers that be are ordained of God'. Obedience to authority is a Christian duty, not only because of the anarchy which results when law and order break down in society, but because law and order have been instituted by God, and civil rulers are ordained by Him. 'Whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God'. (v. 2 ) It should be noted that one of the ways in which we show our submission to authority is our payment of taxes (v. 6). Possibly we had not thought that the tax-man is God's servant!

Thessalonians 5: 12, 13 We must submit to authority within the Church as in other areas, because God has vested this authority in the officebearers. (See also Hebrews 13: 17)

I Peter 2: 13 - 18 Peter gives the same injunction as Paul in Romans 13. Note that good citizenship is one way of silencing critics of our Christian faith (v. 15). Even unpleasant employers must be given good service (v. 18).

#### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION AND APPLICATION

What is wrong with a society where young people, including children under ten years of age, are out on the streets (of our cities) throwing stones and petrol bombs and acid bombs at soldiers and policemen? There has been a breakdown in authority. We see it in so many areas. In many of the schools in our land the authority of the teacher is challenged. In industry workers often refuse to accept the authority of those who are set over them. Where did all this anarchy - for that is what it is - begin? It began in the home. The child who will not accept the control of teachers has already rejected the control of his parents. The workman who defies the foreman began his rejection of authority in the home. The terrorist who seeks to destroy society made his first move toward that destruction when his disobedience to parents disrupted the home.

That lets us see how important this fifth commandment is. The Shorter Catechism answer to question 63 shows that the commandment is concerned with all the relationships of society. And the Larger Catechism in the answer to the question, 'What are the sins of inferiors against their superiors?' gives a picture that is uncomfortably like our society today: 'The sins of inferiors against their superiors are, all neglect of the duties required toward them; envying at, contempt of, and rebellion against, their persons and places, in their lawful counsels, commands, and corrections; cursing, mocking, and all such refractory and scandalous carriage, as proves a shame and dishonour to them and

their government'.

In the next lesson we will look particularly at the setting of this commandment in the context of the home, but now let us learn from the Scripture passages above that it applies in other wider areas as well. The Larger Catechism (q. 124) sees it as applying in the areas of 'family, church, or commonwealth' (i.e., society). In this lesson let us look at the application of the commandment in church and in society.

1. In Church

I Thess. 5: 12, 13 and Heb. 13: 17

We are to give respect and love to those who guide and instruct us in the Christian life, for two reasons:

- (a) because God has given them authority
- (b) because their work is to watch for our souls (Heb. 13: 17). Ask the students if they are learning to respect the authority of their minister and elders.

2. In Society

Romans 13: 1 - 7

It is worth noting that Paul's command to be subject to authority was written at the time when Nero, one of the worst of the Roman emperors, was at the head of government. Even a bad government can maintain law and order and so far as it does so it must be obeyed.

Apply obedience to authority to such things as obeying speed limits, respecting teachers, paying taxes, co-operating with leaders in youth organisations.

I Peter 2: 13 - 18 - See Background Notes.

Colossians 3: 18 - 4: 1

This passage may be considered in more detail in the next lesson, in the context of the family, and in comparison with the parallel passage in Ephesians 5:21 - 6:9. But note here that there are duties for superiors in relation to inferiors. Young people who have authority over others, as prefects in school, or leaders in youth organisations, or as more senior employees, have a responsibility to act fairly toward their subordinates. See Col. 4: 1 We also have a responsibility toward our equals. See Romans 12: 10. (The main thing is fairness).

Note that in so many of the passages our relationship to others is linked with our relationship to the Lord. See Background Notes on Colossians 3: 18 - 4: 1. If our relationship to Him is right, our attitude to others will be right too.

FURTHER READING

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| CATHERWOOD, Fred  | First Things First                     |
| PACKER, J. I.     | The Ten Commandments (pamphlet)        |
| WATSON, Thomas    | The Ten Commandments                   |
| WILLIAMSON, G. I. | The Shorter Catechism questions 63, 64 |

**LESSON 7**

Studies in the Shorter Catechism

**THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT (2)**

Catechism Questions - 65, 66

Scripture Text - Eph. 5: 21 - 25; Eph. 6: 1 - 9; Mal. 1: 6; Matt. 15: 1 - 9

**AIM OF LESSON**

To teach the responsibility of children to parents, and parents to children in the Lord.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

Catechism

Question 65. The two words 'honour' and 'duty' should be noted. If we truly honour people according to their different standings and relationships to us, we will also seek to fulfil the duties which we owe to them. 'Honour' must show itself in 'duty'.

Question 66. The promise attached to the fifth commandment has raised problems for some. One has known obedient children, who honoured father and mother, and yet did not live long on the earth. The sentence in the answer - 'as far as it shall serve God's glory and their own good' - qualifies the promise: God always gives His children what is best. It should be noted that the promise is to be taken in a broad sense, as applying not merely to individuals but to society as a whole. Society can be strong only where this principle of parental authority is observed. No society can last long where parental authority, reflecting the authority of the Lord, is rejected.

Scripture:

Ephesians 5: 21 - 25; 6: 1 - 9 The relationship of parents and children is only one of the relationships referred to in Ephesians chapters 5 and 6: others are the relationship between husbands and wives and between employers and employees. In every case the relationship is governed by the principle stated in Ephesians 5: 21 - that of submission to one another. Every relationship is set in the context of our relationship to Christ: it is to be 'in the Lord'. Thus the husband's love for his wife is to be the kind of love that Christ has for His Church; the wife's submission to her husband is her response to his love, just as the church's submission to Christ is its response to His love. Similarly, servants (or slaves) are not only the servants of men: they are the servants of Christ (6: 5 - 7); masters are reminded that they have a Master in heaven. Children are to be obedient to their parents 'in the Lord' and fathers are to bring up their children 'in the training (education) and admonition of the Lord'.

It will be most profitable for young people to concentrate mainly on the relationship of parents and children, though the other relationships in the passage should be noted.

Malachi 1: 6 God refers to this commandment and then applies it to Himself.

Matthew 15: 1 - 9 A son whose parents were in need frequently evaded the requirement of this commandment by saying that the money needed for their support was dedicated to God. The account in Mark 7: 11 uses the official word, Corban, meaning an offering. The scribes and Pharisees tolerated this practice and so broke the commandment of God by their tradition.

#### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

When a young person rejects the authority of his parents and every other lawful authority there will be another authority, sinister and evil, ready to take over, e.g., school gangs, terrorist organisations, etc. This shows how vitally important it is to obey this fifth commandment and honour father and mother. This lesson is about duty to parents, though it should be noted that the passage in Ephesians deals with the responsibility of parents to exercise their God given authority (Eph. 6: 4).

Our duty to parents can be summarised under three headings - respect, obedience and service.

#### 1. Respect

Parents are set over their children by divine appointment. Therefore they are entitled to respect and reverence. They should always be treated with respect, i.e., given their proper place in the home, not pushed aside or ignored. They should always be addressed with respect, not with rudeness, impertinence or insolence. They should always be spoken of with respect, not slightingly, or contemptuously, or apologetically. If children are to recognise that God-given authority, they must see where it comes from. A writer has spoken of the lasting impression made on him by seeing, as a small child, the highest authority he knew on earth, his parents, bowing down to a Greater Authority, when they knelt in prayer.

#### 2. Obedience

This is the duty of parents that Paul stresses in Ephesians 6: 1 - 'Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.' Paul adds a further incentive to obedience when he quotes the promise in the fifth commandment - 'that it may be well with you, and you may live long on the earth'. Discuss the apparent non-fulfilment of that promise in the case of some who die young. See Background Notes.

We have the highest possible example of obedience to parents in Christ who at twelve years of age went down to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary, 'and was

subject to them' (Moffatt translates, 'He did as they told Him'). This obedience of children to parents must be seen as part of Christian duty: it is 'in the Lord'. Children should not obey their parents if asked to do that which is wrong.

### 3. Service

Calvin speaks of this under the heading of gratitude.

Children have the responsibility of caring for their parents as their duty to honour them especially when they cannot care for themselves. Christ makes it quite clear in Matthew 15: 4 - 6 that nothing must interfere with our responsibility for caring for our parents. See Background Notes. Could this passage be applied to young people who are so actively involved in church work that they have little time for their home or their parents? Is the church open to Christ's condemnation by undue demand on people's time? (Matt. 15: 5 - 8)

### APPLICATION

Practical applications have been made in the suggested presentation. But there is a deeper application suggested by the passage in Malachi 1: 6. There God refers to this commandment, and then applies it to Himself: 'A son honours his father, and a servant his master: if then I am a father, where is My honour? and if I am a master, where is My reverence?' That is where the breach of this commandment begins - in our refusal to honour God. What is involved in such dishonouring is clearly stated in Deuteronomy 27: 16 - 'Cursed is the one who treats his father and mother with contempt. . .' To dishonour is to treat with contempt. And is not that what we do to God when we refuse His love revealed in Christ and when we reject His commandments?

The way back to a happy home and to God is set forth in the best-known of the parables: 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned . . .".'

### FURTHER READING

|                       |                                 |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| CATHERWOOD, Fred      | First Things First              |
| PACKER, J. I.         | The Ten Commandments (pamphlet) |
| WATSON, Thomas        | The Ten Commandments            |
| WILLIAMSON, G. I.     | The Shorter Catechism, 65, 66   |
| Relevant Questions in | The Larger Catechism            |

## LESSON 8

Studies in the Psalms

### GOD'S ETERNITY AND MAN'S FRAILITY

Psalm 90

Scripture Text - Ps. 90; Gen. 3: 8 - 19; Num. 13: 26 - 33; Num. 14: 26 - 35

#### AIM OF LESSON

To show some essentials of true worship as set out in Psalm 90.

#### BACKGROUND NOTES

The title of Psalm 90 links it with Moses and that provides us with a background which adds point and meaning to the psalm. Our understanding of the psalm will be increased as we apply two sections of it to particular historical events.

1. The first is verse 3, which has a clear link with the Fall as described in Genesis 3, and particularly with Genesis 3: 19 'Dust you are, and to dust you shall return'. 'Children of men' at the end of the verse could be translated 'Children of Adam', making the link even more definite. Man's frailty goes back to Adam's sin, and that frailty is underlined by the fact that man, however strong he may think himself to be, eventually returns to dust. Note that Adam's sin was the sin of disobedience and rebellion against God: that led to the pronouncing of God's sentence: 'To dust you shall return'.
2. The second historical event which forms the background to this Psalm is another example of man's disobedience and rebellion - Israel's refusal in unbelief to enter the Promised Land, as described in Numbers 13 and 14. That background gives a particular poignancy to verses 7 - 11 of the Psalm. All the adults who came out of Egypt, and who rebelled against God in their refusal to go up to possess the land which God had given them, were doomed to fall in the wilderness. Some who were 30 or 40 when they left Egypt might reach the age of 70 or 80, but their end was inevitable. 'We have been consumed by Your anger, and by Your wrath we are troubled' (v. 7) was manifestly true of those who died in the wilderness.

And yet God's grace did not fail. The generation who in unbelief refused to go forward into the Promised Land died in the wilderness; but God's grace did not fail. He said, 'Your little ones, who you said would be victims, I will bring in, and they shall know the land which you have despised' (Numbers 14: 31). Does that not give a special significance to the prayer of the 16th verse of the Psalm: 'Let Your work appear unto Your servants, and Your glory to their children'? In wrath God still remembered mercy.

## SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Each Sabbath we come together to worship God. Are we satisfied with the worship that we offer to Him? Is there a deep sense of awe as we come into the presence of a holy God? Or do we come casually and carelessly, with little thought of what we are doing? In this 90th Psalm we have some of the essentials of true worship, which in God's grace, may lead us into a deeper experience of worship than we have ever known.

1. The first essential of true worship is an awareness of God's eternity and greatness.

If we are going to worship God aright, we must have some understanding of how great God is. The man who wrote this Psalm certainly had. See verses 2 and 4. We begin to see the wonder of God's eternity and greatness when we set them over against man's frailty and the brevity of his life. Verse 3 reads literally, 'You turn man to something that crumbles away,' i.e., dust.

The Psalmist uses vivid pictures to drive home the message of man's frailty. His life is like flotsam carried away in a raging torrent; like a dream, insubstantial and fleeting; like grass, growing fresh and green in the morning, made into dry hay in the evening (vs. 5, 6); like a sigh, brief and gone in a moment, leaving only sadness behind. The point that the Psalmist is making is that if we are to acknowledge the greatness of God, we must begin by realising the littleness of man. Only then can we truly worship God. Any sense of our own importance or of our own gifts and abilities strikes at the very heart of worship. Compare the Pharisee in Christ's parable (Luke 18: 9 - 14).

To realise our own frailty is not enough for true worship: to stop there might lead us only to a sense of helplessness and despair. The Psalmist is concerned to emphasise the frailty of man in order that he might magnify the greatness of the God who is the dwelling place of His people in all generations - 'a dwelling place for us in one generation after another' (v. 1). That is the wonder of the Gospel.

2. A second essential for worship is an awareness of the wrath of God against sin.

Why is man's life so weak and short? Why does he return to the dust from which he was taken? Genesis 3 tells us - man's sin. This is also taught in Psalm 90 verse 3. A real sense of sin is lacking in many people today, even as it was lacking in the Psalmist's day. 'Who knows the power of Your anger?' (v. 11) People do not realise what the wrath of God means; consequently the fear of God (reverence and awe) is absent from much modern worship. The second half of verse 11 means that our fear of God will be proportionate to our awareness of His wrath.

How can we come to an awareness of sin that will bring us to God in penitent worship? Only the Holy Spirit can arouse such conviction of sin in us. This Psalm and the

experience of the children of Israel in the wilderness show that such penitence is essential.

- (a) God often uses the calamities of life to make us aware of our sin. Verses 7 and 9 refer to the calamities that Israel suffered in the wilderness. National disasters are God's way of reminding us of national sins.
- (b) We can be brought to an awareness of our sin by the realisation that God knows all about us, even the sins that are hidden in the secret places of our hearts - verse 8. Compare Matthew 5: 21 - 28.
- (c) Our awareness of the brevity of life should make us realise our need of salvation - verse 12.
- (d) We see in the closing section of the Psalm that God's people pleaded for mercy - verse 14. Continually the Old Testament sacrifices reminded them of their sin and the possibility of forgiveness. It is in the sacrifice of Christ on the cross that we see the wrath of God against sin and the mercy of God to His people. There at the cross we are convicted of our sin.

3. A third essential of true worship is an awareness of the lovingkindness of the Lord.

If it were not for God's grace, our awareness of His greatness would only crush us to the dust. The final section of the Psalm verses 13 - 17 assumes the compassion and the mercy and the restoring grace of God.

Moses was very sure that God was a God of lovingkindness and tender mercy. We too can be sure of God's mercy, for in the cross of Christ we see the meeting-place of wrath and mercy, God's wrath borne by our great Substitute, and God's mercy extended to us in Him. This certainty is central in true worship. A literal translation of verse 14a reads 'Satisfy us in the morning with thy covenant love' - in the morning of our days, this Sabbath morning, every morning of every day we live. 'Let Your work appear to Your servants, and Your glory to their children' (v. 16). The sense of the whole verse is 'Let Your working and Your majesty appear to Your servants and abide upon Your children.' A. F. Kirkpatrick.

#### APPLICATION

Application has been made throughout the suggested presentation, but opportunity should be taken to stress the three essentials of true worship as set out above.

#### FURTHER READING

KIDNER, Derek

Tyndale Old Testament Commentary on the Psalms  
The New Bible Commentary

## LESSON 9

Basic Truths

### DOES GOD REALLY EXIST?

Scripture Text - Ps. 53; Rom. 1: 16 - 32

#### AIM OF LESSON

To help students to have a deeper understanding of the nature of God and to deepen their reverence and love for Him.

#### BACKGROUND NOTES

It goes without saying that the topic is fundamental. As you approach the lesson, it is important to have a right framework within which to teach.

#### 1. How we know about God

In the 1930s, J. G. Machen gave a series of talks on the radio in Philadelphia. In the first talk he asked this fundamental question, 'How can we discover whether there is a God at all, and then, if there is, what sort of Being is He?' He answered like this, 'If we are really to know anything about God, it will probably be because God has chosen to tell it to us.'

This is indeed the position of all Reformed theologians. Berkhof says, 'For in the existence of God is the great presupposition of theology. This presupposition is not that there is something, or some power, to which the name of God may be applied, but that there is a Personal Being, Who is the origin of all things.' We know about God for one reason - He has told us about Himself.

He has told us about Himself in Creation:

(a) in the creation of man. Because we are creatures made in the image of God, we have evidence within us of the existence of God. John Calvin said, 'Men have in their own persons a factory where innumerable operations of God are carried on, e.g., conscience.'

(b) in the creation of the world. Man has round about him the clearest possible evidence of the power and divinity of God. See Romans 1: 18 - 22. 'Natural revelation', though it speaks clearly and leaves man without excuse for unbelief, is yet insufficient in itself. God has told us about Himself in His Word, and through His Word written, has made known to us His being and grace.

#### 2. What we know about God

There seems to be a paradox here, for the Christian faith says on the one hand that we cannot know God, and on the other hand, that He can be known.

Though we cannot know all about God, still one can know Him in a real sense and be conscious of His Being and His attributes.

We know that God is a Spirit - John 4: 24.

We know that God is personal - John 3: 16.

We know that God is Triune - Matthew 3: 16, 17; 28: 19; Genesis 1: 26, 27.

We know the attributes of God - see references in the Shorter Catechism, question 4.

### 3. The result of a knowledge of God

Our knowledge of God should lead us to worship Him, to trust Him, to obey Him.

That is, 'to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind and with all our strength'.

## SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Comment on the importance of the subject.

Read the set passages.

### 1. The folly of denying God

Begin by asking some general questions: What percentage of the population they think really believe in God, compared with those who say they believe in God? In what way do people today deny the existence of God?

Go through the set questions in the students' material No. 1.

### 2. The joy of knowing God

Emphasise the truth that we can know God only because He has made Himself known.

Go through the set questions in the students material No. 2.

## APPLICATION

The study should be practical. Emphasise that our knowledge of God should lead us to worship and love Him. Get the class to suggest ways in which we can better prepare ourselves for the worship services of the Lord's Day.

**LESSON 10**

Basic Truths

**GOD HAS SPOKEN**

Scripture Text - Psalm 19

**AIM OF LESSON**

To show that God does speak to man.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

There are four major ways in which it may be said that God has spoken to man:

1. By the creation of the world - Ps. 19: 1; Rom. 1: 20  
The creation is said to 'declare the glory of God', to shout out aloud the greatness and majesty of the One Who called it into being by the word of His power. Ps. 19: 1. The very works of creation proclaim Him to be the only true and living God. Indeed that same psalm says that the works of creation speak eloquently of their Creator, Rom. 1: 20, Who has given that knowledge of Himself in His world. Ps. 19: 2.
2. By the Prophets - Heb. 1: 1  
The prophets were holy men who spoke 'as they were moved by the Holy Spirit' (2 Peter 1: 21). Before there was any definite written revelation, God communicated with His prophets in such a way that they were able to come to the people and declare quite categorically, 'Thus says the Lord'.
3. By the Lord Jesus Christ - Heb. 1: 2  
The Lord Jesus Christ was able to declare, 'I and my Father are one'. Jn. 10: 30 (NIV). There was no more perfect revelation of God than that given by Jesus. He perfectly reflected the image of His Father, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father'. Not only did Christ reveal God in His own perfect position, He also spoke to man the very words of God. Jn. 3: 34.
4. By His written Word - Ps. 19: 7  
Psalm 19 describes the Word of God and shows how it is the revelation of the living God.
  - (i) It is perfect and flawless - v. 7.  
There is no need for any supplementary revelation.
  - (ii) It is trustworthy - v. 7.  
Man can place his total trust upon the Word of God and know that it will never be found to be false or contradictory.

- (iii) It is straight - v. 8.  
This in opposition to the crooked and perverted ways and words of man.
- (iv) It is clear or bright - v. 8.  
It shows man clearly what he is to believe and the direction that his life should take.
- (v) It is true - v. 9.  
The facts of the Word of God remain true no matter how much they are called into question by the ungodly, because it is the unchanging word of the unchanging God.
- (vi) It is altogether righteous - v. 9.  
There is nothing that is unjust or unfair in the record of God's dealings with men or nations.

#### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Read Psalm 19 together. Try to have two or three different versions to hand, as well as the Psalter, e.g. N.K.J.V., A.V., R.S.V., NIV.
2. Ask the students to consider different ways of speaking or of giving a message to someone else, eg, spoken words, written words, pictures, films, actions, etc.
3. Discuss with the students the four major ways that God speaks to His people and show how they are relevant to man today. See Background Notes. Lay particular emphasis on number 4, the Word of God, and show how it is able to direct man in all the ways that God would have him go.
  - (a) It revives the soul - v. 7.  
In the context of the Psalm, 'converting' the soul does not refer to bringing life to the dead soul in regeneration, although there is no doubt that the Word of God does precisely that, 1 Cor. 1: 21, it refers rather to the refreshing of the weary or the cast down believer. The Word of God brings 'back the spirit' by refreshing and consoling it, as food restores the faint.
  - (b) It brings enlightenment - v. 8.  
Man is by nature blind to the things of God; even the converted man has difficulty in seeing things as God sees them. Because of his own sinful nature and the sinful and godless environment in which he lives, man often adopts the desires, motives and presuppositions of the world; only the radiant commands of the Lord will enable him to see clearly, so that he will be able to determine

what is glorifying to God in his daily life.

- (c) It gives wisdom - v. 7.  
The promise that is given is that the Word of God will make a simple man, a man open to instruction, wise. It is unfortunate that many people set great store upon worldly wisdom or seek to be acknowledged as wise by the people of the world, and yet do not have much interest in gaining true knowledge and true wisdom. The Bible says that 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'. It is only when man looks at the world in the light of the Divine Revelation (ie, Scripture) that he comes to understand its meaning and purpose. The wisdom referred to here is not just the so-called 'spiritual' wisdom that makes a man 'wise unto salvation' 2 Tim. 3: 15, it is a complete understanding of God and His world. Whatever other source of knowledge or wisdom is used, it must always be subservient to the 'testimony of the Lord . . . making wise the simple'.
- (d) It produces joy - v. 8.  
Because the Word of God is right (straight) in its concept of God, in its understanding of man, and in its portrayal of the Lord Jesus Christ, it can bring the joy of security and assurance to the child of God. Nothing destroys our joy so much as uncertainty; the Word of God removes that uncertainty because it is the unchanging Word of the Living God. In the midst of a changing world, faced with a multitude of differing circumstances, the child of God goes to the Word of God and finds principles and values that do not change and thus he is given security and stability, which produce joy in his heart.

#### APPLICATION

It is important for the students to realise that God has not left man to find his own way through life, or to depend upon the fallible theories of his fellow-men. God has been pleased to reveal Himself to man in such a way that we can be absolutely certain of what God wishes us to know. Try to impress upon the students that the God who made the world is the best possible Interpreter of it in all its various aspects.

The 'to think about' section of the students' material can be discussed if there is time. It should be emphasised that God's ways are not our ways and that the best method of human communication may not be the way that Almighty God chooses to fulfil His own plan and purpose.

## LESSON 11

Basic Truths

### **GOD'S WORD WITHOUT ERROR**

Scripture Text - II Tim. 3: 14 - 17

#### AIM OF LESSON

To show that the Word of God is absolutely reliable and trustworthy.

#### BACKGROUND NOTES

Paul is writing to a young man who had recently undertaken the responsibilities of the pastoral oversight of a congregation of God's people and in order to help him, the apostle gives him useful and profitable exhortations and instructions. In telling Timothy that he must expect opposition, persecution and the teaching of error, (vs. 1 - 13) he directs him to the source of strength, comfort and truth - the Scriptures.

The word 'inspired' in v. 16 is not a good translation of the Greek word that is used. In fact, it conveys exactly the opposite meaning. The word literally means 'God breathed'; it is the breathing out of God. Thus the Scriptures are the very words that Almighty God breathed out. It could be said that if God were to stand in the flesh before men today, He would give them no other words than those He has already breathed out and has caused to be written down. It is also significant that it is not the writers that were inspired by God (though holy men did write as they were moved by the Holy Spirit), but rather the writings. 'All scripture is God-breathed . . . '.

This God-breathed Scripture is said to be useful in five different areas.

1. It makes men 'wise unto salvation'. It is through the Scriptures that man is brought to know his need of Christ and it is through the 'foolishness of preaching' that God is pleased to save sinners.
2. It teaches us all we need to know in order to please God - what we should believe and what we should do. It sets the standard of faith and life.
3. It convicts us of our failure to live up to God's standard.
4. It corrects us. The Scripture shows us how to repent, how to seek forgiveness and how to correct the mistakes that we have made.
5. It trains us in righteousness. We are shown how to develop correct patterns of behaviour so that we learn how to 'walk in the paths of righteousness'.

The Scriptures being 'God-breathed' are of necessity without error.

## SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Read 2 Tim. 3: 1 - 17.
2. Ask the students if they know the last words of any famous person and ask them why 'last words' are important. Tell them that 2 Timothy was the last letter that Paul wrote and that he wrote it to a young man who was undertaking a life's work of great responsibility. His last words therefore contain the heart of what he wished Timothy to remember.
3. Help the students to distinguish between the inspiration of the Scriptures and artistic works often described as inspiring.
4. Emphasize that although 'the scriptures' in this text refer to the Old Testament, it is nevertheless true that the writings of Paul himself and the rest of the books that make up what we call the New Testament were considered in the same way. (2 Peter 3: 15, 16)
5. Stress the fact that since the Scriptures, in the original languages, are the very breathing out of the God of truth, then they must be without error.
6. Show how the infallibility of the Bible relates to everyday life. Since the Bible is without error and therefore true and trustworthy:
  - (a) If man is to be saved, he must follow its direction. 2 Tim. 3: 15.
  - (b) A Christian must submit what he believes and what he does to its teaching. v. 16.
  - (c) A Christian will accept the rebuke and conviction it contains. v. 16.
  - (d) A Christian will seek to order his life according to its precepts. v. 16.

## APPLICATION

The important thing in this lesson is that the students may know that the directions given regarding belief and practice are completely trustworthy, and are the standard by which our lives are to be measured and not simply that they should have an intellectual acceptance of the infallibility and inerrancy of the Word of God.

## FURTHER READING

PACKER, J. I. GOD HAS SPOKEN

## LESSON 12

### Basic Truths

### SCRIPTURE AND SCIENCE

Scripture Text - Gen. 1; Gen. 2

#### AIM OF LESSON

To demonstrate the trustworthiness of the Genesis account of Creation.

#### BACKGROUND NOTES

Nothing has so powerfully undermined the sufficiency of the Scriptures as the widely accepted theory of evolution propounded by Charles Darwin in his book 'The Origin of Species'. So strong has been the influence of this theory that many Christian people have tried to find some way of harmonising evolution with what the Scriptures clearly teach. The Bible has been interpreted in the light of so-called scientific fact and thus made subordinate to human intelligence. True science and Scripture do not conflict but some theories of unbelieving scientists most certainly do conflict with Scripture.

1. Belief in creation does not depend upon science or supposed scientific evidence. Creation is true because the Bible teaches it. The starting point for the Christian is the sufficiency of the Word of God. Whatever position a person takes, it is one of faith; no less for the evolutionist than the creationist. The judgement that we have to make is whether we trust the Word of Almighty God or the word of fallible scientists.
2. True science is concerned with facts and laws which can be demonstrated and is bound by verifiable facts. It cannot interpret these facts correctly apart from the revealed truth of Holy Scripture.
3. God's revelation is two-fold: His revelation in the Scriptures and His revelation through the works of His hands. These are not two unconnected revelations, but one complete and coherent revelation of the sovereign God. This is important because if there is but one revelation, albeit in a two-fold form, then it is impossible that one should contradict the other. The only way we can possibly understand the created universe is by seeking the interpretation given in the written Word of its Creator.
4. There has been much speculation over the length of the Genesis 'day'. Was it a day as we understand it, or was it a period of extended duration? The Hebrew word itself is no real help for it is used in different ways, just as the English word 'day'. The question may be asked as to whether the desire of some to extend the period of the Genesis 'day' is an attempt to reconcile the teaching of the Word of God with the

'findings' of modern science. There is no reason in the Scriptures why the ordinary and straightforward interpretation, namely, that the days were days of twenty four hours, should not be accepted.

#### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Read Genesis chapter 1 verse 1.
2. Ask the students what they understand by the term 'sufficiency of Scripture'. (The Word of God gives true and accurate information and is all that is necessary in matters of faith and practice.)
3. Discuss with the students the grave implications of rejecting the Genesis account of Creation. These include:-
  - (a) The Bible contains inaccuracies.
  - (b) The world did not come into being by special creation but by a process of evolution.
  - (c) Man is not a unique being but merely the most intelligent of the animals.
4. Outline the four points in the background material.
5. An important aspect of evolutionary theory is the belief that change and development always occur at a uniform pace. This is not supported by Scripture.
  - (a) The world, at creation, was 'full-grown'. Adam was a fully grown man, not a baby; the animals did not begin as eggs - 'the chicken is before the egg, and the tree is before the seed'. What might have taken centuries from a single cell, if indeed such a thing were possible, was rendered unnecessary by the creation of a 'mature' earth.
  - (b) Science does not, and cannot, study the creation as it was originally formed. The world after the Fall was different from the one that existed prior to man's sin for the earth was cursed and now is under bondage (Rom. 8: 19). The world before the Fall is outside the realm of observation and cannot therefore be studied except by reference to the Word of God.
  - (c) There was a radical change in the world at the time of the Flood. We are told that . . . the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished'. There can be no doubt that the Flood had a profound effect upon the earth; the whole structure of the earth was shaken when 'the fountains of the

great deep . . .' were broken up. (For the effect of the Flood upon the earth, see 'The Genesis Flood' by Witcombe and Morris).

#### APPLICATION

The fundamental lesson that must be impressed upon the students is that we have no need to feel intellectually inferior because of a belief in Creation. We are on a firm foundation, that of the unchanging Word of a Sovereign God. The evolutionist, in spite of the accepted respectability of his position, does not only have the truth of the Word of God against him, he is also defending a position based on an unscientific and unreasonable theory.

#### FURTHER READING

|                  |                                |
|------------------|--------------------------------|
| ANDREWS, E. H.   | Is Evolution Scientific?       |
| BAKER, S.        | The Bone of Contention         |
| SHORT, A. Rendle | Modern Discovery and the Bible |
| WITCOMBE         | The Genesis Flood              |

## LESSON 13

Basic Truths

### WHAT IS SIN?

Scripture Text - Gen. 2: 4 - 3: 6

#### AIM OF LESSON

To discover the nature of sin by an examination of the account of the Fall.

#### BACKGROUND NOTES

That there is evil in the world today is admitted on all sides. Our newspapers are full of reports of violence, deceit, corruption and tragedy. The question that we need to ask ourselves is, 'What is the cause of all this evil?'

Many answers have been given to this question in the course of history. MARXISM, for instance, would say that it is all to do with the kind of economic system we live under. On this view man is morally neutral; but he must eat to live and that nowadays requires money - money which we get only from an employer. He thus has us at his mercy. From the conflict between these two arises all other evils - theft, vandalism, murder etc.

Some EDUCATIONALISTS also have suggested causes for our evils. Man, they would argue, does wrong because he does not know the 'better way' to live. Education, they say, will rectify that defect. Better education will produce better citizens.

Many PSYCHOLOGISTS AND SOCIOLOGISTS see man's evil ways as being attributable to home and environmental influences. Given the right surroundings, man will turn out all right.

In view of all these competing theories where does the Christian stand? We must be careful not to react too hastily to non-Christian explanations. Even non-Christians often recognise good and evil in society. (Titus 1: 12, 13)

These explanations, despite fragments of truth they may contain, fail to take into account that man does evil because he is evil. Evil structures exist in our society because of man's sin.

What is Sin? One way of answering this question is to look at the account of the first sin and to see what was involved in it.

Since man was created by God, he is wholly dependent upon God for everything. Man is

therefore obliged to live for God, ie, to obey Him. Consequently, when man was created and placed in the garden, as a means of showing his obedience, he was forbidden to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Everything else he could freely have. Genesis chapter 3 records the tragic failure of Adam to obey. On the suggestion of his wife he ate the forbidden fruit and plunged the world into ruin. Adam's sin shows us the nature of sin itself.

1. **SIN IS UNFAITHFULNESS**

It is the rejection of the God Who loves us. If God had created us and 'given us all things richly to enjoy', then by not obeying Him we are, in effect, turning our backs on One Who loves us. God showed His love for Adam by putting him in such delightful surroundings. But Adam spurned that love. We grow up surrounded by God's love and care for us, but from our earliest days we turn our backs on our Maker and go our own ways.

2. **SIN IS LAWLESSNESS**

This is the definition given to it by John (I John 3: 4). All relationships require some specific rules or guidelines. Adam was given a specific command to follow (Gen. 2: 16, 17). In eating the fruit, he deliberately went against God's wishes. In other words, he rebelled against God's authority. God is still our Lord and Creator and He has given us His laws by which we express our submission to His authority. When we break those laws we are rebelling against God.

3. **SIN IS TRANSGRESSION**

This word comes from a root which means 'to cross over a boundary'. God has set limits to man's freedom. Man has perfectly liberty within the framework of the moral law. But sinful man transgresses this law in thought, word and deed.

4. **SIN IS UNLAWFUL DESIRE**

The fruit that Eve saw was 'one to be desired to make one wise'. Here it is implied that desire was involved in that first sin. Eve's sin lay in the fact that she desired something that was unlawful, out of bounds. So it is with us; we all have desires and often the objects of our desire are not wrong in themselves, eg, Achan and the forbidden spoils. Jos. 7: 20,21.

5. **SIN INVOLVES UNBELIEF**

The Tempter's first words to Eve cast doubt on God's Word. 'Did God really say . . . ?' Then came an 'authoritative' rejection of any such consequences - 'You shall not die . . . ' Eve was faced with a choice. Was she to believe God or the serpent? By eating the fruit she showed that she did not take seriously what God had said.

Similarly our disobedience arises from a defiance of God's Word.

6. SIN INVOLVES PRIDE

What appealed to Eve was not just the edible qualities of the fruit but the prospect of having knowledge comparable to that of God Himself and thus of being on a par with God. 'You shall be as God . . . ' Man has been made from the dust of the ground - as had the animals too (Gen. 2: 19; 1: 24) - and yet man had been given the exalted position of 'lord of creation'. (Ps. 8) Still he was not content. He wanted more. Nor is he any better today; he will acknowledge no master but himself.

7. SIN IMPUGNS THE CHARACTER OF GOD

God had placed Adam in an ideal environment and had given him an abundance of good things. Only one thing was forbidden, and that to spare him pain and sorrow. The Tempter twisted all this, suggesting that it was because God was jealous of His superior knowledge and did not want to share it that He was putting this tree out of bounds. Thus he implied that God was niggardly and petty. By taking the fruit Adam was, in effect, consenting to this portrayal of God's character.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Bring in a newspaper and draw the students' attention to any cases of trouble, evil, etc, you may find.
2. Point out to the class that this is the kind of world we live in. What we need to discover is what makes it like this.
3. Now ask the class what explanations they would give if they were:-
  - (a) MARXISTS - use notes to explain their outlook. The pupils should write this in the space provided on their worksheet. For objections, point out the corruptions and crimes of people like Stalin.
  - (b) EDUCATIONALISTS - as above. For objections, one can point out the number of crimes committed by educated people (company swindles etc).
  - (c) PSYCHOLOGISTS etc.- as above. For objections, one can show how much vandalism takes place in new housing estates, etc.
4. After showing the truth in these viewpoints and their weaknesses, show that the

Bible offers us a more fundamental diagnosis - SIN.

5. Get the students to read the set passage.
6. Ask the students what they can deduce from this passage concerning the nature of sin.
  - (a) Get them to put their suggestions in the appropriate spaces.
  - (b) Help them to see the significance of the act of eating in this context.  
(see notes)

#### APPLICATION

The teacher should not be content with a purely academic understanding of the nature of Sin. Unless we are aware of its nature in us, we will never live the kind of sanctified lives God meant us to live. Try therefore to get the students to become aware of its extent in their own lives. Suggest that at home they might write out where they think they exhibit those same sinful tendencies. Make these specific failures a matter of prayer.

## LESSON 14

Basic Truths

### THE WAGES OF SIN

Scripture Text - Genesis 3

#### AIM OF LESSON

To help the student appreciate the consequences of Adam's sin and the misery we suffer as sinners.

#### BACKGROUND NOTES

In lesson 16 the nature of sin was examined. This was done by analysing the sin of Adam and Eve which, it was suggested, demonstrated the true character of evil. In this lesson we think about the consequences of Adam's sin, consequences which we are involved in.

Paul, in Romans 6 verse 23, sums up all these consequences under the comprehensive term 'death'. What did he mean by that term? It would seem that just as physical death does not involve only one thing - it involves for example the cessation of bodily function; the separation of the soul from the body; bodily decay and the failure to respond to one's environment etc. - so the 'death' mentioned in Romans 6 entails several things. Since it would take too much time to search the Scriptures for everything the Biblical writers include under the term 'death' it seems best to look at the account of the Fall. God threatened 'death' if the forbidden fruit was eaten. By observing what followed Adam's action we may gain some insight into all that the Biblical writers meant by that term. In Genesis 3 we see all these things epitomised.

The consequences of Adam's sin:-

1. **Guilt and Shame (v. 7)**  
Before their disobedience they were naked but knew no shame. Now they felt embarrassed and guilty. So it is today, however much we try to suppress guilty feelings, they inevitably come to mind.
2. **Fear of God (v. 8)**  
Having transgressed they could no longer face their Maker for they knew His presence would expose their wrongdoing. So man in his heart fears God, for he knows that God brings to light all hidden sins and faults and condemns them. This in turn leads to hatred of God.
3. **Blighted relationships (v. 12)**  
As soon as Adam was accused of doing wrong, he immediately tried to blame his

wife. One can image the resentment this must have produced in Eve's mind. Already relations were becoming strained. So it is with us today. Everywhere we look there is trouble - war, revolution, race riots, religious bigotry. 'The way of peace they have not known.' (Rom. 3: 17) All this stems from sin. Man's harmonious relationship with his environment ceased. His environment now became hostile and man was exposed to new perils, eg, wild animals and natural hazards. Man's efforts were to be doomed to endless frustration (vs. 17 - 19).

4. Suffering and Pain (v. 16)

Suffering and pain would now be the lot of the whole human race. 'Man is born to sorrow' said Job 'as the sparks fly upward'. The mystery of suffering is great and one that strikes at many of our cherished dreams. It is impossible to unravel this mystery but the Bible makes it clear that ultimately sin is the cause of it.

5. Domination (v. 16)

' . . . and your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you.' The sin of our first parents constituted rebellion and a refusal to submit to authority. What should have been a harmonious relationship needed now the strong hand of authority.

6. Separation from God (vs. 22 - 24)

Separation or exclusion from the presence of God is the ultimate consequence of sin. This is 'death' indeed! We are even now in a state of spiritual death, that is, we are separated from Him who is the source of true life. One day we will die physically. Our bodies will be separated from the life that maintains them throughout their earthly existence. But worst of all, unless we have trusted in Christ, there is the prospect of eternal death, and endless separation from the life of God in Heaven.

These are just some of the consequences of sin which may be summed up in the word 'death'.

#### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Ask the students to read the opening paragraph of the worksheet. Question your students on other things one might include in such a payslip, eg, 'fringe benefits'.
2. In the second section you could stress the fact that slaves in ancient times were bought to work for their master - hence 'employees' (though this would not be an accurate parallel).
3. Ask the students to explain in what sense sin is our master. Do the same with

question 2. (See background notes)

4. For question 3 in the students' material read Genesis 3 and help the students to see what was involved when Adam fell. Comment on the six consequences of sin outlined in the background notes.
  
5. Finally ask the students to fill in some of the 'fringe benefits' on their worksheets. In addition to death in the sense of eternal separation from God, show the other consequences of spiritual death, eg, guilt, suffering, etc.

#### APPLICATION

As you conclude this lesson ask the students to identify those things which they experience in their lives which are a result of the Fall.

## LESSON 15

Basic Truths

### MAN AS HE REALLY IS

Scripture Text - Genesis 4: 1 - 6: 8

#### AIM OF LESSON

To show the total depravity of man.

#### BACKGROUND NOTES

Genesis chapter 4 takes up the account of Adam and Eve from the time they were dismissed from the garden for disobeying God. In a previous lesson you have seen how man was made in the image of God and how that likeness was marred when man succumbed to the temptation of the devil. In this lesson we will consider man as he appears after the Fall.

The term used to describe man since the Fall is 'totally depraved'. This does not mean that man is as depraved as he could be, or that man will indulge in every form of evil. It does mean:-

1. That man is corrupt in every part of his nature:-
  - (a) His mind is unable to understand the things of God. I Cor. 2: 14; Rom. 1: 18 compare I Cor. 1: 18 and I Cor. 2: 14. Genesis 6 verse 5 says that the thoughts of man's heart were 'only evil all the time'. (NIV)
  - (b) His will is set against God. Originally man had lived in subjection to the will of God, but now his will is implacably opposed to God's will. (Rom. 8: 7) The will of man is not free, as Adam's was before the Fall, to choose either good or evil. Man's will is in bondage to his sinful and depraved nature, and so he has neither the desire nor the ability to choose the spiritual over the carnal. (Jn. 8: 44; Jn. 8: 34)
  - (c) His affections or desires are corrupted. (Gen. 6: 5; Gen. 8: 21; Jer. 17: 9; Mk. 7: 21-23). Whereas before the Fall man loved God and desired His will, now his desire is turned to lust, his truth into lies and his submission into rebellion. Thomas Boston put it forcefully: 'His face is towards hell, his back towards heaven; and therefore God calls him to turn. He loves what he should hate, and hates what he should love; joys in what he ought to mourn for, and mourns for what he should rejoice in; glories in his shame, and is ashamed of his glory; abhors what he should desire, and desires what he should abhor.'

2. That man is unable to do any spiritual good.
  - (a) Natural man cannot please God.  
(II Chron. 6: 36; Job 15: 14-16; Eccles. 7: 20; Isa. 64: 6; Rom. 8: 8; Heb. 11: 6)
  - (b) Natural man cannot forsake his sin.  
The unregenerate man does not have the desire or the ability to change his nature or even to prepare himself for salvation.  
(Job. 14: 4; Jer. 13: 23; Jn. 6: 44; Eph. 2: 8, 9)

#### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Read Genesis chapter 4 verses 1 - 12 and chapter 6 verses 1 - 8.
2. Ask the students what they understand the nature of man to be. Is he basically good or basically evil?
3. Discuss the evidences of corruption in Cain.
 

Points to consider:-

  - (a) His self-will. (Gen. 4: 3) He would have known from his parents the kind of offering to bring. He chose to ignore it.
  - (b) His sinful response to God's rebuke. (Gen. 4: 5)
  - (c) His act of murder. (Gen. 4: 8)
  - (d) His lying. (Gen. 4: 9)
  - (e) His arrogance. (Gen. 4: 9) 'Am I my brother's keeper?'
  - (f) His lack of repentance and over-riding selfishness. (Gen. 4: 13, 14)
4. Point out the progression of evil from the first act of disobedience in the garden of Eden to the sin of Cain and eventually to the unequal yoke between the believing Seth and the godless line of Cain, (Gen. 6: 1, 2) until the words of Gen. 6: 5 had to be said. 'Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thought of his heart was only evil continually.'
5. Teach the doctrine that the passage in Genesis illustrates, using the structure given in the Background Notes.

#### APPLICATION

There is a great difference between the modern assessment of the nature of man and that given in the Word of God. The students must be brought to realise that no matter how refined, kind or religious a man may be, his essential nature is corrupt and depraved and that unless he is regenerated by the Holy Spirit of God he remains under the wrath and condemnation of God and is totally unable to please God in any way.

Once this is clearly established, there is an adequate basis upon which the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Substitute for His people, may be presented. It is only against the background of the blackness of total depravity that the full radiance of the grace of God in Jesus Christ can be seen.

#### FURTHER READING

BOSTON, Thomas

STEELE and THOMAS

WILLIAMSON, G. I.

Human Nature in its Fourfold State

Romans - An Interpretive Outline (appendix D)

Westminster Confession of Faith chapter 6

## LESSON 16

Basic Truths

### THE CALL OF GOD

Scripture Text - Genesis 12: 1 - 9

#### AIM OF LESSON

To teach the doctrine of effectual calling and to show the nature of the Gospel call.

#### BACKGROUND NOTES

The call of Abraham is a demonstration of the way God calls sinners into covenant relationship with Himself. There are several truths which ought to be borne in mind as you work through the lesson.

1. God's call to sinners is both outward and inward. All who hear the Gospel hear it outwardly, ie, with the physical sense of hearing. Some who hear the Gospel call also hear it inwardly. This is known as effectual calling, when God the Holy Spirit speaks to the heart so that a sinner is made aware of his need and of the power of Christ to save him and is enabled to respond to the Gospel call in repentance and faith.
2. God's call is a gracious command. It never comes as a suggested option. (Gen. 12: 1; Matt. 11: 28). It is in His grace and love for sinners that God calls them to himself.
3. God's call is accompanied by sure promises. In Abraham's case these were specific. (vs. 2, 3) In the Gospel call they were also specific - the promise of mercy, forgiveness, peace with God, heavenly inheritance.
4. God's call is to discipleship. (Lk. 14: 27, 33) There can be no division between receiving Jesus as Saviour and following Him as Lord.

#### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Read the passage.
2. Set the scene. Consult a Bible handbook or dictionary and fill out some of the details of Abraham's original homeland. Use a map.
3. Lesson plan: Take a little time to stress that man, a lost sinner, is also alone. Emphasise the truth that God's call brings man into friendship with Himself. 'I

will be your God and you shall be my people.'

4. As you consider the following aspects of God's call ask the relevant questions in the students' material.
  - (a) God's call is personal.  
It was addressed to Abraham specifically. When the Gospel is preached it is not a haphazard affair like spraying a hose at random over the flower bed. The Gospel is addressed personally to all those who hear it. No-one can hide in the crowd. The call is personal in another sense: God applies the Gospel to particular persons, so that they listen, and understand.
  - (b) God's call is effectual.  
When God calls particular individuals He enables them to respond.
  - (c) God's call is absolute.  
Abraham was called to give total submission and obedience to God. He was called to follow wherever God would lead him.
  - (d) God's call is merciful.  
Abraham did not deserve God's kindness more than anyone else. Yet in His call God promised Abraham that He would richly bless and use him.

#### APPLICATION

1. Discuss with the class the principal means God uses to call people to faith in Christ. (See Shorter Catechism 89)
2. Emphasise the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in making the call of God effective.
3. Stress that just as Abraham knew that God was with him in his journey, so the Christian has that same assurance. 'Lo, I am with you always.'

## LESSON 17

Basic Truths

### SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

Scripture Text - Gen. 22: 1 - 14

#### AIM OF LESSON

To demonstrate that Salvation is a work of God.

#### BACKGROUND NOTES

The events recorded in Genesis 22 must always be seen against the background of the gracious covenant that God made with Abraham. Some of the promises made to Abraham in that covenant had already been fulfilled at this time in the patriarch's life. God promised Abraham, when still without children, that he would be the father of a great nation (Gen. 17: 5). This promise was wonderfully fulfilled when Isaac was born ('for in Isaac your seed shall be called' Gen. 21: 12b). When Abraham looked at his son he could see him as the physical embodiment of the faithfulness of a covenant keeping God; all his hopes and expectations were bound up with this son whom God had given him.

It should also be borne in mind that Abraham had been given many evidences of the faithfulness of God throughout his life. God did not suddenly come to him with this 'test' without having previously given him many examples of His care and provision. Abraham already knew that God was sovereign, almighty and holy; he knew that God was a God who punished sin and who saved His people. Abraham was never called upon to have what is sometimes called 'blind faith'. He was called upon to trust a God whose goodness had been proved to him repeatedly. He was being asked to commit his cause to One who already had accomplished great things for him.

#### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

1. Read the passage with the students.
2. Explain how devastating the command of God must have been to Abraham in the light of the promises made to him concerning Isaac.
3. Discuss with the students how Abraham's experience of God in the past (Gen. 12: 1 - 9; Gen. 17) would have helped him in this situation. Abraham already knew that God could do what seemed impossible. (Gen. 18: 9 - 15)
4. Ask one of the students to read Hebrews 11: 17 - 19.

5. Compare the verses in Hebrews 11 with Romans 4 verse 3. What does this tell us about Abraham's faith? Abraham's faith was not founded upon good works. He did not 'claim' anything from God as his own just reward. He 'believed' God, that is, he cast himself into the hands of Almighty God and left the whole issue with Him. Such was his trust that he was prepared even to believe that God was able to bring back his son from the dead. Compare Daniel 3 verse 17.
6. Discuss with the students how the grace of God can be seen in Genesis 22 verses 8, 11, 13 and 14.
7. Emphasise to the students that the salvation Isaac obtained was entirely due to the sovereign hand of Almighty God.
8. The name given to the place where the deliverance took place is very significant - 'the Lord will provide'. This is the central fact in man's salvation. God in grace and mercy provided for the salvation of His people by sending His own Son to bear the punishment of their sins. The words at the beginning of this chapter not only set before us the awesome sacrifice that was required of Abraham, it also prefigures the sending of God's own Son into the world; 'Take your son, your only son . . . whom you love . . .'. If such love could be attributed to Abraham, how much more can it be said that God loved His Son? - the One whose very nature is love.
9. Make clear to the students the grace of God as it is seen in Jesus Christ and challenge them concerning their response to it.

#### APPLICATION

It is important that the substitution of the ram for Isaac be clearly seen as a picture of the substitution of the Lord Jesus Christ for the guilty sinner. Just as God, in grace, supplied the need of Abraham and Isaac, so in Jesus Christ, He has for His own elect people.

The faith of Abraham, seen in his unwavering trust in a sovereign God, is an example of the faith that God gives to His people:-

1. Acceptance of the Word of God. (The promise that he would be the father of many, a promise that he continued to believe even when it seemed that it was about to be broken in the death of his son.)
2. Commitment of all things into the hand of God. (Gen. 22: 8)
3. Obedience to the revealed will of God (Gen. 22: 12). Abraham listened to the voice of God and obeyed every command. If he had simply obeyed the first command and then ignored subsequent instructions he would not have seen the salvation of God. Obedience is a central aspect of faith.

**LESSON 18**

Worshipping God

**THE MEANING OF WORSHIP**

Scripture Text - Psalm 92:1,2; Ps. 95; Ps. 96; Genesis 12:7,8; 28:10-22;  
Exodus 3:1-5; 33:7-10.

**AIM OF LESSON**

To bring to the students the idea that Worship is the submission of our whole nature to God - a way of life.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

The noblest occupation for any creature is to be engaged in the worship of God. The seraphim are thus occupied crying 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts' (Isa. 6:3). The varied orders of heavenly being esteem it their highest privilege to be thus engaged, and it was for this that man was created. Man's chief end is to glorify (or worship) God and to enjoy Him for ever. A study of the Old Testament will show that the whole religious service, revealed to Israel, was principally worship. There was a sanctuary - court, holy, and most holy place. There was a priesthood. There were sacrifices, daily and special. There were special set times or feasts for the offering up of sacrifices. All this was to emphasise to the Israelite that he was a worshipper. The sacrifices, which more particularly met his need, such as sin and trespass offerings, were still presented to God in worship; while a far more prominent place was given to the burnt offerings which were more directly acts of worship of a sweet savor to God. These were repeated on certain occasions (Num. 28). Between the worshipper and the immediate presence of God there hung a veil, through which only the high priest might pass and only on the 'day of atonement'. This, then, describes Old Testament worship based on the Law, giving glory to God for His majesty, wisdom and power but holding man off as unfit to stand before Him.

Passing on to the New Testament we find a great contrast. The veil has been torn in two from the top to the bottom by the death of Christ. What would have been death to the Hebrew priest is a way of life to the Christian. Christian worship has its source in an accomplished redemption; its object is the Triune God, its power is the Holy Spirit; its place is the Presence of God and its duration is eternity. One well known definition of worship is 'worth-ship'. This denotes an attitude to God as to One supremely worthy of the highest honour man can render. Our whole being must be involved.

**SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**

Read the portions of Scripture. We find from our reading several meanings of the word

worship.

1. Setting God above everything else

Which portion gives us this meaning? Ps. 95:3 'For the Lord is the great God and the great King above all gods'. God Himself said 'You shall have no other gods before me'.

2. Talking to God

In Gen 12:8 we read 'Abram called upon the name of the Lord'. In Ex. 33:11 Moses went into the tabernacle and 'the Lord spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend'. How do we talk to God? We talk to Him in prayer (a) reverently; (b) frequently.

3. Singing the praises of God

In the Bible the Jews sang from the Psalms at their feasts. In the two Psalms we read we are told 'sing unto the Lord'. Singing is a natural way to express our feelings.

4. Working for God

(a) Abraham in Gen. 12:7, 8 'built an altar'. We can't literally build a stone altar but if we think about Abram we can see how we are able to work for God. An altar, in Old Testament times, was a place on which sacrifices were offered to God. Abraham's offering was

- (i) A life of obedience
- (ii) A life of faith

Discuss with the class what this means for them.

(b) Jacob in Gen. 28:22 said 'of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to you' - tithing - giving our money, our time, our energy in God's work.

5. Living for God

We might call this kind of worship 'wearing God's badge'. Abraham and Moses are both referred to as friends of God. How do people think of us? Our whole life should be lived in such a way that God is glorified. In Rom. 12:1, 2 we are told to 'offer our bodies a living sacrifice, which is your reasonable service' (or worship). Can you think for yourself what some of these 'badges' might be.

Worship is, therefore, how we express with our lives, what we feel in our hearts towards God. It is firstly a personal matter because we are expressing our own feelings but it is also done in groups both large and small, congregations and families.

**APPLICATION**

The students' material asks the students to write down five or six reasons for worshipping in groups. What are the advantages of family and congregational worship? Can we not worship God just as well on our own?

Some possible answers -

1. God's presence with the 'two or three gathered together in My name'.
2. Encouragement and support from others.
3. Instruction from parents, ministers, etc.
4. We are reminded in Acts 2:42 - 47 that they devoted themselves to the fellowship.  
Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts (v.46)
5. 'Families that pray together stay together'.

**LESSON 19**

Worshipping God

**THE MARKS OF A TRUE WORSHIPPER**

Scripture Text - John 4:24; Phil. 3:3; Matt 15:9; Col. 2:23.

**AIM OF LESSON**

To show that true worship is essential to our spiritual growth.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

The early church members met where and when they could for it was a time of persecution. Everywhere Paul went he was able, with God's help, to establish a nucleus of believers and from this little group there gradually grew and developed a church. Church buildings are not essential to true worship. We are made more aware of this as we think of countries where Christians are forbidden to worship in large groups.

**SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**

What is worship? What kinds of worship are there? What do you think of when you hear the term 'true worship'? Encourage the class to discuss these questions and this will help to develop the idea of personal involvement, i.e., true worshipper.

1. How should we worship?
  - (a) Joyfully - Ps. 122
  - (b) With others - Heb. 10:25
  - (c) In spirit and in truth - John 4:24
  
2. Why should we worship?
  - (a) To glorify God
  - (b) Because God has commanded us - Deut. 12:5-9
  - (c) God has promised to meet with us, whether in private or in public, to instruct us - Micah 4:2
  - (d) To encourage others by our example
  - (e) To show the world that we belong to Christ

Most of these suggestions refer to congregational worship which is an essential element in our spiritual life.

3. What will a true worshipper do?
  - (a) Worship God only - Deut. 6:13,14; Matt. 4:10  
The worship of anyone or anything else is forbidden in Scripture.
  - (b) Worship God through our Mediator, Jesus Christ, 'I am the Way, the Truth

and the Life,' John 14:6. Christians are people who come to God through Christ. Heb. 7:25 There is no other mediator.

(c) Worship according to the standards in God's Word

The Jews added many rules of their own making and so lost the spirit of true worship. Matt. 15:9

(d) Worship with understanding

The Samaritans feared the Lord but served their own gods. 2 Kings 17:24, 41. Paul accused the Athenians of idolatry. Not only did they worship named gods but they also set up an altar to 'the unknown god'. Acts 17:23

(e) Worship with our hearts

This is stated in the old Testament and Jesus Himself quoted from Isaiah 29:13. 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth and honour me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me.' Matt. 15:8

(f) Worship reverently

Jesus cast out the money changers from the Temple. They were using the building for secular purposes. Matt. 21:12, 13.

In the Old Testament the Israelites were told how to behave when they went to the Temple. Eccles. 5:1

4. If we worship God in spirit and in truth our worship will make us more sensitive to sin, more humble, stronger in Christ and closer to God.

The more we read and study God's Word the more we will want to increase our knowledge of Him. We will grow spiritually and will know more of God's plan for our lives. We will be more careful about what we do, say, and how we behave. 'By their fruits you shall know them'. This is how the work of the Spirit is expressed in every true worshipper. Such worship enables us to walk with God, to take pleasure in reading His Word, and to show something of His likeness in us to the world.

#### APPLICATION

How should we reply to someone who says

- (a) I never go to church, but I am just as good as people who do?  
 (b) I can worship God anywhere; I don't need to go to Church?

#### FURTHER READING

STOTT, John R. W. Understanding the Bible.

**LESSON 20**

Worshipping God

**THE PLACE OF THE WORD OF GOD IN WORSHIP**

Scripture Text - Nehemiah 8:1 - 12

**AIM OF LESSON**

To show that the Word of God should be the basis and source of our worship.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

Worship begins with the instruction in the way of the Lord and its ultimate expression is obedience to God's Word and service to God. Ezra probably read the book of Deuteronomy. See Deut. 31:9-13. Verses 7 and 8 suggest that, because of the large crowds and due to the fact that many of the people understood the Aramaic language better than Hebrew, the Levites helped to broadcast and expound the word.

**SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**

Remind the class of the events which have taken place in the first seven chapters and how Jerusalem has been restored under the leadership of Nehemiah. The lesson can be taught by a detailed study of the passage.

- v.1 (a) The people had a desire to hear God's Word. Only the Holy Spirit can give that desire. We must come to worship God with a desire in our hearts to hear His Word.
- (b) They were united in their desire to hear the Word.
- (c) It was the Law of Moses, i.e., Deuteronomy, which was read to them. It is the Law which brings us to a realisation of our sin and need of a Saviour. Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:24
- v.2 Everyone was there who could understand. The worship service is not for adults only but for every member of the family. Deut. 31:12, 13.
- v.3 The people were attentive although it was a long sermon lasting from dawn to mid-day. We also should be attentive to the Word, following it in our Bibles.
- v.4 (a) Ezra stood on a pulpit of wood. Discuss why in Reformed Churches the pulpit is in the centre of the church in front of the congregation. It is the Word which is given the most prominent place, not the preacher who is the communicator of the Word nor the sacraments which are subordinate to the Word.

- (b) He was supported by the Levites who helped to translate and explain the text. Discuss how we can gain a better understanding of the Bible, e.g., some congregations discuss the sermon at the weekly prayer meeting; home Bible studies; the use of commentaries to help with private study; the advantages of preparing talks for the C.Y. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using a modern translation.
- v.5 The people treated the Word with reverence, standing up when Ezra opened the book.
- v.6 The reading of the Word was preceded by prayers. We should always ask God to reveal Himself to us through the reading of the Bible. Notice how the people identified themselves with the prayer and said 'AMEN, AMEN.'
- v.8 The law was read distinctly and explained so that the people could understand. In many churches today there is no exposition of the Word and the sermon is merely a talk with a moral lesson.

The results :-

- v.9 The people wept, being convicted of their sin.
- v.10 They recognised the day as holy unto the Lord and as a day of rejoicing.

#### APPLICATION

1. Worship is hearing God's Word and doing it.
2. We must come to God's Word with eager anticipation.
3. We must come prayerfully.
4. The Word of God provides us with all that we require to worship God. 2 Tim 3:16
5. It provides us with Psalms to sing.
6. It gives us Christ's teaching on how to pray.
7. 'God's Law is perfect and converts the soul in sin that lies.' Ps. 19:7

#### FURTHER READING

STOTT, J. R.W. Understanding the Bible

**LESSON 21**

Worshipping God

**THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN WORSHIP**

Scripture Text - 1 Cor. 2:10 - 14; I Cor. 3:16, 17; I Cor. 12:4 - 11; Rom. 8:26, 27

**AIM OF LESSON**

To show how the Holy Spirit guides into all truth, reveals the mind of God and helps us in our worship.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

1 Cor. 2:10 - 14

The word 'spirit' means breath or wind. Both these ideas are contained in the word as applied to the Holy Spirit. In John 20:22, Genesis 2:7 and Job 33:4 we have the idea of the Spirit being the breath of God and of the Son. In John 3:6 - 8 we have the idea of the Spirit as a wind.

The Spirit is - A Person, John 14:16, 17; sovereign John 3:8; invisible John 3:8; vital John 3:5,6; life giving Ezekiel 37:8-10; irresistible Acts 6:10.

We cannot understand the thoughts and intentions of God except through the work of the Holy Spirit. Just as a teacher helps students to increase their knowledge of a particular subject, so God's Holy Spirit acts as our teacher by enabling us to understand His Word more perfectly so giving us a better knowledge of God Himself.

v. 12 This verse means that the Christian has not the outlook of this world but, having received the Spirit, he is able to appreciate what God has done for him through Jesus Christ. This revelation cannot be expressed or understood by the wisdom of the world but only by the enlightening of the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of Truth.

1 Cor. 3:16, 17

In I Cor. 6:19 Paul describes believers as being the temple of the Holy Spirit. However, here he applies it to the whole church at Corinth. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God's presence, God's holiness and God's glory. Wherever Christians gather in fellowship God is present by His Spirit.

1 Cor. 12:4-11

Christians must learn that the Holy Spirit uses men and women in different ways, giving different gifts to each individual. Though there are various gifts they are from the same Spirit and given for the common good. All are essential to the life of the Church. It is the Spirit who brings all the differing gifts together to work in harmony to God's glory.

Romans 8:26, 27

The word 'helps' in the original conveys the idea of someone carrying one end of a stretcher - a joint effort.

#### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Discuss what is meant by the Spirit. Make sure the class understands the doctrine of the Trinity. The Shorter Catechism refers to the Holy Spirit as the third person in the Godhead but makes it clear that this does not mean a first, second and third person. It does not imply any subordination in rank. 'There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.' S.C.6

Ask the students to imagine a person from an undeveloped country being flown by air from a jungle where he has never had contact with western civilisation to a royal palace where he is to live permanently. Discuss some of the difficulties he would encounter.

1. He could not communicate
2. He would not know how to behave in the presence of the monarch.
3. He would not understand what he should or should not do or what was right or wrong.
4. He would not understand the wonders of modern communication, e.g. T.V., Telephone, etc.

How could he survive in such a situation?

The only solution to his problem would be to find someone who could not only communicate with him but also be familiar with the palace and know the monarch and the protocol. He would need someone to instruct him how to adjust to the customs and laws.

Use this as an illustration of what it is like for a sinner to come into the presence of God and try to have fellowship with Him. The Holy Spirit instructs us how to behave.

Not only is the Holy Spirit the author of the written Word of God but He is also its interpreter. How much easier it is to understand a book on nuclear physics if the author of the book is beside us when we read it and will answer our questions. Ps. 119:18. It is a mistake to try to comprehend spiritual revelation with our natural understanding.

1 Cor. 2:10-14

Discuss:

How do Christians learn about God?

How can we convince others of the truth of the Bible?

Note verse 14 - without the help of the Holy Spirit the gospel is foolishness. Worship of God depends on true knowledge of God and that can only come from the Spirit's teaching. Ask a student to read John 16:13. Christ has promised the Spirit's presence to guide us in every act of true worship.

I Cor. 3:16, 17

Discuss

Explain that here Paul was referring to the whole church at Corinth. See background notes. Does God require us to worship Him in a particular building or indeed any building? Can we worship God by ourselves at home without having fellowship with other Christians?

God requires Christians to worship Him in Spirit and the unity one with another in the Holy Spirit constitutes a proper and acceptable temple of worship.

I Cor. 12:4-11

Discuss the different gifts which members of a congregation might have and how they might be used in worship. Emphasise that no one is without some spiritual gift and that it is sinful not to use it in God's service. What gifts have individual students been given?

Stress that the Spirit unites us in our worship, helps us to praise God, to confess God in unity and to pray to God with one mind.

Romans 8:26, 27

Go back to the illustration of the person from an undeveloped country. How much better and easier it would be if the interpreter was not only a close friend but was the Monarch himself. The fellowship of the Holy Spirit provides us with a similar relationship.

Prayer does not originate in the will or heart of man; it is the Holy Spirit who prompts and enables us to pray . The Spirit intercedes on behalf of God's people to make their petitions known.

#### APPLICATION

1. How can we come to know God?
2. How can we know how to worship God?
3. What is essential to true worship?
4. How can various spiritual gifts combine to promote unity of worship?
5. How can we be sure that our prayers are acceptable to God?

**LESSON 22**

Worshipping God

**THE PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP**

Scripture Text - Acts 2:41 - 47

**AIM OF LESSON**

To answer the question 'What does worship consist of?'

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

Acts 2:41 -47 gives us a beautiful picture of the New Testament Church after Pentecost. In verse 41 Peter has just finished expounding the Word of God and preaching the good news of Christ crucified, risen and reigning in a magnificent sermon that God uses to convert 3,000 souls! The ensuing fellowship of believers is a model for the Church to follow.

**SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**

1. Ask the students to read Acts 2: 41 - 47, a verse each in rotation.
2. Introduce the subject, ensuring that the class understands what 'elements' mean. Compare it to the ingredients needed for baking. Link the lesson with the previous lesson, by pointing out that without heat, ingredients will not be baked and without the Holy Spirit, the elements will not constitute true worship.
3. Encourage the class to find out for themselves what the principal elements of worship are, doing their own research ('Search the Scriptures' John 5:39) with the passage and writing in their answers in part A of the students' worksheets.
4. Ask each member of the class to read out an answer, correcting and explaining the answers as you go along.

**THE PRINCIPAL ELEMENTS OF WORSHIP FOUND IN ACTS 2: 41-47**

(a) **PREACHING** and **HEARING** the Word - verse 42

(b) **PRAYER** - verse 42

(c) **PRAISE** - verse 47

(d) **OFFERING** - verse 45

(e) **BAPTISM** - verse 41

(f) **THE LORD'S SUPPER** - verse 42 & 46

5. Ask the class to complete Section B of their worksheets, then show them the

answer in verse 46, that the believers worshipped daily in the temple and also in their homes. Point out that the occasions for worship are unlimited but that we must diligently follow this New Testament example by attending to daily worship in our homes, both individually and as families.

#### APPLICATION

Show the class that worship must be accompanied by fruitfulness and faithfulness.

- (a) FRUITFULNESS - SECTION C of the students' worksheets.

Worship cannot be separated from conduct. These New Testament believers bore fruit in fellowship (v.42), reverence (v.43), selflessness and loving kindness (v. 44 and 45) and sincerity (v.46). We need to follow their example - see John 15:5.

- (b) FAITHFULNESS - SECTION D of the students' worksheets

We must be faithful worshippers, following the Divine directions for worship lest we be guilty of the sin of Matthew 15:9 'They worship me in vain. Their teachings are but rules taught by men'. Like the Psalmist let us pray 'Direct my footsteps according to your word; Let no sin rule over me'. Ps. 119:133

#### FURTHER READING:

Testimony of R.P. Church of Ireland ch. 4 (particularly paragraph 6 and its reference texts.)

**LESSON 23**

Worshipping God

**PREACHING AND ITS PURPOSE**

Scripture Text - Acts 13:13 - 52.

**AIM OF LESSON**

To introduce the class to the basic Bible doctrine of preaching.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

The best background for this lesson is to study the following reading list:-

1. The Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, page 26, para. 2
2. Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. XXXI, para V.
3. The Larger Catechism, Questions 35 and 154 - 160.
4. Romans 10:12 - 17
5. I Cor. 1:18 - 25.

**SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**

1. Ask a member of the class to read the passage.
2. Put the passage in context: Paul has started on his missionary voyages. They arrive in what would now be called Turkey and travel to a town called Antioch in Pisidia (different from the Antioch in Syria from where Paul had set out on the journey) and on the Sabbath they go to worship in the synagogue. After the Old Testament reading, Paul and Barnabas are invited to speak and Paul preaches this notable sermon. It is an example of how the preaching of the Word is the centre and climax of congregational worship.
3. Point out that the Bible has many passages which teach the doctrine of preaching, but this is a passage where the doctrine is put into practice.
4. To help communicate those doctrines, tell the class that you are going to compare preaching with the sowing of seed; after all the Lord Jesus used the parable of the sower to teach about the hearing of the Word.
5. The purpose of this illustration is to get the class involved, so ask them to refer to their worksheets and encourage them to search the passage for themselves. You can hold their attention by asking each one to give an answer in turn.

**PREACHING IS LIKE SOWING - IT NEEDS:-**

### 1. THE RIGHT SEED

If you have time you can expand on this illustration with your own ideas. It is no use sowing lawn seed for a playing field, it will not endure the wear. You can not sow barley and expect to get wheat. The right seed is essential. The perfect seed for preaching is God's Word. It is the only seed that can germinate in the soil conditions of human hearts. That is because God has designed it and perfected it especially for this purpose. (See Prov. 30:5 and 1 Peter 1:23)

Since men reap what they sow (Gal. 6:7) it is not surprising that the false preaching of modernism in this century, sowing man's corrupt seed and not God's seed, has produced a harvest of apostasy, unbelief and immorality across the world.

In contrast, God gave an abundant harvest in Pisidian Antioch long ago because the primacy of God's Word was shown in Paul's preaching, as is evidenced in his whole sermon, but particularly in verses 25, 33, 34, 35, 41, 44, 46, 47, 48, and 49.

### 2. THE RIGHT CLIMATE

Seed needs the right mixture of sunshine and rain to germinate. Similarly, preaching needs to be accompanied by the Holy Spirit because only the Spirit can prepare the human heart to receive the seed of the Word of God.

The fact that Paul's ministry was accompanied by the Holy Spirit is shown in verses 2, 4, 9 and 52, and in verse 48 we see the fruits of the Spirit in that 'all who were appointed for eternal life believed'. Thus this same Paul was able to write later in 1 Cor.2:4 'My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power'.

### 3. THE RIGHT SOIL

In this story the reaction of the Jews in verse 45 can be compared to the seed that fell along the wayside. (See Matt. 13:19) But the reaction of the Gentiles in verse 48 is like the seed sown in good soil.

The contrast between their reactions is a good reminder of the responsibility of those who hear the Word preached to listen attentively with understanding, faith and reverence. Just as soil needs to be prepared before sowing, so we who hear the Word need to prepare our hearts beforehand in private prayer in order that we come in awe and holy fear, ready to listen and obey.

Paul opened his sermon with a solemn command (v. 16). That solemn command applies to us all, young and old, when we come to hear the Word of God preached.

#### 4. THE RIGHT SOWER

A man who does not know how to sow can waste much valuable seed, leaving the field patchy and unproductive. Such confusion can be caused among Christians by those preachers, who however sincere they may be are deficient in their understanding of Biblical truth. (Acts 18:24 - 26)

Just as a farmer will only entrust the sowing of his valuable seed to those who know how to sow, so Christ entrusts the preaching of His precious Word only to those who are called to preach. (Rom. 10:15) Paul was ordained to his ministry just before he set out on his missionary voyage in verses 2 and 3 of the chapter, fulfilling the words of Scripture: 'And how shall they preach unless they are sent?' (Rom. 10:15) 'No man takes this honour to himself; but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was'. (Heb. 5:4)

#### 5. THE RIGHT PURPOSE

Just as a farmer sows in order to reap, so Paul preached in order 'to bring salvation to the ends of the earth'. In these words we find the great and glorious purpose of all preaching - salvation. And not just salvation in Antioch or in the Middle East, but salvation 'to the ends of the earth', fulfilling the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus when He said 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.' (Mark 16:15).

The preaching of salvation aims at more than just the conversion of unbelievers, because conversion is only the start of a Christian's life. Therefore preaching also aims at the growth and the building-up of believers so that they may press on to maturity, see Phil. 3:12. Conversion, however, is clearly central to the great purpose of preaching salvation for 'unless a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God' (John 3:3) and so in this sermon Paul concentrates on presenting the risen Christ as the Saviour of sinners (verse 39).

#### APPLICATION

Some maintain that preaching is a very poor method of communication because the spoken word has a relatively low level of retention. Perhaps this is why preaching's central place in worship and evangelism is sometimes replaced by methods that are more attractive in human terms: drama, art, musicals, dance, etc. These methods represent just one aspect of the 'wisdom of the world' that Paul repudiates in 1 Corinthians ch. 1, and in verse 21 preaching is stamped with Divine approval as God's ordained method of communicating the gospel - 'It pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe'.

Preaching certainly is foolish in human terms but 'God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty' (1 Cor. 1:27). Thus it is this 'weak', 'foolish'

method of communication that has been used by God down all the centuries to convert all those whom God has predestinated to be His. Why has God chosen this 'weak' and 'foolish' method for His purposes? Because it is the Holy Spirit and not the eloquent preaching that converts sinners to Christ. (See Ps.37:39) It is the Holy Spirit who makes preaching effective,'so that your faith should not be in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God' (1 Cor. 2:5) and 'that no flesh should glory in His presence'. (1 Cor 1:29).

Let us then glory in the Lord (1 Cor 1:31) by giving the glory to God for good preaching and let us honour God's Word in all our worship, as the Gentiles did in Acts 13:48.

**LESSON 24**

Worshipping God

**PRAYING TOGETHER**

Scripture Text - Acts 4:23 - 31

**AIM OF LESSON**

To teach the students how to pray in a group.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

Peter and John had just been released from prison because the Sanhedrin could not deny that the miracle of healing the lame man had been performed through them.

The first thing they did was to go back to their own people and tell them what God had done for them. This led to an outburst of spontaneous praise to God from the group, acknowledging His authority over kings and rulers and the certainty of His will being done. They then asked for courage to preach the gospel and that God would confirm the truth of the message by giving signs and wonders through the name of Jesus.

The result of their praying was that God answered their requests and filled them with the Holy Spirit so that they were able to speak with confidence.

This story shows what should happen when any group of God's people meet to pray together and today's lesson aims to encourage the students to pray in groups so that God's will may be done and His name glorified.

**SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**

Ask whether any members of the group attend the church prayer-meeting, Scripture Union group or any other prayer group. Ask if they join in the times of prayer. What difficulties do they experience? Perhaps they feel shy at hearing their own voice, do not know how to word their prayers, or feel that the meeting is lifeless. Thinking about the purpose of prayer should help them. When praying together there should be -

## 1. Preparation

- (a) personal preparation
  - (i) We need to be penitent. Ps. 66:18
  - (ii) We must be sincere, not praying to make a good impression on others but to glorify God. Luke 18:9 - 14
  - (iii) We must expect God to hear and answer. Matt 21:22
- (b) Group Preparation

- (i) The group must be in harmony. Any discord within the group will detract from the fellowship and reduce the effectiveness of prayer. 'Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you; leave your gift before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.' Matt. 5:23, 24.
- (ii) There must be faith that they really are 'helpers' in prayer. 2 Cor. 1:11
- (iii) There must be agreement about the prayer topics. Matt. 18:19
- (iv) There must be an assurance of Christ's presence in the group. Matt. 18:20

## 2. A Plan (Practical Details)

- (a) There should be a group leader to co-ordinate the group and to avoid confusion and time wasting. (Need not always be the same person)
- (b) Ideally the group should not be too large as some may use it as an excuse for not praying. Try to keep the numbers under twelve. If there is a large group meeting for a Bible study first this can be divided into smaller groups for prayer.
- (c) The place can be anywhere but preferably a small room in a church or someone's home or in a school, and certainly somewhere without the possibility of disturbance as interruptions break the train of thought.
- (d) Getting started - this time should be kept short and to the point but should include enquiry about answers to requests made on previous occasions to ensure giving of thanks. The group leader should then appoint someone to start praying and someone to finish. The actual praying will then be governed by the time available. In a short prayer meeting of fifteen minutes the whole time will be used to pray. Where more time is available the prayers can be divided into groups, e.g. praise prayers, confession prayers, thanksgiving prayers and specific requests with different topics being given by the leader before each division. In a missionary prayer meeting there may be letters from the missionaries to be read and these will include prayer requests.
- (e) The actual prayers. To enable everyone to pray, these should be kept short, Matt. 6:7. It can be very intimidating for a new Christian to hear long prayers as he may feel he cannot follow suit. With children it can be a help to go round the group and ask what each one wants to pray about. When they have said it to the group first it is then easier to say it to God.

### 3. Results Seen

- (a) Glory and praise to God. 2 Cor. 1:11
- (b) Spiritual strengthening to deal with individual problems. Heb. 4:16
- (c) Specific answers to specific requests. Matt. 18:19, 20; 2 Cor. 1:11
- (d) Fullness of joy. John 16:24
- (e) An enrichment of fellowship within the group.

#### APPLICATION

Put the theory into practice at once. Suggest some prayer topics, and finish the lesson with a time of prayer.

#### FURTHER READING

BOUNDS, E.M. Power Through Prayer

**LESSON 25**

Worshipping God

**PRAISING GOD**

Scripture text - Eph. 1:3 - 14; Luke 17:11-19; Eph. 5:19, 20; Ps. 98

**AIM OF LESSON**

To show why and how the whole life should bring praise to God.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

What is praise? It is the realisation and wholehearted acknowledgement of who God is and what He does. It involves turning our thoughts away from ourselves and our circumstances to concentrate on God. This will affect our behaviour so that at appropriate times we will engage in silent praise, praise in spoken words or praise in singing. As we praise God for Himself, thanksgiving will always enter in when we consider what this great God has done for us and has promised to do for us in the future. This thanksgiving will be a testimony to others who in their turn will praise God for His works. Ps. 145:4, 5. The whole life should bring praise to God. Eph. 1:6, 12, 14.

**SUGGESTED PRESENTATION****1. Why we are to praise God****(a) Eph. 1:3 - 14**

Explain that this portion gives general reasons why all believers should praise God. Have a good reader prepared to read the portion and ask him to do so.

Have prepared headings on manilla paper which can be displayed or else use blackboard and chalk to show the nine reasons for praise found in Ephesians chapter 1.

(1) v.3; (2) v 4 a; (3) v 4 b; (4) v 6; (5) v 7,8;  
(6) v 9, 10; (7) v 11, 12; (8) v 13 a; (9) v 13 b, 14.

Application - These reasons apply to us only if we are in God's family. Emphasise the fact of God's choosing us before the creation of the world. Refer to His eternal plan of redemption and how that is worked out. Stress the importance of repentance and the commitment of one's life to the Saviour.

**(b) Luke 17: 11-19****Personal reasons for Praise**

Read the portion. Tell the group what leprosy is like and how its victims are affected. Naturally all sufferers would want to be healed. One would have expected all the men to have been full of praise and thanks but only one came

back to Jesus, and he was a Samaritan.

Application - Everyone faces different experiences and circumstances in life and we need God's help and grace to overcome them. This story underlines:-

- (a) The need to praise God for His help in our personal circumstances and to develop a thankful attitude. Phil. 4:6; 1 Thess. 5:18.
- (b) the sin of ingratitude.

## 2. How we are to praise God

- (a) **As individuals.** Read Eph. 5:19,20
  - (i) By sharing God's Word with other believers.
  - (ii) By singing, audibly or in one's heart, to God.
  - (iii) By always giving thanks for everything (even the 'bad' things in the name of our Lord Jesus).

Application - If we are to fulfil these commands we need to know the Word. Challenge the group to see Scripture memorisation not as a chore for Sabbath School but as a spiritual blessing.

- (b) **As a body of believers**  
If your circumstances permit sing Ps. 98 together. Otherwise read it together quietly. This Psalm calls on us to join with others and all creation in praising God. vv 4, 7,8. Note the exuberance of the Psalm 'Shout joyfully to the Lord', 'Break forth in song' v 4, 'Shout joyfully before the Lord' v6. This praising together can be at family worship, church, Sabbath School, camp or wherever we happen to be with other people who love the Lord.

### APPLICATION

Challenge the class about the spirit of their praise. In the joyful psalms do they sing out whole-heartedly? In the penitent psalms do they mourn for their sin? Remind them of the need to concentrate on the words, especially in the more familiar psalms where it is easy for thoughts to wander. Explain that, unless some physical limitation prevents, it is our duty to join in praising God.

Ask the group to fill in the check-list on the students' worksheet and discuss what can be done to improve congregational singing.

**LESSON 26**

Worshipping God

**THE OFFERING**

Scripture Text - 2 Corinthians 8,9; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4

**AIM OF LESSON**

To teach the students the duty of Christian giving.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

In Acts 11:28 we learn that Agabus prophesied that there would be a severe famine throughout the entire Roman world and that this took place during the reign of Claudius (AD 41-54).

The Christian Jews in Jerusalem were poverty-stricken and so Paul had written to the Gentile churches urging them to give support to their needy brethren. By the next year the Corinthian collection was not ready, not through lack of generosity, but because their good intentions had not been translated into action. Indeed, their promised gifts were so large that the Macedonian Christians had been stirred up to give very freely when they heard about them.

Now Paul in 2 Cor. 8 and 9 exhorts the Corinthians how to go about the practicalities of getting the money together and to help them he sends Titus and two other men to Corinth.

**SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**

Tell the story of the Macedonian churches' giving and why Paul dealt with this in the letter to the Corinthians. Explain the situation in Judea which led to the Macedonians' gifts.

Outline scripture teaching on giving:-

- 1 **The Old Testament teaching on giving** - Gen. 14:20; Numbers 18:26; Malachi 3:10.

Give these verses to one pupil in advance. Ask him /her to read them out to the class. Discuss what it means to 'tithes'.

2. **Christ's attitude to giving** - Mark 12:17; Mark 12:44; Luke 18:11, 12.  
Give each verse to a different student. Ask him/her to say what lesson we learn from each verse. Bring out the facts:-
  - (a) He taught that we ought to give what God requires of us.
  - (b) Jesus showed that the important thing is not the actual cash amount which we give but the proportion of our income. Someone has said that it is not so

much what we give but what we keep for ourselves which is significant.

(c) He showed that the attitude of our heart in giving needs to be right.

3. **Paul's attitude to giving** - 2 Cor. 8 and 9; 1 Cor. 16:1-4

(a) The persuasion he used

(i) The example of others. 2 Cor. 8:1-7

(ii) The example of Jesus' sacrificial giving of Himself. 2. Cor. 8:8,9.

(iii) Paul's own pride in the Corinthians. 2 Cor. 9:1-5.

(iv) The example of God in giving His Son. 2 Cor. 9:15

(b) The practical help he gave

(i) He set out straightforward guidelines. 1 Cor. 16:1-3

(ii) He sent others to give them help to make the collection in an orderly fashion. 2 Cor. 8:16-24

(c) The promises to those who give

(i) God blesses those who give to Him. 2 Cor. 9:8 -11

(ii) Giving supplies the needs of God's people. 2 Cor. 9:12

(iii) Giving results in praise to God. 2 Cor. 9:12, 13.

(iv) Giving results in greater love among the brethren. 2 Cor. 9:14

APPLICATION - This may be given after each section if preferred.

1. Persuasion

Ask the students if they receive pocket money or earn any income. Emphasise the importance of giving at least one tenth to God. As Christians we should seek God's guidance about how much more He may want us to give. (God loves a cheerful giver - not one who gives under compulsion). As there may be those who have not committed themselves to Christ bring out the lesson in 2 Cor. 8:5 of the need to give ourselves to God first. If possible, give your own testimony about giving.

2. Practical help

Young people with small amounts of pocket money may need guidance on how to budget. Some may say they do not get enough to tithe. Teach the principle of subtracting the tenth first before they spend any of the money. If they are earning, discuss tithing net or gross income.

3. Promises to those who give

Emphasise that the promises given in Scripture apply to us today. Tell any story of your choice of someone who received blessing through giving. Have some appropriate book to lend, e.g. Biography of Hudson Taylor, Gladys Aylward which show how God provides for those who give all to Him.

**LESSON 27**

Worshipping God

**THE SYMBOLISM OF BAPTISM**

Scripture Text - Romans 6:1 - 7 (compare Col. 2:8 - 15)

**AIM OF LESSON**

To show from Romans 6 how outward baptism by pouring or sprinkling symbolises the inward work of the Holy Spirit in cleansing from sin and bringing into saving union with Christ.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

First of all, as we approach this passage, we must dispel some confusion with regard to baptism, in particular the argument that baptism must always be by immersion. This argument is based on two main grounds:

1. Grammatical:

It is argued that the Greek word translated to 'baptise' must always mean 'to immerse'. However, it has been conclusively shown that this is not necessarily so; the word can also mean 'to pour' or 'to sprinkle' (see for example John Murray's *Christian Baptism* pages 10-29). Apart from the fact that there is no proven instance of immersion in the New Testament, the background to New Testament baptism is the Old Testament teaching on purifying which was done by sprinkling (e.g. see Heb. 9:10 compare Ezek. 36:25 - 27).

2. Symbolical:

It is insisted that Romans 6:3 - 6 (and its parallel in Colossians 2:11, 12) is a reference to the outward rite of water baptism and teaches the mode of immersion. The death and resurrection of Christ provide us, it is said, with the pattern for immersion in, and emergence from the water. This going down into and coming up out of the water is said to provide an analogy, that graphically portrays the believer's coming into saving union with Christ in His burial and resurrection. However, in this passage Paul is speaking of union with Christ which he calls a 'baptism into Christ'. In Romans 6 this baptism into Christ is described not only by the terms 'buried' and 'raised' but also by the terms 'died', 'planted' and 'crucified' with Christ. There is no analogy with immersion in these terms. Note also that in Galatians 3:27 Paul uses the figure of 'putting on a garment' to explain the meaning of 'baptism into Christ'. Immersion in water in no way symbolises death, planting, crucifixion or putting on a garment, though it is as legitimate to insist that these terms must instruct us as to mode, as it is to insist that burial and resurrection must do so. In fact, however, burial and resurrection are not even symbolised by immersion in water. Jesus' body was not lowered into the earth, but left in a tomb. There was, in fact, no 'going down' as one does into water so there could have been no coming up.

We may conclude the 'baptism' which is discussed in Romans 6 is not the outward rite of water baptism, but the inward 'baptism of the Holy Spirit'. This happens when the Holy Spirit renews a person. This is the 'circumcision made without hands' of Colossians 2:11. Only when this happens do we 'walk in newness of life...no longer the slaves of sin' ( Rom. 6:4, 6). The baptism spoken of here is not 'into water', but 'into Christ'. What does this mean? In 1 Cor.10:2 Paul explains Exodus 14:31 by saying that the Israelites were 'baptised into Moses.' This means that they 'became identified' with Moses ...were 'united with' him. Thus Romans 6:3 teaches that all true believers have been united with Christ in His death. This results from the baptism of the Holy Spirit as 1 Cor. 12:13 states: 'for by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body.'

In Romans 6 Paul is not instructing us about the actual outward rite of water baptism or its mode but about its meaning. Salvation involves being 'identified with' Christ or 'joined with' Him in His death, burial, resurrection and ascension.. This glorious truth of being 'in Christ' assures us of victory in our Christian lives.

It is this inward and real baptism of the Holy Spirit that is symbolised in the outward visible rite of water baptism by pouring or sprinkling. The baptism of the Holy Spirit has two results that are symbolised in water baptism.

1. Purification (or cleansing) from sin.

This is the negative effect. The Shorter Catechism speaks of our 'partaking of the benefits of the Covenant of Grace and our engagement to be the Lord's' as being symbolised by baptism. We partake of the benefits of the Covenant of Grace and become the Lord's through cleansing. This becomes evident as the renewed person in repentance trusts in Christ and His atoning work and continues to experience daily cleansing. All the Old Testament washings or ('baptisms') speak of cleansing but Ezekiel 36:25-27 associates this cleansing with the coming of the Holy Spirit. Just as water cleanses the body so the Holy Spirit cleanses and renews the spirit.

2. Union (or identification) with Christ.

This is the positive effect. The Shorter Catechism also speaks of our 'engrafting into Christ' as being symbolised by baptism. The Holy Spirit cleanses from sin and sanctifies the believer who is identified with Christ in all His saving work and thus counted as righteous in God's sight. The Holy Spirit cleanses from sin. He also enables the believer to live the Christian life.

#### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Review previous teaching on baptism, especially relating it to the Covenant of Grace as the New Testament mark of this Covenant which is for professing believers (previously unbaptised) and the covenant children of believers. Ask the class to read Romans 6:1-7

(also the parallel in Col. 2:8-15 if so desired). Begin discussion of the passage by dealing with the argument that it refers to water baptism by immersion. (See background notes). Explain that the baptism being referred to here is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Only by this baptism can there be cleansing from sin, saving faith and vital union with Christ in all His redemptive work. Explain how it is these things that are thus symbolised by the rite of water baptism by sprinkling or pouring. The implications of water baptism are:-

#### 1. Cleansing from sin

We frequently use water for the purpose of cleansing. In Scripture water is often used as a symbol of spiritual cleansing. Thus in Ezekiel 36:25-27 we read: 'Then will I sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean: I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take away the heart of stone out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes ...' In baptism water is used as a symbol of this inner cleansing wrought by the Holy Spirit and referred to in Titus 3:5 as the 'washing of regeneration.' Believers are said to be 'washed' (1 Cor 6:11; Tit. 3:5; Heb. 10:22; 1 Pet. 3:21; Rev.1:5). It is important to stress that baptism does not effect this inner renewal, but symbolises it, just as bread and wine in the Lord's Supper represent the body and blood of our Lord.

#### 2. Union with Christ.

Baptism is more than a solemn recognition of membership in the visible Church of God. It is a sign and seal that believers are grafted into Christ, that they experience 'the washing of regeneration,' and that they are associated with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, for He died as their substitute and representative. This last point is emphasised in Romans 6:3,4 and Colossians 2:12. Thus we are reminded of the union which exists between Christ and His redeemed people. As bread and wine in the Lord's Supper proclaim the central message of the Cross, so water in baptism proclaims the effect of Christ's finished work when applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. It reminds us that we need to be cleansed from sin and that only the blood of Christ can effect that cleansing. Bread, wine and water are only the outward symbols of the great spiritual realities which are in Christ.

#### APPLICATION

Make sure the pupils understand the wonder of what was symbolised in their baptism. Stress to the class the present day relevance of their baptism.

1. Have they accepted God's offer of cleansing?
2. Have they inherited the covenant promise made to them and their parents at their baptism?
3. As they look back on their baptism is it a seal to them of their saving union with Christ?

Remind them that if not, their baptism could become the seal that, through unbelief, they will be cut off from God's people, since the Covenant also carried this threat to unbelieving covenant children who are covenant-breakers.

**LESSON 28**

Worshipping God

**COMING TO THE LORD'S TABLE**

Scripture Text - 1 Corinthians 11:17 - 34  
In Remembrance of Me, Chapter 5

**AIM OF LESSON**

To show the importance of proper preparation in coming to The Lord's Table.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

1 Cor. 11:17 - 34

In vs. 17-22 Paul is writing to correct an abuse of the Lord's Supper which had developed in the Corinthian church. It was the custom for Christians to meet for communal meals or 'love-feasts' (Jude 12) and to celebrate the sacrament in connection with these gatherings. At Corinth, however, they had become occasions for division rather than greater unity. Each person was bringing and eating his or her own provisions, without any attempt at sharing, and this accentuated the differences between rich and poor. Some were feasting and drinking to excess, while others, starving with hunger, could only look on in embarrassment. Instead of being a time of true 'communion' with God and with each other, their meeting was irreverent, selfish and divisive.

vs. 23-26 Paul reminds them of the sacredness and significance of the feasts. The Lord Himself is the Host, they are all His guests, and He has laid down clearly the way in which the sacrament is to be observed. The bread and wine, taken with thanksgiving, are symbols of His body and blood, offered for sinners. Everything is to be done in remembrance of the holy Son of God, Who, in supreme selflessness, gave His life as a ransom. They are to remember also that He is coming again as King and Judge. The apostle is asking the Corinthians indirectly if they would have behaved in the upper room in the same way as they do in their meetings.

vs. 27 - 33 In the light of its solemnity, anyone who approaches the Lord's Supper as an ordinary meal is guilty of great sin. He does not recognize the spiritual realities which the elements symbolise and so treats those realities themselves ('the body and blood of the Lord') in an irreverent way, thus bringing on himself judgement (v.29). The Corinthian believers have suffered illness and even death for their sin (v.30). Every individual should examine himself before coming to the Table, to discover if he understands what is involved and if he is really trusting in Christ. This 'self-judgement' (31), would remove the necessity for the Lord's judgement (v 31) although His discipline is loving, aimed at bringing His children to repentance and forgiveness (32). The sacrament is a spiritual, not a physical, feast and should be characterized by unselfishness (33).

## SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

We prepare for important events in our lives - ask for illustrations. Coming to the Lord's Table is important and requires careful preparation. This was being neglected in Corinth.

### THE PROBLEM vs. 17-22

Explain the background of these verses. Some Corinthian Christians were using the meeting as an excuse for feasting, thus behaving selfishly and irreverently. They were dividing the church and grieving the Lord, although their sin was probably not deliberate, but due to thoughtlessness. We do not have a meal before the Lord's Supper, but this does not mean that the passage has nothing to say to us. Discuss ways in which irreverence and selfishness can be present:- e.g.

- (a) no real commitment to Christ
- (b) no prayer - for ourselves - for others in the congregation
- (c) unforsaken sin
- (d) lack of concentration

### THE RESULTS

1. No blessing - see v.17. 'When you come together in one place it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.' (v 20) The outward ceremony may be correctly carried out, but it means little or nothing to those who are unprepared. Ask the students if they have been blessed at the Lord's Table. If not, could this be a reason?
2. Guilt before God - vs. 27, 29. It is a serious sin to treat lightly the salvation which was obtained at such a cost. Do we need to seek God's forgiveness for our sin at past communion services?
3. Possible discipline - vs. 30-32. Some Corinthians suffered sickness or death as punishment inflicted by God. God may still deal with us in this way by sending things into our lives which are meant to bring us back to Him. Make it clear that not all suffering is sent as a judgement - e.g. Job. Self-discipline is preferable.

### HOW TO PREPARE

Realize what is involved in the sacrament - vs. 23 -26. It is:

1. A commemoration of Christ's death for our salvation, requiring thankfulness.
2. A communion with the risen Lord, Who is host at the table, requiring reverence.
3. A confession of Christ as one's own Saviour, requiring faith.
4. A commitment to holiness and service, requiring repentance and obedience.

FURTHER READING - Larger Catechism, questions 171 - 175

**LESSON 29**

Coming to Terms With the World

**THE STATE OF THE WORLD**

Scripture Text - Genesis 1:26 - 31; Genesis 3:17 - 19, 23, 24.

**AIM OF LESSON**

To show the state of the world when God created it and changes that took place as a result of man's disobedience.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

Gen. 1:27 'created' - This word is used only in reference to God. It is God alone who creates. 'in the image of God' - Man, when created, was not like the other creatures of God's creation: he was unique in that he was created 'in the image of God'. By this we mean that (i) man was a spiritual (religious), rational (intellectual), moral, and immortal being, and (ii) man possessed true knowledge, righteousness and holiness: this is generally called 'original righteousness' When man sinned this 'image', though not totally lost, was greatly impaired.

Gen. 1:28 'be fruitful and increase in number' - God commanded the first man and woman to have children. This, however, was to take place within marriage (Gen. 2:24). 'subdue it; and have dominion over...' Man, in being the greatest in God's creation, was entrusted with care and development of this creation. He was to be God's deputy on this earth.

Gen. 3:17 'cursed is the ground' - At the beginning there existed a harmonious relationship between man and his environment (e.g. when Adam planted a seed he could be sure of it growing). But when Adam sinned, God broke that harmonious relationship (the curse) and the cultivation of the soil became difficult. This is but one aspect of the rupture between man and his environment. 'Painful toil' - when God created man He placed him in the Garden of Eden and told him to look after it. Through this work man found fulfilment and it was to him a joy and a delight. When man sinned work became toil and it brought with it hardship, worry, weariness, and uncertainty.

**SUGGESTED PRESENTATION****Introduction**

Collect some news items from newspapers and magazines relating to the present state of this world, e.g., war, refugees, scarcity of food, murder, robbery, persecution of Christians, etc. Ask the students to read a selection. Then turn to the Bible to discover:

**1. The State of the World at the Beginning**

Read Genesis 1:26 - 31. Explain these verses to the class by referring to the following points:

(a) Man was created, not like the rest of God's creatures; he was unique in that he was created 'in the image of God' (see Background Notes). On account of this man had a special relationship with God. He had continual fellowship with God and lived a life of perfect obedience to Him.

(b) Man was given dominion over the earth and all living creatures. God placed man in a position of responsibility. He was to be God's deputy here on this earth and was to rule over all things. Also, he was to care for and develop God's creation.

(c) Man was blessed by God and told to have children. Man was commanded by God to populate the earth (see Background notes).

(d) Man was permitted to use plants for food, as were the animals. God, having made man as needing food to live, instructed him to use every seed-bearing plant and every fruit-bearing tree as food. These were also to provide food for the animals and birds. Man undoubtedly had to work to obtain this food, carefully tending the plants and trees already growing in the Garden of Eden, and planting new ones from the seeds of the existing ones.

(e) God viewed His creation as perfectly good. All that God had created was perfect; it was without flaw. It was exactly as God had planned it and it reflected His nature.

## 2. The State of the World after Man's Disobedience

Read Genesis 3:17 - 19, 23, 24. Explain to the class that on account of man's sin (disobedience) certain changes took place in the world.

(a) Work became toil. Read Genesis 2:15. When God placed man in the Garden of Eden He instructed him to work. Through this work man would have happiness and contentment: work would be a joy. But this was to change. Man had sinned against God, thus work became toil. This meant that it was no longer to be the enjoyable enterprise it was at the beginning of creation, rather it was going to involve hardship, pain, worry and fatigue (v19)

(b) A bountiful harvest was no longer guaranteed. At the beginning man had a harmonious relationship with the environment, but after his disobedience God cursed the ground and that relationship was broken (see Background Notes). Man could no longer be certain of a bountiful harvest. He would have to contend with weeds and disease. He would see many of his efforts end in failure, i.e., destroyed by wind, floods, weeds, insects, pests, etc.

(c) Sin brought death into the world.

Read Genesis 2:16, 17. God told man that he could eat of any tree in the garden with the exception of one - the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. To eat of it would mean death. There are, however, two deaths spoken of here.

(i) Spiritual death

Man lost communion with God when he sinned. The special relationship that had existed between them from man's creation was broken. Man was now separated from God. This change also resulted in a necessary change of residence. Man was driven from the Garden of Eden (v. 23), because it represented the place of communion with God. He was also debarred from the tree of life (v.24). This spiritual death (separation from God) is mentioned by Paul in Romans 6:23. Sin separates man from God, brings upon him the judgement of God, and if a man dies in his sin he is cut off from God forever.

(ii) Physical death

Physical death also resulted from the first sin of man.

Having sinned, he was doomed to return to the dust from which he was made (v. 19)

3. How does this affect you and me today?

The effect that man's disobedience had on the world can be clearly seen today. Consider the following points with the class:

(i) Man's attitude to work

Ever since he sinned and work became toil, man has had an ever-increasing negative attitude to work. He sees it as an obstacle to his enjoyment of life rather than something by which he can have fulfilment in life. Ask the class to turn to No. 1 in their worksheets on the present-day problems in relation to work, e.g. - work merely a means of getting money, shoddy workmanship; no desire to do a job well, wanting more leisure hours and fewer work hours, frequent strikes; poor employer / employee relations. Stress the point that work is not the curse of God upon sin. God gave man work to do before he sinned and he was to find fulfilment in it.

(ii) Food shortage throughout the world

Consider the problem of insufficient food for man's needs, particularly in the Third World. Point out the various factors which cause this, e.g. plant and animal diseases, weeds, weather conditions, soil erosion, etc. Emphasise that these are the 'thorns and thistles' referred to in Genesis 3:18. In addition, owing to man's greed, there is a constant manipulation of the world food markets, involving the dumping of produce and the destruction of crops. (Note: over population is not a factor that causes a world food shortage. God told man to 'be fruitful and increase in number' (Gen. 1:28).)

Discuss with the class No.2 on the student's worksheets. (The various sufferings considered might include: poverty, refugees, war, famine, disease, death, rain storms, flooding, murder, injustice.)

(iii) Death

(a) Spiritual death

Read Romans 5:17. Because of Adam's sin we are sinners (Rom. 3:23). As sin is disobedience (i.e., breaking God's laws) we are all under the wrath and judgement of God and our punishment is eternal separation from Him (Rom. 6:23 - the death referred to here is spiritual death, i.e., eternal separation from God).

(b) Physical death

Read Psalm 39:4, 5 and James 4:14. Each one of us will die. We cannot escape the promise in Genesis 3:19. (The only exception to this is the people who will be alive at the Second Coming of Christ - 1 Thess. 4:17). Physical death is a certainty. It is possible, however to escape spiritual death. This is by repenting of sin and believing in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Emphasise to the class the importance of this. Point out that each person must individually repent of his/her sin, confess it to God, and believe in Jesus Christ for salvation. It is only through Jesus Christ that salvation is possible, only He can save from spiritual death.

Complete No. 3 on students' worksheets. Discuss the answers with the students and encourage them to learn the memory verse.

## CONCLUSION

When Adam disobeyed God this resulted in many changes in the world i.e. man became a sinner, he lost communion with God, no longer had a harmonious working relationship with his environment and he became subject to death. These broken relationships can only be renewed through Jesus Christ who died on the cross for man's sin.

**LESSON 30**

Coming to terms with the world

**WHO RULES THE WORLD?**

Scripture Text - Colossians 1:9-20.

**AIM OF LESSON**

To help the students see that Christ, not Satan, is King in the whole world, and the implications of this for their own lives.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

1. The subject of the Kingship of Christ is one of the more overlooked and misunderstood truths revealed to us in Scripture. There is confusion about what is meant by the statement that Christ is King. When we say that Christ is King, we mean that He reigns as the Mediator. While it is true that as the second person of the Godhead, He has always been the ruler and sustainer of all things, when He assumed human nature, and triumphed over sin and death, He was exalted by God the Father to a place of pre-eminence over all things. 'And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth' (Matt. 28:18). Compare Eph. 1:20 - 22; Col. 1:13 - 19; Phil. 2:9; Ps. 2:6 - 9. While some believe that we must await the Second Coming before Christ will begin to reign, the Bible teaches that He is reigning now, and that His future return will be the occasion when all men will see and know that He is King. Some, on the basis of I Corinthians 15:24 - 28, believe that Christ's mediatorial Kingship will end after all the events related to His triumphant return have taken place. However, elsewhere His Kingdom is said to be of everlasting duration (Luke 1:32, 33). The book of Revelation is decisive as it shows the Lamb receiving the homage of the glorified church (Rev. 5:12 - 14).

2. Colossians 1:15 - 18. Christ 'is ... the firstborn'.

This does not mean that Jesus Christ was the first created being; verse 16 clearly establishes this. Rather it stresses Christ's pre-eminence. In verse 15 Christ is spoken of as pre-eminent over every living creature. He is both distinct from and highly exalted above every creature. In verse 18 Christ, by His resurrection from the dead, is the source of Eternal Life. Also, since He was the first to be so raised the resurrection also established His primacy over those who should experience a like resurrection.

**SUGGESTED PRESENTATION****Introduction**

Discuss with the class a situation in which it may be difficult to decide who is in control. e.g. sometimes we may wonder if it is the man taking the dog for a walk or the dog taking

the man. There are much more serious situations where it is vital to know who is in control, e.g. after a military coup who is to be recognised as the right authority? The teacher may wish to give examples from recent history. As we look around us in the world today it might seem at first glance that God is not in control. Wars, earthquake, famines, the opposition which many missionaries experience in their work and the spread of many anti-Christian faiths e.g. Communism and Islam lead us to ask whether someone other than God is in control.

1. Is Satan in control of the world?

When we consider the state of the world it is obvious that Satan is very powerful. (See 2 Cor.4:4) Because man is fallen and led by Satan the majority of people have no regard for the commandments of God. In the Bible there are passages which have been used to support the idea that Satan is in control of the world. During our Lord's forty day period of temptation in the wilderness, the devil took Him up into a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory and said, 'All these things I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me'. In other places, he is called 'the prince of this world', 'the god of this world' and 'the prince of the power of the air'. (Jn. 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2). How are we to understand these statements? Firstly, we need to remember that Satan is the father of lies and his claims as to his own power ought not to be accepted i.e. the kingdoms of the world were not his to offer to anyone. Because of man's sin Satan does exercise power in human affairs, subject to divine permission. It is clear from the testing of Job and Peter (Job 1 and Luke. 22:31) that Satan cannot act without God's permission.

2. Who does control the world?

The Bible teaches that God has always been in control. 'The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness; the world and those who dwell therein.' (Ps. 24:1) Ask the students to think of other Psalms which assert that God is reigning e.g. Psalms 93 - 99. Ask one of the students to read Daniel 4:34,35. In the New Testament we find a restatement of this great truth. At Calvary, Christ triumphed over Satan and was victorious over all things so that now He is declared to be King of kings in the universe. (Eph. 1:20 - 23; Col. 1:12 -20; Col. 2:10).

3. What do we know about the King of the world?

Paul identifies the King in Colossians 1:15 as the One who is 'the image of the invisible God'. He embodies all the attributes of God. When we see the character of Christ we are seeing the character of God Himself. 'No one has seen God at anytime. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him' (Jn. 1:18). He is also the One who stands worthy of the esteem of every creature. He is superior to everything because all things have been created by Him. He is not part of the created world, but everything without exception, both material and spiritual, has been fashioned

by Him. Everything in creation is His possession and subject to His dominion and rule. While the powers on earth do not recognise Christ's dominion now, one day they surely will. One day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that 'Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father' (Phil.2:10, 11). In Colossians 1:16, Paul makes the very strong statement that not merely was the world created by Christ, but it was also created for Him. The whole purpose of the creation was that the created world might serve Christ. Although the world is blind to Christ's rule, Paul stresses the fact of His reign (v.17). Everything in nature and in history is sustained because He governs the created world by His providence. This fact should help us keep things in proper perspective. We can become more confident servants of Christ in the world. The reason why there is not chaos in the world is because Christ is effectively reigning (Heb. 2:8, 9).

4. Who are the King's subjects? verses 12 - 14, 20

Although Christ is the Sovereign Lord of the World few people are submissive to His rule. As King every person is a subject in the sense that they are under His authority but it is only in the church that we find those who truly love the Lord and serve Him with a willing heart.

(a) the members of the church are the King's loyal subjects. They recognise Christ as King over all, i.e. the nations, the Church, the family and the individual. They acknowledge that their standing as royal subjects only came about as a result of God's grace. Verses 12, 13 speak of the Father's work in bringing people into Christ's kingdom. Verse 14 explains how this was accomplished by the death of Christ and verse 20 emphasises the basis of being reconciled to God ('the blood of his cross'). No wonder Paul says we should give 'thanks to the Father'. Ask the students how they can show their thankfulness.

(b) Unbelievers are in rebellion to Christ's reign. They do not acknowledge His sovereignty and are in open revolt to His authority. However one day everyone will willingly or unwillingly come to recognise Christ as King and acknowledge His authority. (Ps. 22:27 - 29).

#### APPLICATION

Challenge the students about their living. Are they still serving Satan, or are they gladly serving King Jesus and his loyal subjects? If they know that Christ truly rules the world and are serving Him, then all those things which Paul includes in his prayer (Col. 1:9 - 14) should be seen in their lives. Our service of the King should mean that we want others to serve Him too and become like Him.

To reinforce the Scripture referred to during the lesson, ask the students to complete the crossword at home.

**LESSON 31**

Coming to terms with the world

**RESIDENT ALIENS**

Scripture Text - Hebrews 11:8 - 16; Hebrews 13:14 - 16.

**AIM OF LESSON**

To show the students, from the life of Abraham, what it means to be a resident alien in the world.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

Hebrews 11:8 - 16

Verse 9 'he sojourned' - he made a temporary home. 'tabernacles' - tents.

Verse 13 'aliens and strangers' (NIV). These terms, applied to Abraham and his family, are found also in 1 Peter 2:11, where they refer to Christians. These two terms show us that Christians have 'resident alien' status in this world. They are strangers because they do not feel at home in the world: their true home is elsewhere, i.e. heaven. The term 'resident alien' is applied to a person who is the citizen of one country but finds himself residence in another.

**SUGGESTED PRESENTATION**

What do the words 'resident alien' mean? (See Background Notes.) A resident alien is how the New Testament describes the Christian. In John chapter 17 our Lord refers to His disciples as those who are 'in the world' (v.11) but 'not of the world' (v.16). The Christian, therefore, is a resident in the world but he does not belong to it. The life of Abraham is illustrative of what it is to be a resident alien in the world. Hebrews 11:13 states that he was a stranger and pilgrim: while he lived on the earth his homeland was elsewhere. Read Hebrews 11:9, 10. This does not mean he lived as a tourist, uninvolved in the affairs of the land he was in. Rather, as he lived in expectation of the day when God would take him to his eternal home (heaven), he was active in the world, participating in its life and doing all things to the glory of God.

**1. ABRAHAM AS A RESIDENT IN THE WORLD**

How did Abraham live as a stranger and pilgrim 'in the world'?

- (a) He obeyed God's commands.

Read Hebrews 11:8 and Genesis 12:1 - 4. God called Abraham to leave the security of a settled existence in familiar surroundings and set out for an unknown destination. Abraham responded by obeying God's call.

Read Genesis 22:2, 10. This is another example of Abraham's obedience.

Abraham did not live to please himself. His life as a stranger on the earth was marked by active obedience to God's will.

- (b) He believed God's promises  
Genesis 15:6 states 'Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness' (NIV). God promised Abraham that his wife would have a child in her old age and that he would be the father of a great nation which would be like the stars of heaven in number. Many other promises were made to Abraham, (Gen. 12:2, 3; Gen 17:2 - 8) and although many were not fulfilled in his life-time, he never doubted them. Read Romans 4:20 - 22.
- (c) He sought fellowship with God  
Read Genesis 12:8 and 13:18. In these verses we find Abraham seeking fellowship with God. (Sacrificing upon an altar was the means of access to God's presence.)
- (d) He demonstrated concern for others  
Genesis 18:23 - 33 records Abraham's earnest and bold prayers for Sodom. This was not simply for the city but for the righteous living in it (Lot and his family). He took time and expended mental and spiritual energy on their behalf.
- (e) He engaged in honourable occupation  
Abraham was a herdsman with a large number of cattle and sheep. Genesis 14:14 records that he had at least 318 servants. He led a busy and active life overseeing his herds and flocks and providing for those dependent on him.
- (f) He trained his family in God's ways  
Read Genesis 18:19. Hard-pressed though he was with all his duties, Abraham always took time to teach his children and household the way of righteousness.

Being a resident alien in the world does not mean a life of seclusion and idleness. Since this is God's world Christians, following Abraham's example, should be actively involved in its affairs. Like Abraham they should see every activity of their lives giving them opportunity to glorify God. (Rom 4:20).

## 2. ABRAHAM AS AN ALIEN IN THE WORLD

In what manner did Abraham show that he was 'not of the world'?

- (a) He was constantly aware of the temporary nature of this life  
Read Hebrews 11:9. The fact that he lived in tents was a continual

reminder that his home in the promised land of Canaan was only a temporary one. He knew that he was not going to be on the earth for ever.

- (b) He had his sights fixed on heaven  
Read Hebrews 11:10, 16. With the eye of faith Abraham looked beyond the circumstances of this life to his true homeland, heaven.
- (c) He viewed earthly possessions as important but temporal  
Read Genesis 13:8 - 11. As the older man it was Abraham's privilege to choose, but his heart was set on greater things than acres of land and what they would produce to feed his cattle: therefore, he found little difficulty in giving Lot first choice. Abraham, however, did not despise earthly possessions (Gen 13:2). He saw them as a gift from God and used them for His glory (Gen. 14:18-20).

#### APPLICATION

How are we to conduct ourselves as those who live in the world but do not belong to it?

1. We are to work in the world  
Abraham was a worker on the earth. The Bible condemns idleness and sloth. Complete students' worksheets No.1 and discuss.
2. We are to be law-abiding in the world  
Our heavenly citizenship does not mean that we can disregard the laws of the country in which we live (Rom. 13:1-7). The citizen of heaven it to be a good citizen of earth. Complete students' worksheets No. 2.
3. We are to show compassion to others  
Abraham had a deep concern for Lot and sought to help him. While living in the world the Christian must never forget to be good to others and to share what he has with those in need.(Heb 13:16) Complete students' worksheets No. 3.
4. We are to avoid conformity to the ways of the world  
Unlike Lot, Abraham did not conform to the lifestyle of the society in which he lived. Likewise we must be careful not to conform to the thought patterns and moral standards of this world, but live according to the command of Romans 12:2. Complete students' worksheet No. 4 and discuss.
5. We are to remember that heaven is our true home, on account of this we must:
  - (a) prepare to meet God (Psalm 90:12).
  - (b) lay up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:19 - 21).
 Complete students' worksheets No. 5 and discuss.

**LESSON 32**

Coming to terms with the world

**CITIZENS OF HEAVEN**

Scripture Text - Philippians 3:12 - 21

**AIM OF LESSON**

To help the students recognise some of the practical implications of heavenly citizenship for life here and now.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

Philippians 3:20 - 'For our citizenship is in heaven.' This statement would have had particular significance for the Philippian Christians. Rome had built up her strength by planting colonies in strategic centres throughout the Mediterranean world. The great characteristic of these colonies was that they reflected Roman culture. The people wore Roman dress, observed Roman laws and customs, etc.

One of these colonies was the city of Philippi situated in Northern Greece. In Acts chapter 16 you can sense the pride that the Philippians had in their Roman citizenship when they put Paul and Silas into prison on a charge of 'throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practise' (Acts 16:20, 21 NIV). The Philippian Christian, therefore, would have understood the apostle Paul as saying that just as the Roman always valued his citizenship wherever he happened to be, so the Christian values his heavenly citizenship regardless of his circumstances.

**SUGGESTED PRESENTATION****Introduction**

Read Philippians 3:12 - 21. Using the Background Notes show the students that while the Philippians lived in Greece they were actually citizens of Rome. Paul saw this as an illustration of the Christian's position for he tells the Philippian believers that while the Christian lives in this world, he is in fact a citizen of heaven: 'For our citizenship is in heaven...' (Phil. 3:20).

Such heavenly citizenship has very practical implications for life in this world.

1. The citizens of heaven enjoy special privileges
  - (a) They have their names written on heaven's roll  
Only those who were registered as free-born Roman citizens enjoyed the special privileges and benefits of Roman citizenship. Likewise, only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev. 20:15; 21:27), i.e., believers, enjoy the benefits of heavenly citizenship.
  - (b) They enjoy communication with their homeland

As a colony of Rome, Philippi was in regular communication with Rome. Decisions taken in Rome were made known to the authorities in Philippi and the state of affairs in Philippi was communicated to the authorities in Rome. Such communication exists between the heavenly citizen and his homeland.

Describe to the class the nature of this communication. Explain that God speaks to His people from heaven by means of the Bible. This is the 'Word of God' and it provides instruction how heavenly citizens should live in order to bring honour and glory to their Lord. When the citizens of heaven speak to God it is by means of prayer. Discuss with the class the importance of the Bible and prayer as a means of communication and consider how each should be used in order to provide the heavenly citizen with effective communication between himself and his homeland. Complete students' worksheet No. 1.

2. The citizens of heaven obey God's laws

The people of Philippi, as citizens of Rome, were under Roman law even though they were living in Northern Greece. It was this adherence to Roman law that prompted the Philippian authorities to put Paul and Silas into prison. They said, 'These men ... teach customs which are not lawful for us being Romans to receive or observe' (Acts 16:20, 21). Paul, subsequently, charged these same authorities with a failure to act in accordance with Roman law, as they were obliged to do. (Acts 16:37). Roman citizenship, therefore, involved submission to and observance of Roman law.

Similarly, heavenly citizenship carries with it the obligation to obey God's laws, which indeed supersede all earthly laws. Read Philippians 3:17 - 19. In verse 19 Paul describes those who do not obey God's laws. The only law they know is the law of self-satisfaction and they seek to please themselves and not God. The citizens of heaven must not live like this; instead, they must follow the example of the Apostle Paul, and those like him, who live in obedience to God's laws. What are some of God's laws? Discuss with the class some of the laws the heavenly citizen must obey and complete students' worksheet No. 2.

The Roman citizen was always careful not to do anything unworthy of a Roman. Ask the students:

- (a) are they always careful not to do anything unworthy of a citizen of heaven?
- (b) does their speech and behaviour reflect heavenly citizenship?

3. The Citizens of Heaven await Christ's return

Roman citizenship gave people a hope that, some day, they might visit the city of Rome. Paul, possibly thinking of this, reminds the Philippian Christians that

heavenly citizenship provides an even greater hope. What is this hope? Read Philippians 3:20. The citizens of heaven eagerly await the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, their true King, in the knowledge that, when He comes, He will take them to be with Himself for ever. The language Paul uses in verse 20 suggests that the heavenly citizen looks for nothing but the return of Christ, and that he is never weary of looking, so great is his desire to see Christ.

Ask the students what thoughts they give to Christ's return. When last did they hear a sermon preached on the subject? Discuss the different ways in which people could be reminded more frequently of the Second Coming of Christ. Stress the point that heavenly citizens should be eagerly awaiting the return of Christ. If the citizens of a particular country can gather in their thousands with the eager expectation of seeing their king or queen, how much more should the citizens of heaven eagerly await the return of their sovereign Lord, King Jesus?

4. The citizens of Heaven have a glorious future.

Read Philippians 3:21. When Christ returns something wonderful will happen - the heavenly citizen's 'lowly body' will be transformed and become like the glorious body of Christ. While the body of the believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19), it is, nevertheless, also a lowly or humiliated body because of sin. As such it is subject to weakness, suffering, and death and can cause a believer to sin. Ask the class to look up the different verses given in student's worksheets No. 3 (a) and list the various ways in which the Christian can sin by yielding to temptation that comes through the weakness of the body.

Christ, when He comes, will transform this 'lowly body' and it shall be like His glorious body. When this takes place the citizen of heaven will no longer be tempted to sin for he will 'be conformed to the image of His (God's) Son' (Rom. 8:29) and will 'bear the image of the heavenly man' (1 Cor. 15:49). On account of this, the citizen of heaven should be striving to put to death the sins of the body and seeking each and every day to be more like Jesus Christ. Read Colossians 3:5 - 10 and stress the point that the citizen of heaven must live a life wholly consistent with that which characterises all that he is. Complete No. 3 (b) in the students' worksheets.

## CONCLUSION

People only become citizens of heaven by experiencing the new birth (John 3:3). Citizens of heaven are recognised by the fact that they enjoy communication with heaven, obey God's laws, expect Christ's return and desire the transformation of the body. Challenge the students to memorize the verses set in No. 4 of their worksheets.

**LESSON 33**

Coming to terms with the World

**LIGHTING THE WORLD**

Scripture Text - Matt. 5:14 - 16

**AIM OF LESSON**

To show that Christ's followers are to shine like lights in a dark world.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

The Scripture reading is part of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, which was primarily addressed to His disciples. Having described the character of the true Christian in Matthew 5:1-10, and the reaction of the world to that character in verses 11 and 12, our Lord proceeds to outline the function which the Christian fulfils in the hostile environment in which he is placed.

**SUGGESTED PRESENTATION****Introduction**

Discuss with the students what happens when there is an electricity power failure at night - immediate darkness, no freedom of movement, no clear vision, fear. Our first concern is to find a light, e.g., a match, a candle, an oil-lamp. Light is important to man. Think of ways in which he has provided himself with light during the past centuries. We are going to consider another kind of darkness and light - spiritual darkness contrasted with spiritual light.

**1. THE NECESSITY FOR LIGHT**

When our Lord says to His disciples, 'You are the light of the world' (v.14), He implies that the world is dark and in need of light. In Proverbs 2:13, we read of the evil man leaving the paths of righteousness 'to walk in the ways of darkness.' Already in the days of Noah, these ways were very dark. Ask a student to read Genesis 6:5 and 11.

No-one would deny that the world enjoys much scientific light. Man's knowledge of the universe increases year by year. But in spite of these scientific advances, the moral darkness of the world is as great as ever. Ask the students to give examples of moral darkness, e.g., failure to distinguish between right and wrong, lack of honesty, disregard for the sanctity of human life (violence, murder, abortion). Unbelievers do not object to this darkness. Our Lord teaches us that 'men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil'. 'Everyone preaches evil, hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed' (John 3:19, 20). So the darkness has power over the sinner (Col. 1:13). We read in Ephesians 6:12 about the rulers of the darkness of this world, i.e., Satan and his demons. Sinful man's 'foolish heart is darkened' (Rom. 1:21).

His sinful life shows what that darkness produces. Ask a student to read Romans 1:28 - end, and another to read Galatians 5: 19-21. The Bible teaches that wickedness is spiritual darkness (Prov. 4:19). We know that the world is wicked, so it is therefore spiritually dark and in need of light.

## 2. THE FUNCTION OF LIGHT

The Bible teaches that 'God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all' (1 John 1:5). God made the light at the beginning of creation. He made the sun and the moon and the stars also. But He has given us a far greater light than these (Isa. 9:2). God has given us spiritual light as well as physical light. The Lord Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life'. (John 8:12) His followers having this light, He can say to them, 'You are the light of the world'. They must shine, like lights in a dark place (Phil. 2:15). People 'do not light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven' (Matt. 5:16). These are the words of the Lord Jesus. Good deeds are of supreme importance in the Christian life. They show that we have faith in Christ.

In writing to the Ephesians (5:8), Paul says that the believers were once darkness, but now they are light in the Lord. So if we are light, we must act like light. How can we be light in the world? Ask the class to read Ephesians 5:1- 11. This is the description of the life that pleases the Lord (v.10). We must 'have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them' (v.11). Our lives must be different from the lives of those who do not know Christ as Saviour. We must also have the courage to confront evil in the name of the Lord, whose Law everyone is commanded to obey. 'Sin is lawlessness' (1 John 3:4).

## APPLICATION

The Bible contrasts the darkness of the sinful life (Gal. 5:19-21) with the light of the Christian life (Gal. 5:22, 23). Is your life shining like a light in a dark place? Remember that one small light-bulb can light a whole room.

There are warnings in the Bible, too. 'He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in darkness until now' (1 John 2:9). 'If we say that we have fellowship with Him (i.e., Christ) and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practise the truth' (1 John 1:6).

There are also false lights e.g. sects and cults, Moonies, Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons. 'If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!' (Matt 6:23).

**LESSON 34**

Coming to terms with the World

**SALTING THE WORLD**

Scripture Text - Matthew 5:13.

**AIM OF LESSON**

To teach the students what it means to be the salt of the earth.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

'... if the salt loses its flavour ... ' The primitive method of mining salt in our Lord's day resulted in the extraction of minerals and clay along with the salt. Consequently when it was stored, prolonged contact with these impurities resulted in a loss of saltiness. Such salt was useless. It had neither the capacity to flavour nor preserve. The only thing the owner could do with it was spread it on the earth around his house to level out the ground. That is the picture we are given here.

**SUGGESTED PRESENTATION****Introduction**

Ask the students to describe various uses of salt. Point out that in a day when there were no fridges or deep-freezers salt was used not only to flavour food, but to preserve it. Jesus said to His disciples, 'You are the salt of the earth', indicating that Christians exist to enrich and preserve the society in which they are placed.

**1. THE NEED FOR SALT**

We have observed that in our Lord's day, the primary function of salt was to preserve meat. Therefore by comparing His disciples to salt and the earth to that which needs salt, our Lord was saying that the world is in a state of decay and consequently requires the check of salt upon it.

Ask the students to make their own comments about the condition of the world today. Is it still in a state of decay? What is the evidence? - threat of nuclear war, violence in the classroom, vandalism on the streets, etc.

Evolutionists claim that the world is gradually improving, but daily news reports confirm that the world today is just as evil as in our Lord's day. Refer to students' worksheets Question 1.

Salt is an indispensable commodity. The world cannot do without it. Likewise in its corrupt, decaying state the world cannot be without the 'salty' influence of true Christians. It is only as our society is influenced by individual Christians that the process of evil is going to be checked.

## 2. THE FUNCTION OF SALT

Salt can only truly carry out its function of flavouring and preserving because -

- (a) It is basically different from that which it preserves. This fact is also true of Christians. They can only function as people who have a preserving (sanctifying) influence on society because they are basically different from unbelievers. The followers of Christ are not of this world (Jn. 17-16). This means that although they live in the world and may follow the same trade and profession as others, their lives are motivated by different goals and objectives.
- (b) It is in contact with that which it preserves. 'You are the salt of the earth' said Jesus. Salt flavours and preserves only that which it actually touches. You can shake salt to within half an inch of your meat but it will still be unsavoury and will remain so until the salt actually falls on the meat. In the hot climate of Palestine meat decayed very quickly. Since there were no fridges or deep-freezers, the practice was to pickle the meat in salt in order to preserve it. However, until the salt came into contact with the meat the preserving process could not begin. The implication is clear; since Christians are to function as salt of the earth they must be in contact with people in the world.

Ask the class to describe the situations where they come in contact with people who are not Christians. Complete students' Question 2.

## 3. THE EFFECT OF SALT

Common salt acts as a preservative. When Christians function as salt in the world, what effect do they have?

- (a) When they show forth the characteristics taught in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5: 1 - 12) e.g. having a spirit of meekness, performing acts of mercy and acting as peacemakers, they influence those with whom they come in contact.
- (b) As the lives of Christians conform to the Scripture and as they seek, by the help of the Holy Spirit to follow Christ's example they check and restrain the pollution of sin in the various situations in which they find themselves.

Explain to the class that if their behaviour prevents others from being as evil as they could be, they are acting as the salt of the earth, e.g., if people are embarrassed when they use bad language in your presence or are afraid to admit to you that they have cheated in an examination, you are the salt of the earth. When people begin to recognise that your life is motivated and controlled by Christian principles they will generally not want to engage in evil behaviour in your presence. Such is the effect of salt. Then you are 'the salt of the earth'. See students' worksheet Question 3.

Application-(a) Discuss with the students the value of salt. Ask them to imagine what the world would be like without salt. As salt fulfils a useful function in savouring and preserving food so Christians exist in society for the good and blessing of that society.

- (b) Emphasise to the class that a person can only be the salt of the earth if that person is a Christian, i.e. in a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

#### 4. THE CORRUPTION OF SALT

In verse 13 Jesus warned against the terrible possibility of Christians losing their capacity to flavour or preserve. When that happens their usefulness is over (see Background Notes). Christians must be careful to do nothing that would rob them of the ability to function as salt. (Use Lot's sojourn in Sodom as a good illustration of this point, Gen. 19:1 - 16.) Like Lot it is possible for Christians to be moulded by the spirit of the world, and so adopt the attitudes and thought patterns of the world. Then they lose their saltiness. Stress that salt functions as salt only when it is different from that which it flavours and preserves.

How then can Christians avoid losing their saltiness?

- (a) Feed daily upon the Word of God

As we read and meditate upon the Word of God the Holy Spirit reveals and removes those impurities which we have allowed into our lives. This is what Jesus meant when He said 'Now you are clean through the Word which I have spoken to you' (John 15:3). 'Sanctify them by your truth; your word is truth.' (John 17:17) When we neglect daily meditation upon the Word of God we are denying ourselves the basic instrument which the Holy Spirit uses to make us 'salty'.

- (b) Spend time in Prayer

Every day we must take time to pray, 'Search me, O God, and know my heart; test and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.'

- (c) Have regular fellowship with other Christians

Mixed with impurities salt will lose its saltiness.

Since we are out in the midst of 'the world' (in school or at work), we need to meet regularly with God's people that we may preserve our saltiness. All Christians ought to fear losing their saltiness for if this happens they will forfeit their usefulness. Complete Question 4 of students' worksheet and encourage the students to learn the memory verse.

'You are the salt of the earth' - are you?

**LESSON 35**

Coming to terms with the World

**PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST**

Scripture Text - Matt. 22:34-40; Deut. 6:4-9, Deut. 10:12,13.

**AIM OF LESSON**

To show the priority of love for God (before love for others), and what love for God involves.

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

Matt. 22:34-40

v.35 - 'Lawyer' in the N.K.J.V. means an expert in the Law ('scribe' in the parallel passage in Mark has the same meaning): one whose task it was to interpret and teach the Law that God had given to His people. Such experts in their attempts to interpret the Law had spelled it out in many rules and regulations. Yet they felt that it should be possible to summarise it in one command which would take in everything. It was this approach which was reflected in the lawyer's question, 'Which is the great commandment in the law?', the one that includes everything.

v.35 - 'testing Him' suggests that the lawyer was trying to trip Christ up, but the parallel passage in Mark suggests that his enquiry was genuine.

v.37 - Christ's answer was to quote the summary of the Law given in Deuteronomy 6:4,5. This summary was called the 'Shema' from the Hebrew word with which it begins, translated 'Hear'. It was the first verse learned by every Hebrew boy, and the sentence with which every synagogue service always began and still begins. It was written and kept in the little leather boxes called 'phylacteries' (Matt.23:5), which a devout Jew wore on his wrist and on his forehead when he was at prayer; and also in a little box attached to the door of his house. These practices arose from a literal interpretation of the commands given in Deuteronomy 6:8,9. Christ in effect said to the lawyer, 'Your own "Shema" is the answer to your question.'

v.37 - It is to distinguish the different aspects of love for God that are expressed in the different parts of man's make-up referred to here - 'heart, soul, mind, strength'. 'Heart' in Hebrew thought - Christ was quoting from Deuteronomy - means far more than with us, where it is often limited to our emotions and our feelings. For the Hebrews 'heart' meant the very centre of his being, including his thought and his will as well as his emotions.

Similarly, 'soul' for us is usually taken to refer to the spiritual side of our nature: for the Hebrew, 'soul' meant his whole being and personality. And the word translated 'might' in

Deuteronomy 6:5 has the root meaning of vehemence and total commitment. This depth of meaning for the Hebrew in 'heart' and 'soul' and 'might' explains the variations in the quotations in the New Testament of this passage in Deuteronomy 6 (Compare Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30 and Luke 10:27).

It has been suggested that the New Testament has added something to what was written in Deuteronomy when it put in 'mind', but the truth is that it took all the words - heart, soul, mind, strength - to express in Greek what was said in the Hebrew. A man is called to love God with every fibre of his being and with absolute commitment.

#### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Many young people about the age of 17 are careful students of the Highway Code, which gives detailed instructions about all things you must do and must not do when driving a car. Sometimes, perhaps, they think it would be good to have it summarised in a single sentence. Can you think of one? A suggestion - 'Drive with consideration' - with consideration of all the conditions, and especially with consideration for other road users.

The experts in the Law, when Jesus was on earth, were anxious to know if the Law with its multitude of details, could be summarised in one brief sentence. That was the point of the question that the lawyer asked Jesus: 'Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?'

##### 1. Man's duty of love

Did you ever ask a question and discover through a good teacher's leading that you knew the answer yourself? Christ quoted to the lawyer something that he had learned from his earliest days, something that he was perhaps even then wearing on his wrist and on his forehead. See Background Notes on 'Shema' and 'phylacteries'.

##### 2. The basis of this love

Stress that in Deuteronomy 6:4,5 something comes before 'You shall love the LORD your God...' It is important to note that the summary does not begin with 'You shall love...' It begins with a statement of what God is. A better translation of verse 4 is : 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God; the LORD is one'. LORD written in capitals in the NKJV and NIV is God's covenant name Jehovah, defining God in His covenant relationship with His people.

Before God calls His people to love Him with heart and soul and might, He reminds them that He is their covenant God, the God who has redeemed them. (Compare the preface to the ten commandments, Exodus 20:2). Then He reminds them that He is the only God - 'the LORD is one'. No one else and nothing else has a claim to their devotion. Because the LORD is one, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your might'. There we see the absolute nature of God's demands on our love: there can be no rival to Him.

### 3. The priority of this love

Note that Christ stated the priorities very clearly: the first commandment is, 'You shall love the LORD your God,' and the second is 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'. Nowadays, for example in the radio programme 'Thought for the day', people are continually exhorted to love their neighbours: there seems to be considerably less stress on the command that comes first: 'You shall love the LORD your God'. The next lesson will show the connection between the two commands. But we must put first things first.

### 4. The extent of love

The demand that God makes upon our love is total: 'You shall love...with all...'. Love for God is to be 'with all your heart'. It is to come from the depths of our innermost being. 'Out of the heart spring the issues of life' (Proverbs 4:23): it is there that everything begins, as our wills are definitely and decisively turned in love towards Him. 'And with all your soul'. The soul means the whole personality, all that a person is: to love with all the soul means to be fully committed in total self-giving (e.g. the love of Jonathan for David. 'After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one spirit with David, and he loved him as himself.' 1 Samuel 18:1 NIV). 'And with all your might' (Deuteronomy 6:5). The love of the heart and soul must be translated into strong, effective action: that is why the New Testament includes mind and strength. See Background Notes on Matthew 22:37.

## APPLICATION

1. 'Love' needs to be defined, for the word has been cheapened and debased in common use. People will tell you that they love ice-cream, or jewellery, or sport. The word is sometimes applied to a sentimental attachment which is no more than a passing fancy. And often nowadays it is used to describe a passion which may be no more than the expression of a physical instinct, with no real spiritual aspect at all.

The Bible defines love by describing what it does. See 1 Corinthians 13. Love is not the sending of a Valentine card, expressing undying devotion: it is a husband's willingness to reach for a tea towel and help with the dishes! God's love for us is shown by what He did and does. See John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 1 John 4:9. Similarly, our love for Him must be seen in what we do.

2. Can love be commanded? To tell someone that he must love someone else is enough to put him off entirely. Love can be commended only by love: 'We love Him because He first loved us'. Our love for God can only be our response to all that His love has given to us and done for us in Christ. Ask the students to complete the students' material at home.

## FURTHER READING

NEW BIBLE COMMENTARY(Revised) on Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Mark 12:28-34

**LESSON 36**

Coming to terms with the World

**THE OTHER PRIORITY**

Scripture Text - Matt. 22:34-40; Lev. 19:11-18; Deut. 22:1-4; 1 Jn. 4:19-21; Rom. 13:8-10; 1 Cor. 13.

**AIM OF LESSON**

To show our responsibility to our neighbour and how we can do it

**BACKGROUND NOTES**

Matthew 22:34-40 - See Background Notes to this passage in the previous lesson. Christ stated the priorities very clearly: the first commandment is, 'You shall love the LORD your God,' and the second is 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'.

Leviticus 19:11-18 - Note that when Christ gave His answer to the lawyer (Matt. 22:37-39), He joined together two passages from the Old Testament that originally were widely separated (Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18), thus teaching that love for our neighbour and love for God are indivisible.

Deuteronomy 22:1-4 - It is of no use to pretend that you did not know your neighbour's predicament. Exodus 23:4 takes it a stage further: 'If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall surely bring it back to him again.' That makes a nonsense of the view that Christ in the Sermon on the Mount was referring to Old Testament law when He said, 'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour, and hate your enemy."'

The Old Testament does not say, 'You shall hate your enemy': that was the rabbis' misrepresentation of the law. The Old Testament says just as surely as the New Testament, 'You shall love your neighbour'- including your enemy - 'as yourself'.

1 John 4:19-21 - v.19 - The verse should be translated, 'We love because He first loved us'. Both our love for God and our love for our neighbour stem from God's love for us.

John underlines the inconsistency of the man who professes love for God, yet has no love for his neighbour: 'If someone says, "I love God", and hates his brother, he is a liar.'

Romans 13:8-10 - Paul takes four of the commandments that have to do with our relationship with our neighbour, and uses them to illustrate the truth that 'love is the fulfilment of the law'. If a man loves his wife, he will not commit adultery with another woman. Sometimes adultery is excused on the ground that the motive is for love. Lust it may be, but love it is not. Real love has a respect and concern for the beloved: real concern and real love make adultery unthinkable.

Obviously too, love makes killing unthinkable, and to steal something that belongs to someone else is such an obvious contradiction of love as to make it self-evident that if I love my neighbour I will not steal from him. Nor will love bear false witness against my neighbour. And if I really love my neighbour I will rejoice in the good things that he has instead of coveting them for myself. Indeed, coveting is but a short step from hating: if my neighbour has something that I do not have, coveting can so easily lead to bitterness, and bitterness to hatred, the very contradiction of love. So, in all these areas, to love my neighbour means the fulfilment of the law.

1 Corinthians 13 - The Authorised Version 'charity' is replaced by 'love' in all the modern translations, but it should be noted that the Greek word translated 'love' means love in a very special sense, the kind of love that God shows to man. Rather than making a detailed study of 1 Corinthians 13, it might be best in the context of this lesson on loving one's neighbour simply to read the chapter, and particularly verses 4-8, in a modern translation. While now almost 70 years old, James Moffatt's translation still makes the most challenging impact.

#### SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Christ's words, 'Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate' (Mark 10:9) referred in the first instance to marriage, but they apply to other things as well. We are going to apply them in this lesson to love for God and love for our neighbour, as we consider the second priority, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'.

##### 1. The connections of this command

When Christ gave His answer to the lawyer, He joined together two passages from the Old Testament that originally were widely separated - Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. We need to be reminded of that connection, for there is still a tendency to separate what Christ has joined together. There are people who claim to love God, and yet for all the noticeable effect their professed love has on their relationships with others, their piety might as well not be there. See what the apostle John has to say about that in 1 John 4:20,21. There are others who try to separate these two commands by setting love for their neighbour apart from love for God, e.g. 'big-hearted' people, 'helpful' and 'compassionate', whose concern for others is a constant rebuke to 'selfish', 'cold hearted' Christians. It might be helpful to discuss how this can happen.

- (a) Is the kindness of such people merely a residue of Christian qualities whose source they have forgotten? The practice of love for others may still flow for a time when the source is not remembered; and Christian attitudes can persist in society for a time after their original stimulus is gone. Certainly to love the unlovable, the ungrateful, the unresponsive, needs a lasting motive that only a real love for God

can supply.

- (b) Could it be that those who show love for others without professing love for God are unconsciously seeking self satisfaction or merit for good works?

2. Some applications of this command

- (a) Leviticus 19:11-18 gives some very practical applications of the command to love one's neighbour. Note in addition to the more obvious ones (not stealing and defrauding) truthfulness; prompt payment; not making things difficult, (is taking a parking space reserved for disabled the equivalent of putting a stumbling block before the blind? verse 14), or being irritated by them (v.14); not telling tales; rebuking a neighbour when he is in the wrong; not bearing a grudge. Complete Question 1 of the students' material.

- (b) Deuteronomy 22:1-4 tells us that it is no use pretending not to know about your neighbour's predicament. See Background Notes for an extension of this.

- (c) Romans 13:8-10 See Background Notes

- (d) Read 1 Corinthians 13 in a modern translation. Complete Question 2 of the students' material.

3. Encouragements to obey this command

- (a) We will be encouraged to show love and kindness to others when we realise we ourselves were and are needy. See Exodus 23:9. 'Freely you have received, freely give' (Matt 10:8)

- (b) See 1 John 4:10,11: 'In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.'

- (c) We cannot love others until the love of God Himself is shed abroad in our hearts. This is done 'by the Holy Spirit whom He has given us'. (Romans 5:5 NIV) 'The fruit of the Spirit is love ...' (Galatians 5:22). Ask the students to complete the students' material and discuss with them possible answers for Question 4.

#### APPLICATION

Everything stems from God's love for us, revealed in Christ. Our response to that love will show itself in our love for Him, and in our love for our neighbour.

#### FURTHER READING

NEW BIBLE COMMENTARY (Revised) on Scripture passages

SCHAEFFER, Francis A. - The Mark of the Christian - Booklet reprinted from an appendix to 'The Church at the end of the Twentieth Century')