

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To show that people are not merely the products of chance or chaotic randomness, but have a sublime reason to exist.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

**Q.** What is the chief end of man?

**A.** The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

S.C. 1; L.C. 1; W.C. of F. II:II,XVI; Young 1-5

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Acts 17:16-32

**Support Passages:** Psalm 73:24-28; Romans 14:7-12; I Corinthians 6:13-20; John 15:8; Romans 15:5-8

### **BIBLE STORY**

Daniel 4:28-37; Nebuchadnezzar's Boast

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Corinthians 10:31, ESV)*

### **APPLICATION**

In order to receive God's gracious blessing, we must glorify and enjoy him. In other words, we must be in harmony with the reason for which we were created.

## SUMMARY

This lesson is intended to introduce the need for special revelation, the Bible, by demonstrating that mankind has a utility which is to glorify and enjoy God. It is obvious that no other earthly creature has such an ability. If people indeed have such a utility, such a reason to exist, how then do people learn how to glorify and enjoy God?

One view of man follows from the views of Sigmond Freud (Psychology), Charles Darwin (Biology) and Karl Marx (Political Economics) all of whom lived in the 19th century and whose views profoundly affected the course of human history. This world and life view maintains that mankind is a product of his environment and that he has no utility. People who are nothing and have no utility have no creator and no reason to exist. A wrist-watch, on the other hand, has a utility which is to measure time. It follows, therefore, that such an instrument to measure time had a creator, a watch-maker. Nothing useful can evolve from randomness, for randomness only produces its kind, more randomness. The effect can never be greater than the cause. Indeed, that nothing moves from randomness to order unless it has inherent order, is a natural law. Human beings have inherent order and usefulness because they were created by God to possess these qualities. Furthermore, the usefulness of mankind is to glorify and enjoy God and this is accomplished by knowing God and his perfection from the Scriptures.

Glorifying God is a man to God relationship, while enjoying God is a God to mankind relationship. The action terminus in the first case is God and in the second case it is mankind. Each of us is born for a purpose, for a certain usefulness in God's plan. That is, to glorify him and enjoy him forever. As Paul told the men of Athens on Mars Hill, God is "*not far from each one of us; <sup>28</sup> for in Him we live and move and have our being.*" (Acts 17:27-28) We are the offspring of God, created by him and for him. All that we have comes from God and all that we do should be for his glory.

Nebuchadnezzar thought that all the greatness of Babylon had been built by his own power and in his own honor. God caused Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom to depart from him and he was sent to live with the beasts of the field until he learned that God, the Most High, is ruler of all. After seven years, Nebuchadnezzar came to know this and praised and honored the True and Living God. Our bodies are a gift from God. They are God's temple, the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in us, whom we have from God, and we are not our own.<sup>1</sup> Paul continues to tell us that we, "*were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.*"

To Charles Darwin the evolutionist God says, "*God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in*

*temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.*" <sup>2</sup>

To Sigmond Freud who maintained that mankind are the product of their environment God says "*And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;*"<sup>3</sup>

To Karl Marx who looked for a utopia deriving from Communist economics God says, "*Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.*" <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I Corinthians 6:19

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 17:24-25

<sup>3</sup> Acts 17:26-27

<sup>4</sup> Acts 17:30-31

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To establish the necessity of Special Revelation, God's Word, the Bible.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q.** What rule has God given us to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?  
**A.** The word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

S.C. 2; L.C. 2-4; W.C. of F. I; Young 14-15

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Psalm 19

**Support Passages:** Romans 1:18-32; I Corinthians 2;  
Hebrews 1:1-3; John 1:14

### **BIBLE STORY**

Exodus 32:1-21; Exodus 24:4, 7-8, 12: In the absence of revelation through Moses, the golden calf is made and worshipped.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether." (Psalm 19:7-9, ESV)*

### **APPLICATION**

If the only source of saving knowledge of God is the Bible, we must by all means study it and follow its precepts.

## SUMMARY

This lesson centers upon the absolute necessity for the Word of God for people have no other source of knowledge of God's means of salvation. Without exception people who are left alone to conjure up their own theologies and philosophies, deny the True and Living God and pursue after false Gods of their own creation. Even when many people are directly confronted with truth and beauty, they refuse it, for God's Word requires seeing eyes and hearing ears to comprehend it. The natural man does not receive the things of God.

Even those who have the grace of God to understand, find no other source of the saving knowledge of God than the Scriptures. While natural phenomena do set forth the glory of God so that people may never claim complete ignorance of God, yet these phenomena do not speak; they are silent. To the believer they say a great deal for God's word, which the believer comprehends, opens up their secrets, but the ungodly person hastens to his idols in spite of them. For this reason the psalmist says

*"Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way."*<sup>1</sup> The law of the Lord is perfect to the end that people are made wise unto salvation. God's natural creation in all its beauty and wonder cannot do this, it is silent.

Albert Schweitzer wrote, "The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give His work its final consecration, never had any existence." Schweitzer apparently did not understand the reason for Christ's death, but worse, he did not find his Jesus in concrete history. As a result, divorced from history and the Word of God, Schweitzer's Jesus was unreal, having been the product of his supremely egotistical mind, and Schweitzer pursued spiritual idolatry.

The unregenerate scientist will waste countless hours researching blind alleys and fruitless experiments simply because he rejects God's Word as folly. Vast resources are squandered to find that there is no life on the moon and planets, when God's Word has already instructed us in these things. People resort to sin and license to obtain pleasure when joy unspeakable through the Christ of Scripture goes begging. For their entertainment this generation resorts to the television set, when instead they could be and should be cultivating themselves in the beautiful things of the Bible. That which is beautiful in art and music is defined and derived from it and the life style subsumed by the Word of God is indeed delightful. One would suppose that the Christian would spend all his resources to obtain such delight and joy but as has been said, "The horse can be led to water, but it's another thing to make him drink it."

Let us feast our faith upon God's own word and whatever our desires or fears let us come to Him with this prayer for assurance, *Let Your mercies come also to me, O LORD; Your salvation according to Your word. So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches me, For I trust in Your word.*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 119:104

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<sup>2</sup> Psalm 119:41-42

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To establish that while the Bible contains concrete history and makes some scientific and philosophical statements, its substance is theological and ethical.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q.** What do the Scriptures principally teach?
- A.** The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning god and what duty God requires of man.
- S.C. 3; L.C. 5; W.C. of F. I:VI; Savoy 1:6; Young 14

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

- Study Passage:**      II Timothy 3:14-17
- Support Passages:**    Matthew 22:23-46; John 5:30-47, 15:3,  
17:17, 18:37; II Peter 1:16-21; I John 1:1-3

### **BIBLE STORY**

Acts 8:26-39; What the Ethiopian official read in the Bible led to his conversion and to saving faith in Christ.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,"*  
(2 Timothy 3:16, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

In order that people may be saved and know how to live lives that are pleasing to God, the Scriptures must be taught.

## SUMMARY

While the bible is not a textbook on Science, nevertheless, scientific information in Scripture is perfectly accurate. In like manner the Bible contains much information of a historical nature which is also perfectly true. In the previous lesson our concern was the unique value of Scripture, however, this present lesson deals with the nature of its content. When we read Scripture, what do we expect to find there? The answer is, of course, truth. This is the Lord's own estimation of the Word of God and His own personal revelation of it.<sup>1</sup> This means, of course, that all its statements, regardless of the category of learned discipline to which they apply, are true.

Nevertheless we cannot ignore the main thrust of the Bible. All its statements and information are God given and God directed and either convey to men that nature of God which He desires us to know or that godly set of ethics by which we are to live. Furthermore, God has not given all knowledge of Himself to mankind neither has He given us all knowledge of godliness, yet we possess in Scripture alone all that God is pleased for us to know. Indeed, we have more than sufficient knowledge to be saved and to live godly pious lives, and we have known the sacred writings which are able to give us the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus -- equipping us for every good work.

Robert L. Whitelaw, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Virginia Polytechnic Institute at Blacksburg, commenting on I John 1:1-3 wrote as follows: " A fashionable notion of our time is that it is possible, at one and the same time, for a Christian to keep his 'faith' and accept without question whatever 'science' says. A man remembers a Bible that speaks of a personal, holy God, of His supernatural works of creation, providence and judgment, and of a supernatural, risen Christ who testifies to the truth of that record. He also sees a world of unprecedented scientific knowledge and achievement whose high priests assure him there is no such God, and that all things came about over billions or trillions of years by chance combination of matter and energy. The Christian answer is at least three fold.

(1) The denial of an event plainly described in the Bible is not merely contradicting an obscure Bible writer; it is a challenge to the resurrection authority of Christ Himself as God manifest in human form. He unequivocally endorsed Moses, Abraham, Noah, as historical people; and the creation of Adam and Eve as the first human pair, the destruction of the entire earth at the Flood, and the cataclysm upon Sodom and Gomorrah, as historical events. If He knew that these were but picture-people and picture-stories (as the new system would have us believe), and yet encouraged His hearers in believing they were historical, then He becomes party to deceit and ceased being a sinless Savior.

(2) No matter how skillful man may be in measuring and observing his world, wherever his conclusions have ethical implications, i.e. wherever they touch upon God's sovereignty, man's corruption and bondage to Satan, and God's plan of salvation, fallen man always comes to false conclusions. his understanding is darkened, and professing himself to be wise he makes himself a fool.<sup>2</sup>

(3) Any man who is both a scientist and a Christian must apply to any new finding or theory in the realm of science the following tests: (a) Does it bear upon any clearly identified events or persons or times in the Biblical record? If so, it must conform to what Scripture teaches or be rejected. (b) Does it have ethical implications as to God's sovereignty, man's sinfulness, Christ's Deity, or God's plan of salvation and final judgment? If it does, and it denies Scripture on such points, then it may be expected to teach false conclusions in the natural realm as well! The answer is yes!"

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<sup>1</sup> John 15:3, 17:17, 18:37

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<sup>2</sup> Rom. 1, I Cor. 1-3, Eph. 4, etc.

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the spiritual nature of God.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is God?

A. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

S.C. 4; L.C. 7; W.C. of F. II; Savoy 2; Young 9

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** John 4:1-26, 38-42

**Support Passages:** I Timothy 1:15-17, 6:13-16; Isaiah 40:12-31, 45:5-25

**BIBLE STORY**

I Kings 18:21-40; YAHWEH God as opposed to Baal

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."* (John 4:24, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

The true God who has revealed Himself by His works and word; that most Holy and True Spirit, must be worshipped in accord with His revealed will from the heart.

### SUMMARY

Since the Bible does not give us a definition as such of God, we must come to our concept of God by an exhaustive study of His attributes of which the Bible has much to say. While the usual Reformed classification of these attributes divides between those that are communicated to mankind (in the sense that they are found to some degree in God's created universe) and those attributes that belong to God alone, nevertheless, the Catechism suggests another classification. It is assumed in the catechism answer that God is a self-existent being and it is affirmed of Him:

- (1) That He is spirit;
- (2) That as such He is infinite, eternal and unchanging and;
- (3) That each of these aspects apply to His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

One observes in John 4:24 (King James Version) that the phrase, "God is a Spirit" contains the italicized word "is" indicating that this word is not found in the original Greek text and was added by the translators for clarity or to provide a proper English clause or sentence. In fact the word "a" should be italicized as well for the same reason. This is the only such statement about God in the Bible and the Lord Jesus does not say that God is merely "a" spirit in the sense that He is one of many spirits, but that He is Spirit meaning that this is His essential nature. There are other spirit beings of course such as the angels, but the angels are not infinite, eternal and unchangeable. God alone is an infinite, eternal and unchanging spiritual being. He has a substantial being all His own and distinct from the world; immaterial, invisible without composition or extension.

It is true that the Bible often speaks of the ears, eyes, hands, mouth, etc. of God, but these are anthropomorphisms or figurative descriptions of the activities of God. God is Spirit or Spiritual. When it is said that a man is spiritual, one refers to that small amount of God-like qualities that true saving faith in Christ produces. However, the Spirituality of God is infinite, eternal and unchangeable whereas human beings are just the opposite; finite, limited to time and space, and variable.

That God is Spirit means that He has an objective existence. He is not just an idea like the "Spirit of Saint Louis" or the "Spirit of 76". Neither is God merely a kindred spirit or a good feeling. God's being Spirit also means that He is rational and conscious; in other words, that He is personal. In this sense God is completely independent and self-sufficient. While human beings are rational and conscious, that is to say they have souls, they are completely dependent on God. God's being Spirit means that He has a will albeit not with sinful human passions but a perfect and holy will. Lastly God's Spirituality means that He is a moral being. There are, therefore, those things that are right in the eyes of the LORD and others that are wrong.

God can and does act as He did on the occasion spoken of in I Kings 18. No matter how fervently the priests called upon him, Baal did not consume their offering with fire. We read that they "called on the name of Baal from morning

until noon saying, 'O Baal, answer us'." They leaped upon the altar and cut themselves with swords and lances to no avail. Baal was merely an idea concocted by sinful human minds. No so with YAHWEH. Elijah flooded his altar with water eliminating the possibility of spontaneous combustion, the whole area being parched from years of drought. He then prayed simply, "O YAHWEH, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done these things at Thy word. Answer me, O YAHWEH, answer me, that this people may know that Thou, O YAHWEH, art God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again." Had YAHWEH been merely a human idea this too would have failed but the "God who is there" consumed Elijah's sacrifice with fire.



**TEACHING GOAL**

To show that God is exalted above all we can know or think.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is God?

A. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

S.C. 4; L.C. 7; W.C. of F. II; Savoy 2; Young 9

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Psalm 139

**Support Passages:** Psalm 90:1-6; I Kings 8:27; Job 11:7-9; Romans 11:33-36; Psalm 147:4-5

**BIBLE STORY**

Exodus 3:1-15; God is the one who informs us "I am that I am". Moses and the burning bush.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55:8-9, ESV)*

**APPLICATION**

The true God who has revealed Himself by His works and word; that most Holy and True Spirit, must be worshipped in accord with His revealed will from the heart.

## SUMMARY

The last lesson examined the concept that God is Spirit and therefore a rational, conscious, personal being. Now our attention is turned to those characteristics of God that transcend those of mankind. Not only does God establish Himself as a personal being with whom people may fellowship, whom they can worship and love and to whom they can pray and expect answers, but He is exalted above all that we can know or think. It is the Bible God with whom we fellowship and not the Gods of the Koran, the Pali (Buddhist), the Gathas (Zoroastrianism), etc. All other so called gods are false, and it is a dreadful sin before the True and Living God to worship another in any manner whatsoever. All other gods are different and strange. It is only the Bible that represents a God that is both personal and infinite at once.

In its concept of infinity, the Bible does not present God as nothingness or allness. Faulty concepts of infinity have led some theologians to refuse the concept of the substance of God. Emil Brunner, for example, in speaking of the One the Bible calls the Son of God, writes, "that is, as everything we say about God, a parable. God has no sons just as men have sons."<sup>1</sup> Because many conceive of infinitude as the absence of anything material or substantive, they believe God to be absolutely transcendent. Again many conceive of infinitude as being all inclusive and therefore that God is inclusive of all and in all. That view is Pantheism. Everything is thus made to be God. To avoid these heresies we have been careful to establish God's personality and spirituality.

The Bible concept that God is infinite does not mean that He is nothing, or that He is in everything. It means simply that God is above all that we can know or think. As God is free from all constraints of space, so also is He free from the constraints of time. He is eternal. He has always existed. So has Jesus always existed as He states in John 8:58, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." He is the "I AM", meaning that He is the eternally present being. Moses heard God speak from the bush, "I AM WHO I AM." He wants us to know Him as YAHWEH (Exodus 6:3), which is translated "LORD." The lower case "Lord" translates another word for God, namely, "adonai." Furthermore, His name YAHWEH is closely related to the Hebrew word "ehyeh", which means "I am." He therefore is the eternally present being.

It is no small problem to many theologians that God being eternally in the present is nonetheless rational and intelligent; that He actually thinks and feels. To discuss these modern concepts is beyond the scope of this lesson, but all views in this regard are illogical and unbiblical and God's name is blasphemed if He is made no less than the living, personal God of the Bible and the heart.

James writes, James 1<sup>17</sup> "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." Other scriptures such as Isaiah 14:24, Malachi 3:6, or Numbers 23:19 state the same concept. All instances in Scripture where God

is said to "repent" (e.g. Genesis 6:6-7) mean that God exhibits sorrow or grief. He is a compassionate, personal being. Yet God is not inactive because He does not change. He is not away on business or sleeping. What wicked blasphemy are such statements. He is no less a personal being because He is unchanging or unchangeable.

We must fellowship with so exalted a being while He is longsuffering and near to us. The day soon will come when this Holy Exalted being will judge the world in righteousness.

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<sup>1</sup> Emil Brunner, I believe in the Living God, Philadelphia PA, The Westminster Press, 1961, p. 54.

**TEACHING GOAL**

To show that the Lord of Hosts is sovereign over all.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is God?

A. God is a spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth.

S.C. 4; L.C. 7; W.C. of F. II; Savoy 2; Young 9

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Romans 9:6-29

**Support Passages:** Nahum 1:1-8; I John 4:7-21; Lamentations 3:22-23; I Samuel 2:1-10; Psalm 99:9; Genesis 17:1-2; Psalm 115:1-8

**BIBLE STORY**

Acts 14:1-18; Paul and Barnabas are mistaken for Gods. So inately foolish was their idolatry of the apostles that Paul and Barnabas tore their robes and showed the nature of the True god to their would-be worshippers.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; he knows those who take refuge in him."* (Nahum 1:7, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

To escape the wrath of the sovereign, just God, we must repent and believe on the perfect exhibit of His love - His Christ!

## SUMMARY

This lesson on the nature of God deals with those attributes that are possessed by men to some small degree. Wisdom or knowledge, for example, is present in mankind but it is small and finite compared to the wisdom of God which is infinite eternal and unchangeable. In animals other than man, these attributes are not present at all. Animals have no wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. Intuition or instinct are not related to the attributes of God but are derived from the genetics of the particular species of animal. A new-born baby does not have to be taught to suckle because this ability is given to it biologically by means of its genes. The attributes of God that are present in mankind are the properties of the soul and are not biologically obtained. Furthermore, these attributes are also present in the souls of men in heaven and they are found in angels. Among animals, human beings alone are able to conceive of abstractions and of God, not because their brains are larger or more developed than other animals (they are in fact smaller than some other animals) but because they have souls. It is a feature of immortality that the Christian will enjoy an environment of absolute wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.

Now we have some concept of the nature of these attributes for we possess them to some degree. Yet, as they apply to God they are quite different. Consider wisdom or knowledge. We may have knowledge of a future event which is probable to occur because, based on a pattern of such things occurring in the past we are able to reason that such things will come to pass again. We are able to predict based on a study of the past. Even so, the prediction may not come to pass. With God, His prediction of the future is sure to happen not merely because He knows the past, and of course He knows the past just as He knows all things, but because He causes the future event to take place.

God is all-powerful. A person repents from sin and believes on Christ, not because God merely knew of this future event, and of course He does because He knows all things, but because God caused his conversion to occur. People repent because God has "mercy on whom I will have mercy, and will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." On one He has mercy; another He hardens. From the same lump of clay one vessel is made for wrath and another for glory. Therefore, an event is perfectly predictable, to God only, because God brings it to pass. His knowledge is causative, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. The knowledge of mankind, though it be a small measure of God's knowledge, is none of these. Thus we may argue similarly concerning all of God's attributes. Mankind has a measure of holiness but they are sinners. God has no sin. Our power is limited to human capabilities, and we cannot create from nothing. Mankind do not exhibit undeserved love. We love God because He first loved us. A baby is loved because of who it is, because in that sense it deserves love. God "so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son" in

spite of its undeserving iniquity. God's truth is never relative. It is never contingent on other things such as the abilities or social behavior of mankind.

"Sovereignty is not a property of God's nature, but it is a prerogative"<sup>1</sup> that arises from His exalted and perfect being. Because He is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in all His attributes, He exercises sovereignty in all of them. He works all things to the praise of the glory of His grace. "He does what He wills with His own."<sup>2</sup> Dr. Charles Hodge puts it this way: God's people, "rejoice that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth; that neither necessity, nor chance, nor the folly of man, nor the malice of Satan controls the sequence of events in all their issues. Infinite wisdom, love and power, belong to Him, our great God and Savior, into whose hands all power in heaven and earth has been committed."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans' Publishing Company, 1965, p440

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 441

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 441

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the biblical concept of the trinity.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. Are there more Gods than one?

A. There is but one only, the Living and True God.

Q. How many persons are there in the Godhead?

A. There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

S.C. 5-6; L.C. 8-9; W.C. of F. II; Savoy 2; Young 6-8

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Matthew 28:16-20

**Support Passages:** Acts 2:37-41, 8:14-17; Genesis 1:26, 3:22, 11:7, 18; Ephesians 4:4-6; I Corinthians 12:4-6, 15:27, 28, II Corinthians 13:14

**BIBLE STORY**

Matthew 3: The baptism of Jesus. The Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit are exhibited on this wonderfully significant occasion.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.""* (Matthew 28:18-20, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

We are to make disciples of the Triune God, in the strength of Jesus to whom all authority in heaven and earth has been given.

## SUMMARY

To this point in our dealings with the doctrine of God we have observed from Scripture some of the attributes and characteristics of the Living and True God. We have noticed His personality, yet His transcendence. He is far above man, yet mankind were created by God with a portion of His attributes, for God said, "Let us make man in our image." (Genesis 1:26) To this point we have observed that God is a unity, that He is one God who is a real objective being. We have referred to Him as He or God. Now we will examine biblical data that teach a Godhead or a God who consists of three persons. For example the passage just cited makes use of the plural pronouns us and our.

Although the word for God is often Elohim, a plural Hebrew noun. God is not many Gods but one God therefore it is translated God and not Gods. We should note the use of Elohim in Genesis 3:22 where we find YAHWEH Elohim. Here is YAHWEH, a singular proper noun, in apposition to Elohim, a plural noun thus Elohim may properly be translated God. In Genesis 1:26 it would be ridiculous to translate "and Gods said", particularly in view of the fact that the verb said is in the third person singular or "He Said" and not "They said."

However, there are still the plural pronouns to reckon with "us" and "our". "God said, let **us** make man in **our** image." Only three persons in Scripture are said to be God: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. All three are identified as YAHWEH, and all three are the same in substance and equal in power and glory. (That Jesus is YAHWEH will be discussed in the next lesson.) Even so there is a subordination with regard to the three persons of the Godhead as is seen in the order of the persons mentioned in the baptismal formula, "In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19) The Son is begotten by the Father (John 1:18) and the Holy Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son (John 14:26, 16:7) which is to say the Father and the Son operate through the Holy Spirit. (That the Holy Spirit is a person will be discussed in a future lesson.)

One realizes immediately that these persons are not separate Gods but one and the same, since the term God applies to them all. They are never "a God" but "God". Jesus, that one with "all authority in heaven and earth", which is true only of YAHWEH, instructs His disciples to "make disciples (of God) of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Thus is God said to be one God, yet three persons all of whom named YAHWEH.

We are not able to adequately prove the doctrine of the Trinity from any single Bible passage. I John 5:7 in the King James Version is used by many to the contrary to prove the Trinity but this verse appears to be spurious and modern translations of the Bible (e.g. NASB, NIV) do not include it. The Bible doctrine of the Trinity, like the definition of God, is only understood by an

exhaustive study of the Word of God. This summary only points to the basic elements of this doctrine.

**TEACHING GOAL**

To show that Jesus is God.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. How many persons are there in the Godhead?

A. There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

S.C. 6; L.C. 9; W.C. of F. II; Savoy 2; Young 7-8

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Hebrews 1:1-2:4

**Support Passages:** Psalm 2:7, 45:6-7, 97:7, 102:25-27, 104:4, 110:1; 2 Samuel 7:14; John 1:1-18, 5:15-18, 10:24-31; Colossians 1:13-19, 2:1-10; Titus 2:11-14

**BIBLE STORY**

Mark 2:1-12; Jesus healed the man who was lowered through the roof. Jesus healed his body and soul from which we conclude that only God can forgive sins.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority."*  
(Colossians 2:9-10, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Ones personal salvation is predicated on a genuine confession that Jesus is LORD or YAHWEH. We therefore will not escape the wrath of God if we demean the Son of God by relegating Him to something less than God.

**SUMMARY**

About the year 300 AD, a heated controversy tore at the church. Arius, a Presbyterian in the church of Alexandria, insisted that God the Father alone was without beginning and that the Son of God was merely brought into being by the Father. So vocal was his objection to the Deity of Christ that a special Synod was called to deal with the issue he raised, with the result that Arius and his followers were condemned. "We were persecuted," said Arius, "because we say that the Son has a beginning, but that God is without a beginning."<sup>1</sup> The Jehovah's Witness cult carries on the theology of Arius and with him they deny the substantial Deity of Jesus Christ.

The Synod of Nicea met in 325 AD under the aegis of Emperor Constantine who was converted to Christianity in 312 AD and they produced the following creed:<sup>2</sup> "We believe in one God, Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father; only begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father: by whom all things were made in heaven and on earth: Who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate and was made man; He suffered, and rose again the third day; He ascended into heaven, and is coming to judge both quick and dead. And we believe in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes all who say that there was a time when the Son of God was not; that before He was begotten He was not; that He was made out of the non-existent; or that He is of a different essence and of a different substance from the Father; and that He is susceptible of variation or change." The earlier Apostles Creed does not take up this matter because the various heresies that led up to the Arian denial, had not yet affected the Church.

What would you have said to Arius?

No passage of Scripture states the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ in stronger terms than does Hebrews chapter 1 where we read, "<sup>3</sup> who (Jesus) being the brightness of *His* (God's) glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power,..." Jesus is even attributed eternity in Hebrews 1:8 But to the Son *He says*: "Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your Kingdom." Psalm 45, of which this is a quote, is addressed to the "King" and it is of this King of whom it is said, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever" and "Therefore, God (referring to the King or the Son according to Hebrews 1:8), Your God, has anointed You." In its attempt to discredit the deity of Christ, the modernist RSV reads, "Your divine throne endures for ever and ever." This is a very dishonest translation.

Continuing in Hebrews chapter 1 notice verse 10 where, still speaking of the Son, we read, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning,

and the heavens are the work of your hands." This is cited from Psalm 102:25 which refers to YAHWEH.. That Jesus bears God's covenant name (YAHWEH) is taught in many Old Testament passages, for example Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:14-16; Isaiah 40:10-11.

The Apostle John, whose purpose in writing is to set forth Jesus as Messiah and God (John 20:31), says that the Word was God (John 1:1) and is God (John 1:14). Clearly the Jews understood His claim to be God for they tried to stone Him for blasphemy (i.e. claiming to be God; John 5:18, 8:58, 10:30-31, etc.)

No one can deny Paul's view of the Lord Jesus in texts such as Colossians 1:16 and Titus 2:13. So clear is the deity of Christ in Scripture that we can do no other than bow before Him and worship Him as our God and King. What awful blasphemy it is to do otherwise. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Hebrews 2:3)

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Ferm, Readings in the History of Christian Thought, New York, Holt Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966, p. 129

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 138



**TEACHING GOAL**

To show that the Holy Spirit is a person.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. How many persons are there in the Godhead?

A. There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory.

S.C. 6; L.C. 9; W.C. of F. II; Savoy 2; Young 7-9,15

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      John 16:1-15

**Support Passages:** John 14:16-17, 25-31, 15:26-27; Romans 8:26; Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30; Galatians 4:1-6; Isaiah 63:7-14; Psalm 51:10-13

**BIBLE STORY**

John 3:1-10; The Spirit of God is the powerful person of the Trinity who causes people to be born again (or from above) according to His sovereign will and work.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30, ESV)*

**APPLICATION**

We must not distress the Holy Spirit who, by means of a past and completely effective act, sealed us for the day of redemption and was given to the people of God as the pledge of their inheritance.

## SUMMARY

Those who refuse the deity of the Son of God also refuse a personal Holy Spirit. The same errors that led to the heresy of Arius also caused were the basis for denial of God's Personal Spirit by those known as Monarchians and Sabelians. Again, in our day, Modernists, Unitarians, and such like, share in this heresy. The Word of God, however, is so specific and so plentiful are references to a personal Holy Spirit that there is no excuse for this denial. This erroneous view states that the Holy Spirit is like an idea or concept that is completely abstract. "Like the concept of beauty; as the flower is beautiful so God is a Spirit."

We read, "*When (He) the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.*"<sup>1</sup> The verse begins with the use of the masculine personal pronoun He (ekeinos in Greek) in the phrase "When (He)" and since there exist feminine and neuter forms of this pronoun it clearly must be translated He. Such references to the Holy Spirit utterly destroy the view that God's Spirit is merely an abstract concept.

How can a mere abstraction intercede for us with groanings too deep for words<sup>2</sup>, or be given as a pledge of our inheritance. Speaking of the Holy Spirit we read in Ephesians 1:14, "Who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory." We notice again that the pronoun who translates the masculine Greek pronoun "hos" therefore the spirit of god is a He, not an it. How can a mere concept be grieved or distressed when we sin? (Ephesians 4:30)

The Spirit of God is named in scripture as The Paraclete (John 16:7). Not merely a help or a comfort but The Helper, The Comforter, The Intercessor, is the Holy Spirit. Help and comfort are merely abstract influences but The Helper, The Comforter is a person who acts in our behalf. The third person of the Trinity has intelligence (John 14:26), and affections (Isaiah 63:10, Ephesians 4:30). He searches, speaks, testifies, commands, reveals, strives, creates, makes intercession, raises the dead, etc. (Genesis 1:2, 6:3; Luke 12:12; John 14:26, 15:26, 16:8; Acts 8:29, 13:2; Romans 8:11; I Corinthians 2:10-11) A being that does all these things is no mere influence. He is not merely "the force" but He is the personal Holy Spirit of God.

Such divine perfections are given to Him as omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, and eternity. (Psalm 139:7-10; Isaiah 40:13-14; I Corinthians 2:10-11, 12:11; Hebrews 9:14) He is the regenerator of God's people and He inspires them and assures them of their union with Christ. He works sanctifica-

tion in people, teaches and guides the church. It is He that provides and preserves the Word of God throughout history. Let us therefore be careful to please the Spirit of God Who indwells and seals us. Let us please Him with holiness and service to our Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> John 16:13, ESV Parenthesis mine.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 8:26

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To show that everything that happens is the result of God's decrees.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What are the decrees of god?

A. The decrees of god are, His eternal purpose, according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.

S.C. 7; L.C. 12; W.C. of F. III; Savoy 3; Young 13

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Ephesians 1:3-14

**Support Passages:** Romans 8:26-39, 9:11-18; Acts 2:23, 4:24-28; John 6:44,65; II Thessalonians 2:13; I Peter 2:8; Genesis 18:19; Isaiah 5:1-7; Deuteronomy 7:6-11; Amos 3:2

### **BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 37:1-28, 50:15-21; Joseph's being sold into slavery in Egypt occurred by the will of God for His sovereign purposes.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him."*

(Ephesians 1:3-4, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

As those who have been blessed with all spiritual blessings we ought to return to God our complete and wholehearted service. We should love Him who first loved us.

## SUMMARY

The substance of this lesson is difficult indeed, yet, because it is found so often in Scripture, we dare not neglect it. It has been noted that the unbeliever who stands outside the gate to the narrow road to heaven, sees "WHOEVER BELIEVES" written above the door, but looking back after having passed through sees "PREDESTINED TO SONSHIP" written there. The unbeliever thinks of God's decrees as the work of a bigoted egotist, but the Christian saint rejoices that he has been blessed with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3ff)

These blessings include the following: (a) The Father's choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world; (b) Predestining us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself; (c) The bestowal of grace upon those He has chosen; (d) The redemption of His chosen people through the blood of Christ; (e) The forgiveness of our trespasses; (f) Lavishing the riches of grace upon us; (g) Making known the mystery of His will; (h) Being kindly disposed toward us which He purposed in Christ; (i) Causing us to obtain an inheritance by His gracious predestination; (j) Working all things for our good, after the counsel of His own will; (k) Raising up a people for Himself to the praise of His glory; (l) Causing us to listen to the message of truth, the gospel of our salvation; (m) Enabling us to believe on Christ; (n) Sealing us with the Holy Spirit of promise; (o) Making believers to be temples of the Holy Spirit as a pledge (earnest money) of their inheritance.

So odious is this doctrine to the unbeliever and so precious to the believer, that the Confession instructs us to handle the "high mystery of predestination - - with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in His word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation (calling), be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence and abundant consolation, to all that sincerely obey the gospel."<sup>1</sup> Over and over again the Apostle praises God for choosing him and saving him because Saul, on the road to Damascus, was hopelessly in bondage to sin. Only a direct, powerful, gracious exercise of God's election in Paul's behalf could and did save him. Truly, Paul was, "the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)

If you have read the passages of Scripture suggested in the previous part of this lesson, you have seen the words "chosen", "elect", "predestined", "foreordained", etc. In many cases the word "foreknowledge" or God's knowledge, is also associated with them. Lesson six noted that God's foreknowledge is equivalent to His foreordination (decree) for all that God foreknows is certain to come to pass because He causes it to be so. Therefore it is no comfort to the Arminian to claim that predestination is based on, or contingent to, foreknowledge. Furthermore, even though God decreed the Garden of Eden, the fall of man and his redemption, He is by no means the author of evil. (James 1:3, 17; I John 1:5; Hebrews 7:26-27; etc.)

Here we have man's real problem with God's decrees. It is our problem and not God's problem. Since it is not apparently given to mankind to understand such things, we are not to propose solutions to the origin of sin and election. The Bible tells us that sin entered the world through the devil, who fell from his original place of authority in heaven, and by means of Adam's disobedience. We know virtually nothing about things which happened before the creation of the universe and mankind. Some have proposed that God permitted sin in His universe by virtue of His "permissive decrees". However, the problem is not solved by this view, but remains. Why should God even "permit" sin? He could have decreed a world without it just as well. Some call the problem of sin a paradox and others an antinomy. Everywhere in scripture, however, God is represented as holy, righteous, just, good, etc. God is not the author of sin and that's that!

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<sup>1</sup> The Westminster Confession of Faith, Ch. III, Para. VIII.

### **TEACHING GOAL**

Establish that the universe and all in it was created from nothing (ex-nihilo) by a free act of God.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q.** How does God execute His decrees?
- A.** God executes His decrees in the works of Creation and Providence.
- Q.** What is the work of creation?
- A.** The work of creation is, God's making all things from nothing, by the word of His power, in the space of six days, and all very good.

S.C. 8-9; L.C. 14-15; W.C. of F. IV; Savoy 4; Young 16-17

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Genesis 1:1-25

**Support Passages:** Hebrews 11:1-6; Romans 1:20; Revelation 4:11; Colossians 1:16; Psalm 33:6-12; Nehemiah 9:5-8 (Notice the connection to God's decrees in these passages)

### **BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 1; The six days of creation.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." (Hebrews 11:6, ESV)*

### **APPLICATION**

We do not have faith that pleases God if we do not believe that He created all things from nothing.

## SUMMARY

Having studied the nature of the decrees of God, wherein everything that comes to pass was and is ordered by God, we now examine the primary means by which His decrees are carried out. When the King makes decrees, He also establishes a means wherewith to carry them out. This is done by God in His works of creation and providence, the former having been accomplished and the latter a continuing process which we are soon to study.

When it comes to the origin of the physical universe, which of course is the essence of the doctrine of creation, only the Bible provides the truth of the matter. No scientist or philosopher has any means at his disposal for proving hypotheses that do not concur with the biblical record because it is not possible to go back in history to reconstruct either the context or the data in order to examine them. In addition, most of the data before us today support the biblical position and raise serious questions regarding the prevailing scientific theories.

The description of the six creative days in Genesis chapter 1, clearly speaks of every classification of physical things from the astronomical universe to bacteria. As God created Adam as an adult so He created the entire universe, functioning and mature. There is no reason to reject this proposition because the all-powerful God who creates from nothing is surely capable of creating a universe that is mature. Apparently, the only motive to conceive of the creative days as long periods of time comes from the halls of science. I dare say that most unbelieving scientists believe that universe and the earth are very old, but many believers also have yielded to the pressure theorize some sort of evolutionary process taking place during long creative days. My point is this: Scripture does not demand the concept of long creative days and neither does science, if what is here was created by almighty God.

Notice the structure in Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, etc., "and there was evening and there was morning, one day." Surely this in itself does not lead one to the conclusion that these days are long periods of time, yet, how does this phrase "evening" and "morning" fit a long period of time? Created living things do not require long periods of time to evolve since they came into being instantly by the "word of God", and God "spoke and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast." (Hebrews 1:3; Psalm 33:9) In addition, the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:11) virtually precludes the long day concept when it mentions the Sabbath "day", obviously a 24-hour day, in the same context as the six creative days. Notice that this is also the case in Genesis 2:2 and 3. Much of the pressure to accept the long day position comes from the geologist who postulates eons of glacier movements and weather, to account for the mountains and valleys. However, we must not neglect the effect of the Flood (Genesis 7:10-24) in this regard.

Of course, the evolutionist does not either accept the Flood, but this monumental physical phenomenon accounts for much of the modern appearance of the earth. Before the Flood, there was no rain; the plants and animals received water by a "mist" that rose from the earth. (Genesis 2:5-6) No coal or oil depos-

its were created by this gentle means of caring for living creatures, but the great pressures and temperatures of the Flood very likely brought them into existence.

Originally, creation was "very good", (Genesis 1:31) and one wonders if it is still good. To suggest an answer to this, we hasten to note that "good" meant, among other things, that the creation was ecologically good and harmonious and that Adam was morally good after God's own image. Yet we may still observe the "good" creation of God in its beauty, the perfection of physical law and its natural ecology. It is not chaos. Nature is not twisted and depraved, to the contrary, it is mankind that are depraved who delight in portraying God's earth as twisted and chaotic. We must live under the curse of death not because nature sinned against God but because our first parents did, yet, "the heavens are declaring the glory of God; and the firmament is declaring the work of His hands." (Psalm 19:1) While the whole creation "groans and suffers the pains of childbirth" (Romans 8:22; Jeremiah 12:4,11), yet this pain is the result of sin and sins. Sinful mankind messes up his environment and destroys beauty.

God's creation is still good and beautiful, but "cursed" with death and sinful man. That which is beautiful, which follows precise physical laws, which has design such as atomic structure, does not derive from a "big bang" or evolve. Energy cannot suddenly decide to become matter with atomic design, and genetic material (DNA) cannot be produced from random processes. Indeed life itself cannot suddenly appear by itself and is certainly not simply a chemical reaction. These things come only by creation and creation comes only from a wise and powerful, sovereign God.

**TEACHING GOAL**

Study the basic difference between mankind and all other animals and the nature of his dominion.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. How did God create man?

A. God created man male and female, after His own image, in knowledge, righteousness and holiness, with dominion over the creatures.

S.C. 10; L.C. 16-17; W.C. of F. IV; Savoy 4; Young 18

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Genesis 1:26-2:25

**Support Passages:** Ecclesiastes 3:17-22, 12:7; Luke 23:43; Matthew 10:28; Isaiah 10:18; Daniel 7:15; I Corinthians 15:45-54; II Corinthians 5:1-10; Philipians 1:23-24; Colossians 3:10; Ephesians 4:24

**BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 1:26-30, 2:15-25; Adam in the Garden of Eden and the making of Eve. Mankind was made perfectly according to God's sovereign intentions.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."* (Genesis 1:27, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Let us be renewed in spirit and body after the likeness of the image of God; holy and righteous, with true knowledge.

## SUMMARY

Human beings did not derive from or originate in other forms of life. The Bible clearly states that, "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground..."<sup>1</sup>, and that he, "created man in His own image."<sup>2</sup> There is no room at all for any form of evolution in the case of mankind nor in the creation that took place on the other days. Now we observe change does occur within the classes of animals or other living things, but all such changes are limited genetically. Cats, for example, are observed to vary in size and color but they are always members of the cat family. Many believing scientists have presented cogent and biblical refutations of the theories of Lamark, Darwin and others, and I might add that many unbelieving scientists have done likewise. Modern technology has led a great many scientists and researchers to the persuasion that living things are so complex they could not have evolved. It is obvious to them that an intelligent designer must have originated living things. Most of the scientific data in existence fully supports the claim of Scripture that God created all things and mankind in particular. It supports the obvious fact that the classes of living things appeared suddenly and discretely. There is a complete absence of any transitional forms of life among the data before us.

Genesis records the words of God; *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."*<sup>2</sup> But God is a Spirit<sup>3</sup> and since mankind exhibits a physical or material body, it follows that man's likeness of God is a spiritual likeness. Paul corroborates this in speaking of the new birth, for he tells us that the converted sinner has put on a *"and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator"*,<sup>4</sup> thus God's image includes true knowledge. Speaking again of this new self<sup>5</sup> Paul equates righteousness and holiness of truth with the likeness of God. Now these are all spiritual qualities. It is obvious, therefore, that mankind has a dual nature. Mankind is both body and soul. His body was formed of the dust of the earth and his soul bears the image of God. This, of course, is the difference between mankind and all other animals. Only man has a soul that bears God's image.

Genesis 2:7 makes the interesting statement, "man became a living being." The words "living being" translate two Hebrew words that, in Genesis 1:20,21 and 24, are translated "living creatures". Therefore, contends the Jehovah's Witness, animals have souls. That animals and mankind both are living beings or living creatures we do not dispute, but animals do not have immortal souls, nor are they immortal beings. The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us that animals and

mankind have in common the fact that their bodies came from the dust and return to it but their spirits or breath<sup>6</sup> are quite different. It is only the spirit of man that returns to God who gave it. The Bible never refers to the sins of animals or ascribes to them any spiritual characteristics. Therefore the newer Bible translations are reluctant to speak of animals as having spirits. That mankind have souls is not established in Genesis 2:7 and the newer translations are correct in translating "living being" or "living creature" to avoid the conclusion that animals have souls, especially in light of the rest of Scripture which opposes such a position.

The immortality of the human soul is clearly taught in 2 Corinthians 5:1-10 and Philippians 1:23-24, to name several of the many passages that bear on the subject. Paul, however, uses Genesis 2:7 in an interesting manner in I Corinthians 15:45 and following. *"Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven."*<sup>7</sup>

In comparing Adam with Christ, Adam is natural, from the earth, bearing the image of the earthy. Thus Adam is a living creature but Christ, on the other hand, is spiritual as opposed to natural, from heaven, bearing the image of the heavenly, thus he is a life-giving Spirit. Paul's point is that the bodies of saved mankind will be resurrected to glory and be changed like the body of Christ. In heaven there will be no flesh and blood<sup>8</sup> but our body that died will be changed and resurrected. He writes that our souls are immortal and he tells us that our changed and resurrected bodies shall be also.

The Lord God has also given mankind dominion over all other creation. Ecology in the Garden of Eden demanded the presence of the man Adam and he did physical work there for God put Adam in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. Dominion, yes, but not exploitation and greedy waste. One wonders how well mankind lives up to his image of God or how prudently he exercises his dominion. The answer is obvious, not very well at all.<sup>9</sup> () We all need to turn away from our lack of zeal for the kingdom of Christ and be steadfast in the process of growth in grace.

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1 Genesis 2:7

2 Genesis 1:26, ESV

3 John 4:24

4 Colossians 3:10, ESV

5 Ephesians 4:24

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6 Ecclesiastes 3:20-21, 12:7

7 1 Corinthians 15:45-48, ESV

8 I Corinthians 15:50

9 Romans 8:20-25



**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the grace of God to His people in particular and to all mankind in general.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What are God's works of providence?  
A. God's works of providence are His most holy wise and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures, and all their actions.

S.C. 11; L.C. 18-19; W.C. of F. V; Savoy 5; Young 13

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Isaiah 43

**Support Passages:** Psalm 145:8-12; II Kings 10:29-30, 12:2-3, 14:3-4; Matthew 5:43-45, 10:29-31; Luke 6:35-36; Romans 2:13-14, 10:5; II Thessalonians 2:6-7; Revelation 20:1-3

**BIBLE STORY**

Exodus 7:20-11:5; The Ten Plagues. Note particularly Exodus 9:12, 15-16, 10:27 in regard to the providence of God. The Plagues were God's special act of providence to redeem His people from Egypt.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made." (Psalm 145:9, ESV)*

**APPLICATION**

It is of great comfort to us to know that God provides for all mankind and that His watch care is specially favored upon His own people who are bought by His own blood.

## SUMMARY

That God's providence extends to all of God's creatures, whether they hate Him or love Him, is an amazing doctrine of Scripture. It is hard indeed for us to show love to our enemies, yet He commands us to do just that in Matthew 5:43 and 44 where He tells us, "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." The Synod of Dordt declared that "Touching the favorable attitude of God toward mankind, and not alone toward the elect -- that there is, besides the saving grace of God, shown only to those chosen to eternal life, also a certain favor or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in general -- Touching the restraint of sin in the life of the individual and in society, -- there is such a restraint of sin -- Touching the so-called civic righteousness by the unregenerate -- the unregenerate, though incapable of any saving good can perform such civic good."<sup>1</sup> So long as the church of Christ, His own bride, is in this world, the forces of evil will be restrained in her behalf. Paul clearly teaches this in II Thessalonians 2 where speaking of the man of lawlessness he writes, "And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way." Civil government also is provided to us for the same purpose and to the extent that it administers justice and restrains evil it is God's minister to us (Romans 13:1-4). God however, is specially concerned for His own chosen people.

Although the study passage, Isaiah 43, is directed to Israel, yet we must not cast off this great passage as belonging to another dispensation of time, or one that does not apply to the church. Believing Israel was and still is God's church into which we gentile Christians have been grafted (Romans 11:17-24). We are, by the blood of Christ, no longer aliens and strangers, but are fellow-citizens with the saints, that is to say the commonwealth of Israel, and are of God's household (Ephesians 2:11-22). It would be utterly foolish to ignore such great promises as, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you (Isaiah 43:1b-2). It would be foolish to ignore such promises simply because they are addressed to Israel. We are Israel, brethren, if we belong to Christ. We are truly the offspring of Abraham (Galatians 3:26-29).

Do we fully grasp the statement that we are "precious in the sight of God?" Because of God's kind disposition towards His people, He provides for all of their true needs. When God wipes out their transgressions, He does so for His own sake and does not continue to remember them but human beings bear their grudges until the bitter end. Therefore, we learn the wisdom and holiness of God's providence, its gracious character towards the saints and His powerful directing of the affairs and estates of all mankind.

*"The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. He fulfills the desire of those who fear him; he also hears their cry and saves them. The Lord preserves all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy." (Psalm 145:17-20, ESV)*

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<sup>1</sup> The Banner, June 1, 1939, p. 508ff.

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study God's specific acts of providence in the Garden of Eden.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What special act of providence did God exercise toward man in the estate wherein he was created?
- A. When God created man, He entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience; forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil, upon pain of death.

S.C. 12; L.C. 20; W.C. of F. V; Savoy 5; Young 21-23

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      Genesis 1:26-2:25

**Support Passages:** Exodus 20:8-9, 31:12-17; Psalm 104:24-30; Ephesians 5:22-33; II Thessalonians 3:6-15; Hebrews 13:1-6

**BIBLE STORY**

Exodus 24; An example of God's fellowship, His extending of Himself to mankind in such a manner as this is a direct act of Providence.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one."* (2 Thessalonians 3:3, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Let us obey God's commandments and His creation ordinances, that the joy of Christ may be in us and that our joy may be made full.

## SUMMARY

Last week we undertook the subject of "Common Grace" or the ruling and governing of all God's creatures. We were also reminded that the saints are "precious in the sight of God." Now let us turn to several specific acts of providence which were present at Eden, but also have a most immediate and powerful impact on mankind today. The Larger Catechism summarizes them as follows:

- 1) Adam was placed in Paradise, the Garden of Eden.
- 2) Adam was appointed to cultivate the Garden.
- 3) Adam was granted liberty to eat of the Garden.
- 4) Adam was granted dominion over the creatures.
- 5) Marriage was ordained for Adam's help.
- 6) God extended Himself in fellowship to Adam.
- 7) The Sabbath was instituted for Adam's benefit.
- 8) God agreed to give life to Adam, requiring only that Adam obey His commands to receive it.

One can readily observe the far-reaching effects of these creation ordinances. God was infinitely gracious in extending this providence to mankind, but man has misused and done evil with each one of God's graces.

Eden is an example of heaven. In Eden, there was no curse, and before the fall of Adam and Eve, no death. None of the miseries of this life were present originally in Eden. The Tree of Life was there, and also in heaven, which John terms the "new heaven and the new earth" (Revelation 21-22). John sees there "a river of the water of life." Like Eden, heaven will not be a place of inactivity where we sit on clouds and play harps and sing. Of course there will be singing and choirs, but there will also be the activities of Eden, the cultivating of God's gardens. We will have resurrected bodies which are not cursed, and they will probably be similar to Adam's original body. Eden was Paradise, and to an Eden-like existence we go after death and the resurrection of our bodies. Isaiah and Zechariah give explicit pictures of this existence (Isaiah 65:17ff; Zechariah 14) and John as well, and these prophets claim that the New Jerusalem will be there. This Paradise to come will be never-ending, whereas Eden ended with Adam's sin. The Paradise to come will not depend on Adam, but on Christ, so it shall never fail.

What a privilege for Adam to cultivate and work in God's garden. Certainly he sweat and exercised his marvelous body, but what a joy to labor! Labor is a privilege and when properly done, a great source of joy and satisfaction to mankind. What a wonderful repast at God's hand, both food and fellowship. The joy of marriage, of cleaving to one's wife was exquisite and we note that the only marriage relationship blessed by God in Scripture was between one man and one woman. Then, too, the day of rest and worship was a

complete delight. While the Garden of Eden has passed away for the present, its great ethical and moral principles remain. If we would obey God's gracious commandments, we today may have a foretaste of Paradise.

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the effects of the fall of Adam and Eve.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Did our first parents continue in the estate wherein they were created?
- A. Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God.

S.C. 13; L.C. 21-23; W.C. of F. VI & IX; Savoy 6 & 9; Young 27

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Genesis 3

**Support Passages:** Genesis 6:5-8; Psalm 89:46-48; Ecclesiastes 7:20-29; John 6:43-44; Romans 1:24-25; I Corinthians 15:21-22; Ephesians 2:1-3; James 1:13-15; Revelation 21:4

**BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 3: Adam and Eve are tempted by Satan and fall into sin.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."* (1 Corinthians 15:21-22, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Since every one dies we must face the issue of immortality. Will it be in heaven or hell? The Scriptures tell us that people go to heaven only by repenting from sin and believing on Christ as Lord (Romans 10:9-10).

## SUMMARY

Adam was created by God with a free will and good. He was placed in the Garden of Eden, in a paradise, and could ask for no better estate, but something happened to bring all that to an end. By a direct and flagrant act of disobedience, Adam and Eve lost their first estate of goodness and delight. In the next few lessons we shall examine the nature of sin and how the desire to sin is passed on from generation to generation. In this lesson we wish to undertake the effect of the fall of Adam on us today.

The sin of our first parents had this immediate effect:

1) They were ashamed of their nakedness. 2) They hid from God because they felt guilty. 3) God immediately administered judgment upon the serpent, the man and the woman. 4) Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden and denied access to the Tree of Life.

Let us notice first of all that Adam did not have to sin. He did so of his own volition. Therefore, Adam was responsible for what he did and God judged him accordingly and rightly. The condition of obedience was simple enough. He was not to eat of a certain tree and he could then stay in the garden and enjoy it. Remember that God had provided everything for Adam's delight and well-being. He could eat of any other tree in the garden but this one. God wonderfully provides for His people, and His laws are not hard, but they are good for us. The way to happiness and joy in this life is obedience to the Law of God (John 15:10-11).

One immediate effect of Adam's sin on mankind was the loss of all freedom and ability of the will to do any spiritual good accompanying salvation. This, of course, renders all mankind dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-3) and the new birth alone restores a measure of ability to do what is spiritually good and pleasing to God (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 6:18,20; etc.)

Secondly, let us notice the nature of the curse which in essence is a curse of death. All living things now die, whereas before Adam's first transgression they did not. The serpent was cursed with death. In Genesis 3:14 we read the phrase, "all the days of your life" which implies that the life of the serpent is limited by death. Snakes are very wonderful creatures and live very well in their bellies. Human loathing for snakes is irrelevant here because the enmity referred to in this text is between Christ and the snake who is the devil. So the curse on the snake is death and enmity with Christ who is God. Furthermore, snakes participate in the curse of death along with all other creatures. Eve's pain in childbirth was increased, but more so because all her children would sooner or later die. Involved with her curse was the sinful domination of her husband. On the other hand, godly marriage involves a very delightful domination as described by Paul in Ephesians 5:22-33, "Let every individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband." Marriage is good and delightful, but the curse affects marriage adversely because men and women hate each other and fornicate. Adam was cursed with death (Genesis 3:19) and in addition he was cursed because his

planting would die and not thrive as it did in the garden. His curse did not consist merely in the sweat of his brow but because his labor was increased and his plants and animals would now also die. Like the snake is a wonderful creature so Adam's sweat glands were wonderful organs<sup>1</sup> and not really involved with the curse. The curse in essence is the effect death has on all creation and mankind in particular which have also become dead in sin.

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<sup>1</sup>

R. D. Ratcliff, I am Joe's Skin, Reader's Digest, June 1972.

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the doctrine of sin, in particular, its definition.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is sin?

A. Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God.

Q. What was the sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created?

A. The sin whereby our first parents fell from their estate wherein they were created was their eating the forbidden fruit.

S.C. 14-15; L.C. 24; W.C. of F. VI; Savoy 6; Young 27-31

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** I John 3

**Support Passages:** Leviticus 4; Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Romans 3:9-24; Hebrews 11:4; James 2:1-13

**BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 4:1-15: Cain sinned against God and against Able his brother.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness." (1 John 3:4, ESV)*

**APPLICATION**

Let us all examine our lives to discover sin in them. God's people must confess "the sin which so easily entangles us" (Hebrews 12:1-2) and those who are unbelievers must also repent, confessing their sins and believing that Jesus is Lord in order to become the Lord's people.

## SUMMARY

This lesson is concerned with the nature of sin which the Bible simply defines as "lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). This correctly translates the Greek word *anomia* which is translated in the Authorized Version (King James) as "transgression of the law." Lawlessness expresses the idea of living as if there were no law or living in the context of despising or disregarding the law of God. How different is this way of life from that of one who has been born again and redeemed by God's own blood. Such a child of God says with the Psalmist, "*In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.*" (Psalm 119:14-16, ESV)

The Westminster Larger Catechism answers the question concerning sin in this manner: "Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, any law of God, given as a rule to the reasonable (rational) creature" (Question 24). Adam, you see, was a rational creature, whereas all other creatures were irrational. In other words, Adam had the ability to conceive of God, to worship Him, and to comprehend and perform God's laws. Thus are God's moral laws distinguished from the law of nature which would include instinct and natural physical law. Such law operates and exists quite apart from the rational activities of creatures. There is no moral responsibility involved with involuntary obedience to natural law. For example, it is not a moral issue when the heart skips a beat or an animal fails to do what would normally occur by instinct. Sin involves rational disobedience, "*For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.*" (Hebrews 10:26-27, ESV)

Now 1 John 3 contains some hard concepts concerning sin. In verse 6, for example, "*No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.*" (1 John 3:6, ESV) There are two present participles here; the word "abides" and the word "sins" in the second clause. The force of each of these is continual normal activity. So also in verse 9, "*No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God.*" (1 John 3:9, ESV) John tells us clearly that we as Christians sin, but that there is forgiveness by confessing our sins to God. Furthermore, He has provided His own Son as our Advocate and Propitiation (1 John 1:8-2:2), but make no mistake, that person who has been born again by God has been changed such that a different life-style is pursued.

Regarding our natural estate of sin Paul notes that it is written, "*What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom*

*of asps is under their lips." "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes."*" (Romans 3:9-18, ESV) Such is the nature of sin. It is completely enslaving. It renders useless. It is poison. It is cursing and bitterness. It brings death and is death. It is godless and lawless. For the Christian, however, this abysmal estate is not a way of life. Even though the Christian has an abiding proclivity for sin, no one who is born of God practices lawlessness as a way of life.



**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the transmittal of the sinful nature from one person to another.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?

A. The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for all his posterity; all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression.

S.C. 16; L.C. 22; W.C. of F. VI; Savoy 6; Young 27

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      Romans 5:12-21

**Support Passages:** Genesis 4:23-24, 8:20-21; Job 14:1-6; Psalm 51:5; John 3:3-6; Ephesians 2:3

**BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 6-8; God sent the Flood upon mankind because of their great sin and sinfulness.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Realizing that it is our nature to sin and that our sinful nature yet remains with us let us continually confess sin to God and ask His forgiveness. Let us pray to be holy people, living as those who have been set free by Jesus from the bondage of sin.

## SUMMARY

It is perfectly obvious that everyone sins. Some who are in bondage to sin are very wicked, and every intent of the thoughts of their hearts is only evil continually. But others, like Noah, "found favor in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:8-9). Even Noah, who God said was a righteous man, blameless in his time and who walked with God, sinned. We may infer this from the fact that Noah prepared and presented a sacrifice for his sin (Genesis 8:20-21). Furthermore, God required him to carry clean animals on the Ark for sacrificial purposes.

The catechism raises the question about the involvement of everyone in Adam's sin. Since everyone does in fact sin and everyone shares in the curse for sin, which is death, it follows that all sinful human behavior and state of being is natural and inborn. We do not have to teach our children to sin because they do so naturally. It is necessary in every case to train children in the ways of the Lord, in the way they should go because the ways of the Lord are not natural to sinners. For this reason all peer teaching fails if it is not given biblical content by godly teachers. Peer teaching boils down to the blind leading the blind. That all mankind are included in the curse is seen, furthermore, in the fact that all mankind die. While scientists may extend the life-span of mankind, death will never be eradicated, and it is not man alone that dies; every living thing eventually dies. God's curse is irreversible and will never be mitigated by human means.

The clear biblical concepts in this regard are directly opposed to modern philosophical and psychological thinking. Freud would have us believe that are a product of our environment. While it is true that environment influences our lives greatly, it does not cause us to sin. No one is forced to sin, not even in the poorest of environments. That people do so is related to the sinful natures they possess and the lust of their hearts. We cannot either possibly consider that people sin because they imitate their parents sin. Scripture clearly states that we are born as sinners, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:3; Job 14:4; John 3:6; Ephesians 2:3). Sin is something original in which all people participate, and which makes them guilty before God. People are so caught up in sin and they are in such bondage to it that, as Paul says, they are "dead in trespasses and sins." And in Romans 8:7 he writes, "the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the Law of God, for it is not even able to do so." The new birth is required to release this bondage and the redemption purchased by Christ on the cross must apply to the individual who sins in order to escape from it.

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the meaning of sinfulness as it applies to mankind.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?
- A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.
- Q. Wherein consists the sinfulness of the estate whereinto man fell?
- A. The sinfulness of the estate whereinto man fell consists of the guilt of Adam's first sin, the lack of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature which is commonly called Original Sin, together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

S.C. 17-18; L.C. 25; W.C. of F. VI; Savoy 6; Young 28-30

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      Romans 3:1-20

**Support Passages:** Psalm 5:9, 10:7, 14:1-3, 36:1-4; 53:1-4, 140:3; Isaiah 59

### **BIBLE STORY**

Numbers 13-14 (14:1-10); The sinful despising of the Lords grace at Kadesh-Barnea. With sinful natures abundantly evident this is an example of people who are wholly inclined to all evil, made doubly heinous because they had direct knowledge of the Lords mercies.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23, ESV) "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;" (Isaiah 59:1, ESV)*

### **APPLICATION**

Even though Isaiah speaks particularly to the people of God, nevertheless, God will pardon the sin of anyone who will repent and believe on His Christ. This is the only means whereby we may escape the wrath of God which is to be poured out upon the wicked.

## SUMMARY

The ungodly person does not like the idea that he is wicked, it being quite natural to think that one is pretty good. If anyone is unfair, it is said, it is a God who willy-nilly presses the "smite" button. If anyone is unfair it is a God of wrath. In my home town of Vineland, New Jersey, someone who now knows the truth, engraved his tombstone with, "The angry wrathful Bible God is a myth." Liberal theology has long been known for its rejection of Original Sin and man's essential sinfulness. The liberal argues that there is a spark of good in everybody which simply needs to be fanned up, thus bringing reconciliation to people.

The Westminster Larger Catechism is quite plain when it states, regarding the corruption of man's nature, "Whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually" (Question 25). This is not a picture of God but of man. It is man's fault there is misery and pain in the world because he brings it upon himself by means of his sinfulness. Paul argues in Romans 3, our study passage, that God cannot be called a "Judge" if there is no wrath brought upon the wicked. "Let God be found true though every man be found a liar" (Romans 3:4). The scripture is full of descriptions of the sinfulness of mankind and the holiness of God. Notice the list of corruptions prevalent in mankind: (Romans 3:10ff)

- (1) No one is righteous or without sin.
- (2) No one understands godly things (See also I Corinthians 2:14).
- (3) No one seeks for God.
- (4) Every one has become useless in terms of the things of the Lord.
- (5) No one does any spiritual good in the sense of meriting heaven or pleasing God.
- (6) The verbal communications of people are lies, curses and bitterness. (See also James 3)
- (7) Mankind are hostile, murderous and fomenters of hatred.
- (8) No one fears God acting as if there is no God or that God is not supremely and sublimely sovereign.

What Paul speaks of is the sinfulness of the estate into which mankind fell. When a person is converted by the grace of God, this description fits him less and less. Paul speaks of one who is totally depraved and inexorably locked in the grasp of sin's power. It is true for both Jews and Greeks ( the Greek is typical of all Gentiles, see Romans 2:1-16) and thus for all mankind in general, but surely the one who is genuinely converted has been set free from such dominion, for "sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14). That man's whole nature, all of his being, body and soul, is in bondage to sin, should be clear from Paul's list of corruptions.

Isaiah includes much more in his list of corruptions (Isaiah 59) which we shall not reproduce herein. However, even though our iniquities have made a

separation between ourselves and our God (Isaiah 59:2), "Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear." (Isaiah 59:1).

**TEACHING GOAL**

To give meaning to the phrase “the miseries of this life and the pains of hell forever.”

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What is the misery of the estate into which man fell?
- A. All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under His wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries in this life, to death itself and to the pains of hell forever.

S.C. 19; L.C. 27-29; W.C. of F. VI; Savoy 6; Young 31-33

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Matthew 25:31-46

**Support Passages:** Deuteronomy 28; Lamentations

**BIBLE STORY**

Luke 16:19-31; The rich man and Lazarus.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? "I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.""* (Jeremiah 17:9-10, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Every one receives from God the punishment that is deserved and creates for oneself a miserable and painful existence, but God is merciful and will pardon the iniquity of those who call upon Him for salvation.

## SUMMARY

In previous lessons we have discussed the subject of death and pain as the result of Adam's first sin and in this lesson we will consider the last of the topics associated with the fall of mankind namely, the wrath of God or punishment. One of the punishments consists of human misery. This is not biological pain which, as we have discussed, is necessary for the proper functioning of the body. Rather, this is human misery, baseness or utter depravity. For example, Paul writes, "they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened - God gave them over to degrading passions - to a depraved mind" (Romans 1). And again, "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, - and they having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness" (Galatians 4). It is evident from this nature of man, from this kind of psychology, that human misery necessarily issues. The cries of anguish ring out in the night from broken homes, sickness, death, drunkenness, poverty because man sins. Misery comes even to homes where there is adequate money and luxuries for the same reasons and more beside but all relating to sinfulness. Upon observing this some may be led to say "this is hell on earth." It is hellish all right but not hell!

The Bible story in today's lesson describes the intermediate state of the damned. The rich man is described as being in Hades "in agony in this flame" while Lazarus was far away in the bosom of Abraham. Now the rich man's body was buried (Luke 16:22) therefore only his soul was in the flames of hell. He did not have to wait for the day of judgment to receive his punishment, for his judgment in part occurred when he died. In like manner, Lazarus did not have to sleep in his grave until the great judgment day but went immediately to be with the Lord. The Seventh Day Adventist and the Jehovah's Witness are in grave error therefore when they among many other cults and liberals deny the continued existence of the wicked thus rendering a place of eternal punishment unnecessary. There can be no doubt whatever that the Bible teaches the continued existence of the wicked after death, in passages such as Luke 16:19ff, Matthew 25, 18:9, 13:24, and Revelation 20:14-15.

In several other places the Bible refers to hell as Tophet (spittle) where the worshippers of Moloch would burn their children alive by passing them through fire. The Bible also uses phrases like "furnace of fire", "lake of fire" and "prison" to speak of hell. Thus does Scripture constantly treat hell as a place. Lest we think that this language is symbolic or figurative, consider the Lord's own statement in Mark 9:43, "and if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; for it is better for you to enter life crippled, than having your two hands to go into hell" (Gehenna - the lake of fire), "into the unquenchable fire" and He continues by quoting Isaiah 66:24. Moreover in hell there will be pangs of conscience, weeping, anguish, despair, and gnashing of teeth forever. If you have taken the time to read to this point I want you to stop and consider this last statement. If you really understand the force of it you will not be so careless with the training of your children, or so ashamed of the gospel of Christ. You

will not squander your time on the sewage of Hollywood nor fill your mind with such naughtiness. If you realize the certainty of hell you will not be negligent about your relationship to the Church, nor will you rebel when it comes to involvement in its program.

Give heed to the words of Joseph Alleine who writes, "The furnace of eternal vengeance is heated for you. Hell and destruction open their mouths upon you; they gape for you; they groan for you (Isaiah 5:14), waiting as it were with a greedy eye as you stand on the brink. If the wrath of men be 'as the roaring of a lion' (Proverbs 19:12), 'more heavy than the sand' (Proverbs 27:3), what is the wrath of the infinite God? If the burning furnace heated in Nebuchadnezzar's fiery rage, when he commanded it to be made seven times hotter, was so fierce as to burn up even those that drew near to throw the three children in, how hot is that burning of the Almighty's fury! Surely this is seventy times seven more fierce. What do you think, O man, of being a faggot in hell to all eternity? 'Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong in the days that I shall deal with thee?' (Ezekiel 22:14). Can you abide the everlasting burnings?"<sup>1</sup>

Fly to the cross, you who fear hell, for the blood of Christ is your only hope to stay the hand of God against you. Where is apathy in the face of hell, or coldness toward God and His Church? Where is shame of Christ? Have you no burden for the lost? Then perhaps you have not yet considered the "eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels."

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Alleine, *Alarm to the Unconverted*, London, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1967, p 93.

**TEACHING GOAL**

Explain the Covenant of Grace and its relationship to salvation.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Did God leave all men to perish in the estate of sin and misery?
- A. God, having out of His mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a redeemer.

S.C. 20; L.C. 30-35; W.C. of F. VII; Savoy 7; Young 34-37

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      Genesis 17:1-14; 18:19

**Support Passages:** Genesis 3:15, 9:8-17, 12:1-3, 15:1-21; Romans 8:28-30

**BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 19:1-26; The salvation of Lot.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1 Peter 2:9-10, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

We should praise God for setting His love, without condition, on His chosen people. Without such election no one can be saved.

## SUMMARY

Having studied the horrors of hell, the miseries of this life and the desperate wickedness of all mankind, whose heart "is more deceitful than all else, and is desperately sick..." (Jeremiah 17:9), we are confronted with our complete inability to save ourselves or to do anything in our own strength that is pleasing to God. Does not Paul say that the Law is our tutor to bring us to Christ (Galatians 3:24)? Surely it is knowledge of God's Law that brings us before the cross to acknowledge our sinfulness and our need for the Savior.

It should be obvious that there are many who, even when they are confronted with the Law of God and have some knowledge of their sinfulness, do not receive Christ as their sin-bearer and Lord. It is also clear that many others do come to Christ for salvation and confess Him as Lord. So then it is in keeping with our own observations and, much more importantly, the data of Scripture, that the Catechism notes that God did not leave all men to perish - but chose some to receive His saving love, brought to some eternal life, and brought some under the terms of His covenant of grace. Without this gracious act no one could possibly be saved. Even if the Redeemer is presented to mankind they must be made willing by God to receive Him, which happily for some is the outcome of the Covenant of Grace.

The Westminster Confession of Faith states this doctrine very clearly in chapter VII:

I. The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their creator, yet they could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which He has been pleased to express by way of covenant.

II. The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.

III. Man by his fall having made himself incapable of life by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the Covenant of Grace: whereby He freely offers unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in Him, that they may be saved; and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe.

We have seen in Scripture that were it not for God's gracious promise to Adam (Genesis 3:15) there would be no hope for him and he would have perished. Had not God acted in Noah's behalf (Genesis 9:8-17) he and all his household would have perished, and rightfully so for the people of Noah's time were so wicked (Genesis 6:5). Had not God acted in Abram's behalf in bringing him out of Ur to Canaan, and had He not covenanted with Abram to be a God to him and to his descendants (Genesis 12, 15 & 17), none of them would have been saved either. Don't forget that we also are Abraham's descendants if we are

by grace, "in Christ" (Galatians 3). Mankind simply cannot save himself. Furthermore, the salvation of God is not merely an offer but an act of God in the sinner's behalf, that act being that God makes Himself to be a God to the sinner. He is not a God to be chosen from the "God shelf" of the idolater, but God makes Himself to be a God to the person of His choosing by His gracious and powerful act. We do not deny that people can make choices, even choices that are reasonable and proper, but in the matter of one's salvation his reaction to God's offer will be rejection unless God acts in his behalf.

Lot is an excellent example of this truth. We read that Lot and his family had to be forcibly removed from Sodom and even so his wife looked back with desire and perished. Unless God had acted in Lot's behalf he would have perished in Sodom. The parallel with us today is striking. When we get too close to iniquity it seems to rub off and has a way of captivating us. When we camp near our own Sodom it's not long before we are inside and liking it. We then must be forcibly removed (John 6:44-45).

What is God's covenant of grace? It is God's gracious promise of salvation to His people, which does not depend on human obedience, as His first covenant depended on Adam's obedience, but it depends on Christ as the Mediator of the Covenant. It is only Christ who is able to and does now keep the Covenant of Grace as our perfect and powerful representative.



**TEACHING GOAL**

Define the Church in the light of the Covenant of Grace.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. Did God leave all men to perish in the estate of sin and misery?

A. God, having out of His mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a redeemer.

S.C. 20; L.C. 30-35; W.C. of F. VII; Savoy 7; Young 38-40

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Ephesians 2:11-22

**Support Passages:** Matthew 5:13-16, Matthew 13 (All seven of these parables illustrate a great truth about the Church.)

**BIBLE STORY**

Isaiah 2:1-5; The house of the LORD; the chief of the mountains raised above the hills.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.” (Matthew 5:13, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Since the Church is God's means of leavening the earth, we must as members of it, let our lights shine before men in such a way that they may see our good works and glorify our father who is in heaven.

## SUMMARY

We have noticed in Scripture that God does not merely offer salvation to people, but He is a God to His people. He not only offers salvation but acts to bring His people into the estate of salvation that He offers. Since He has done so by means of a covenant which we call the Covenant of Grace, which promises salvation in the manner just described, the Covenant is also His means to bring His church into existence. This He did when He covenanted with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15) and with Noah and Abraham as was noted last week.

The Church did not originate in Acts at Pentecost but in the Garden of Eden. Did not Christ, the Lord, sow His good seed in the Old Testament as well as the New? Was not Abraham a son of the Kingdom, and Noah, and Enoch and Abel? (Matthew 13:37-43, Hebrews 11) The study text for today states in essence that there is no real difference between saved Jews and saved Gentiles, for they are made one in Christ. Together they are the Church, the Kingdom of God. The Gentiles, it is true, were brought into the Church in large numbers after Pentecost, but they had been brought into the Church on many previous occasions as well (e.g. Ruth, Rahab, etc.). God brought His church into existence for a purpose, perhaps summarized in the Lord's own statement, "You are the salt of the earth..." (Matthew 5:13 ff). But let us give our attention to Dr. Charles Hodge on the matter:

"God as the creator and preserver of the universe, and as infinite in His being and perfections, is, in virtue of His nature, the absolute sovereign of all His creatures. This sovereignty He exercises over the material world by His wisdom and power, and over rational beings as a moral ruler. From this rightful authority of God, our race revolted, and thereby became a part of the kingdom of darkness of which Satan is the head. To this kingdom the mass of mankind has ever since belonged. But God, in His grace and mercy, determined to deliver men from the consequences of their apostasy. He not only announced the coming of a Redeemer who should destroy the power of Satan, but He at once inaugurated an antagonistic kingdom, consisting of men chosen out of the world, and through the renewing of the Holy Ghost restored to their allegiance. Until the time of Abraham this kingdom does not appear to have had any visible organization apart from the families of the people of God. Every pious household was a church of which the parent was the priest.

To prevent the universal spread of idolatry, to preserve the knowledge of the truth, to gather in His elect, and to prepare the way for the coming of the promised Redeemer, God entered into covenant with the father of the faithful and with his descendants through Isaac, constituting them His visible kingdom, and making them the depositaries and guardians of His supernatural revelations. In this covenant He promised eternal life upon condition of faith in Him that was to come.

When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, they were made a theocracy so constituted in its officers, in its institutions, and in its services, as not only to preserve alive the knowledge of God's purpose and plan of salvation, but also to set forth the character, offices, and work of the promised seed of Abraham in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed.

The kingdom of God, therefore, as consisting of those who acknowledge, worship, love, and obey Jehovah as the only living and true God, has existed in our world ever since the fall of Adam. It has ever been the light and life of the world. It is the salt by which it is preserved. It is the leaven by which it is

ultimately to be pervaded. To gather His people into His kingdom, and to carry it on to its consummation, is the end of all God's dispensations, and the purpose for which His eternal Son assumed our nature. He was born to be a king.<sup>1</sup> To this end He lived and died and rose again, that He might be Lord of all those given Him by the Father."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965, Vol II, p. 596ff.

**TEACHING GOAL**

Show that faith in Christ is necessary to receive the covenantal blessings.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Did God leave all men to perish in the estate of sin and misery?
- A. God, having out of His mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a redeemer.

S.C. 20; L.C. 30-35; W.C. of F. VII; Savoy 7; Young 41-42

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Romans 4

**Support Passages:** Genesis 12:1-4; John 3:36, 8:56; Acts 7:1ff; Romans 3:21-31; Galatians 3:1-14; Hebrews 11:1-12; James 2:21-24

**BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 22:1-14; Abraham prepares to sacrifice his own son.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."" (Romans 4:3, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

The covenant blessing being in essence a promise of salvation through a redeemer, it is required of people that they believe in (obey) the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, to have eternal life.

## SUMMARY

The covenant of grace, that is specifically the promise of God to be God to us, is a doctrine that is central to Reformed theology. The covenant applies to God's elect whether parent or child and in essence is a promise of salvation through a redeemer which is Christ. Whereas mankind are not able to keep the terms of any covenant of God, for God demands absolute holiness (e.g. Genesis 17:1), and whereas only the perfect Christ could and does keep the will of God the Father, it seems logical to expect Jesus our representative before God, as priest, to be the covenanting party rather than men. Where Adam failed to keep God's will Christ does not.

Another reason for believing that Christ is the covenanting party on our behalf in the Covenant of Grace, is the central place the Lord Jesus occupies in redeeming His people. He is our substitute not only on the cross as our sacrifice, but also as the one who represents us before God, and the Bible is consistent in requiring of men, faith in Christ to be saved. God, in being God to His people, saves them by providing the Redeemer and acting in their behalf by enabling them to believe in the Redeemer.

Abraham is perhaps the clearest example in Scripture of this truth. The gospel was preached to him and he believed. He saw the Day of Christ and was glad, he believed God and righteousness was imputed to him. He is thus an example of faith and his faith centers on Christ. Apparently the promise made to Abraham of salvation by a redeemer, had Jesus written all over it, for that was in essence how God intended to be God to them.

Calvin had this to say on the matter:

4. " ... it follows that the Old Testament was established upon the free mercy of God, and was confirmed by Christ's intercession. For the gospel preaching, too, declares nothing else than that sinners are justified apart from their own merit by Christ's fatherly kindness; and the whole of it is summed up in Christ. Who, then, dares to separate the Jews from Christ, since with them, we hear, was made the covenant of the gospel, the sole foundation of which is Christ? Who dares to estrange from the gift of free salvation those to whom we hear the doctrine of the righteousness of faith was imparted? Not to dispute too long about something obvious - we have a notable saying of the Lord: "Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). And what Christ there testified concerning Abraham, the apostle shows to have been universal among the believing folk when he says: "Christ remains, yesterday and today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). Paul is not speaking there simply of Christ's everlasting divinity but of his power, a power perpetually available to believers. Therefore, both the blessed Virgin and Zacharias in their songs called the salvation revealed in Christ the manifestation of the promises that the Lord had formerly made to Abraham and the patriarchs (Luke 1:54-55, 72-73). If the Lord, in manifesting his Christ, discharged his ancient oath, one cannot but say that the Old Testament always had its end in Christ and in eternal life.

11. We ought to esteem Abraham as one equal to a hundred thousand if we consider his faith, which is set before us as the best model of believing; to be the children of God, we must be reckoned as members of his tribe (Genesis 12:3). Now what could be more absurd than for Abraham to be the father of all believers (cf. Genesis 17:5) and yet not to possess even the remotest corner among them? But he cannot be removed from their number - not even from the very highest rank of honor - without wiping out the whole church. ... When Isaac alone is left, in whom the weary old age of the good man may repose, he is shortly after ordered to sacrifice him (Genesis 22:1ff.). What more frightful thing can the human mind imagine that for a father to become the executioner of his own son? If Isaac had died of sickness, who would not have thought Abraham the most miserable of old men - given a son in jest - on whose account his grief of childlessness should be doubled? If he had been killed by some stranger, the calamity would have been much increased by the indignity. But for a son to be slaughtered by his own father's hand surpasses every sort of calamity. In short, throughout life he was so and troubled that if anyone wished to paint a picture of a calamitous life, he could find no model more appropriate than Abraham's. Let no man object that he was not completely unhappy, because he finally came safely through so many great tempests. We will not say that he leads a happy life who struggles long and hard through infinite difficulties, but he who calmly enjoys present benefits without feeling misfortune." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book II, Chapter X, Paragraph 4 and 11.

**TEACHING GOAL**

Show that the Covenant of Grace has not been changed in kind but in extent, application or administration.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Did God leave all men to perish in the estate of sin and misery?
- A. God, having out of His mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a redeemer.

S.C. 20; L.C. 30-35; W.C. of F. VII; Savoy 7; Young 43-45

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      Hebrews 8

**Support Passages:** Hebrews 9 - 11

**BIBLE STORY**

Numbers 21:4-9, John 3:14-16; The bronze serpent and the crucifixion of Christ.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith."  
(Galatians 3:26, ESV)

"And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." (Galatians 3:29, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Seeing that God's covenant of grace applies to all the saints who have ever lived, we must, like all the others, believe in the Bible God to escape His wrath (Psalm 78:21-22).

## SUMMARY

This last lesson on the Covenant of Grace, emphasizes its unity throughout all history as it pertains to all of God's people. It is very popular among evangelicals today to divide the Scriptures into seven periods or dispensations of time during which God tested His people in different ways which they completely failed in every case. The notes in the Scofield Bible present this view which does not square with biblical data. Although the notes have now been revised and are much less objectionable with regard to the means whereby the Old Testament saints were saved, yet Christians today are being told that they are no longer under the Law of God. They are told that they no longer need to observe the Ten Commandments in order to please God because those belonged to another period of history.

The apostle Paul writes concerning the Covenant in Hebrews chapter 8. Quoting Jeremiah 31: 32-34 we read, "For he finds fault with them when he says: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away." (Hebrews 8:8-13, ESV)

The striking thing about this passage is the fact that it is a quote of Jeremiah, an Old Testament prophet. The covenant relationship of God to His people was also on this prophet's mind just as it is on ours. Let us notice that God does not promise to do away with the law of Sinai but (verse 10) He promises to apply them differently. They are more intimately known now, and they are extended to the Gentiles "For all shall know Me." Please notice also that the substance of the Covenant remains as it was to Abraham "And I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

From year to year automobile manufacturers change their product making previous models obsolete, but the new models still have a motor and wheels. They are not different in kind but in extent or application. Similarly God's covenant is the same throughout history in meaning and content, "I will be a God to you and your descendants after you," but it makes the old covenant obsolete where it required us to sacrifice animals and be represented by a High Priest after Aaron. We still need a blood sacrifice and we still must have a High Priest. However, the newness of the new covenant is based on the Mediator of it. Christ the Messiah has now come and has fulfilled these covenant promises making obsolete the old, making all things new. Still the sacrifice but Christ is the sacrifice. Still the priest but Christ is the priest. The New Covenant is new

by virtue of the blood of Christ for He says, "this cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My Blood" (Luke 22:20).

The covenant then is not new because now we are under grace rather than the Law. But the Covenant is new because its Mediator has come and fulfilled it. Applied now to Gentiles as well as Jews, it is applied more intimately to the heart by the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is not new in substance but in extent or application. It is unthinkable that Moses who spoke with God so directly and intimately (Exodus 33:18ff) to whom the Tabernacle was revealed, whose observance of the Passover demonstrated his faith (Hebrews 11:28), did not know and worship the coming Messiah, Jesus. Moses as well as all these Old Testament saints lived by faith, "But the righteous man shall live by faith." Obviously Paul writes of both the Old Testament church and the New Testament church for he quotes the Old Testament passage Habakkuk 2:4 in the New Testament passage, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "**The righteous shall live by faith.**" (Romans 1:16-17, ESV)

**TEACHING GOAL**

Show that there is only one way to get to heaven, namely, through Jesus Christ the Redeemer of His people.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. Who is the only Redeemer of God's elect?

A. The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was and continues to be God and Man in two distinct natures and one person forever.

S.C. 21; L.C. 36-42; W.C. of F. VIII; Savoy 8; Young 46-47

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** I Timothy 2:1-7

**Support Passages:** Matthew 7:13-14; John 1:9, 6:35-40, 10:9, 14:6, 17:1-3; Acts 4:12, 27-28, 2:23; Hebrews 9:11-15; I John 5:12, II John 9

**BIBLE STORY**

II Kings 5:1-15; Naaman could be cleansed from his sickness in only one way and that was to bathe in the Jordan river seven times. No other river could be used.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

The Christian cannot believe that all roads lead to heaven, nor can he be tolerant of such heresy in the church. There is only one narrow way and one small gate - Jesus Christ the Righteous, therefore we must strive to enter it to be saved.

## SUMMARY

Naaman's attitude toward the things of God is typical of the attitude of people today. "Are not Abnah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" And we read that he went away from Elisha's messenger in a rage (II Kings 5:12). God's answer to such things is, if you wish to be clean, you must do it my way. To rid himself of his awful leprosy, Naaman must bathe seven times in the Jordan river and nowhere else for that was God's way. Today if we would be clean from our sin we must also follow God's way which is to repent from our sin and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ alone as our Lord and Savior.

How often I have spoken to the ungodly about things of the Lord just to hear them say, "we will all get there if we just do our own thing." To the liberal theologian this narrowness of the gospel is bigotry and of course it is to any one who does not believe the Scriptures. The thrust of Theosophy or Bahaim, two rapidly growing eastern cults, is the unification of the world under one religion. The theosophist would glean the best from all religions, and the Bahai constructs his place of worship with many entrances to signify that all roads lead to heaven. The World Council of Churches would agree with the Bahai when they say, "The foundation of all religions is one. Religion must be the cause of unity." <sup>1</sup> But how different is the testimony of the Bible, that there is only one mediator between God and man - Christ Jesus. Or the words of the Lord Himself, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (John 14:6). When I quoted this verse to one who was well schooled in modern theology he said, "I just do not believe that Christ ever said such a thing."

Another error regarding the uniqueness of the Mediator is summarized by Dr. Charles Hodge. <sup>2</sup> "The Romish Church regards priests, and the saints, and angels, and especially the Virgin Mary, as mediators, not only in the sense of intercessors, but as peace-makers without whose intervention, reconciliation with God cannot be attained. This arises from two erroneous principles involved in the theology of the Church of Rome. The first concerns the office of the priesthood. Romanists teach that the benefits of redemption can be obtained only through the intervention of the priests. Those benefits flow through the sacraments. The sacraments to be available must be administered by men canonically ordained. The priests offer sacrifices and grant absolution. They are as truly mediators, although in a subordinate station, as Christ himself. No man can come to God except through them. And this is the main idea in mediation in the Scriptural sense of the word.

The other principle is involved in the doctrine of merit as held by Romanists. According to them, good works done after regeneration have real merit in the sight of God. It is possible for the people of God not only to acquire a degree of merit sufficient for their own salvation, but more than suffices for them-

selves. This, on the principle of the communion of saints, may be made available for others. The saints, therefore, are appealed to, to plead their own merits before the throne of God as the ground of pardon or deliverance of those for whom they intercede. This according to the Scriptures is the peculiar work of Christ as our mediator; assigning it to the saints, therefore, constitutes them mediators. As the Christian minister is not a priest, and as no man has any merit in the sight of God, much less a superabundance thereof, the whole foundation of this Romish doctrine is done away. Christ is our only mediator, not merely because the Scriptures so teach, but also because He only can and does accomplish what is necessary for our reconciliation to God; and He only has the personal qualifications for the work."

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<sup>1</sup> Virgilius Ferm, Living Schools of Religion, Ames, Iowa, Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1956, p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965, Vol II, p. 455.



**TEACHING GOAL**

Define and discuss the meaning of the dual nature of Christ; The God-Man.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. Who is the only Redeemer of God's elect?

A. The only Redeemer of God's elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was and continues to be God and Man in two distinct natures and one person forever.

S.C. 21; L.C. 36-42; W.C. of F. VIII; Savoy 8; Young 48-49

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Colossians 1:9-23

**Support Passages:** Luke 1:26-35, Colossians 2:8-12, Hebrews 2, Hebrews 7:23-28

**BIBLE STORY**

John 9; The healing of the man who was blind from birth. Only God can heal the blind therefore the man who was healed worshiped Jesus as God, the Son of Man

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell," (Colossians 1:17-19, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Because Jesus is God, the Son of Man, like the blind man whom Jesus healed we must say, "LORD I believe," and worship Him (John 9:38).

## SUMMARY

In the course of our Catechism studies this lesson is the second involving the deity of Christ. The first was Year 1 Lesson 8 and it would be helpful the review that lesson. However, the emphasis of this lesson is the dual nature of Christ; that He is both God and Man at the same time.

The early church not only had problems with the deity of the Lord Jesus but as is obvious from the early creeds, they had problems with His nature as Man as well. Then swinging too far in the latter direction a definition of His dual nature became necessary. You will recall that the Nicean Council dealt with the deity of Christ (325 AD) and stated that Jesus was and is of the same essence as God the Father.

Later, in 451 AD, the Council of Chalcedon declared, "Following the holy Fathers we teach with one voice that the Son of God and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same (Person), that He is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, very God and very man, of a reasonable soul and (human) body consisting consubstantial with the Father as touching His Godhead, and consubstantial with us as touching his manhood; made in all things like unto us, sin only excepted; begotten of His Father before the worlds according to His Godhead; but in these last days for us men and for our salvation born (into the world) of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God according to His manhood. This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son (of God) must be confessed to be in two natures, unconfusedly, immutably, indivisibly, inseparably (untied), and that without the distinction of natures being taken away by such union, but rather the peculiar property of each nature being preserved and being united in one Person and substance, not separated or divided into two person, but one and the same Son and only begotten, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets of old time have spoken concerning Him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ has taught us, and as the Creed of the Fathers has delivered to us."

Some years before this council, a man named Eutyches described the nature of Christ as being the same with God the Father but not with man. This became known as the monophysite heresy to which the Council of Chalcedon in the main addressed itself.

There are a series of verses in God's word that seem to subordinate the Son to the Father or suggest that Jesus is not an eternal being. These verses are explained in the context of Christ's humiliation and incarnation, the substance of which is to be taken up in our next lesson. However, one such verse is contained in the study passage before us. Notice Colossians 1:15, "*And He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*" That He is eternal is clearly stated in verse 17 (also notice Jesus argument in John 8:52ff), thus we must find another explanation of His being the "firstborn." Perhaps Revelation 1:12 will help, but particularly Revelation 3:14, "*... The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God,...*" It is clear from the context that the speaker is Jesus such that Jesus is the originator of all creation, not that God began the creation with Him. Jesus brought it all into being. That He is the "firstborn" therefore means that He is unique or preeminent since He cannot be both the creator and one who is created. He is "firstborn" in the sense that He is first with respect to rank or power.

In addition to the material offered in lesson 8 concerning the deity of Christ, consider that all the attributes of God are found in Him:

1. **Infinite** in His being - Matthew 28:20, John 3:13.
2. **Eternal** in His being - Micah 5:2, John 1:1.
3. **Unchangeable** in His being - Hebrews 13:8, II Corinthians 1:20.
  - A. In His **wisdom** - John 1:48, 4:16.
  - B. In His **power** - John 5:21, Matthew 28:18, Hebrews 1:3.
  - C. In His **holiness** - II Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 7:26, I Peter 2:22.
  - D. In His **justice** - John 5:22, Acts 22:14, Isaiah 11:3.
  - E. In His **goodness** - Matthew 8:37, 9:36, John 10:3, 4, 11, 14-16.
  - F. In His **truth** - John 1:14, 5:33, 14:6.

### **TEACHING GOAL**

Show that Jesus becomes real flesh and blood, a true Man by the Virgin Mary.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?
- A. Christ the Son of God, became Man, by taking to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her yet without sin.

S.C. 22; L.C. 46-50; W.C. of F. VIII; Savoy 8; Young 47

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Luke 1:26-38

**Support Passages:** John 1:1-18; Philippians 2:5-11; I Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 2:14, 4:15; I John 1:1-4, 4:1-3; II John

### **BIBLE STORY**

Luke 2:1-20; The birth of Christ.

### **.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Let us praise God like Mary did, for sending Jesus to die on the cross for our sins. She sang, "My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God, my Savior." It is comforting to know that because Jesus was a real Man and was here with us that He understands and sympathizes with us. He was tried like we are yet without sin.

## SUMMARY

This is the first of two lessons on the nature of Christ as true Man and we shall focus our attention on Christ as flesh and blood. Next week we shall study His sinless nature.

As early as the first century a heresy known as "Gnosticism" intruded upon the Church. The Gnostic believed that material things were evil and so he reasoned that since Jesus had no sin He was not actually flesh or material. John is very careful to use the word "flesh" in his epistles and his gospel when referring to the physical nature of Christ because he is concerned that we believe that Jesus was a real man and not just a phantom. We should take particular notice of John's language in this regard in the support passages listed in this lesson. Not only do we read that Jesus ate food but His body of flesh actually became hungry and weak from the lack of it (Matthew 4:2 & 11). Similarly we read that He thirsted on the cross and that His body bled. John speaks of handling Him (I John 1:1) and of Mary's "clinging" (John 20:17) to Him. Without any doubt Jesus was really flesh for His body not only was born, but it did all the things other bodies do such as eating, sleeping, walking, weeping and dying. But what does such information about Christ mean to us?

God has declared that blood must be shed for the forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22, Leviticus 17:11) and therefore Christ must shed real blood to effect our pardon for sin. Therefore He must be born a real man. He was born of the Virgin Mary that He might be flesh but His sinless nature derives from God the Father who caused Mary to conceive. The sinless nature of Christ did not come from Mary for she was not immaculate in the sense that she was without sin. She was, in fact, just as we are, a sinner in need of conversion and justification. That Christ is flesh means that He is our blood sacrifice, our Passover.

It is no small comfort to the saints to realize that the Lord Jesus was subjected to the same human context that we live in yet without sin. Our High Priest, Jesus the Righteous, is not indifferent to our problems nor is He indifferent to the effects of sin on His Church. He is, in fact, preparing His Church as a bride for His return. The God of the Deist is cold, indifferent and away on business, but not so the Word made flesh, who tabernacled among us. He, who in the flesh was the public display of all that the Tabernacle represented and performed, is now interceding for His people at God's right hand. Hallelujah! Are you not moved to shouts of praise to your Lord and King, Jesus?

Finally, Christ's fleshly existence fulfilled all the covenant promises to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc. For the promise was of the Seed of Abraham, blessing all the nations. The seed of Adam was to crush the head of the Serpent. This is a promise of a flesh and blood person in whom these great

promises are based. This "Son of Man" (Daniel 7:13-14) to whom is given everlasting dominion, glory and a kingdom of Jew and Gentile alike, the great Beginning and End of all things, was one of us and substituted Himself for us His people, so that they will go to heaven. His people belong to an everlasting kingdom. Do you believe on this Jesus as your Savior and Lord? Have you repented from your sins and do you follow Him? If so then you have the same cause to rejoice as did Mary, saying: "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for he who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is his name. And his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.'" (Luke 1:46-55, ESV)

**TEACHING GOAL**

Study the sinless perfection of Christ.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. How did Christ, being the Son of God, become man?
- A. Christ the Son of God, became Man, by taking to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born of her yet without sin.

S.C. 22; L.C. 46-50; W.C. of F. VIII; Savoy 8; Young 47-48

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** I Peter 2:11-25

**Support Passages:** Isaiah 53:9-12; Matthew 26:59-68; John 8:43-47, 18:33-40; Romans 8:3; II Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 4:4-5; Hebrews 7:26-28; I John 3:5

**BIBLE STORY**

John 5:1-18; The healing of the sick man at Bethesda.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"For it was indeed fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens." (Hebrews 7:26, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Christ is our example in the way we should live. If we suffer, let it not be for our own sin but for our stand for Christ, for doing that which is right in the eyes of the Lord.

## SUMMARY

It is alleged that Jesus made a confession of sin. Says C. G. Montefiore, "we may be sure that of Jesus, both in fact and in His own estimate of Himself, the adage was true: 'there is no man that sinneth not.'"<sup>1</sup> This was said in regard to Jesus' answer to the rich man's question, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life (Mark 10:18ff)? Jesus answered, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone."

The greeting Good Teacher was very unusual indeed. Edersheim writes, "In no recorded instance was a Jewish Rabbi addressed as 'Good Teacher'"<sup>2</sup>, and indeed in the whole Talmud there is no instance of a Rabbi being addressed in that manner. So strange was this greeting that it invites our attention and shows us in stark relief the flippancy and irreverence shown to the Lord of glory.

The rich man did not really want to know how to be saved but he intended to ridicule Jesus. This is evidenced by the supreme vanity of his egotistical lie, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up." He went away grieved at the thought of selling his goods and following Christ. His lust for wealth; his covetousness not only revealed his true attitude toward Jesus, but took his soul into the fires of hell. What did he really know of the goodness of God? Jesus answer was not at all a confession of sin but a confronting of this proud man with God's holiness. The sinner will be quick to insert the words, "I am not good, only God is," into the statement of Jesus, but He really did not say this at all. Jesus really rebukes the man. He says in effect, what do you know about goodness? You obviously do not believe that I am good and therefore that I am God. You love your money more than you do Me. Jesus plows this stony hard heart with the holiness of God and his law, but the seed is choked by the deceitfulness of riches and dies.<sup>3</sup>

The Bible clearly states that Jesus is without sin. "For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens -- a son made perfect forever" (Hebrews 7:26ff). Peter applies Isaiah 53:9 to Jesus when he writes, "Who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth" (I Peter 2:22). John writes, "and you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin" (I John 3:5), and Paul's estimate of Christ in this regard is, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf" (II Corinthians 5:21). Even the ungodly Pilate could "find no guilt in Him" (John 18:38).

An interesting problem is raised by Paul in Romans 8:3 where he notes that God sent "His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh." It is clear that the Word who became flesh was without sin and did no sin, but Paul implies that

His flesh also was sinless. Notice that Paul does not say that the Lord had sinful flesh but the "likeness" of it. This means that the curse to which He was subjected was not that of Adam's first sin but the curse of the sins of His people. He was made sin on our behalf, Christ became a curse for us (Galatians 3:13). Warfield sums it up as follows:

"He was accursed, not because He became man, but because He bore the sins of His people; He suffered and died not because of the flesh He took but because of the sins He took. He was, no doubt, born of a woman, born under the law (Galatians 4:4), in one concrete act; He issued from the Virgin's womb already our sin-bearer. But He was not sin-bearer because made of a woman; He was made of a woman that He might become sin-bearer; it was because of the suffering of death that He was made a little lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:9). It is germane to our inquiry, therefore, to take note of the fact that among the emotions which are attested as having found place in our Lord's life-experiences, there are those which belong to Him not as a man but as sin-bearer, which never would have invaded His soul in the purity of His humanity save as He stood under the curse incurred for His people's sins."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> C. G. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels*, 1909, pp. 246-247

<sup>2</sup> Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Christ*, Vol. II, p. 339.

<sup>3</sup> Walter J. Chantry, *Today's Gospel Authentic or Synthetic*, London, The Banner of Truth Trust, 1970, p. 19ff

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<sup>4</sup> Warfield, *The Person and Work of Christ*, 1950, pp. 144-145

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the threefold office of Christ.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What offices does Christ execute as our redeemer?
- A. Christ as our Redeemer, executes the offices of a Prophet, of a Priest and of a King, both in His estate of humiliation and exaltation.

S.C. 23; L.C. 41-42; W.C. of F. VIII; Savoy 8; Young 47-48

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Psalm 110

**Support Passages:** Acts 3:11-26 - Christ the Prophet; Hebrews 5:1-10 - Christ the Priest; Isaiah 9:6-7 - Christ the King; Psalm 2, 45:1-9; Isaiah 61:1-3; Luke 4:18-19; Acts 2:29-36

**BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 14; Abraham pays tithes to Melchizedek

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

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

**APPLICATION**

The Messiah, anointed as Prophet, Priest and King has come. Let us repent of our sins and be forgiven and refreshed by the Lord.

## SUMMARY

Having studied the person of Christ, namely His deity and sinless humanity, we now turn to His work as the Christ of God. The word Christ means anointed one. The Greek word for this is Christos and the Hebrew word is Meshiach. So it is clear that the words Christ and Messiah are equivalent. Calvin writes of this as follows:

"Now it is to be noted that the title 'Christ' pertains to these three offices: for we know that under the law prophets as well as priests and kings were anointed with holy oil. Hence the illustrious name of 'Messiah' was also bestowed upon the promised Mediator. As I have elsewhere shown, I recognize that Christ was called Messiah especially with respect to, and by virtue of, his kingship. Yet His anointings as prophet and as priest have their place and must not be overlooked by us. Isaiah specifically mentions the former in these words: 'The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me, because Jehovah has anointed me to preach to the humble, ... to proclaim the year of the Lord's good pleasure,' etc. (Isaiah 6:1-2; cf. Luke 4:18). We see that he was anointed by the Spirit to be herald and witness of the Father's grace." <sup>1</sup>

Christ was anointed beyond measure in all three; Prophet, Priest and King. He occupies and executes these offices now in heaven in His supremely exalted estate as He did when He was here with us even though He "made himself nothing" (ESV), that is to say he set aside his divine prerogatives (Philippians 2:7-8). But because we shall study the nature of the three offices of Christ and of His estates of humiliation and exaltation in future lessons, let us here merely raise the question of when the offices are to be carried out.

Luke deals with Christ as Prophet in Acts 3:11-26 saying that Christ is that Prophet foretold in Deuteronomy 18:15, the Messiah appointed for us (verse 20), who is now in heaven until the period of restoration of all things (verse 21). We must give heed to everything He says to us. Now, from His sublime exaltation, He speaks to us in His written word, made effective by His Spirit. But when He was here with us, He spoke directly with all the authority of God, whom He was and is.

Paul quotes Psalm 110:4 in connection with Jesus, "Thou art a Priest forever, according to the order of Melchizedek (cf. Hebrews 5:16) and there we notice the eternal character of the Messiah's priesthood. In the former example, that of the Prophet, Christ is compared with Moses who was a King (or chief magistrate) in a position of authority over Israel, and a prophet. While Moses interceded for Israel on many occasions nevertheless He did not perform the office of priest. We may assume that when Moses sacrificed he did so through the offices of the Levites and Aaron the High Priest. Moses is clearly a King-Prophet, but Melchizedek was a King-Priest. Genesis 14 informs us that

Melchizedek (or King of Righteousness) was a priest of the most high God and Melchishalom (or King of Peace). That Christ is a Priest according to the order of Melchizedek means among other things that He is a King-Priest. Aaron was a priest-prophet for he spoke the word of the Lord. So we observe the fact that no one but Christ occupied all three offices, Prophet, Priest and King, at once.

That Jesus is a King now is apparent in Isaiah 9:6-7, and Psalms 2, 45, and 110 among many other scriptures. In all these, His kingly office is associated with His first coming as the Messiah. His is an eternal office and kingdom and throne. It is clear from Acts 2:29-36 that Jesus now occupies David's throne for Luke writes that the Prophet David (verse 30) looked ahead to the resurrection of Christ, clearly understood by David (Psalm 16:8-11), whereby the foretold Messiah was seated upon David's throne forever. This throne will also be the great throne of judgment (Matthew 19:28, 25:31) upon which the Son of Man, Jesus, will judge all the nations and it will foremost in the new Heaven and new Earth (Revelation 22:1-3). That Jesus now sits on an eternal throne is stated explicitly in Revelation 3:21. Is not the throne of God eternal (Acts 7:49, Matthew 5:33ff, Hebrews 1:8)?

Each one of us must repent from our sins, turning from them unto this glorious one who is our Prophet, Priest, and King. Only then will the times of refreshing come to us from the presence of the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Chapter XV.2.



**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the prophetic work of Christ.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. How does Christ execute the office of Prophet?

A. Christ executes the office of Prophet, in revealing to us by His word and Spirit, the will of God for our salvation.

S.C. 24; L.C. 43; W.C. of F. VIII; Savoy 8; Young 64-65

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** John 1:1-5, 9-18

**Support Passages:** Deuteronomy 18:18-19; Daniel 9:24; John 14:18-24; Acts 3:11-26

**BIBLE STORY**

Luke 24:13-35; the great Prophet teaches two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world." (Hebrews 1:1-2, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

So that we may become children of God, and have a right to the privileges of such (Romans 8:16-17), not the least of which is eternal life, we must receive and believe on Jesus the revealed Word of God and the one who reveals God to us.

## SUMMARY

Before we can understand the work of Christ as a Prophet, we must understand the nature of the office of prophet. What is a prophet? Not merely a revealer of future events is a prophet, but the very mouth of God. Peter writes, "for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (II Peter 1:21). Moses and Aaron are an excellent example of this truth, "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet'" (Exodus 7:1ff). Moses was the authority from which the pronouncements of the Lord to Pharaoh came, and Aaron actually spoke them to Pharaoh. Thus Aaron acted as Moses' mouth and did the work of a prophet (Exodus 4:16).

Of Jeremiah the prophet it is said, "you will become my spokesman" (Literally - as my mouth, Jeremiah 15:19). A prophet therefore is one who speaks for God in an immediate sense. That is to say, what God speaks to the prophet is communicated directly without the need for an intervening process or person. What the prophet sees and hears he then speaks. The prophet is a direct organ for announcing the words of God to people.

In these last days there are no more prophets in this sense. Now, the pastor-teacher delivers the words of God from Holy Scripture. The minister's gift of prophecy is that of interpreting Scripture and not that of being God's direct organ of communication. In these last days, God no longer speaks to us by the prophets as He did long ago but "by *his* Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He made the world" (Hebrews 1:1-2). Jesus is both the revelation of God and the revealer of God.

That Jesus is God's revelation to men is clear in such passages as John 1:14. When the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, John and the other eyewitnesses saw in Him the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. To have seen Jesus was to see the Father (John 14:6-9). To know Christ was to know the Father and the works of the Son are the works of the Father. Is not the name of Christ, among others, "Eternal Father" (Isaiah 9:6)? Jesus is the Logos, the Word, and God (John 1:1). As the Logos He is the creator who reveals God to us in nature (verse 3). He was and is the light of the world (Verses 4-5, 9). He is truth and grace (verse 17). In Him, "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). Therefore from Christ, all that men come to know about God, radiates. But Jesus is also the revealer of God.

"No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him" (John 1:18). Jesus is the great explainer of God, the only one to have seen God and who Himself is God. He is therefore eminently, uniquely, supremely qualified to reveal God to mankind. Jesus stood up to teach in the Nazareth Synagogue and read Isaiah 61:1-3, "the Spirit of the LORD is upon me to preach the gospel ... proclaim release ... proclaim recovery ... proclaim the favorable year of the LORD" all functions of

a prophet. Having read these words He sat down and said, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled on your hearing" (Luke 4:21). So clear was His claim to be this prophet that His enraged hearers sought to kill Him at that very moment.

Jesus, because He is the source of all our knowledge about God, must be studied carefully and followed. This we must do using the sacred writings that are able to give us the wisdom that leads to salvation. Let there be no pretense of receiving and believing on Jesus. Such pretense is openly manifested in our attitude toward God's Word both living and written. Can there be so little longing for the Bread of Life, for every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God? Does the Word of God not excite us and burn in our breast with passion for Christ and all that is His? Is there little zeal for the things of God? The apathy that many have for the Word of God is not at all typical of one who is a child of God. We must take heed to ourselves to improve our thirst for the written Word and our desire for Christ the Living Word. We must desire Christ with all our heart, soul and mind for Christ alone is the great Prophet.

**TEACHING GOAL**

Study the priestly work of Christ with emphasis on His work as the offerer of the sacrifice.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. How does Christ execute the office of Priest?

A. Christ executes the office of Priest, in His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice and to reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us.

S.C. 25; L.C. 44; W.C. of F. VIII; Savoy 8; Young 67

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Hebrews 10:11-25

**Support Passages:** Hebrews 5:1-10, 7:1-28, 9:11-15, 12:24

**BIBLE STORY**

Leviticus 16; Aaron offers a sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur).

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." (Hebrews 10:14, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Because it is the blood of God and our Savior Jesus Christ that cleanses His people from their sin and because He is their great priest, let us not fear to trust Him and to draw near to God through Him.

## SUMMARY

Our study of this office of Christ will be in done in three parts, namely:

1. Christ as the Offerer.
2. Christ as the Atonement.
3. Christ as the Intercessor.

Thus our study in this lesson will center upon Christ as the one who makes the offering for us as our federal representative. L. Berkhof describes the functions of a priest as they are given in the classical Scripture passage Hebrews 5:1ff. "The following elements are indicated here: (a) the priest is taken from among men to be their representative; (b) he is appointed by God, cf verse 4; (c) he is active in the interest of men in things that pertain to God, that is, in religious things; (d) his special work is to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. But the work of the priest included even more than that. He also made intercession for the people (Hebrews 7:25), and blessed them in the name of God, Leviticus 9:22." <sup>1</sup>

Jesus performs these things perfectly as our great Priest over the house of God. Hebrews 5:1 and following is about Christ of course, who was begotten in the flesh in order to become a Priest-King like Melchizedek. In fact, to use the language of Scripture He is "after the order of Melchizedek."

Notice the basic duties of the priest in Leviticus 16. He was to enter into the Holy of Holies to make this particular sacrifice for sins once each year. Before he did this, however, he was to be properly attired and bathed, for one dare not enter into the very presence of God without having the right to be there and in a manner not pleasing to God. Aaron also was to make a sacrifice for his own sins before he entered. When he did enter, he was to cover the Mercyseat with a cloud of incense, "lest he die" and sprinkle blood seven times on it. The Mercyseat, by the way, was the golden lid that covered the Ark of the Covenant in which were the Law, the Manna, and Aaron's Rod that budded. The whole point to his entering the Holy of Holies in this manner was to put blood upon the Mercyseat, thus effecting the atonement by covering the sins of God's people symbolized by the contents of the Ark with blood. The tables of stone represented the Law of God which we do not keep, the Manna represented the Bread of Life to which we are indifferent, and the Rod that budded represented our rebellion against God's authority. These three things are the essence of all sin.

Let us also notice that the High Priest alone could enter this holy place while no one else could be anywhere in the Tent of Meeting. The Hebrew refers to the Tabernacle in this manner because God met only with an authorized representative of Israel in this place. The congregation of Israel had to remain outside the Tent of Meeting or Tabernacle. Like the High Priest of old, Jesus is

our sole representative except that He is not after the order of Aaron who was a Priest-Prophet, but after the order of the Priest-King Melchizedek. Jesus entered the Tabernacle, of which the old one was a mere shadow, once for all time not yearly, carrying His own blood not the blood of sheep or goats. He had no sin of His own so that He did not have to purify Himself, as did Aaron, before He could do the service of the Priest. In each instance Jesus did the service of a priest, better and perfectly (Hebrews 9:13-14).

Because the unique and finished work of Christ is so clear in Scripture, who, as the great High Priest entered only once into the heavenly Tabernacle; so clear is this that we must utterly repudiate the Roman Catholic Mass wherein Christ is re-sacrificed each time the ordinary elements of bread and wine are transubstantiated into the real flesh and blood of Christ. They do this despite the fact that Scripture states, "for by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). Since He has perfected us for all time by His blood on the cross, we should not fear to draw near to Him and to serve Him with all that we are and have.

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<sup>1</sup> L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941, p. 361.

**TEACHING GOAL**

Study the priestly office of Christ with special emphasis on the atonement.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. How does Christ execute the office of Priest?

A. Christ executes the office of Priest, in His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice and to reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us.

S.C. 25; L.C. 44; W.C. of F. VIII; Savoy 8; Young 67, 70

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Romans 3:21-31

**Support Passages:** Matthew 5:23-24; Acts 20:28; Romans 5:1-11; I Corinthians 6:20, 7:23; II Corinthians 5:11-21; I Peter 1:18-19

**BIBLE STORY**

Acts 9:1-22; The conversion of Saul is an example of reconciliation. Whereas Saul was an enemy, he became a friend of God for God's justice was satisfied.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'" (Matthew 20:28, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Oh how we should rejoice to find our sins covered by precious blood, and the wrath of God toward us and upon us stayed. Oh the joy of forgiveness of sins and the blessedness of the hope of eternal life with Christ who is coming in power and great glory. Let us repent from our sins and be reconciled to our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

## SUMMARY

Let us review briefly the fact that Jesus our Lord preeminently performs the office of the Priest, for He is taken from among men to be their representative. He is appointed by God for His task, He is active in the things of God in behalf of His people, and He has performed the special task of making a sacrifice for the sins of His people. All of this follows from Hebrews 5:1-10. The office contemplated in Leviticus 16 was perfectly carried out by the Lord, our great Priest, however with several important distinctions. He was the sacrifice, the blood was His own, the Mercyseat was Himself and He is the scapegoat upon whom our sins are imputed. To Him are reckoned our sins; to us is reckoned His righteousness.

The word "atonement" sums up the meaning of the sacrifice offered by Christ on the cross. In the Authorized Version (King James) it is used only once in the New Testament in Romans 5:11, however the Greek word in that place does not mean atonement but reconciliation. In the Old Testament the word atonement translates a word that means to cover as in Leviticus 17:11. But Greek literature uses a word that refers to the cover on the Ark of the Covenant on which the priest sprinkled the blood on the Day of Atonement. We may see this word used in Romans 3:25 as propitiation. One may note the use of the word ransom (Matthew 20:28), or redemption (Romans 3:24) or purchased (Acts 20:28) all of which refer to the Atonement of Christ. The following three points present several different contexts in which the concept of Atonement is set forth.

(1) The concept of Redemption involves release from the bondage of sin by buying back the slave. The price that was paid was the blood of Christ (I Peter 1:18-19, Romans 3:23-24).

(2) The concept of Propitiation involves the covering of our sin. The blood of Christ is that which stands between our sin, our inability to keep God's Law, and the wrath of God. In terms of the tabernacle, the blood of the sacrifice was put on the Mercyseat or Propitiation which then came between and covered the stone tables of the Law inside the Ark, which represented our inability to keep the Law of God. The blood came between our inability to keep the Law of God and the presence of God in the Holy of Holies (Leviticus 16, Romans 3:25).

(3) The concept of Reconciliation is really the basic meaning of atonement. We may conceive it as the satisfaction of wrong done to God by the sinner. A classic example of this is given by Christ in Matthew 5:23-24, in which the offending party, remembering that he is yet unreconciled to the one he has wronged, goes to him and makes amends before he makes his offering to God. Christ, by His sublime sacrifice, has satisfied divine justice and has effected our reconciliation to God who we have so dreadfully wronged by our sins (Romans 5:11, II Corinthians 5:11-21).

One of the great questions raised in the theology of the atonement, is its extent. For whom is the atonement effective, the whole world or God's people only? This week's memory verse implies that Christ did not ransom everyone in the world but only the many. He is named "Jesus, for it is He who will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). The people of Christ, His own, are those who have been chosen from before the foundation of the world. They are limited in number and are not everyone who has ever lived. Shall we say that Jesus ransomed Judas who He calls the son of perdition (John 17:12)? Why did Jesus only pray for "those whom Thou hast given Me," if everyone in the world was atoned for by His blood (John 17:9)? That the atonement of Christ is particular, that is, that it applies only to God's chosen people, is unquestionably clear in these additional passages: John 10:11 and 15, Acts 20:28, Ephesians 5:25-27, Romans 8:32-35, and John 6:37-40 among many others. Dr. Berkhof, speaking very strongly against the heresy of believing that the Atonement applies to every individual in an efficient manner, states: "It should also be noted that the doctrine that Christ dies for the purpose of saving all men, logically leads to absolute universalism, that is, to the doctrine that all men are actually saved. It is impossible that they for whom Christ paid the price, whose guilt He removed, should be lost on account of that guilt. The Arminians cannot stop at their half-way station, but must go all the way." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941, p. 395.

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the priestly work of Christ with emphasis on His intercessory work.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. How does Christ execute the office of Priest?

A. Christ executes the office of Priest, in His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice to satisfy Divine justice and to reconcile us to God; and in making continual intercession for us.

S.C. 25; L.C. 44; W.C. of F. VIII; Savoy 8; Young 67, 70

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** John 17

**Support Passages:** John 14:6; Romans 8:31-39; Hebrews 4:14-16, 7:23-8:3; I John 1:9-2:2

**BIBLE STORY**

Numbers 16; Moses and Aaron intercede for Israel upon the rebellion of Korah.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us." (Romans 8:34, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

The answer to all problems of sin is Jesus Christ. We who sin are to confess our sins to Him and not only will He forgive our sins, but He will be our advocate or helper. We know that He is the propitiation of His people no matter what their nationality.

## SUMMARY

We have studied the fact that Jesus is the one who offers a sacrifice for the sins of His people as their appointed representative. Furthermore, Jesus is the Sacrifice, the Blood, the Mercyseat, and the Scapegoat. All these concepts we have studied as well as the meaning of propitiation, redemption, and reconciliation. There remains to study Christ as our intercessor.

The study passage contains the great high priestly prayer of the Lord for His own people, spoken while He was yet with us in the flesh. That He is now our High Priest is clear from a study of the word Advocate in John 14:16 and 26 where one will observe the word helper. This word translates the Greek *paracletos* which means one who is called alongside to help. It also includes the concept of legal aid. Jesus as our Helper argues our case before the throne of justice. Does not John say in His first epistle “and if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”? He refers, of course, to the help given to the sinner in the legal sense before God the Father. But that is not all there is to it. In the aforementioned passages Jesus, through His Spirit, comforts and encourages us as our Helper. The legal sense of Christ's intercession is further developed in Romans 8:34 where Paul writes that no one can charge God's elect with sin, for we have been justified, that is, we have received pardon for our sins and the righteousness of Christ put to our account, and we have the risen Christ for an intercessor or advocate. Our lawyer, so to speak, has obtained our pardon and continues to argue our cause at the place of highest authority, God's right hand.

The Catechism uses the word “continual” in reference to the nature of Christ's intercession. We may draw this inference from the description of Christ the Priest in the book of Hebrews. As the priest entered daily onto the temple to burn incense, which symbolized intercession, so does our Lord Jesus Christ. But He is quite different from Aaron in that He never dies. He abides forever. He holds the priesthood permanently. “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7: 25).

For what does our Lord intercede? He most certainly intercedes for us now as He did on that night before His death. As Berkhof writes, "Christ has a great deal to pray for in His intercessory prayer. We can only give a brief indication of some of the things for which He prays. He prays that the elect who have not yet come to Him may be brought into a state of grace; that those who have already come may receive pardon for their daily sins, that is, may experience the continued application to them of the fruits of justification; that believers may be kept from the accusations and temptations of Satan; that the saints may be progressively sanctified, John 17:17; that their intercourse with heaven may be

kept up, Hebrews 4:14, 16; 10:21, 22; that they may at last enter upon their perfect inheritance in heaven, John 17:24." <sup>1</sup>

For whom does Christ intercede? Only for His own people as we have noted in the last lesson; Only for those to whom His atonement effectively applies. Notice the strong distinction in verse 2, John 17. Even though He has authority over all men, yet He gives eternal life only to those that He has been given and He prays only for them (verse 9). In fact, every passage in Scripture that describes the priestly work of Christ limits the effect of His work to the elect only. He offered the sacrifice for His people as their representative (not everyone in the world) and He atoned for their sins only and intercedes for them alone.

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<sup>1</sup> L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1941, p. 404.



**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the office of Christ as King, particularly the fact that He is the King now.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. How does Christ execute the office of a king?
- A. Christ executes the office of a king, in subduing us to Himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all His and our enemies.

S.C. 26; L.C. 45; W.C. of F. VIII; Savoy 8; Young 68, 71

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Acts 2:29-42

**Support Passages:** Genesis 49:10; Numbers 24:17; II Samuel 7:16; Psalms 2, 45, 72, 110; Isaiah 7:14, 9:6-7; Daniel 7:13-14; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 9:9; Luke 1:31-33; John 18:33-38; Revelation 1, 19:16, etc.

**BIBLE STORY**

Matthew 21:1-11 (Zechariah 9:9); The triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:32-33, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

The only proper reaction to the knowledge that Christ is King of the universe is to bow before Him in worship and service. Jesus is, "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come." (Ephesians 1:21, ESV)

## SUMMARY

Charles Hodge writes, "Nothing, therefore, is more certain according to the Scriptures, than that Christ is a King, and consequently, if we would retain the truth concerning Him and His work, He must be so regarded in our theology and religion."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the Larger Catechism emphasizes the Kingship of Christ over His other two offices, and not because these other offices are unimportant, for they are supremely so, but because there is in fact a great deal of Scripture that represents Christ as King and gives the description of His kingdom.

Even a cursory examination of the supporting passages of Scripture in this lesson will show that Christ the Messiah was to be a King who occupied the throne of David forever. The messianic psalms are very rewarding in this regard especially when they are studied in the context where they are quoted in the New Testament. The prophets wrote that the Messiah would be a King. The angel Gabriel told Mary that she would bear the Christ and that He would be a King. In fact Mary was to bear a child who would occupy the throne of David forever. Jesus before Pilate, acknowledged that He was a king with a kingdom "not of this realm." Daniel's description of Jesus' kingly office and the Lord's own statement in Revelation represent Him to occupy the highest possible kingly office and dominion (see also Ephesians 1:21).

Every king must have a kingdom and the Bible has much to say about the nature of Jesus kingdom. The next lessons in this series will deal with the nature of the Lord's physical and spiritual kingdoms which Jesus rules with officers and laws. There is a throne and a city of the King from which the rule proceeds. Even though our Lord's claim before Pilate, that His kingdom was not of this world, He certainly did not mean to say that He had no power or authority here for Jesus has "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). He told Pilate in essence that His seat of governance is not here but at the right hand of God in heaven. His power is not merely that of an earthly king but it is the power of God Himself. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. His weapons are not limited to earthly weapons and armies but He has the hosts of heaven and all the angels of God at His disposal. With such scriptural statements as those in Revelation, Ephesians and Colossians it is unthinkable that Christ has no power on earth as a King. He is the King of the universe.

The study passage states that Jesus not only is a King but that He occupies the throne of David. Let us notice the argument in Acts 2:30-31. David, looking ahead to the resurrection of Christ in Psalm 16, knew that God would seat Jesus, one of David's descendants, upon his throne. Jesus has ascended into heaven and in fulfillment of Psalm 110:1-2, sits at God's right hand until His enemies are subdued. (Study also I Corinthians 15:23-28 and Hebrews 10:23-24) The phrase sit at the right hand means to occupy the highest position of authority and since this right hand is of Majesty, it necessarily refers also to a position of rule.

To say that Jesus is Lord is to say that He is a King and has a king's authority. Indeed, to be saved, it is necessary for one to confess that Jesus is Lord (Romans 10:9). Let us not say that Jesus is the great King without any real commitment to that fact. Our salvation depends on such a commitment and indeed, our whole world and life view will be greatly influenced by the extent to which we accept the rule of Christ right now. If Jesus is not fully and completely our King, our lives will reflect that weak relationship and it may indicate that Christ has not yet subdued us to Himself. He subdues everyone in His kingdom to Himself as the King of His subjects. Let us repent from our sins and believe on Jesus as Lord, thus shall we be saved.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965, Volume II, p. 598.

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the kingly office of Christ, with special attention to the universal nature of His kingdom.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. How does Christ execute the office of a king?
- A. Christ executes the office of a king, in subduing us to Himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all His and our enemies.

S.C. 26; L.C. 45; W.C. of F. VIII; Savoy 8; Young 68, 71

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      Corinthians 15:20-28

**Support Passages:** Psalm 8:6; Ephesians 1:20-23, 6:10-13; Philippians 2:9-10; Hebrews 1:13, 2:8, 10:12-13

**BIBLE STORY**

Matthew 4:1-11; The Lord Jesus is tempted by Satan but is able to conquer the Devil because He is all powerful.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth," (Philippians 2:9-10, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Nowhere do we find a higher concept of Jesus than in Ephesians 1:20-23. Without hesitation or reserve we must worship and serve this great King.

## SUMMARY

King Jesus has immense power and authority beyond measure and His kingdom in Paul's terms is all things under His feet and all things to the Church both in this age and the one to come (Ephesians 1:20-23). When concepts like this and the Lord's own statement that all authority in heaven and earth was given to Him (Matthew 28:18) are taken seriously we cannot escape the conclusion that Jesus' kingdom is universal. One wonders, in light of this, whether we may defer His occupying the throne of David and His reign over the house of Jacob forever (Luke 1:32-33). He certainly is great now and is now called the Son of the Most High. May we therefore stop short of the sweeping statements of Scripture in acknowledging the full extent of His kingdom? The age to come is heaven, the age of glory, and He has no less power and authority now as then.

Let us notice the all inclusive statement of Paul, "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth," (Philippians 2:9-10, ESV) To confess that Jesus is Lord is to confess that He is King and more than this it is to confess that He is YAHWEH because the name of Jesus which is above every name is YAHWEH. Moreover, every rational being in the universe is included here including Satan. But we must be careful to note the word *should* in the text. The Greek mood here indicates that it is proper for everyone including the Devil to worship Christ as King and YAHWEH but not necessarily actual or even probable that they will do so. This text does say that Jesus is a universal King, but as He told Pilate "My kingdom is not of this realm" (John 18:36) or world. Jesus does not take the throne away from civil government but He puts civil government upon it and regulates and controls all the authority and power of it. Jesus is not a mere civil ruler like Caesar but infinitely greater He is Caesar's ruler. Like Satan, whom Jesus rules and limits, civil government may well be hostile to the Kingdom of Christ. Ungodly governments might not promote the good of the Church nor restrain evil nor even lead away from anarchy. The Christian must oppose such governments but on the other hand he must seek to establish godly governments that will punish evildoers and reward righteousness. Neither can the Christian obey laws of governments that require him to sin, bearing for Christ's sake whatever such disobedience might bring to him. In the words of R. L. Dabney, "There may be obviously a point then where 'resistance to tyrants is obedience to God.'" <sup>1</sup>

Jesus exercises His universal dominion for another reason mentioned in Psalm 110 and it's New Testament quotes. For example, Paul notes that after making our sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God which is the seat of highest authority, "waiting from that time onward until His enemies be

made a footstool for His feet" (Hebrews 10:23-24). Notice this concept in our study text in verse 23 and following. Jesus was first to arise from the dead and then His people, the elect, will be raised. "Then is the end." Some translations may read, "Then *comes* the end" but there is no Greek word in the original text which we may translate as *comes*. Therefore we have the freedom to make other choices within the constraints of the context. This text places the resurrection of the saints, the second coming of Christ, the end, and the abolishment of all rule and power, in coincidence. All civil rulers and authority will cease to exist at that instant for Jesus must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. Death is said to be the last enemy which Jesus conquers at the last day (verse 50ff). The Messiah's reign in His messianic kingdom began at His first coming, foretold by the prophets, and continues until all His enemies are defeated. The subduing of enemies is, of course, the function of a king and Paul states clearly that God has put all created things in subjection under Jesus' feet.

In view of these Scriptural statements of Christ's kingly office, let us not be restrained in according to our Lord his due as ruler of the universe. Let us worship Him and serve Him as our great God and King.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1972, p. 872.

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the Kingly office of Christ, with special attention to the kingdom of Christ known as the Church.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. How does Christ execute the office of a king?
- A. Christ executes the office of a king, in subduing us to Himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all His and our enemies.

S.C. 26; L.C. 45; W.C. of F. VIII, XXV, XXX, XXXI; Savoy 8, 31, 32; Young 68, 71

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Matthew 16:13-28

**Support Passages:** **Discipline:** Mark 8:27-33, Luke 9:18-22, John 6:68-69; II Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; **Officers:** Acts 14:20-23, 20:28; I Timothy 3; Acts 6; **Offices:** Ephesians 4:1-16; I Corinthians 12; **Judgement:** John 5:19-29; **Law:** Matthew 5-7

**BIBLE STORY**

Matthew 17:1-8; The Lord is transfigured and Elijah and Moses come from the Lord's kingdom in heaven.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life? Or what shall a man give in return for his life?" (Matthew 16:24-26, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Nowhere do we find a higher concept of Jesus than in Ephesians 1:20-23. Without hesitation or reserve we must worship and serve this great King.

## SUMMARY

The Scriptures present two aspects of the lordship of Christ. The first is His sovereignty over the created universe. King Jesus, does not disestablish civil government. In fact He controls and establishes the kingdoms of the earth. John is shown a vision of the Lord in heaven (Revelation 19:11-16) sitting on a white horse, judging and waging war. The armies which are in heaven follow Him and the sharp sword of His word smites the gentiles. He shepherds them with an iron rod. He is the KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. John is not shown the Lord as He will be at His second coming, but as He is now in heaven. The angel told the disciples (Acts 1:11), "This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." He did not go to heaven on a white horse. John sees Jesus as the Messiah-King that He is now, ruling from heaven from His seat of authority. The word of God from the mouth of Jesus is heard by all nations now and many gentiles as well as Jews believe. Thus He is subduing us to Himself. And He rules (shepherds) with a rod of iron. This phrase comes from Psalm 2:8-9 which is quoted in Revelation 2:27 and 12:5, which teaches us that the kingship of Christ is powerful and just.

Indeed, the hostility of the kings of the earth and the beast (for example, the Roman government) does not escape our attention. The enemies of God and His Christ are many and have been so since the fall of man in Eden. Especially did they show their hostility when they slew the Son of God on the cross. The world of sinners hates Christ and refuses to follow Him as King and openly wars against Him hating and killing the followers of the King. Many indeed have been martyred for the sake of Christ and those of us who are subjects of the King of Kings are immediately placed into a battle for which we are given armor and grace to fight.

Jesus has graced His Church, His special kingdom for whom He died, His bride, His body, with His word, sacraments, government, and prayer. Not given the sword of civil government, the Church is given the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Civil government is provided for the prevention of anarchy and the good of Christ's Church which is immortal, everlasting and will be glorified in heaven. All civil government is fitted for destruction for the kingdom of Christ will be victorious over His enemies. The Lord Jesus is the rock upon which His special kingdom is founded (Matthew 16:13ff) and the very gates of hell itself, even the domain of Satan cannot overpower it. This is the second aspect of His lordship.

To be a citizen in any country or kingdom, there are entrance requirements. We must be born again by the Spirit of God in order to be a citizen of His special commonwealth. Every kingdom also has officers to which the king delegates some of his power. So the kingdom of Christ has officers with the "Keys to the kingdom of heaven." These officers may pass judgment on certain matters in the earthly part of the kingdom. No man is king in Christ's place but the Roman Catholic view of the Pope is just to the contrary, namely that he is Christ vicariously and occupies Christ's throne on earth. However, the officers in

Christ's kingdom have the power to extend it by preaching and teaching the Word of Christ, to administer the sacraments and to discipline the subjects of the King. Our gracious King has also given wise laws for us to follow (See for example Matthew 5-7, Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5). And He is going to come in glory, "The glory of His Father with His angels, 'and will recompense every man according to his deeds'" (Matthew 16:27).

When our King comes the second time He will raise the bodies of His redeemed people, change them to glorious bodies, in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (I Corinthians 15:50-52). His glorious kingdom to come is not perishable but heavenly. The glories of this future kingdom can scarcely be told even on the pages of Scripture, perhaps that the saints on earth will be more content to do the will of the King (Philippians 1:20-24). But the hope for the kingdom to come is blessed indeed. This very hope motivates us to serve our King all the more (Titus 2:11-13, Hebrews 11, 12). The messianic kingdom inaugurated at the ascension of Christ will then have been fulfilled and will be delivered up to God the Father in order that He might be all in all (I Corinthians 15:27-28).

We have seen from Scripture that Jesus indeed is a King, that His kingdom is universal and that He is Lord over all that special kingdom known as the Church. His special kingdom alone will be glorified for it alone had been redeemed by the blood of its King.

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the humiliation of Christ which was incurred by His birth and life on earth.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist?
- A. Christ's humiliation consisted in His being born and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death on the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.

S.C. 27; L.C. 46-48; W.C. of F. VIII, XXV, XXX, XXXI; Savoy 8, 31, 32; Young 47

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      Philippians 2:5-11

**Support Passages:** Luke 2:7; II Corinthians 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Hebrews 2:9, 14

**BIBLE STORY**

Hebrews 11:24-28, Exodus 2; Moses refuses the treasures of Egypt for the greater riches of the reproach of Christ.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

Galatians 4:4-5

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

**APPLICATION**

We are to be like Jesus by humbling ourselves before God confessing our sins to Him and by regarding our Christian brother more important than ourself. We are really nothing compared to God.





**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the humiliation of Christ which was incurred by His death and His estate following His death, before His resurrection.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist?
- A. Christ's humiliation consisted in His being born and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death on the cross; in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.

S.C. 27; L.C. 46-48; W.C. of F. VIII; Savoy 8; Young 48

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** The accounts of the crucifixion. Matthew 26:1-27:56; Mark 14:1-15:41; Luke 22:39-23:49; John 18:1-19:37

**Support Passages:** Psalm 16:10, 68:18; Acts 2:22-28, 4:23-28, 13:32-37; Ephesians 4:9; I Peter 3:18-19

**BIBLE STORY**

The crucifixion of Christ taken from the passages above

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:19-20, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

The crucifixion of Christ becomes ours when by faith we receive Him as Lord, and when we truly repent from our sins. Then we are crucified with Him.

## SUMMARY

It is not difficult at all to understand the humiliation of crucifixion. A criminal would be taken to a public place, sometimes beaten and then tied to a pole, stripped of his clothing and raised up above shoulder height for all to see. In the case of the Lord Jesus, however, the crucifixion was all the more humiliating for He was nailed to the cross. He was treated much more roughly than the common criminal would be. He was not only taken before Pilate, the Roman civil governor, but He was also taken before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish religious government composed of Pharisees, Sadducees, and Scribes. There He was spit upon, beaten with fists and slapped. He was dreadfully mocked for He was asked to prophesy concerning the identity of His tormentors, which in effect was treating Him as if He were a common fortune teller or oracle. "He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11).

"Our standards specify 'the wrath of God,' as a distinct particular of the burden of sorrow which Christ, for our sakes, humbled Himself to bear. The word wrath is the familiar Scriptural term to express any manifestation of the displeasure of God against sin. Christ, although in Himself perfectly holy, bore our sins. He was 'made sin' (II Corinthians 5:21); or, treated as a sinner. He was 'numbered with the transgressors' (Isaiah 53:12), not only in the judgment of men, but in the dealing of God with His soul when He stood in the place of sinners. Such Psalms as the sixteenth, fortieth, and especially the twenty-second, which treat of the sufferings of the Messiah, represent Him as passing through all the experiences consequent on the punishment of sin, save those which have their source in the sinfulness of the sufferer. We therefore find that even such language as that in Psalm 40:12, 'Innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more than the hairs of mine head; therefore my heart faileth me,' may not inappropriately be taken as the language of His holy soul .

The words uttered by our Lord upon the cross, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' show that He was suffering under the hiding of His Father's face. What that experience was it is impossible for us to understand. Yet as in other cases He suffered anxiety, fear, a sinking of the heart, and other natural states of mind incident to the circumstances in which He was placed; so also He suffered all that a holy being could suffer that was enduring the divinely appointed penalty for sin, which penalty He sustained for His people. Into the relation between His divine and human nature as revealed in these experiences, it is in vain for us to inquire. As that relation was consistent with His human nature's being ignorant, with its progressive development, with all its natural affections, with its feeling apprehension in the presence of danger, and dread in the prospect of death , so it was consistent with the feeling of depression and anguish under the obscuration of the favor of God. As the sufferings of Christ were not merely the pains of martyrdom, but were judicially inflicted in satisfaction of justice, they produced the effect due to their specific character.

This of course does not imply that our Lord suffered as the finally impenitent suffer. Their sufferings are determined by their subjective state. The

loss of the divine favor produces in them hatred, venting itself in blasphemies (Revelation 16:1--11), but in Christ it produced the most earnest longing after the light of God's countenance, and entire submission, in the midst of the depressing and overwhelming darkness." <sup>1</sup>

It is with much more difficulty that we approach the nature of Christ's state of being between His death and resurrection. We must agree with many reformed writers that His descent into hell (Hades) should be conceived as His lying in the grave under the power of death for three days. The phrase found in the Apostles Creed, namely, "He descended into hell," is not found in Scripture. It was introduced much later in the fourth century and then only in the creed. We must steadfastly resist the Roman Catholic notion that Christ entered hell during this period and led the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, etc., into heaven. We must reject the doctrine of purgatory as being ungodly and unbiblical. While it is true that David's bones were in the grave (Acts 2) nevertheless his spirit returned to God and was not in purgatory but heaven (Ecclesiastes 12:7, II Corinthians 5:1-10). Did not Jesus Himself promise the penitent thief that he would that very day be with him in paradise?

The word for hell used in Acts 2:27 is not the word for eternal fire, but simply the unseen world beyond death. The passage in I Peter, though very difficult (3:18) means that Christ preached to sinners in the days of Noah who are now in hell because they did not repent. This has no reference to Jesus' death.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965, Vol. II, p. 614

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the nature of Christ's exaltation in His resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Wherein consists Christ's exaltation?
- A. Christ's exaltation consists in His rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.

S.C. 28; L.C. 51-53; W.C. of F. VIII, XXXII; Savoy 8, 32; Young 68

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Acts 1:1-11

**Support Passages:** Matthew 27:62-28:20; Mark 15:42-16:20; Luke 23:50-24:53; John 19:38-21:25; I Corinthians 15:1-11; I Timothy 3:16

**BIBLE STORY**

The resurrection of Christ from one of the gospels.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.'" (Acts 1:8, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

We are to be witnesses to the world of the risen, glorified Christ.

## SUMMARY

"There is abundant Scriptural proof for the exaltation of Christ. The gospel story clearly shows us that the humiliation of Christ was followed by His exaltation. The classical passage to prove the latter is found in Philippians 2 "Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11, ESV) But in addition to this there are several others, such as Mark 16:19; Luke 24:26; John 7:39; Acts 2:33, 5:31; Romans 8:17, 34; Ephesians 1:20, 4:10; I Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:3, 2:9, 10:12. There is a close connection between the two states. The state of exaltation must be regarded as the judicial result of the state of humiliation. In His capacity as Mediator Christ met the demands of the law in its federal and penal aspects, paying the penalty of sin and meriting everlasting life. Therefore His justification had to follow and He had to be put in possession of the reward. Since He was a public person and accomplished His work publicly, justice required that the exaltation should also be a public matter. The exaltation of Christ has a threefold significance. Each one of the stages was a virtual declaration of God that Christ had met the demands of the law, and was therefore entitled to His reward. The first two stages also had exemplary significance, since they symbolized what will take place in the life of believers. And, finally, all four stages were destined to be instrumental in the perfect glorification of believers." <sup>1</sup>

Thus begins Dr. Berkhof in his excellent treatment of this subject. Many of the Scriptures that he adduces, we have already been acquainted with but it will be helpful to review the Philippians passage in particular. The four stages of Jesus exaltation are given in the Larger Catechism in the answer to question 50 but we see them also in the Shorter Catechism question for this lesson. We shall consider the first two in this lesson and study the third and fourth separately in the next lessons.

There have been many attempts to do away with the resurrection of Christ and for many different reasons. In the main it is due to the supernatural or miraculous nature of the resurrection that modernists reject it as they do all the miracles of the Bible. But at the outset it is obvious that any attempt to deny the resurrection of Christ must also deny the blessed hope of the Christian which is the second coming of Christ. It is also to deny the possibility of one's own resurrection for if Christ is not raised from the dead neither shall we. For this reason Paul writes, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless" (I Corinthians 15:17).

Some of the theories that attempt to do away with the resurrection are (1), that Christ swooned on the cross as the result of ingesting the vinegar and gall

and did not really die, (2) that the whole thing was a lie, trumped up by the disciples who took His body from the cross, (3) that Christ's appearances after his death were really visions and not flesh appearances, and (4) that the stories arise from mythology to which the Greeks were so addicted. With knowledge of the biblical accounts in the gospels of the resurrection we may reject these theories quite easily. A belief in the literal interpretation of scripture is what is required. The lie according to Scripture was not the fact of the resurrection but that His disciples "came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep" (Matthew 28:11ff).

Luke (who wrote the Acts) claims that Christ presented Himself alive by many convincing proofs to hundreds of His disciples over a period of forty days. These proofs are set out for us in the gospel accounts of the resurrection and also by Paul in the support passages for this lesson. Luke writes that after these forty days of appearances, Jesus gathered His disciples together and while they were looking on He was lifted up and a cloud received Him (Acts 1). He was taken up in the flesh, that is, with His resurrected body, which was the same one that suffered and died on the cross (Luke 24:39ff, John 20:26ff), in which body Jesus is at the right hand of Majesty, and in which He will return at the last day.

This body had flesh and bones and yet it was no longer subject to death nor to any of the miseries of this life. In bodies like His glorious body, we shall be raised when He returns. He will come back in just the same way as He was seen to go into heaven, in the clouds and glorious (I Thessalonians 4:17). Statements to this effect in places such as Matthew 24:30 do not apply to His second coming but to His Messianic appearance for they are really quotes of the Old Testament (e.g. Daniel 7:13-14). His Messianic kingdom continues to be so. After all, this is the meaning of the exaltation of Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> L. Berkhof, Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962, p. 344ff.

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the nature of Christ's exaltation in His sitting at God's right hand and interceding for us.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Wherein consists Christ's exaltation?
- A. Christ's exaltation consists in His rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.
- S.C. 28; L.C. 51-53; W.C. of F. VIII, XXXII; Savoy 8, 32; Young 68

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Revelation 1

**Support Passages:** Psalm 110:1 and its quotes in Matthew 22:44, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42; Matthew 26:64; Mark 14:62, 16:19; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33-34, 5:30-32; Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 10:12-14; I Peter 3:22

**BIBLE STORY**

Acts 7:54-60; The stoning of Stephen and his vision of the Lord.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God." (Colossians 3:1, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Since Jesus has risen indeed from the dead, and we serve a real and living King, let us not be slow or lax about seeking the real things of God.

## SUMMARY

We have already studied the kingly office of Jesus in lessons 30, 35, 36, and 37, therefore in this lesson we shall confine ourselves to the nature of His exaltation in His sitting at God's right hand.

First of all let us determine that sitting at the right hand of God is exalting. Speaking of Jesus, *"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,"* (Hebrews 1:3, ESV). We are saved, *"-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him."* (1 Peter 3:21-22, ESV). In these two passages the seat at God's right hand is directly connected with the rule of kingship, being the present work of Christ. At the right hand of God, Jesus is not inactive, for as Paul writes, *"Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us."* (Romans 8:34, ESV) This concept of Christ's sitting at God's right hand, which comes from Psalm 110:1, is exalting because it is the position of kingship, moreover, it is exalting because the context about each of the passages in which such an estate is mentioned is exalting to Christ.

Nowhere is there a more sublime picture of Christ than in John's vision in Revelation chapter 1. Seven Spirits are said to be before the throne of, "Him who is, and who was, and who is to come" (verse 4). This same one is said to be the "Lord God," the "Alpha and the Omega" (the first and last letters in the Greek alphabet) and "The Almighty" (verse 8). He who is "the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead" (i.e. the best example of the dead who have been raised) is ruler of the kings of the earth and has made us to be a kingdom (past tense) etc. (verses 5-6). The phrase, "Behold He is coming in the clouds," is a Hebrew idiom that means that the coming one is powerful (e.g. Isaiah 19:1). Now it is obvious that each of these verses or phrases refer to Christ for the rest of verse 7 speaks of Him who was pierced. The Jews who pierced Him and all the tribes of the earth began to see Jesus in His great power from His death to this very day and when He comes the second time all eyes will have seen Him. People everywhere will have repented and mourned over Him and over the dreadful sins that they have committed against the Savior.

Take note of the glorious Jesus in Revelation 1:13-18.

He is "one like a son of man" (compare Daniel 7:13-14).

He is "clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breasts with a golden girdle" (the attire of a king).

"And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow, and His eyes were like a flame of fire; and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters" (Jesus is glorious and powerful indeed).

"And in His right hand He held seven stars" (He provides for and protects His church).

"And out of His mouth came a sharp two edged sword" (which is the word of God).

"And His face was like the sun shining in its strength."

He said, "I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

This is a vision of Jesus as He is now, and His words are directed to churches in Asia Minor that existed in the days of John to whom the vision came. This is a vision of Jesus who is said elsewhere to be at the right hand of God, of the Majesty on high. We must not hesitate to obey so glorious a being as this, nor fail to fall at His feet in worship. He is Jesus our risen King.

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the exaltation of Christ in His coming to judge the world at the last day.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Wherein consists Christ's exaltation?
- A. Christ's exaltation consists in His rising again from the dead on the third day, in ascending into heaven, in sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and in coming to judge the world at the last day.

S.C. 28; L.C. 56; W.C. of F. XXXIII; Savoy 32; Young 138-139

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** John 5:19-29

**Support Passages:** Support Passages: Matthew 13:36-43, 25:31-46; Acts 10:34-43, 17:30-31; Romans 2:1-8; II Corinthians 5:10; II Thessalonians 1; Hebrews 9:27-28; II Peter 3; Revelation 20-22

### **BIBLE STORY**

John 11:17-44; The raising of Lazarus and our Lord's teaching concerning the last day.

### **.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." (2 Corinthians 5:10, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Since all of us must be judged for our sins by the glorious and powerful Jesus Christ, we must be found in Him as His people or be cast into hell for eternity.

## SUMMARY

In this final lesson on the exaltation of Christ our thoughts are turned to His second coming when He will judge the world in righteousness on the last day. That this event will be supremely exalting to our Savior hardly needs further comment. Jesus, who will judge all mankind, must therefore occupy a position of authority to do so and He must be perfectly righteous in order to render perfectly just judgments'. The fact that Jesus has been given all judgment is a divine honor as He Himself has said (John 5:22-23).

In order to give some perspective to this coming event let us consider the following outline of history:

- I. Before Christ.
  - A. Periods of blessing and apostasy.
  - B. With few exceptions the Jews only are called.
  
- II. Between Christ's first and second coming.
  - A. Periods of blessing and apostasy.
  - B. Gentiles are now in the main called.
  - C. The fullness of the Gentiles comes in.
  - D. The Jews are no longer hardened.
  - E. A great but short apostasy.
  - F. Jesus' second coming.
  - G. Resurrection of the just and unjust.
  - H. Judgment of all mankind.
  
- III. The eternal State.
  - A. The estate of souls and changed bodies.
  - B. The new heavens and the new earth.

The Bible as history is a record of periods of revival and its accompanying blessings, and periods of turning away from the Lord or apostasy. This is the characteristic of history rather than general worsening or general bettering. It is therefore in keeping with the record of Scripture and the data of history to expect more periods of revival and apostasy, culminating in the last periods of revival and apostasy outlined in Romans 11, II Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 20. The characteristics of the final period are foretold by many of the prophets, for example, Isaiah 11 and Micah 4.

Concerning the coming of Christ to judge the world, the Bible consistently declares that this is the only future coming of the Lord, that both the just and the unjust will be resurrected on that day and that both groups of people will be judged. Those found in Christ will go to eternal glory or what is known as the final state of bliss, but those who are not written in the Lamb's book of life will be cast into the lake of fire. The only portion of Scripture that speaks of both resurrections (and two deaths) is Revelation 20 but the first resurrection spoken of there cannot be a physical or literal resurrection.

Furthermore, it only applies to martyrs who have not received the mark of the beast spoken of in Revelation 13:17-18. The mark of the beast is most likely a special permission to buy or sell granted by Nero as head of the Roman government. It is of some interest that the calculation of the Hebrew numerical value of Caesar Nero is 616 but it is 666 for the Aramaic form, Caesar Neron. Indeed, some early Greek manuscripts have 616 and others have 666. In addition, John sees the souls of these martyrs in heaven. The first resurrection, therefore, is spiritual and probably refers to a special state of bliss, in the intermediate state, of these martyrs.

We must note also that the New Heavens and the New Earth, according to Peter are not just a fixed up version of this present universe and earth. These, he says, are being reserved for fire, kept for the Day of Judgment and the destruction of ungodly men. These will be destroyed with intense heat and by burning. The day of the Lord is said by Peter to coincide with this final destruction. Since this is so we are to be a holy and godly people looking for that Day of Judgment. We are to work hard to establish the New Heavens and the New Earth now embodied in the Church culminating in the eternal state in heaven.

Let us also note the teaching of Jesus in John 5:28-29. Without question, when Jesus returns the second time, all who are in the graves will hear His voice. Some will be resurrected to life and others to judgment. Jesus therefore teaches us that both types of people will be resurrected at the same time, at the hour when they hear His voice. This indeed will be the day when we shall see the Son of God in all His glory and those of us in Christ will be glorified with Him forever.



### **TEACHING GOAL**

To show that no one can partake of redemption apart from the work of God, the Holy Spirit.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ?
- A. We are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ, by the effectual application of it to us by His Holy Spirit.
- S.C. 29; L.C. 57-61; W.C. of F. XXV, IX, X; Savoy 26, 9, 10; Young 58-59

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Hebrews 5:11-6:12

**Support Passages:** Support Passages: Matthew 7:15-23, 13:1-23, 22:1-14; Romans 2:17-3:8, 9:6-13, 11:1-10; I Corinthians 2-6-16; II Timothy 2:14-21; Titus 3:4-7

### **BIBLE STORY**

Acts 5:1-11; Ananias and Saphira are examples of those who are outwardly members of the saved community and yet do not have the characteristics of repentance unto life.

### **.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 7:21, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

We are hereby exhorted to take heed to the condition of our hearts. If we are not truly repentant, if our membership in the body of Christ is superficial, let us repent in truth before the Lord of Lords declares, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”

## SUMMARY

To this point the Catechism has led us through the doctrines of the written word of God, and the nature of God and His decrees expressed in His acts of creation and providence. We have also studied the doctrines of sin, the covenants of God and the nature of Christ as Redeemer. Now we shall examine the application of redemption to sinners.

The Catechism question for this week informs us that there is no possibility of being saved (one of the benefits of redemption) apart from the work of God the Holy Spirit. As a matter of fact, no benefit of redemption is available to anyone, apart from a direct and powerful act of God in each individual to whom they are applied, through His Spirit. Even though people have been endowed by God with minds that can reason and differentiate between good and evil (the animals cannot do this), people cannot and will not in their own free will repent and believe on Christ for salvation. What is required is the direct and powerful work of the Holy Spirit in the individual before true repentance will occur and apparently God does not act in such a manner in everybody.

The study passage, Hebrews 5:11-6:12, teaches us that it is possible to be quite intimate with the benefits of redemption without having them powerfully applied by the Holy Spirit. Many reliable commentators differ in their interpretation of this passage mainly with the spiritual condition of the people of whom it speaks. One thing is certain, these are Hebrew people who claim to be Christians but have no noticeable growth for they "have become dull of hearing." When they should have been teachers they are still babes. They are like the vineyard in Isaiah's Song (Isaiah 5) which was well cultivated, fertilized, and protected, but instead of good fruit, it brought forth worthless ones. They are like ground that has drunk in God's rain but instead of useful vegetation it has yielded thorns and thistles (Hebrews 6:7-8). It is therefore possible that they have fallen away from an intimacy with the benefits of redemption because they were not powerfully applied by the Holy Spirit.

While this seems to be quite clear, it is verse 6 that presents the real difficulty. Paul writes (in the Greek text), "it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, **while they again crucify** to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame." Now the only sin for which there is no pardon is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. This text does not refer to the unpardonable sin, but to a hindrance to repentance. No one can truly repent unless these hindrances are removed. On the other hand the word *impossible* refers to the impotency of human beings to renew sinners to repentance; only God can do such things. These who have fallen away are re-crucifying to themselves the Son of God and putting Him to open shame and so long as they do this they certainly can have no assurance of salvation and may well wind up in the fires of hell. Paul here teaches that human beings are not able in themselves to correct this wretched situation; only God can do such things.

Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5) prove this point as well, for outwardly they were members of the saved community having heard the gospel and seeming to respond to it. But then they sinned so dreadfully against the Holy Spirit. Because this was a period of great revival and presence of the Holy Spirit their sin was much more heinous. Their behavior was certainly not typical of those to whom the Spirit had applied the benefits of redemption. It is as our Lord stated (Matthew 7:21), "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of heaven."

The Titus passage (3:4-7) teaches directly that God our Savior saved us by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus. Justification (a benefit of redemption) is God's work and not ours.

Furthermore, Paul compares the visible church to a great house (II Timothy 2:14-21) which contains many types of vessels, some for honorable use and some for dishonorable use (cf. Romans 9:21). Hymenaeus and Philetus were dishonorable vessels yet were in the great house. It is God who saves us and not our works (II Timothy 1:9). The same may be said for the parable of the sower or the parable of the wheat and tares or Paul's statements about Israel in the Romans passages (2:28-29, 9:6-7, 11:5-7). No one can partake of the benefits of redemption apart from the work of God the Holy Spirit. They may approach it and seemingly partake of it, yet apart from the Spirit it never comes to fruition.

**TEACHING GOAL**

Examine the nature of our union with Christ and thus the nature of the invisible and visible church.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. How does the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?

A. The Spirit applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ, by working faith in us, and thereby uniting us to Christ in our effectual calling.

S.C. 30, L.C. 62-69, W.C. of F. IX, X, XXV, Savoy 9, 10, 2, Young 58, 59

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** John 15:1-11

**Support Passages:** Support Passages: II Timothy 2:11-13, Romans 6:3-11, Galatians 2:20, I Corinthians 6:15-17, Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:4-6, 20-22, 4:15-16, 5:29-30, John 14:20

**BIBLE STORY**

Exodus 28: The people were not allowed to enter into the Holy of Holies, but Aaron bore their names into God's presence in the Ephod as their federal representative. It is the Old Testament type of our federal union with Christ.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Abide or be burned. Those who are truly in union with Christ, by his grace, will abide in the vine. Let us note that abiding in Christ is related to commandment keeping.

## SUMMARY

We are told that the Holy Spirit brings us into union with Christ by working faith in us. We shall study this aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit when we take up the study of effectual calling but this lesson is concerned with the nature of our union to Christ. We have also observed that unless the Holy Spirit applies the benefits of redemption to sinners, no matter how intimate with Jesus they may seem, they will ultimately fall away into eternal fire. We have also observed that the visible church is composed of many who are redeemed and others who only appear to be so.

The Lord Jesus compares the church to a grape vine (John 15), in which many branches bear grapes because they are alive and are connected to the vine in a viable manner. Other branches are also connected to the vine but are dead and not viable. The difference between a living union and a dead one is seen in the fruit, or grapes, and not more branches. The fruit is characterized by commandment keeping and whereas we are no longer related to the law as a tutor to lead us to Christ, since the Holy Spirit applied the benefit of saving faith to us, now we delight to obey the law to please our God and Savior. The result of union with Christ is a living branch that has been changed, made a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. The branch now bears fruit; it delights in the law of God and meditates in it day and night. Such branches are said to be in Christ, members of His body, one flesh and one Spirit with Him and now we are even reigning with Him. This is called the mystical union because its depth and riches are so far beyond our understanding, and the workings of the Holy Spirit who effects them is supernatural and mysterious. Christ is the head of His body, and His church is His bride.

The high priest is a rich type of our union with Christ. Aaron represented his people before God; he carried the blood into the Holy of Holies, which only he could do, and sprinkled it upon the Mercy Seat. Thus it is just as if the people had done so for themselves because Aaron represented them. This union of Aaron and the people whom he represented is beautifully pictured in the twelve jeweled breast plate and the engraved shoulder stones which Aaron carried into the presence of God. Greatly should we praise God; we who have been so unified with Christ, by His grace.

But there is a dire warning for those to whom saving faith has not yet been applied, to those who are dead branches, who are superficially connected to Christ the vine. Such are pruned out, dried, and gathered for everlasting fire. We must search our hearts to examine the nature of our union with Christ, for we must abide in Him or be burned.

Such is the picture of the visible church. It is composed of wheat and weeds, of fruit-bearing branches intermingled with dead ones. But scripture also pictures the church as all of the elect; as those who have already gone to be with the Lord, those who in this life are truly unified with Christ and those elect persons yet to be born. There are no weeds in this group, the invisible church;

there are no dead branches. We are careful to notice that members of the invisible church are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. (John 15:3) The act of abiding in Christ is only possible to those who are living branches for the branch cannot bear fruit of itself and as Jesus said, "apart from Me you can do nothing." Only by the gracious act of God the Holy Spirit are the branches made alive but this will be the topic of our next study.

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To understand the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit in calling the elect into the kingdom of Christ.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What is effectual calling?
- A. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convicting us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.

S.C. 31, L.C. 67-69, W.C. of F. X, Savoy 10, Young 58, 59

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Ephesians 2:1-10

**Support Passages:** Acts 26:14, Romans 8:28-30, John 3:5-8, Acts 28:23-28, Ezekiel 36:25-28, I Corinthians 1:22-25, II Thessalonians 2:13&14

### **BIBLE STORY**

Acts 10: Cornelius was prepared by God to receive the gospel from Peter. Thus did God call the gentile Cornelius and his household into the kingdom of His Son.

### **.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified." (Romans 8:29-30, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

The attempt to save ourselves or to merit eternal life by our behavior is utterly futile, and if at the outset we have saving faith in Christ, let it be known that it is the work of God's Spirit.

## SUMMARY

There appears to be a certain set of events that must occur in an individual's behalf, in order for that person to obtain eternal life. Theologians refer to this as the *Ordo Salutis* or the order of salvation. (The Latin word *ordo* refers to a methodical arrangement and *salutis* means salvation) Perhaps the best text to demonstrate that order of events, especially in reformed circles, is Romans 8:29 and 30. There we find that those who are the objects of God's saving grace are: (1) Foreknown; (2) Predestined; (3) Called; (4) Justified; (5) Glorified. The first two have been discussed in lesson 10 on the Decrees of God and the rest are shortly to be dealt with. This lesson concerns number three, namely, the work of the Holy Spirit in calling the elect into the kingdom of God.

This work of the Holy Spirit is taught by Paul in Ephesians chapter 2. There he compares the unsaved person to a dead man. Incapable of doing any spiritual good, in total bondage to the devil, an enemy of God, the unsaved person is completely hopeless and helpless. There is not the faintest spark of spiritual goodness in him and he cannot enter the kingdom of God nor does he care to. This is the description of the unsaved person though he be the best, most noble, most cultured, most refined and most philanthropic person on earth. In order to be saved we must be given "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him", and ... "our hearts must be enlightened." (Ephesians 1:17 & 18) In short we must be made spiritually alive (Ephesians 2:5) and in this process the spiritually dead man is completely passive. That is to say, he can do nothing and does nothing with regard to his salvation.

God's electing and seeking love alone can make those who are dead in their trespasses and sins, alive. At the outset the one who has been saved is the workmanship of God and has been gifted with salvation which includes all that is necessary to save. It includes the Redeemer and God's act of calling the sinner out of a condition of death, and the gift includes faith, for Paul writes "you have been saved through faith." <sup>1</sup> God would have us know that not one single step in our salvation was accomplished by man, not even our faith. If at any point we could say "I produced the faith" or "I cooperated with grace", then we could not say we were the workmanship of God.

The Holy Spirit opened the heart of Lydia (Acts 16:14) so that she responded to Paul's message. No one with deaf ears or blind eyes or a sin hardened and deadened heart can ever savingly respond to the gospel apart from regeneration by the Holy Spirit, as was the case with Lydia. The story of

Cornelius also teaches this truth (Acts 10). He already had a rudimentary faith in God for God had opened his heart to truth and when Peter preached the gospel to him, he savingly received it and as evidence the Holy Spirit fell upon him.

We learn from all this that if we hope for heaven because we have been good or have done good things for people (which of course we ought to do), then we are living in great delusion. Let us repent and believe on Jesus Christ as our sacrifice and LORD (YAHWEH), realizing that if we do this in a saving way it arises from the effectual calling of God's Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> For those with a bent for detail - the Greek word for *that* in the second clause of verse 8 (*that* not of yourselves) is *touto*, a pronoun which is neuter singular nominative. It does not have faith (*pistis*) as its antecedent since *pistis* is a feminine noun. *Touto* has an implied antecedent namely the whole complex of events, including faith, necessary to save us.

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To understand the necessity for the effectual calling of God's Spirit.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What benefits do they that are effectually called partake of in this life?
- A. They that are effectually called do in this life partake of justification, adoption and sanctification, and the various benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them.

S.C. 32, L.C. 68-69, W.C. of F. X, Savoy 10, Young 58, 59

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** John 6:41-71

**Support Passages:** Romans 8:1-11, John 5:41-47, Ephesians 4:17-19, Hebrews 3:7-13, Romans 3:9-18, II Timothy 3:2-4

### **BIBLE STORY**

II Samuel 9: The story of David and Mephibosheth illustrates the bondage of sin and the necessity of the sovereign act of God to bring one out of this condition into the covenantal blessings.

### **.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:44, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Let us thank God with our lips and the services of our lives for drawing us into the saving benefits of redemption by His sovereign power, for we are drawn into the kingdom of King Jesus.

## SUMMARY

We have learned that the effectual calling of God's Spirit is part of the *Ordo Salutis*. Because of this, effectual calling is directly related to predestination (election) and justification, etc. It is God's means of bringing His people into the kingdom of Christ and apart from this activity of the Spirit it is not possible to be saved. One of the basic reasons why such an act of God is necessary is that we are in total bondage to sin, being completely unable to either save ourselves or even approach God for salvation. We cannot in ourselves make the first or smallest movement toward the cross.

The doctrine of Total Depravity was very prominent in the Reformation as witnessed by Luther:

“You make the power of *Free-will* to be --that certain small degree of power, which, without the grace of God, is utterly ineffective.“

“Do you not acknowledge this? - Now then, I ask and demand of you, if the grace of God be wanting, or, if it be taken away from the certain small degree of power, what can it do of itself? 'It is ineffective (you say) and can do nothing of good.' Therefore, it cannot do what God or His grace wills. And why? because we have now separated the grace of God from it; and what the grace of God does not, is not good. And hence it follows, that *Free-will*, without the grace of God is, absolutely, not free; but, immutably, the servant and bond-slave of evil; because, it cannot turn itself unto good. This being determined, I will allow you to make the power of *Free-will*, not only a certain small degree of power, but to make it evangelical if you will, or, if you can, to make it divine: provided that, you add to this doleful appendage - that, without the grace of God, it is ineffective. Because, then you will at once take from it all power: for, what is ineffective power, but plainly, no power at all.”

And Calvin:

“Wherefore those who have defined original sin as a privation of the original righteousness, which we ought to possess, though they comprise the whole of the subject, yet have not used language sufficiently expressive of its operation and influence. For our nature is not only destitute of all good, but is so fertile in all evils that it cannot remain inactive. Those that have called it concupiscence have not used an expression improper, if it were only added, which is far from being conceded by most persons, that everything in man, the understanding and will, the soul and body, is polluted and engrossed by this concupiscence; or, to express it more briefly, that man is of himself nothing else but concupiscence....”

The text in John 6, which is our study passage, states directly that no one can come to Jesus (for salvation) unless the Father draws him. Now the word *draws* translates the Greek word *hēlukasai* but it is really much stronger than that. It is used, for example, in Acts 21:30 to speak of Paul dragged out of the temple. It also is used in connection with the act of dragging in a net of fish. Conceptually, we see it in Lot, unwilling to leave Sodom, having to be dragged

out of the city of sin. So it is here. It is not just that the Father draws us with the cords of love, but He drags us against our natural will. Verse 65 uses another term for it - a grant from the Father is required in order to come to Jesus for salvation. The intimacy of the relationship pictured here in the eating of Jesus' flesh and drinking His blood is totally impossible apart from the effectual calling (dragging) of the Holy Spirit, for apart from this vital and intimate relationship with Jesus no one can be saved.

When we understand the state of sin in which we are all naturally found (Romans 3:10-18); that we are dead, in darkness; that we do not have love for God in us (John 5:42); that we who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:8); futile of mind, darkened in understanding, excluded from the life of God, ignorant and hard of heart (Ephesians 4:17-18); when we see ourselves as completely evil and unbelieving (Hebrews 3:12), and then we begin to understand the necessity for electing love through the means of the effectual calling of God's Spirit. We need to praise God for His grace in saving us who are His people. We need to praise God not only with our lips but with obedient lives that radiate His grace and that openly love Him who first loved us.

"When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them." (Hosea 11:1-4, ESV)



### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the element of pardon in the doctrine of Justification.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is Justification?

A. Justification is an act of God's free grace wherein He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

S.C. 33, L.C. 70-73, W.C. of F. XI, Savoy 11, Young 50

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Romans 5:1-11

**Support Passages:** Romans 3:24-25, 4:5-6, James 2:21-25, II Corinthians 5:11-21, Galatians 2:15-18, Titus 3:5-7, Colossians 1:19-23, Isaiah 44:22-23

### **BIBLE STORY**

II Samuel 12:1-28, Psalm 51: David prays to be pardoned from his sin by a gracious act of God. David realizes that cannot reconcile himself to God but that God must act to reconcile Himself to David.

### **.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," (Romans 3:23-24, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

The only way to have peace with God, to be reconciled to Him is through His own gracious act toward wretched sinners such as we all. This alone is the peace that surpasses all comprehension.

## SUMMARY

Justification by faith alone is one of the central issues of the Protestant Reformation, the sole authority of the Scriptures being another. We sharply disagree with Roman Catholicism at this point and with many others, for example, the Mass. We will even disagree with Lutheran theology on the issue of Justification so far as its application is concerned. Let us, however, draw out the disagreement with Roman Catholic theology which will help us understand the nature of Justification from the biblical and Reformed viewpoint.

Roman Catholic theology sees justification as a combination of the pardon of our sins, the expulsion of in-dwelling sin and the infusion of divine grace. We of Reformed persuasion see it as a legal act of God involving the pardon of our sin and putting to our account the righteousness of Christ. We do not see it as anything inward or subjective nor as anything that changes us. If justification is an external legal act of God, then it only comes about by His grace, by His sovereign act in our behalf. As soon as we begin to concede that the inward man is involved, then this inward man gains some control over the process of justification working more or less for his own benefit. We also disagree that justification is a process but we say, rather, that it is an act.

Some have likened God's act of justification to the act of a judge who pardons the sin of a criminal. The criminal deserves the gas chamber but the judge declares that his sin of murder is pardoned and sets him free but this only explains our view of justification in part. Remember that there are two parts to it, pardon and imputation. The criminal who is merely pardoned and set free still has his reputation. He would find it difficult to obtain employment or to be accepted by society or by his family and friends, because people would fear him by virtue of his reputation. Now God the righteous judge not only pardons our sin but gives us a new reputation. Not the old reputation which has been changed but he gives to us the reputation of the Lord Jesus. God puts the righteousness of Christ to our account. If we insist on using the catch phrase just - as - if - I'd - never - sinned to state the meaning of justification in popular terms, we must add in the - first - place to capture the concept of imputation.

The real question must of course be, is our view biblical? Paul instructs us that by means of justification we have peace with God, hope of the glory of God, salvation from the wrath of God and reconciliation to God. (Romans 5) These are some of the elements of biblical pardon. When Nathan confronted David with the parable of the rich man and the poor man, "Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.'" (2 Samuel 12:5-6, ESV)

Biblical pardon also involves restitution and satisfaction which for sinners chosen by God, is carried out for them by the blood of Christ. We must observe that all of these elements of justification are provided by the declaration of God and the blood of Christ. None of them result from our own action or by means

of our own inward cleansing. Examine the other passages suggested to support this thesis. Nowhere will you find that the term justification is used in connection with the inward man. Again Paul tells us that we are justified through Christ (not anything inside us), Galatians 2:16ff tells us that we are justified by faith in Christ not by the works of the law (or something inward). Colossians 1:20 tells us that we are reconciled through the blood of His cross in His fleshly body through death (not through an inward experience). But consider these questions:

1. Do you believe that the grace of God in your heart is able to make you acceptable in the sight of God?
2. Do you believe that Christ as a divine person can dwell in your heart?
3. Do you believe that the in-dwelling of Christ can make your good works entirely acceptable to God?

If you answered any of these questions with "yes" then you still do not understand the biblical principle of justification. We are justified by the grace of God in Christ, not by the grace of God in our hearts. Christ is an objective person who is seated at the right hand of God in heaven, by whose righteousness we are justified.

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the element of imputation in the doctrine of Justification.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is Justification?

A. Justification is an act of God's free grace wherein He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

S.C. 33, L.C. 70-73, W.C. of F. XI, Savoy 11, Young 50

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Romans 5:12-21

**Support Passages:** Romans 4:1-9, Psalm 32:1-2, Philippians 3:8-12, I Corinthians 1:30-31, II Corinthians 5:21

**BIBLE STORY**

Philemon: Paul asks that Onesimus be treated by Philemon as if he were Paul and that his debt be reckoned to Paul's account. This is a clear example of imputation.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit." (Psalm 32:1-2, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Indeed, we should bless God for His grace in placing the righteousness of His dear Son to our account, where we have none of our own.

## SUMMARY

Imputation is a big word which means (as it is often translated nowadays) to reckon or to place something into the account of someone else, or to credit by transfer. To the scapegoat (Leviticus 16) was transferred the sin of Israel by imputation, symbolized by the priest laying his hands on the head of the animal and sending it out of the camp. In the story of Onesimus (Philemon) the runaway slave, Paul sent him back to his master Philemon, also a Christian, asking that he be received as Philemon would receive Paul himself. Paul wrote, "If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge (*impute*) that to my account." (Philemon 18, ESV)

Justification involves both the pardon for sin (last week's lesson) and the imputation of the obedience (righteousness) of Christ to ones account. We are accepted as righteous, not because we have performed the act of believing in Christ or any other act of obedience to God but only because Christ's righteousness is placed to our account. In other words, justification does not make us holy by changing our lives into holy lives but by making us appear to God as holy when we are not, in fact, holy.

The study text, Romans 5:12-21, claims that Adam is a type of Christ with regard to his sin in the Garden of Eden (verse 14). On the one hand sin is imputed to all people (all referring to those who die physically) and on the other hand, righteousness is imputed to all who receive justification of life (all in this case referring only to those who live spiritually). Adam's sin is visited upon his progeny (that's us!) simply because he was our federal representative in Eden. Similarly, the righteousness of Christ is visited upon His people simply because He was our federal representative on the cross.

We must understand, from this passage, that it is another's righteousness that we receive and not our own. The following is a chart of this comparison between Adam and Christ:

<b>ADAM</b>	<b>CHRIST</b>
To all people including the many	To the elect only the many
Sin, transgression	Free gift of righteousness
Physical death	Reign in life
Condemnation	Justification

The Philippians passage (3:9) is most clear to this point, as Paul writes, "--not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—" (Philippians 3:9, ESV)

It will be helpful to review lesson 18 of this series, wherein we examined Romans 5:12-21 relative to the transmittal of the sinful nature of Adam, from the parent to his children. While Adam's sin is imputed to us, the sinful nature

we receive by birth is subject to a process of degradation and hardening in sin. Similarly, while the righteousness of Christ is imputed to the elect, the new nature we receive at the second birth is subject to a process of sanctification and enlightenment. This is the subject of a lesson to be undertaken shortly.

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the biblical concept of the sonship of believers.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What is Adoption?
- A. Adoption is the act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.

S.C. 34, L.C. 74, W.C. of F. XII, Savoy 12

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Romans 8:12-17

**Support Passages:** Ephesians 1:3-6, II Corinthians 6:18, Hosea 1:10, Revelation 3:12, Galatians 4:1-7, Psalm 103:13, Hebrews 12:6

**BIBLE STORY**

Exodus 2:1-10; Moses received the privileges of the palace of Pharaoh by the kind act of his daughter. One who was not born a son became a son by a gracious command.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." (Romans 8:16-17, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

We bless God for the wonderful benefits of adoption, such as our privilege to the throne of grace and God's protection and chastening and sealing unto the day of redemption. But we long for that day when with our resurrected bodies we shall realize our full inheritance forever with Christ.

## SUMMARY

Those whom God acts to justify, He also acts to adopt into His family of sons. People who were in bondage to sin and sons of darkness were foreknown, predestinated, called, justified and glorified into adoption as sons. Those who were helpless and not sons, were made sons by God's gracious act and given an inheritance to which they were not previously entitled. Adoption, like justification, is a gracious act of God in behalf of sinners. We cannot adopt ourselves into God's family but God must act to adopt us. He does this freely, not because He has to do so. We cannot merit adoption any more than we deserve to be justified.

In Scripture, we find the word adoption referring to an estate of being, into which those who are justified by faith are placed, in which they receive certain benefits, privileges and blessings. Some of these benefits are realized now, in this life, and others only in glory after the resurrection to come.

Romans 8:12-25 mentions both kinds of benefits. In this life we are: (1) led by the Spirit of God, (2) given a spirit of adoption, (3) enabled to call God our father, (*Abba* is Aramaic for the Father which is the term used by Greek and Aramaic Christians in prayer. Rather than treating this term as familiar it should be thought of as proper; similar to our use of Thee and Thou) and, (4) are assured by the Holy Spirit that we are sons.

When our bodies are resurrected: (1) eternal glory will be revealed in us, (2) the rest of creation will be set free from corruption, and (3) our bodies will be redeemed, changed into incorruptible bodies having no curse. Let us notice that all these benefits are the result of an act of God and are not our own doing. The apostle Paul leaves no doubt that we receive adoption as a gracious act of God as he writes, "he **predestined us for adoption** through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will," (Ephesians 1:5, ESV) Other scriptures inform us that we have "boldness and confident access" to God (Ephesians 3:12), "as a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him" (Psalm 103:12); that He protects His children (Proverbs 14:26), chastens them for their good (Hebrews 12:5-10) and seals them for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30).

We bless God for all these wonderful and gracious things that He does for us who are His people but we long for that day of resurrection when we, together with all creation, will be with Christ in glory forever.

**TEACHING GOAL**

Study the process of sanctification and the tremendous battle that ensues to the obtaining of it.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is Sanctification?

A. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness

S.C. 35, L.C. 75, 77-78 W.C. of F. XIII, Savoy 13, Young 51

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Romans 7

**Support Passages:** I Thessalonians 5:23, II Thessalonians 2:13, Romans 6, I Corinthians 6, Philippians 3:1-16, Romans 12:1-2, I Peter 1:13-21

**BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 12-25:11; The life of Abraham, often used as an example of faith and godliness, proves that perfection is impossible even to the greatest of saints.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." (Romans 12:1-2, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Since the old man, the sinful nature, remains in the Christian, we must make a real effort to subdue it and to conform ourselves to Christ.

## SUMMARY

We certainly do not lack for scripture passages that teach the people of God to be holy. Holiness, by the way, is simply another word that means to be sanctified. To be holy is to be separate from sin.

The difference between justification and adoption as opposed to sanctification should be obvious. The former two are acts of God while the latter is a work or process performed by God in the believer. Scripture speaks of this process in two ways, first, as a deadening of the old sinful nature and secondly, as the making alive of the new nature wherein we conform more and more to the nature of Christ.

That these two natures are present in the believer is clearly taught in Romans chapter 7. Roman Catholic theologians, however, as well as many evangelical theologians, teach that Romans 7 speaks of Paul's life before he was converted. But we notice immediately Paul's statement in verse 24, "Wretched man that I am ---" We who are Christians still have the remnants of the body of death (verses 24 and 25) and we serve both the law of God and the law of sin. That the unbeliever cannot serve the law of God at all is clear from statement of Paul, "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot." (Romans 8:7, ESV) Thus we conclude that Paul speaks of his experience as a believer.

As we can see, Paul states the glorious truth that even though believers serve both the law of sin and the law of God, even so, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:1, ESV) Furthermore there is no condition to this truth according to the great majority of Greek texts. (We note here that several minor texts include the phrase. *who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit*)

According to the great majority of Greek texts, there are no ifs, ands or buts to the truth that we are not condemned even though we may fall into sin as Paul often claims to do. Thus Spurgeon comments on this verse that we have "free justification." What a precious jewel is this! Not that we are enjoined to sin and debauch ourselves. God forbid! But even while this process of sanctification is not completed, we are not condemned. (Romans 6)

Speaking of the state of perfection obtained at the resurrection which he has not yet obtained in this life Paul writes, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own." (Philippians 3:12, ESV) The same Greek word translated "*perfect*" in verse 12 is translated "*mature*" in verse 15, "Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you." (Philippians 3:15, ESV) Verse 15 must refer to maturity as it is according to the English Standard Version for Paul has already stated that he is not perfect as he will be at the resurrection from the dead,

We are to be holy, even as God is holy (I Peter 1:16) and surely the holiness of God is central in scripture, for He is holy in all His attributes. Yet

there is a marvelous escape when we sin, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 1:8-2:1, ESV)

Praise God!



**TEACHING GOAL**

Study the nature of the Christian's assurance of salvation.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption and sanctification?
- A. The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption and sanctification are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.

S.C. 36, L.C. 80-81 W.C. of F. XVIII, Savoy 18

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** I John 5

**Support Passages:** I John, particularly 1:6-7, 9; 2:3, 5, 10, 15-17, 19, 23-24, 29; 3:3, 9-10, 14, 24; 4:6, 12-13; III John

**BIBLE STORY**

Luke 15: Parables that illustrate the joy of being sought out and received into the kingdom of God.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:2-3, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

We must thank God for His means of grace whereby we may improve our relationship to Him and experience the joy of His kingdom.

## SUMMARY

It is certainly possible to be assured of entrance into the kingdom of God. Scripture, the sacraments and prayer are the ordinary means to this end. Assurance of salvation is a problem to some Christians but many others believe they are saved when, in fact, they are not, being falsely assured. Certain modern evangelism has seen to that. Justification by faith alone, apart from the deeds of the law, improperly understood can result in the message, "only believe" and can lead to the following line of thought:

"Do you believe that you are a sinner?"

"Yes!"

"Do you believe Christ died for sinners?"

"Yes!"

"Will you receive him as your savior?"

"Yes!"

"Then you are saved?"

"Yes, the Bible says I am saved."

Omitted herein is any reference to repentance unto life and the service demanded by the King. The recruiting sergeant has failed to tell the young recruit of the terrors of battle and the hardship of the new way of life. The result being that when trouble inevitably comes along, the devil readily reclaims his own.

John, in the study passage, gives us the real basis for assurance as he writes, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments." (1 John 5:2, ESV) Along with verses one and three we learn that true believers observe the commandments of God which involve love for King Jesus and love for His kingdom. One of the signs of true repentance, therefore, is delight in the law and precepts of God. In addition, the in-dwelling Holy Spirit witnesses to us, who truly believe, that we have the Son of God and life eternal. Finally, there is a perceptible change such that the true believer no longer pursues a manner of living that is characterized by sin.

John characterizes our new life styles by confession of sin (I John 1:9), love for the brethren (2:10, 3:14), loathing of worldliness (2:15-17), the practice of righteousness (2:29), purity (3:3), listening to the word of God (4:6) and the doing of good (III John 11). Where these characteristics are seen, there is the basis for a good measure of assurance of salvation.

Some Christians never seem to enjoy the blessing of assurance. William Cowper, the author of such hymns as *There is a Fountain Filled with Blood*, and *God Moves in a Mysterious Way, His Wonders to Perform*, one of the great hymn writers in the English speaking world, was afflicted with long periods of depression during which he was literally overcome by his consciousness of sin

and despaired of his salvation. For much of his life, as a child of God, he lived in the terror of going to the flames of hell forever.

Happily, most Christians seem to experience the joy of the Lord expressed in the Lost Son who returned home, or the Coin That Was Found, or the Lost Sheep That Was Found.

**TEACHING GOAL**

Study the preservation by God of His people and the reason for their perseverance.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?
- A. The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption and sanctification are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.

S.C. 36, L.C. 80-81 W.C. of F. XVII, Savoy 17

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Romans 8:26-39

**Support Passages:** 1 Peter 1:3-9, John 10:27-30, Philippians 1:6, 2 Peter 1:5-11, John 17, Hebrews 9:13-15

**BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 47:13-26, 50:20; God preserved His people through a great famine by His sovereign power.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

" What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:31-32, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

While it is true that God surely preserves His people and guarantees them an eternal inheritance, nevertheless we must persevere in our faith in the power of our King through His Spirit. He who endures to the end shall be saved, and this we shall certainly do if we are really the King's people.

## SUMMARY

There are two sides to the question of the eternal security of Christians; the preservation of and the perseverance of the saints. God most certainly preserves His people. But on the other hand His people will certainly persevere (endure) to the end. Not because it is possible for anyone to be that obedient or that faithful or that forceful of will, but only because God acts in behalf of His people, enabling and empowering them to do so, such that they will persevere.

The first thing in favor of the Christian is the gracious activity of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16-17 and 26). Our eternal security, happily, does not depend on our ability to pray because the Holy Spirit takes us our cause when we don't know how to pray as we should. He Himself intercedes for the people of God according to the will of God (Romans 8:26-27).

The next thing in favor of the Christian is the gracious activity of the Father. Our eternal security, happily, does not depend on our mastery over ourselves or over our earthly estate, because it is God Himself who causes all things to work together for good for His people (Romans 8:28). The Greek New Testament reads either: *"And we know that to those who love God, He works all things together for good..."* or, *"And we know that to those who love God, God works all things together into good..."* The A.V. (King James) is not explicit as to the source of power for things to work together for good by reading, *"For we know that all things work together for good..."* as if to say, by one's ability to love God, these things happen. The Christian may not, in fact, love God as he ought. Indeed, some Christians may be rebellious and disobedient sons requiring chastisement by the loving Father. We may be among those sons (and daughters) who do not love God very much; even so, God causes all things to work together for our good. Praise God! God, who foreknows, predestines, calls, justifies, and glorifies His people, also causes all things to work together for our eternal good. The God who does these things, is *"for"* His people and this being so, no one can be against them. No one can pluck the sheep from the hand of the Good Shepherd.

Then, too, the Christian has the gracious activity of God the son in his favor. Jesus not only bought His people with His own blood on the cross, but being raised, He is now at the right hand of God where He is the King of kings and Lord of lords and our great high priest. He conquers His and our enemies and intercedes for us. Who indeed shall separate us from the love of Christ?

As Christians we are exhorted to persevere, to obey our King and delight to keep His commandments and we have every reason to believe that the King's people will do just that. The church that God has established, He now preserves and will preserve to the end. If God is not working thus in His church, or if our hope of eternal life rests on our ability to love God or to pray or to obey Him, we may as well give up and weep for all is lost.

The wicked are exhorted to seek the LORD while He may be found, to forsake their wickedness and to return to the LORD for pardon, but we realize

that all motive to do so is produced by God who pardons and God who enables His people to persevere to the end.

*"Salvation belongs to the Lord; your blessing be on your people!"*  
(Psalm 3:8, ESV)

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the nature of the perseverance of the Christian.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?
- A. The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption and sanctification are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.

S.C. 36, L.C. 63, 80-81 W.C. of F. XVII, Savoy 17

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Job 1:20-22; 2:10; 13:15

**Support Passages:** Ezekiel 14:14,20; James 5:11; Revelation 2-3; Ephesians 6:18; Romans 2:7, 5:3, 15:4; II Thessalonians 1:4

**BIBLE STORY**

The Book of Job: The story of Job

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips." (Job 2:10, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

We must be faithful to God and His laws regardless of adversity, whether from enemies or from God Himself.

## SUMMARY

In this final lesson on the benefits of God's grace of justification, adoption and sanctification, we consider the matter of the perseverance of the saints. We have learned that God preserves the Saints perfecting that which He begins in them "until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). God provides the only basis for assurance of salvation and only because He preserves the Saints are they able to persevere.

Moreover, the scriptures command us to persevere. "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. **Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.**" (Revelation 2:10, ESV). Similarly, God commands us to believe in Christ and to repent from our sins. These are things we as Christians must do. Yet, we will not do them until the gracious Lord authors our personal salvation by regenerating us and enabling us to obey His commands. "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot." (Romans 8:7, ESV)

The nature of perseverance is beautifully illustrated by the life of Job. The Lord requires us to overcome (persevere) as he did the seven churches of Asia Minor (Revelation 2-3) and to be steadfast as was Job (James 5:8-11) because the Christian must face adversity. We must learn to deal with the hostility of the enemies of Christ, which comes to us variously from governments that require us to obey laws contradictory to God's laws and individuals who, in hating our Lord, hate His disciples. Our response to all such hostility must be faithfulness, steadfastness, endurance or patience toward God, to persevere in God's laws regardless of the consequences.

Adversity comes not only from the enemies of God but from God Himself. Adversity serves to work patience or perseverance in us (James 1:2-7; Romans 5:3-5; etc.). In dealing with divine adversity we must have the character of the godly Job. After God allowed Satan to destroy Job's household and possessions at the hands of the Sabeans and Chaldeans, Job worshipped God as follows:

### **Job 1:21 (ESV)**

<sup>21</sup> And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

To adversity Job responded:

### **Job 2:9-10 (ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die." <sup>10</sup> But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

Job's response to the accusations of Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar was:

### **Job 13:15 (ESV)**

<sup>15</sup> Though he slay me, I will hope in him;  
yet I will argue my ways to his face.

Whether adversity comes from enemies or from God Himself, we must be found faithful, however, we will be found faithful if we are truly regenerate.

### **Psalms 121:1-4 (ESV)**

#### **My Help Comes from the Lord**

**121** A Song of Ascents.

<sup>1</sup> I lift up my eyes to the hills.  
From where does my help come?  
<sup>2</sup> My help comes from the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth.  
<sup>3</sup> He will not let your foot be moved;  
he who keeps you will not slumber.  
<sup>4</sup> Behold, he who keeps Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the result of the death of the Saints.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?
- A. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united with Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection..

S.C. 37, L.C. 85-86 W.C. of F. XXXII, Savoy 31, Young 140, 144-145

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** II Corinthians 5:1-10

**Support Passages:** Hebrews 10:23, Philippians 1:21-23, Luke 23:43, Romans 15:2-4, Revelation 15:2-4, I Corinthians 15:23, I John 3:2, Psalm 17:15, Job 19:26-27, II Corinthians 11:16-33

**BIBLE STORY**

II Kings 2:1-14, The translation of Elijah

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better." (Philippians 1:21-23, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Knowing that death is gain for the believer, we should not value our lives more than the good of the Kingdom.

## SUMMARY

The prospect of immortality is no small comfort to the Christian. After a life of toil, disease, pain and persecution, which, says Paul, "all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus"<sup>1</sup> shall receive, it is a blessed hope indeed to look forward to eternal life in heaven with our Lord. The apostle himself desires, to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better", and "to die is gain."<sup>2</sup> One might well ask, why must I suffer a fearsome death to enter eternal bliss?

Perhaps we have observed a godly loved one suffer terribly with a protracted terminal illness and have wondered why the elect of God must be subjected to such suffering. Again, many question the doctrine that the souls of believers go immediately to be with the Lord upon death. They prefer to believe that the souls of believers "sleep" with the body in the grave and do not enter heaven until the resurrection of the dead.

The scriptures clearly indicate that the soul does not sleep with the body until the resurrection. Hebrews 12:23 refers to the "spirits of righteous men made perfect." There is a "general assembly" of such spirits already in heaven! The apostle Paul writes that the Christian has only two estates, "at home in the body" or "at home with the Lord."<sup>3</sup> Steven, as he was stoned to death, cried out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."<sup>4</sup> The believing thief next to Jesus on the cross was told, "Today you shall be with Me in Paradise."<sup>5</sup> And the apostle John saw countless multitudes of Saints already in God's presence before the resurrection.<sup>6</sup>

Now we admit that death is terrible. As Dabney notes, "death is undoubtedly a penal evil", nevertheless, "although believers are fully justified, yet according to that plan of grace which God has seen fit to adopt, bodily death is a necessary and wholesome chastisement for the good of the believers soul."<sup>7</sup> As sinners we deserve anything that God desires to require of us. He is under no obligation to save or help anyone and no one can reply to the Potter "why have you made me thus?"<sup>8</sup> Therefore if the holy God requires death of us, even suffering, we have no other response than "blessed be the name YAHWEH." At best we are unprofitable servants. We, in all circumstances, are subject to the sovereign mercy of God. The agonies of death are greatly to be preferred to the fires of hell and on the other hand, death brings eternal benefits to the believer.

History bears out the grace that God gives to His people in death. As the Covenanters in Scotland faced death and torture for their faith, God gave special grace to them such that they eagerly went to the gallows and were able to deal with inconceivable suffering.<sup>9</sup> The Christian certainly should not fear death as many other people seem to do. Many parents refuse to teach their children about the realities of death. But how much better to face with the Song of Moses on our lips.

"And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."" (Revelation 15:3-4, ESV)

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<sup>1</sup> II Timothy 3:12

<sup>2</sup> Philippians 1:21-23

<sup>3</sup> II Corinthians 5:6-8

<sup>4</sup> Acts 7:59

<sup>5</sup> Luke 23:43

<sup>6</sup> Revelation 15:2ff

<sup>7</sup> Dabney, *Systematic Theology*, Zondervan, pp 817,818

<sup>8</sup> Romans 9:14-23

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<sup>9</sup> Purves, *Fair Sunshine*, Banner of Truth Trust.



**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the doctrines concerned with the great resurrection of the dead and the judgment of people at the last day.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?
- A. At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

S.C. 38, L.C. 87-89 W.C. of F. XXXII, Savoy 31, Young 144

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11

**Support Passages:** Titus 2:13-14, I Corinthians 15:51ff,  
I Corinthians 6:2ff, Daniel 12:2-3,  
Hebrews 9:28, Job 19:26-27

**BIBLE STORY**

Matthew 25:31-46; the sheep and the goats.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:17, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

In view of the blessed hope of Christ's coming and the comfort seen in the resurrection of our bodies, let us be all the more zealous for Christ's kingdom and laws.

## SUMMARY

There are a number of interesting issues connected with the resurrection of the body. First of all, is the body that died actually involved with the resurrection? Consider that after death, the body returns to the dust from which it was made.<sup>1</sup> Some bodies were burned up, others were put into the sea, yet others fearfully mutilated. Notwithstanding the Bible teaches that these very bodies will be raised on the last day, joined to their spirits and then will stand judgment by Christ. Those who are alive at Christ's appearing will similarly be changed, receiving immortal bodies as all the rest and will be judged. However these who are alive at Christ's coming will not precede those who are dead.<sup>2</sup> Therefore they will not receive special treatment but take their place with the rest.

Job clearly asserts the resurrection. He states, "And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!" (Job 19:26-27, ESV) Daniel states, "And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:2, ESV) Thus we are to understand that the bodies of the just and the unjust that died will be raised in the resurrection. Paul's arguments in I Corinthians 15 and I Thessalonians 4 bear out this assertion as well. The raised bodies will be altered to possess several important features.

1. They will never die again.
2. They will not reproduce.<sup>3</sup>
3. They will possess knowledge of things now seen darkly.<sup>4</sup>
4. The elect of God will enjoy a bliss and nearness to God hitherto unknown.
5. The wicked will be cast forever into the lake of fire, an estate far more terrible than their souls hitherto have experienced in Hades.

Another feature of the resurrection is that it occurs on the last day. There will not be several resurrections but one only. Revelation 20 refers to the "first resurrection" and in parallel with the "second death" implies that a second resurrection exists. The first resurrection, however, is a spiritual one. It is the new birth.<sup>5</sup> The implied second resurrection is the resurrection of the body on the last day. Aside from Revelation 20 there is no other mention in scripture to more than one resurrection.

Immediately following the resurrection is the judgment variously described in Matthew 25:31-46, 13:36-50 and Revelation 20:11-15. These passages are typical of many others and they all refer to one judgment. It is not the goal of this brief summary of Christian doctrine to analyze the various divergent views of eschatology, rather it is to present the viewpoint of the Westminster divines which we believe to be the viewpoint of God as it is found in the Scriptures. There we find that the Christian is to look forward to one general resurrection and judgment of both the just and the unjust, but why must the saints be judged?

The Apostle says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." (2 Corinthians 5:10, ESV) The Christian will be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the judgment. He has sinned but he will be acquitted because the righteousness of Christ was imputed to him. He was fully pardoned by God's sovereign act of mercy. (See Year 1 Numbers 48 and 49 on Justification) Furthermore, this passage bears out our former assertion that the bodies of the dead will be present at the judgment.

The second coming of Christ surely is the "blessed hope"<sup>6</sup> of the Christian, but Paul instructs us to comfort ourselves with the hope of the resurrection of our bodies.<sup>7</sup> With these eternal verities in view, should we not be moved to greater service to Jesus? We are "aliens and strangers" to this earth, but we are to prevail against Hell's gates. Let us therefore be zealous for the laws of King Jesus. Let us dominate this earth for Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastes 12:7

<sup>2</sup> I Thessalonians 4:15

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 22:30

<sup>4</sup> I Corinthians 13:9-10

<sup>5</sup> II Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:5-6

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<sup>6</sup> Titus 2:13

<sup>7</sup> I Thessalonians 4:11-18

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the biblical teaching of the nature of heaven.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?
- A. At the resurrection, believers being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the day of judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

S.C. 38, L.C. 90 W.C. of F. XXXIII, Savoy 32, Young 145

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Revelation 21,22

**Support Passages:** II Peter 3:10-13, I John 3:2, II Corinthians 12:2-4, Isaiah 65:17ff, 66:22

**BIBLE STORY**

Revelation 21: The heavenly city.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever." (Revelation 22:5, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

The ultimate goal of the Christian is to glorify God and to enjoy Him. Man is never to cease from His dominion or the work to which God has put him. The ultimate reward of the Saint is eternity with God and heirship with Christ of the benefits of sonship.

## SUMMARY

The Bible does not give us a great deal of information about heaven. Heaven, no doubt, is a place, but is it a recreated earth? Is heaven located somewhere in the universe, perhaps on another planet in another galaxy or is it another dimension of space-time? We think of heaven as up or above etc., but this really teaches us nothing about the location or situation of heaven. The Bible teaches about the character of heaven but not about its precise location, however, we may infer from II Peter 3:12 that it is other than our present situation since the earth, heavens and elements will melt with "intense heat." Whereas God, His holy angels and the Saints who have passed into the intermediate state exist, we can conclude that heaven is a place of abode, a realm of existence that is not possible for mortals to examine.

Jesus spoke of preparing a place for us that contains many rooms<sup>1</sup>, therefore the issue that heaven is a place is settled. We might otherwise conceive of heaven as a state of mind or a Nirvana of sorts. We might even believe, as many do, that heaven consists of a Utopia on earth brought about by Marxist principles of socialism and economics! Since the earth is to be destroyed, the utopia concept of Marx is totally false. If there is to be peace on earth, it will be the result of adherence to God's laws alone. Even so the present earth is to be destroyed. Heaven apparently is an estate of existence beyond our present experience.

The Bible teaches us some of the characteristics of heaven. It is a place of reward in which there is no pain, sickness, violence, want or grief. It is the consummation of grace begun in the sinner. It is eternal social bliss. It is an estate of eternal happiness which happiness is not that of the Hedonist or the Mohammedan but happiness on the terms of the True and Living God who alone determines the good of mankind. We are assured by God that it is a desirable state of being.<sup>2</sup>

We have heard people say that they prefer the company of their friends in hell or as someone once indicated to me, given the choice of "God's law or chaos", "I prefer chaos." That which may be desirable or good for people may only be established on God's terms. We may not actually know or understand what is good for us. We think of heaven as a place where we will be free from injustice and suffering, and indeed it is, but much more. As the apostle John writes, "beloved now we are the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."<sup>3</sup> No mortal has yet had this experience. Paul, caught up to the "third heaven" or "paradise", heard inexpressible words which a man is

not permitted to speak.<sup>4</sup> Evidently there are aspects of heaven that are quite beyond our present understanding.

A number of Scripture passages refer to a re-creation of the earth.<sup>5</sup> Dabney believes that although this present earth is to be destroyed by fire, it is not to be annihilated, rather it will be renovated.<sup>6</sup> The inhabitants of heaven will be its only occupants. Kik believes that the New Heavens and the New Earth are the Church which culminates in the eternal state.<sup>7</sup> There is a difference of opinion then as to the nature of heaven among commentators in our persuasion but all agree that the godly individual will not be lulled to inaction by the hope that eternal life will bring an end to our present strife. Rather the Saint will obey God, glorify and enjoy Him and serve Him with vigor.

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<sup>1</sup> John 14:1-7

<sup>2</sup> I Peter 1:3-9

<sup>3</sup> I John 3:2

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<sup>4</sup> II Corinthians 12:2-4

<sup>5</sup> II Peter 3:13, Isaiah 65:17, 66:22, Revelation 21:1

<sup>6</sup> Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Zondervan, 1972, p 851

<sup>7</sup> Kik, An Eschatology of Victory, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971, pp 243, 244

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the importance of obedience.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is the duty which God requires of man?

A. The duty which God requires of man, is obedience to His revealed will.

S.C. 39, L.C. 90 W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 74-75

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Luke 11:27-28

**Support Passages:** John 3:36, 14:15, I John 2:3-4, Acts 5:29,  
Romans 13:1-7, II Thessalonians 1:6-10,  
Hebrews 13:17

**BIBLE STORY**

I Samuel 15: Saul's disobedience and its consequences.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"-- Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. --" (1 Samuel 15:22-23, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

We must obey God's laws regardless of the consequences brought.

## SUMMARY

It was a simple order, carried out at considerable effort, but easily understood. "And the Lord sent you on a mission and said, 'Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.'" (1 Samuel 15:18, ESV) Saul did not do this. He spared Agag the king of the Amalekites and the soldiers took spoils, sheep and oxen and the choicest of the things that were all to be destroyed. The results were devastating to Saul, king of Israel. Almighty God was now hostile to Saul and we may learn from this that, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams". No one can glorify God, which is man's chief end, with disobedience and we certainly will not enjoy Him if He is our enemy.

Obedience to God is our first priority. Love for God and our neighbor is based upon it and obedience to any other authority is secondary to it. However, love for God and our neighbor appear to present a great problem to many people. Many do not seem to understand the true nature of love. Is it simply a feeling of felicity or gratitude? Of course, toward God we may indeed have such feeling as a child would towards his father; however, the basis of all love is commandment keeping. John states, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3, ESV) And Jesus states, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (John 14:15, ESV)

As we have observed with Saul, the consequences of disobedience are terrible. Jesus tells us, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." (John 3:36, ESV) Thus Jesus equates belief with obedience and from this we clearly understand that man's first priority is obedience to God.

In His sovereign providence, God has delegated certain authority to mankind and we are to obey this authority.<sup>1</sup> The Elders of a particular church are to be obeyed and likewise civil authorities are to be obeyed.<sup>2</sup> What is contemplated here is the authority that God has in fact delegated to human beings some of whom are just and others unjust. He who is a godly Elder meets the requirements set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 and one who is a righteous civil servant meets the requirements set forth in Romans 13:1-7. This latter text teaches that righteous governing authorities are those who reward keepers of God's commandments and punish those who disobey God's commandments. All other authorities are more or less unrighteous or evil. We must understand that God has complete sovereignty over tyrants and Satan, however, Satan and tyrants are not "a cause of fear for good behavior" and they are not "a servant of God to us for good!"

These usurpers only promote evil and if we do evil we will have no fear of punishment from Satan or from unrighteous demigods! Wicked kings (Isaiah 10)

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 13:17

<sup>2</sup> Romans 13:1

are often used by God to bring justice to a sinning nation nevertheless we are to obey every human institution for the Lord's sake (or because of the Lord)<sup>3</sup>. However, given that the Lord is perfectly righteous, human institutions that require us to do evil do not comport with the reason given for obedience, namely, because of the Lord or "for the Lord's sake".

The apostles spent much time in prison because they "obeyed God rather than men"<sup>4</sup> their highest authority being the law of God. An interesting situation developed in Thessalonica<sup>5</sup> where Paul was reasoning with the Jews in the Synagogue there. Out of jealousy, the Jews dragged Jason and other Christians before the civil authorities where they were charged with treason. Paul, Jason and the others were indeed saying, "there is another King, Jesus!"<sup>6</sup> The implication is, of course, that God's law is higher than that of Caesar's.

The Christian has no other choice than to obey the laws of God. The consequences of disobedience are unthinkable. We must obey the laws of God regardless of the penalty imposed by an ungodly government or other enemies of King Jesus.

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<sup>3</sup> I Peter 2:13

<sup>4</sup> Acts 5:29

<sup>5</sup> Acts 17:1ff

<sup>6</sup> Acts 17:7

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the abiding validity of the law.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What did God at first reveal to man for the rule of his obedience?

A. The rule that God at first revealed to man for his obedience, was the moral law.

Q. Where is the moral law summarily comprehended?

A. The moral law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments.

S.C. 40-41, L.C. 91-95, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 72-73

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Matthew 5:17-20

**Support Passages:** Psalms 1, 19, 25:8-15, 119; Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:18-32, 30:11-20

**BIBLE STORY**

Mark 10:17-31: Jesus reaffirms the validity of the law to the rich young ruler.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished."  
(Matthew 5:17-18, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

The law of God abides forever as do the other scriptures. It is our tutor to bring us to Christ and our standard for righteous living. Let us love the Law of God and obey it.

## SUMMARY

The issue before us is this; does the older testament law have validity in our day? This issue is particularly critical in view of the fact that the evangelical community largely rejects the assertion that the Law of God is still valid. We all agree that the ceremonial law, that is, the laws regarding sacrifices, have now been abrogated by Christ. What is debated is the validity of the moral law and the judicial law. The widely held "dispensationalism" popularized by the Scofield Reference Bible relegates God's moral law to an era now past. Liberal theology rejects these laws in favor of modern "situation ethics" so the question remains, are these laws still valid today. As to the judicial law, being that body of civil laws and regulations pertinent to the theocracy of ancient Israel, only the general equity remains binding upon us today.<sup>1</sup> General equity is understood to be a general condition characterized by justice, fairness, and impartiality.

According to Matthew 5:17 and 18, Christ did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, rather He came to fill them out,<sup>2</sup> to expand upon them, to give them meaning, to confirm or ratify them. He did not come to fulfill them in the sense of bringing them to an end, for He continues to say that not one of the smallest details of the law shall pass away until all is accomplished. Literally, the Lord says, not one "yodh" or "horn" shall pass from the law until all is accomplished. The yodh י is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet and the horn or serif is a tiny projection on certain letters. For example, the dalet ד and the resh ר are distinguished by a very small projection at the upper right of the letter. A similar distinction exists between the beth ב and the kaph כ at the lower right of the letter. (The Hebrew alphabet is reproduced below<sup>3</sup> but many Bibles detail the Hebrew alphabet in connection with Psalm 119)

The Lord tells us that the Law and the Prophets (where much case-law is detailed) will abide until all is accomplished. The Greek word translated all in verse 18 actually means *all things*.<sup>4</sup> Therefore we conclude that the Law and the Prophets are valid until the end of the world! The ethical stipulations of the covenant are part of that word of YAHWEH which endures forever. Furthermore, it is abundantly apparent that God's Law is perfect. Not perfect in the older testament alone but forever perfect!

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<sup>1</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith XIX:4

<sup>2</sup> The Greek word used here is *pleroo* which has as a first meaning, *make full, fill*. It can mean bring to completion but the context forbids this understanding.

<sup>3</sup> אבגדהוזחטיכלמנסעפצקרשת

<sup>4</sup> *All things* translates *panta* which is neuter plural, hence the translation *all things*.

Psalm 19 teaches this truth directly. The soul is restored by the Law, the simple are made wise, the heart is rejoiced and the eyes are enlightened. This is still true for all of God's ethical principles. The Apostle Paul writes, "the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ."<sup>5</sup> He obviously refers to the Old Testament Law because the New Testament canon was not completed yet and was not in general circulation. In addition, Paul argues that the Law is not contrary to the promises of God.<sup>6</sup> It isn't that the Law is faulty but that people either will not or cannot keep it perfectly. Therefore, the Law, though perfect itself, does not impute righteousness. It is only the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, that renders ungodly people pure. The Law teaches our need for Christ and establishes the norm for our behavior. We therefore assert that Christ did not bring an end to Old Testament Law (save for its ceremonial aspects) nor did He replace it with new laws nor did He add to it. Christ rather expounded the Law and elucidated it! He rebuked pharisaical abuse of it for it was the Pharisees who added to it and invented new laws.

The double acrostic Psalm 119 is perhaps the greatest passage in all the scripture concerning the value of the Law. We shall have more to say about this Psalm in future lessons, however, consider this passage:

### Psalm 119:1-2 (ESV)

Aleph

**119** Blessed are those whose way is blameless,  
who walk in the law of the Lord!

<sup>2</sup> Blessed are those who keep his testimonies,  
who seek him with their whole heart,

Can it be that these blessings no longer exist for us who love the Lord? That is absurd! It would render meaningless many great texts of scripture to believe that Old Testament Law is no longer valid. May we ever be zealous for all of God's Law, for therein is righteousness comprehended.

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<sup>5</sup> Galatians 3:24

<sup>6</sup> Galatians 3:21



**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the function of God's law in the lives of unregenerate people.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What did God at first reveal to man for the rule of his obedience?
- A. The rule that God at first revealed to man for his obedience, was the moral law.
- Q. Where is the moral law summarily comprehended?
- A. The moral law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments.

S.C. 40-41, L.C. 95-96, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 79

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Romans 7:7-13

**Support Passages:** Romans 2:14-15, Acts 24:24-25, Matthew 14:1-10, I Timothy 1:9-10, Galatians 3:24, Romans 1:20, Galatians 3:10

**BIBLE STORY**

Acts 24: Felix became frightened as Paul spoke to him of the Law of God.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith." (Galatians 3:24, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

How grateful we should be to God for providing his perfect Law to teach us our need for Christ and how thankful we should be to Christ for fulfilling His Law. This provides the strongest possible motive for obedience.

## SUMMARY

One of the interesting facets of mankind is their propensity for laws to govern their lives. Paul writes that the Gentiles instinctively do the things of the Law of God even though they have had little or no exposure to it.<sup>1</sup> God chose to give His Law to the Hebrew nation. Hammurabi (1728-1686 B.C.), on the other hand, was not a godly man. Being a Gentile he none-the-less produced a code that included "nearly three hundred paragraphs of legal provisions touching commercial, social, domestic and moral life."<sup>2</sup> His code parallels the last six commandments of the biblical Decalog but the punishments are excessive and ungodly. He worshipped the Babylonian gods Marduk, Tiamat, Apsu, etc., thus he practiced polytheism as did all except Israel or those to whom YAHWEH chose to reveal Himself.

We mention Hammurabi because this example of heathen legal systems is available for all to see at the Louvre in Paris. It consists of inscriptions on a black diorite Stella. Many more examples of legal systems can be cited which serve to prove Paul's assertion that Gentiles do the things of the Law instinctively. However comprehensive such legal systems may be, they do not lead to Christ. They lead only to false worship and in the end serve to promote evil. It is certainly true that anarchy is evil but one wonders, sometimes, which is worse, anarchy or humanistic ungodly laws. Only the moral Law of YAHWEH promotes good and prevents anarchy. All other legal systems lead to famine, repression, tyranny and the persecution of God's people.

In the case of Felix, the Law of YAHWEH produced terror. We read that Paul spoke to Felix of "righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come,"<sup>3</sup> and he became frightened. Yet this did not produce repentance and faith in Christ. God's Law leads to Christ but much more is needed to produce saving faith, namely such things as conversion and regeneration. Notice that Felix typically wanted a bribe!<sup>4</sup>

In the case of Paul the Law of YAHWEH produced saving faith.<sup>5</sup> In addition, God converted Paul on the road to Damascus where Paul, like Felix, was frightened and those with him as well.<sup>6</sup> The Law, then, obviously awakens the conscience and drives the individual to Christ but it cannot justify or save. The Law is good and perfect but its purpose is other than salvation. Salvation is of the Lord!

Perhaps it would be well take note of the word *guardian* in Paul's letter to the church in Galatia, "So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian." (Galatians 3:24-25, ESV) Older versions translate the Greek original as *schoolmaster* or *tutor*, the idea being that the Law teaches us our need for salvation through Christ. However the translation *guardian* is closer to the meaning of the original Greek word in Paul's day. Thus we would understand that humankind remains under the authority of the Law functioning as a guardian until God declares by sending his Son, that it has come of age.<sup>7</sup>

Felix was left without an excuse after his encounter with God's Law. The things that God created, even without the Law, leave the individual without excuse.<sup>8</sup> Herod's conscience was certainly troubled by God's Law as evidenced by his imprisonment of John following John's rebuke of his sin with Herodias.<sup>9</sup> He did not repent, however, and in the end murdered John. He was left utterly inexcusable. Thus we see the effect of the Law of God on people that are unregenerate. It leaves one without excuse, it leads to Christ, it arouses the conscience, but it cannot save.

Praise God that He converts and enables some to believe and obey. We should thank God for this with obedience to His gracious commandments.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 2:14-15

<sup>2</sup> Jack Finnegan, *Light From The Ancient Past*, Princeton University Press, N.J., 1963, p59.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 24:25

<sup>4</sup> Acts 24:26

<sup>5</sup> I Timothy 1:12-17

<sup>6</sup> Acts 26:13-15

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<sup>7</sup> Arndt, W., Gingrich, F. W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (1996, c1979). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature : A translation and adaption of the fourth revised and augmented edition of Walter Bauer's Griechisch-deutsches Worterbuch zu den Schrift en des Neuen Testaments und der ubrigen urchristlichen Literatur* (603). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

<sup>8</sup> Romans 1:20

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 14:3-5

**TEACHING GOAL**

To Study the function of the Law of God in the lives of regenerate people.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What did God at first reveal to man for the rule of his obedience?
- A. The rule that God at first revealed to man for his obedience, was the moral law.
- Q. Where is the moral law summarily comprehended?
- A. The moral law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments.
- S.C. 40-41, L.C. 97, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 78

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Psalm 119

**Support Passages:** Psalms 1, 19, 111, 112; Matthew 10:28

**BIBLE STORY**

Acts 5:12-42; The Apostles are imprisoned because they loved the Law of God.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way." (Psalm 119:104, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

The keeping of God's Law brings great happiness and peace to the believer. The Law of God is the only means to acquire true wisdom, therefore, we must learn it and obey it at all cost.

## SUMMARY

Psalms 119 is a most unusual chapter in the Bible. It is not only acrostic but doubly so. An acrostic is a composition usually in verse in which sets of letters (as the initial or final letters of the lines), taken in order, form a word or phrase or the sequence of the letters of the alphabet. Psalms 111 and 112 are examples of a single acrostic. Each line of these Psalms (two lines to a verse) begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It is not possible to translate this feature of the Psalms into English, yet we certainly must be aware of this detail because God inspired it. Psalm 119 is unusual because it is a double acrostic. It comprises 22 sections of 8 verses each, one section for each of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each verse in the first section begins with a word, the first letter of which is aleph. The second section, similarly, begins with beth, and so forth.

It may also be observed that except for verse 122, one or more of the ten fundamental words for the Law of God are utilized in each verse. Notice these in the following verses: ways - 3; statutes 8; word of truth - 43; Torah (Pentateuch) - 97; commandments - 98; testimonies - 99; precepts 100; word - 101; ordinances - 102; sayings - 103. We believe that the unusual features of this Psalm serve to draw our attention to the importance of God's Law and to its Divine source.

"I have **stored up** your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." (Psalm 119:11, ESV) Thus we are instructed as to our heart's attitude toward God's Law. Here we are taught that God's word must be treasured in our hearts. God's Law is utterly necessary for the peace and prosperity of God's people in particular and the world in general.<sup>1</sup> Nations and individuals, who despise the Law of God, live under a special curse and their idolatries, food production methods, industries, economies, and governments bring nothing but famine and tyranny.<sup>2</sup> It is a fact that no Communist nation is able to feed its people and in nations like India, famine is rampant due particularly to their idolatrous worship of animals.

The proper use of the Law of God is also essential to one's education. Apart from the Law, true wisdom and understanding are impossible<sup>3</sup> because our faith "does not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."<sup>4</sup> The whole pedagogical process depends solely on the Law, "Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way."<sup>5</sup> True education must include the education of the soul as well as the mind as a part of the body, "I have more understanding than all my teachers, For Your testimonies *are* my

meditation."<sup>6</sup> Humanistic teachers and institutions of learning teach the body alone and ignore the soul, "For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"<sup>7</sup>

On the negative side, keepers of God's Law bring hostility to themselves<sup>8</sup>, yet peace between a man and his God is more important than all the hostility of the enemies of the cross. "And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."<sup>9</sup> We may love peace but in the end this is only attained by the treasuring of God's Law in our hearts and those who do so, who find them "sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb"<sup>10</sup>, have the only basis for the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.

How shall we give answer to our tormenters, to those who reproach us for Christ's sake? We shall say, "So shall I have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your word."<sup>11</sup> Thus is God's Law our answer to all hostility and the daily problems that we as Christians face.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 1:1-3; 119:45, 165

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 119:21, 78, 92, 118, 119, 150

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 119:27, 97-104, 130

<sup>4</sup> I Corinthians 2:5

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 119:104

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<sup>6</sup> Psalm 119:99

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 16:26

<sup>8</sup> II Timothy 3:12, Psalm 119:51

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 10:28

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 19:10

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 119:42

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the rules which will enable us to rightly understand the Ten Commandments.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What did God at first reveal to man for the rule of his obedience?
- A. The rule that God at first revealed to man for his obedience, was the moral law.
- Q. Where is the moral law summarily comprehended?
- A. The moral law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments.

S.C. 40-41, L.C. 99, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 74,75

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Deuteronomy 6

**Support Passages:** James 2:10, Romans 7:14, Colossians 3:5, Amos 8:5, Proverbs 1:19, Matthew 15:4-6, Job 36:21, Hebrews 11:25, I Thessalonians 5:22, Jude 23, Genesis 18:19, I Timothy 5:22

**BIBLE STORY**

Luke 10:38-42; Mary and Martha and their priorities.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." (Deuteronomy 6:4-5, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

It is our duty before God to correctly understand His laws. It is our method to prosperity and to please our God and King.

## SUMMARY

The Westminster Standards enumerate eight rules, the observing of which enables us to rightly understand the Ten Commandments.<sup>1</sup> They may be summarized as follows:

**RULE 1** - The Law is perfect. It binds everyone forever to perfect obedience. This is a direct quote of Psalm 19:7 and as James writes, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all."<sup>2</sup>

**RULE 2** - The Law is spiritual hence it operates upon our consciences and other faculties of the soul. The Catechism here quotes Romans 7:14, "For we know that the Law is spiritual,..." The knowledge, will and affections of Paul are influenced by God's Law thus the Law of God is not merely a showpiece of masterful legal systems but forms the basis for Paul's whole world and life view.

**RULE 3** - The Law must be taken as a complete context of God's will for us. A given precept of God may be treated, therefore, in several commandments. Colossians 3:5 defines idolatry as "immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed." Thus do several of the Ten Commandments deal with different aspects of the same precept.

**RULE 4** - Negative commandments have corresponding positive commandments and vice versa. Ephesians 4:28, for example, gives the positive side of the commandment "you shall not steal", stating "rather let him labor, performing with his own hands what is good,..."

**RULE 5** - God's Law holds true under all circumstances. What is forbidden is never to be done and what is commanded is always to be done. Paul, in Romans 3:8, points out the need for consistency in our law-keeping by stating, concerning the common fallacy "let us do evil that good may come", "their condemnation is just."

**RULE 6** - Sins and duties similar in kind to explicit sins or duties are likewise forbidden or commanded. Paul writes that we should "abstain from every form of evil"<sup>3</sup>, and after listing a number of sins<sup>4</sup> he warns us against doing "similar things".

**RULE 7** - We must endeavor, as we are able, to see to it that others live under the same terms of God's Law that we ourselves live under. Abraham, for example<sup>5</sup>, "commanded his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice;" thus imposing God's Law upon those over whom he was in authority.

**RULE 8** - We must not participate in the sins of others but help them to be obedient to the Law of God. Again we turn to Paul, who commands "and do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them."<sup>6</sup>

It is obvious that these rules are contrary to the commonly held evangelical position of our day, namely, that the Ten Commandments belong to an ancient civilization and are not binding on us today. These rules, however, reiterate the assertions that we have made in previous lessons concerning the abiding validity of the Law. We do not merely believe that the Ten Commandments are valid today but that they form the very basis for a modern society that prospers and enjoys the benefits of God's grace. Rushdoony notes, "the Law, then, first asserts principles, second, it cites cases to develop the implications of those principles, and, third, the Law has as its purpose and direction the restitution of God's order."<sup>7</sup>

The laws of our nation should be predicated on the supremacy of God's Law but increasingly they are being bypassed in favor of the state. The modern evangelical community does a great deal to strengthen the power of the state by deferring to its authority instead of that of God. It is our duty, therefore, to correctly use the Law of God and to this end we must correctly understand them. These eight rules, then, aid us in this endeavor.

**idol•a•try** \-trē\ *noun*<sup>8</sup>

*plural idol•a•tries*

(13th century)

**1** : the worship of a physical object as a god

**2** : immoderate attachment or devotion to something

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<sup>1</sup> Question 99, The Westminster Larger Catechism.

<sup>2</sup> James 2:10

<sup>3</sup> I Thessalonians 5:22

<sup>4</sup> Galatians 5:21

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 18:19

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<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 5:11

<sup>7</sup> Rousas John Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, The Craig Press, 1973, p12

<sup>8</sup> Merriam-Webster, I. (1996, c1993). *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. (10th ed.). Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.: Merriam-Webster.

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the nature of biblical love as set forth in the summary of the Ten Commandments.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is the sum of the Ten Commandments?

A. The sum of the Ten Commandments is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind; and our neighbor as ourselves.

S.C. 42, L.C. 102,122, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 76-79

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** I Samuel 18:1-4; 20:17-42

**Support Passages:** I Corinthians 2:9 (Isaiah 64:4), Joshua 22:5, Psalm 97:10, 116:1-2, 119:97, 113, 127, 132, 167; Proverbs 10:12, 17:9; Ecclesiastes 3:8; Isaiah 56:6; Amos 5:15; John 8:42, 13:35, 15:13; Romans 12:9, 13:8-10; Revelation 12:11

**BIBLE STORY**

Luke 10:29-37; The good Samaritan.

**.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.'" (Luke 10:27, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

We all need to improve the quality of our love for God and our neighbor as ourselves. Let us improve as well the quality of our compassion for others following the example of Christ.

## SUMMARY

Love as we have studied it in previous lessons is in essence commandment keeping.<sup>1</sup> If we truly love God and mankind (including ourselves) we will keep the laws of God as they apply variously to God and mankind. Since we have already dealt with this matter we shall, in this lesson, consider a particular outworking of biblical love.

There are three Greek words which are translated as "love"; *agapao*, *phileo* and *erao*. *Erao*, which refers to sexual love, is never used in Scripture. It is not that this kind of love is avoided in the Bible. To the contrary, a great deal is written concerning such love but with other terms.<sup>2</sup> We may infer from this that love, at least in biblical terms, is not to be confused with sexual relationships. Furthermore, we should take note of the difficulty our modern society has in conceiving of love that far transcends that of the purely physical. *Phileo* refers to a liking for someone or something. Paul, for example, speaks of those who love (*phileo*) him in the faith.<sup>3</sup> However, the commandment which is before us, concerns the highest form of love, namely, *agapao* love.

The highest, most sublime example of *agapao* love is the love God has for His elect people in giving His unique Son to die for their sins. Jesus' love for Lazarus similarly demonstrates this kind of love. Jesus loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus<sup>4</sup> not merely with *phileo* love but with *agapao* love. That he was fond of Lazarus is seen in His weeping on the occasion of his death. As John writes, "He was deeply moved in Spirit, and was troubled."<sup>5</sup> Surely love for God and our neighbor involves a fondness or compassion for them from which it follows that we must seek their good and shun doing evil to them.

At the human level, this fondness is seen in the friendship of David and Jonathan. The Scripture states that Jonathan loved David as he did himself<sup>6</sup> and as the story of their friendship unfolds we see Jonathan doing good to David even at the risk of his own life. David places this form of love on the highest plane when he states of Jonathan, "I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women."<sup>7</sup> This certainly was the *agapao* love that binds man to man in the ties of friendship, or that which knits one to another in simple human fondness. It is interesting that John never uses the Greek word for compassion in his Gospel, but expresses this concept only with the word *agapao*.

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<sup>1</sup> John 14:15, I John 5:3

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 4:1, Romans 1:24ff

<sup>3</sup> Titus 3:15

<sup>4</sup> John 11:5

<sup>5</sup> John 11:33

<sup>6</sup> I Samuel 18:1-4

<sup>7</sup> II Samuel 1:26

This leads us to a consideration of the parable of the Good Samaritan.<sup>8</sup> After the lawyer had correctly stated the summary of the Ten Commandments, he raised the question "Who is my neighbor?" Who is this one to whom we are to show *agapao* love? According to the parable it could be anyone and not just our friends or relatives. The Samaritan had compassion for someone he had never seen before but someone who had need. This man was of unknown nationality and had been the victim of robbers, therefore the parable deals exclusively with the innocent victim. It does not deal with our relationship to criminals or national enemies.

Another example is seen in Ephesians 5:22-33 where Paul uses the love of Christ for the church as a model for the marriage relationship. Husbands are to love their wives as they love their own bodies according to this same text. Fathers are likewise to love their children by admonishing and teaching them the things of the Lord. In addition fathers chasten their children for the same reason; they love their children.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps the highest form of human love is taught by Jesus, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends."<sup>10</sup> The scriptures teach particular atonement very clearly in this text. God loves all mankind in a certain restricted manner<sup>11</sup> but oh how he loves his friends! He died for them! Can we do less for Christ? "And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."<sup>12</sup>

The LORD preserves all who love Him,  
But all the wicked He will destroy.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Luke 10:29-37

<sup>9</sup> Hebrews 12:5-13

<sup>10</sup> John 15:13

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 5:45

<sup>12</sup> Revelation 12:11

<sup>13</sup> Psalm 145:20



### **TEACHING GOAL**

To show that because God created us we are therefore obligated to Him to keep His laws.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What is the preface to the Ten Commandments?
- A. The preface to the Ten Commandments is in these words, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
- Q. What does the preface to the Ten Commandments teach us?
- A. The preface to the Ten Commandments teaches us, that because God is the LORD and our God, and redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all His commandments.

S.C. 43-44, L.C. 101, W.C. of F. XXI, Savoy 22, Young 78-79

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Amos 1-3

**Support Passages:** Isaiah 40:18-31, Malachi 3:6, I Samuel 8:10-22, II Chronicles 7:14

### **BIBLE STORY**

I Samuel 5: Dagon deserves no obedience because he was not the creator.

### **.MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” (Exodus 20:2, ESV) “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” (Amos 3:2, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

As creatures of God, all peoples are obligated to keep God’s Law and those inside the pale of the church more so, because we are entrusted with the Bible and receive God’s covenant promises.

## SUMMARY

To believe, as most so called churches do, that the Law was good for Israel but that now the church is under grace and perhaps there is some newer, higher law, is “implicit polytheism.”<sup>1</sup> It is to say that God changes from age to age. It implies that God’s nature is consistent with a given law-order in one age and then His nature agrees with another law-order, thus He changes. To the contrary He states, “For I, YAHWEH, do not change...!”<sup>2</sup>

We may observe His perfect consistency in His judgments against the nations mentioned in Amos 1-3. The sins of these nations are still sins today. God held these Gentile nations as accountable for their law breaking as He did Israel, and modern nations are surely not exempted. These six Gentile nations were hostile to God and His people and are representative of all Gentile nations in all history. Did God mean to exempt Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, Greece, Rome, etc. from His accountability? Did they not do these same sins and more besides? Don’t we also in modern times break God’s Law in like manner?

Not mentioned in Amos 1-3 is Philistia, but God surely held them accountable for their idolatry. He visited His wrath on them when they desecrated the Ark of the Covenant. With incredible stupidity and crass irreverence to YAHWEH, they set the ark containing the Torah next to the stone idol known as Dagon, as if Dagon was capable of acting in their behalf.<sup>3</sup> Our modern nations do the same thing by placing God’s Law irreverently beside their humanist laws, their Dagon, Molechs and Chemoshes, thus displaying the common belief that God’s Law is subservient to the state.

The sins of the nations of Amos 1-3 are common today. Damascus (Syria) fought with Gilead and used iron threshing carts to torture their victims. Amom ripped open pregnant women of Gilead. Gaza and Tyre delivered Israel to their arch-enemy Moab and this latter desecrated the dead. Judah rejected God’s Law and Israel made slaves of the righteous, committed adultery and forced the Nazarites to demit their vows. The United States has practiced many unbiblical laws and policies in the areas of taxation, education, military subscription, and socialist economics. In this manner it attempts to command the future, predestine the world, and to be as God.<sup>4</sup>

The modern church in recognizing and deferring to the state in much of its ungodliness stands guilty of idolatry, for which God holds us accountable. The church, having received the greater knowledge, bears the greater guilt. The consistent YAHWEH calls first upon his people, who are called by his name to humble themselves, and pray and seek his face and turn from their wicked ways.

Then he will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.<sup>5</sup> Of all the peoples of the earth, Christians are known (chosen, Amos 3:2) by God. He therefore expects us to keep His laws and when we fail to be serious about this and willfully transgress, He promises to punish us. How much better it is to love Him and practice obedience to Him.

"But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31, ESV)

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<sup>1</sup> Rushdoony, The Institutes of Biblical Law, The Craig Press, 1973 p18.

<sup>2</sup> Malachi 3:6

<sup>3</sup> see Isaiah 40:18-31

<sup>4</sup> I Samuel 8:10-22)

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<sup>5</sup> II Chronicles 7:14

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To show that God claims the place of uniqueness and pre-eminence, and to study the consequences of this.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. Which is the first commandment?

A. The first commandment is, You shall have no other gods before me.

Q. What is required in the first commandment?

A. The first commandment requires us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify Him accordingly.

S.C. 45-46, L.C. 103-104, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 80-81

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Luke 14:25-35

**Support Passages:** Deuteronomy 4:35,39; I Samuel 2:2; II Samuel 7:22; I Kings 3:12, 8:60; Acts 4:12

### **BIBLE STORY**

Judges 6:25-32: Gideon tears down the altar of Baal and erects an altar to YAHWEH instead.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”— yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." (1 Corinthians 8:5-6, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

It is essential that we worship the true and living God and no other. The consequences of contrary worship are dire indeed but on the other hand, Christian discipleship has a cost which we must carefully consider.

## SUMMARY

It should be clear to all that idol worship is absurd, bizarre and exceedingly foolish. For anyone to construct a stone or wooden image of something and worship this thing which was manufactured is sheer stupidity. Gideon's father had done just that. The god Baal was often depicted as a stone image and the Ashera were wooden images, perhaps just a special tree selected for worship, similar to the later Celtic Druidism. The Ashera represented a foul female deity worshipped by many in Gideon's day, which the old English versions refer to as a grove. Gideon destroyed these idols of his father (Judges 6:25ff) and erected an altar to YAHWEH which he named YAHWEH SHALOM or YAHWEH is Peace. He did what we must do; He worshipped the True and Living God alone.

It is common in our day to practice idolatry. Many do this by worshipping common things such as money because these may become or are in fact a major part of their lives. People might even worship or venerate saints thus supplanting the worship of YAHWEH. Even covetousness is termed idolatry in scripture.<sup>1</sup>

The worship of YAHWEH alone requires; (a) Love for Him stronger than all other affections; (b) Trusting Him, as our highest portion and source of happiness; (c) Obeying and serving Him supremely and; (d) Worshipping Him as He requires.<sup>2</sup> It is not, therefore, possible to venerate saints without practicing idolatry. Inspired saints and creature-angels are never to be venerated.<sup>3</sup>

Many in our day look to the government for their help and source of happiness. This, of course, is also idolatry. To substitute human ideals for the precepts of YAHWEH, as public education seeks to do, is fundamental idolatry. Our primary allegiance must always be to YAHWEH alone, the Christ (Messiah) to whom Abraham bowed<sup>4</sup> by the oaks of Mamre.

Now scripture is very clear that there is no other God but YAHWEH<sup>5</sup> and that our allegiance to YAHWEH comes before all else, even our family ties. Obviously, love for our family can actually amount to idolatry and so can love for another human being. Isn't this the force of many of our popular love ballads?

Consider the contrary teaching of the LORD in Luke 14:25-35. So essential is our allegiance to YAHWEH Christ that by comparison we are to hate our family. The Lord here teaches us to love Him very much more than anyone or anything else and this may well be at great cost. It is not easy to love God more than ones family or country. Our slogan, you see, cannot be "God and Country"

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<sup>1</sup> Ephesians 5:5, Colossians 3:5, Job 31:24-28

<sup>2</sup> Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972, p359.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 4:10; Acts 14:13-15; Revelation 19:10,22:9

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 18

<sup>5</sup> Deuteronomy 4:35,39; I Samuel 2:2; II Samuel 7:22; I Kings 8:60 etc.

but rather "God very much more than Country". The proper love for YAHWEH will issue in the proper and godly love for our family and country. "Know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other." (Deuteronomy 4:39, ESV)

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the sins forbidden by the first commandment in order to avoid them.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What is forbidden in the first commandment?
- A. The first commandment forbids the denying or not worshipping and glorifying the true God as God, and our God; and the giving of that worship and glory to any other, which is due to Him alone.
- Q. What are we specially taught by these words before Me in the first commandment?
- A. These words before Me in the first commandment teach us, that God, who sees all things, takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other God.

S.C. 47-48, L.C. 105-106, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 81

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      Jeremiah 44:1-23

**Support Passages:** Psalms 14 and 53; Hebrews 11:6; Jeremiah 2:20-28

### **BIBLE STORY**

Acts 19:23-41: Demetrius and the Silversmiths are put into chaos by God.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"The fool says in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good." (Psalm 14:1, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

It is very important to serve no other God than YAHWEH because He takes special notice of it and brings special wrath upon it.

## SUMMARY

Demetrius, a Silversmith, had a thriving business in Ephesus making silver images of Artemis (named Diana by the Romans). With the arrival of the Apostle Paul, his business began to fall off dramatically because Paul was saying that, "gods made with hands are no gods at all".<sup>1</sup> Demetrius argued against Paul as follows: (1) Our prosperity depends on making these images. (2) Our trade will fall into disrepute. (3) The temple of Artemis will be regarded as worthless. (4) Artemis will be dethroned from her magnificence brought about because "all Asia and the world" worship her.

These are all pragmatic reasons for opposing Paul and his preaching. There was no interest in the truth nor was it of any consequence to him that he was worshipping the product of his own hands. Demetrius was, in effect, saying to a tree, "you are my father".<sup>2</sup> To argue that one's prosperity depends on idol making is to elevate prosperity above the idol itself.

By contrast, Christ offers no such emoluments. The disciples of Christ may well face hatred by the world, persecution and hardship. The rich man must sell all that he has and give it to the poor. Zaccheus must return the money he stole. It may be the lion's den or the fiery furnace or the Roman Arena. There may be a Job's testing. Should we sin against God that we might be prosperous? Prosperity is not man's chief end but glorifying and enjoying YAHWEH is. Prosperity, of course, flows from this but on God's terms. It is rather a prosperity based in the Law of God.

To argue that the magnificence of Artemis will be dethroned is manifestly unreasonable. In YAHWEH we are dealing with infinite excellence which must be revered. "That He who is the author of our being and giver of all our mercies; on whom we are absolutely dependent; to whom we are responsible; who is the rightful possessor of our souls and bodies; and whose will is the highest rule of duty, should be duly recognized by His creatures which from the nature of the case must be the highest duty of all rational beings."<sup>3</sup>

Israel lay in ruins<sup>4</sup> due to their wickedness in serving other gods whom they had not known. The women of Israel were burning sacrifices to the "queen of heaven", and when apprised of this sin, they refused to listen.<sup>5</sup> Of this, God took special notice and poured out His wrath upon Israel, and He made this

fearsome statement, "Behold, I am watching over them for disaster and not for good".<sup>6</sup>

How often we accede to the influence of the majority! The whole nation worships Artemis and we do little or nothing of any relevance to oppose it. Let us be warned that God takes special notice of false worship and will just as surely ruin our nation as He did Israel.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 19:26

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 2:27

<sup>3</sup> Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1965, Vol 3, p 279

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah 44

<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah 44:16

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<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah 44:27

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the importance of purity in worship.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Which is the second commandment?
- A. The second commandment is, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness *of anything* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”
- Q. What is required in the second commandment?
- A. The second commandment requires the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God has appointed in his word.

S.C. 49-50, L.C. 107-108, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 82

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

- Study Passage:** Deuteronomy 12:1-32
- Support Passages:** Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:15-16; Malachi 3:8-9; Acts 15:21; II Timothy 4:2; Deuteronomy 17:18-20

**BIBLE STORY**

John 4:1-30: Worship and the woman at the well of Samaria.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

The worship of YAHWEH is not optional, it is absolutely necessary and the correct manner of worship is crucial. It must accord with the Word of God in order to please Him and to render as credible, our faith in Jesus Christ.

## SUMMARY

In the account of Jesus' encounter with the woman at the well of Samaria, we find a unique statement concerning the necessity of worship. It, in fact, is the only command as such to worship God.<sup>1</sup> Many passages forbid false worship as does the second commandment, but here in John 4 we find a very strong statement indeed. Literally, we are told that it is **necessary** to worship God. Speaking to those who are worshipping God, Jesus says that you **must** worship.

Because God is who He is we must worship Him. Moses, who heard God say, "YAHWEH, YAHWEH, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness..."<sup>2</sup> made haste to bow low toward the earth and worship. Job, after having lost all his possessions and family, tore his robe and shaved his head, and fell to the ground and worshipped, saying, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. YAHWEH gave and YAHWEH has taken away. Blessed be the name YAHWEH".<sup>3</sup> Glory is due God because He is the creator and because He is holy.<sup>4</sup>

The true and living God must also be worshipped properly. As He told the woman at the well, "An hour is coming when neither in the mountain, nor at Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father".<sup>5</sup> We are thus pointed to the fact that it is not the place or accommodations that are important to pure worship but rather the manner of worship. It must be done "in spirit and in truth." To worship in spirit is to focus our worship on YAHWEH and on no other, in the most exalted and purest manner possible to mankind. All too often our worship is flippant and irreverent. It is often not focused on God but on experiences we have as human beings.

The Pharisees were careful to wash their hands before they ate, in order to rid themselves ceremoniously of Gentile filth. Christ, speaking to this said, "but in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men."<sup>6</sup> He went on to say that it isn't what enters the mouth and stomach that defiles a man, but what comes from his heart; "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders." Purity of worship involves separation from these things. To worship God in truth, then, necessitates conformity to God's word which is truth. We are to worship the Living and True God in the manner prescribed by the Bible alone known as the regulative principle of worship.

The study passage (Deuteronomy 12) teaches that we must not be indifferent toward false worship of God. We are by nature inclined to live and

let live yet true worship requires us to be deeply concerned about the presence of idolatry. The foundations of our nation would seem to require religious tolerance, and accordingly the nation tolerates every form of idolatry and false religion known to man. We do well to be opposed to Communism and to oppose it with all our might but what of false worship? Do we resist the Devil at times such as Halloween? Do we pay homage to Santa Claus or the Easter bunny?

"You shall tear down their altars, and smash their sacred pillars and burn their Asherim with fire, and you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods, and you shall obliterate their name from that place." "You shall not act like this toward YAHWEH your God." Is this passage without any relevance to our generation? Surely we are to do whatever is in our power to hinder the spread of false worship and to disenfranchise it. We are to keep it out of our domain, out of our sphere of authority. By freedom of religion our nation's forefathers did not mean freedom to commit sin. They believed that true liberty is not the freedom to do as we please, but to do as we ought. May God in His mercy strengthen His people to prevail against the gates of hell!

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<sup>1</sup> δεῖ προσκυνεῖν, *It is necessary to worship* is found only in John 4:20 and 24

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 34:6 ESV

<sup>3</sup> Job 1:20-21

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 95:56

<sup>5</sup> John 4:21

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 15:9



### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the things forbidden by the second commandment.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is forbidden in the second commandment?

A. The second commandment forbids the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in His word.

S.C. 51, L.C. 109, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 82

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Matthew 15:1-14

**Support Passages:** Mark 7:1-13, Deuteronomy 4, Acts 17:29, Romans 1:21-25

### **BIBLE STORY**

Daniel 3: Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael refuse to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's image.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that the Lord your God has forbidden you."  
(Deuteronomy 4:23, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Let us examine our worship practices to see if they are in accord with the commandment of the LORD.

## SUMMARY

The experience of Daniel's three friends certainly illustrates the need to be careful to worship God rightly. They would not take part in the worship of Nebuchadnezzar's statue or graven image. But our lesson this week concerns the negative side of the commandment. Actually, two prohibitions are made in the second commandment: (1) You shall not make; Graven images (idols, statues) or likenesses of God (pictures, concepts, etc.): (2) You shall not worship them.

In enumerating the kinds of sin forbidden by this commandment, the Larger Catechism states, "...the making any representation of God, of all or any of the three persons, either inwardly in our mind, or outwardly in any kind of image or likeness of any creature whatsoever; all worshipping of it...". Other Reformed confessions likewise note that this commandment prohibits the depicting of God in any fashion whatsoever except as allowed in the Word of God.

The art involved with the Temple and Tabernacle used symbols to show the various attributes of God but no images or pictures of God were ever used. The Lord also authorizes the use of bread and wine to represent His body and blood. Beyond these, there does not appear to be any other representation of God in Scripture. The Apostle Paul pointed out to the men of Athens that, "*Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.*"<sup>1</sup> Graven images, therefore, do not qualify to represent God. The Divine Nature is Spirit and cannot be depicted adequately by any kind of art. Even symbols at best only represent certain attributes but not God's entire nature.

So called pictures of Christ do not properly represent Him and actually represent Him falsely. Since no pictures of Christ that may have been made in the first century have survived, we simply do not know what he looked like. It is possible also that no such pictures were made at that time. With a painting or photograph it is not possible to portray the Divine Nature of Christ; therefore, these necessarily are inadequate representations of the Lord of Glory.

The word *likeness* in the second commandment can refer to a concept. False ideas or concepts about God are also a breaking of this commandment. Thus does Deuteronomy 4:15-24 forbid the making of likenesses of God in any way, shape or form. Even the making of these likenesses could serve to draw us into false worship and so we are to beware. Some examples of the violation of this principle are as follows:

1. The unauthorized fire of Nadab and Abihu.<sup>2</sup>
2. The unauthorized handling of the Ark of the Covenant by Uzzah.<sup>3</sup>

3. False asceticism and mysticism in the days of Paul.<sup>4</sup>

4. The traditions of the Pharisees who were careful to wash their hands of Gentile filth but substituted their traditions for the commandment of God.<sup>5</sup>

These all involve false concepts or likenesses of God (*Tamunah* in Hebrew). Thus we must be very careful to represent God only as He has authorized us in Scripture or we risk His displeasure. We must not use false representations of God made by others. If we dislike false representations of ourselves, which may in fact be libelous, how much more does the Holy God dislike false representations of Himself?

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 17:29 ESV

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 10

<sup>3</sup> II Samuel 6:1-11

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<sup>4</sup> Colossians 2:13-23, I Timothy 4

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 15:1-14

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the reasons for the second commandment.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment?
- A. The reasons annexed to the second commandment are, God's sovereignty over us, his propriety in us, and the zeal he has to his own worship.

S.C. 52, L.C. 110, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 82

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Psalm 115

**Support Passages:** Exodus 20:5, Deuteronomy 4:24, 5:9, 6:14-15, Exodus 34:10-17, James 4:5

### **BIBLE STORY**

John 2:13-17: Jesus cleanses the temple which shows us His own zeal for proper worship.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"The dead do not praise the Lord, nor do any who go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. Praise the Lord!" (Psalm 115:17-18, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

The zeal of God for His own worship is unparalleled. Therefore the worship of YAHWEH is not to be eclectic or ecumenical but based on scripture and directed to Him alone. He owns us. He alone is our sovereign King.

## SUMMARY

God is said by scripture to be jealous. What an interesting concept! Jealousy, of course, can be a great sin when it issues in distrust or hatred. However, this cannot be true of YAHWEH whose very name is said to be jealous.

The Hebrew word *khanah* (jealousy), when used as an adjective is, in scripture, only used in connection with God. The noun form can mean ardor, zeal or jealousy and the verb form takes the meaning to be zealous or to be jealous. For God to be jealous means that He is intolerant of unfaithfulness or rivalry and this is His prerogative being the sovereign Lord of all. It is not evil or sinful; rather, it is His right to demand loyalty or faithfulness. He who issues the crown of life can require us to be faithful until death to receive it.<sup>1</sup>

God owns His people and therefore is jealous for them. *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own."*<sup>2</sup> James writes, *"Or do you suppose it is to no purpose that the Scripture says, "He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us."?*<sup>3</sup> That is to say, God demands submission from what is His.

Jesus demonstrated this jealousy for what is His when He drove the money-changers and animal-vendors from the temple. He was consumed by zeal (jealousy) for the house of God and exercised His sovereignty over it.<sup>4</sup> He was intolerant of infidelity and brought judgment to those evil people by forcibly evicting them.

History is replete with examples of God's intolerance of infidelity. Shiloh, the ancient place of worship, was destroyed due to the wickedness of Israel.<sup>5</sup> Jerusalem also was destroyed because she housed vessels made for Baal, for the Asherim, and for all the host of heaven.<sup>6</sup> God brought judgment upon Constantinople, the chief seat of the Eastern Empire for the same reason. India is continually plagued with famine and Africa with upheaval and chaos, not primarily due to racial bias but because they are idolaters and Marxists. God visits all such iniquity with judgment. The temples of Satan will not be tolerated because we deal with a jealous God who visits the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and fourth generation of those who hate Him.

As we leave this subject then, let us remember that the second commandment is enforced by a visitation of God's anger upon generations of idolaters and by the fact that God is jealous.

## Exodus 34:10-17 (ESV)

### The Covenant Renewed

<sup>10</sup> And he said, "Behold, I am making a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been created in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the Lord, for it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.

<sup>11</sup> "Observe what I command you this day. Behold, I will drive out before you the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. <sup>12</sup> Take care, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land to which you go, lest it become a snare in your midst. <sup>13</sup> You shall tear down their altars and break their pillars and cut down their Asherim <sup>14</sup> **(for you shall worship no other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God)**, <sup>15</sup> lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice, <sup>16</sup> and you take of their daughters for your sons, and their daughters whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods.

<sup>17</sup> "You shall not make for yourself any gods of cast metal.

Verse 14 above should be read as follows:

For you shall worship no other god, for YAHWEH, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 2:10

<sup>2</sup> I Corinthians 6:19, ESV

<sup>3</sup> James 4:5, ESV

<sup>4</sup> John 2:13-22

<sup>5</sup> Jeremiah 7:12

<sup>6</sup> 2 Kings 23:4

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the significance of God's name.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Which is the third commandment?
- A. The third commandment is, "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain.
- Q. What is required in the third commandment?
- A. The third commandment requires the holy and reverent use of God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word, and works.
- S.C. 53-54, L.C. 111-112, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 84-85

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      Jeremiah 23:5-6

**Support Passages:**      Exodus 6:3; Psalm 83:18; Genesis 22:14; Judges 6:24; Psalm 68:4; Philippians 2:9-11

**BIBLE STORY**

Exodus 17: Moses builds an altar named YAHWEH NISI or the LORD is my banner.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock."  
(Isaiah 26:4, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Whatever pertains to God must be used worshipfully and reverently in whatever manner used by man, for the glory of God, and the good of ourselves, and others. (See the Larger Catechism Question 112)

## SUMMARY

In previous lessons we have discussed the proper name of God. This is the name above every name YAHWEH (JEHOVAH according to older translations). Since YAHWEH is related to the verb *hayah* (He is) it is probable that God's name means He Who Is, The Self Existing One, or I AM THAT I AM.<sup>1</sup>

The study text is of special interest because therein Jesus is clearly said to be YAHWEH. The name of the "Righteous Branch" of David, speaking of Christ, is YAHWEH TSIDKENU or the LORD our Righteousness. With this sacred name, "God is thus the principle of definition, of law, and of all things. He is the premise of all our thinking, and the necessary presupposition for every sphere of thought. It is blasphemy therefore to attempt to 'prove' God; God is the necessary presupposition of all proof. To ground any sphere of thought, life, or action, or any sphere of being, on anything other than the triune God is thus blasphemy. Education without God as its premise; law which does not presuppose God and rest on His law; a civil order which does not derive all authority from God; or a family whose foundation is not God's word, is blasphemous."<sup>2</sup>

The Bible story concerns Moses, who by lifting up his hands during the early battle with Amelek, enabled victory for Israel. His uplifted hands symbolized the blessing of God upon Israel and their total dependence upon it. Without God's blessing they would have surely lost the battle. Therefore after their great victory, Moses prepared an altar to God in token of His help and called it YAHWEH NISI or the LORD is my banner. This concept is the substance of the third commandment. The help of God is not to be taken lightly, nor is He to be treated irreverently. Moses showed the utmost respect for God as he raised his hands toward Him in deference to His power.

At this point in our discussion of God's commandments it will be well to give some attention, as does Rushdoony, to the negativism of the Law and the issue is indeed a good one. What does this negativism imply, or why does God choose to express His Law negatively?

As Rushdoony argues so well,<sup>3</sup> this negative concept of the Law confers a double benefit. First it deals with a particular evil and prohibits it, thus the Law is limited to controlling evil and not to the regulation of righteous living. It deals with the wrong doer and gives the doer of righteousness his liberty.

Secondly, therefore, the negative concept of the Law insures liberty. Except in the prohibited areas, all of man's life is beyond the Law. "If the commandment says, 'Thou shalt not steal,' it means that the Law can only govern theft, it cannot

govern or control honestly acquired property."<sup>4</sup> The Law of God, though stated negatively, has an implied positive side that simply states that we are to do the opposite of what is prohibited. Godly civil government, while it punishes evildoers, or in this case the irreverence of God, rewards the practice of the reverence of YAHWEH. It will not let blasphemers go unpunished while harassing Christians. This is far different from the development of a myriad of regulations aimed at controlling those who are doing what is right.

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 3:14

<sup>2</sup> Rushdoony, *Institutes of Biblical Law*, The Craig Press, 1974,

p127

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p101

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p102

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study ways in which God's name is defamed.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What is forbidden in the third commandment?
- A. The Third commandment forbids all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God makes himself known.
- Q. What is the reason annexed to the third commandment?
- A. The reason annexed to the third commandment is, that however the breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men, yet the Lord our God will not suffer them to escape his righteous judgment.

S.C. 55-56, L.C. 113-114, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 84-85

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** James 3:1-12

**Support Passages:** Isaiah 26:8,29:13; Matthew 5:33-37,23:16-23,26:63-64; James 5:12, Malachi 1:6-14,2:2,3:13-15; Jeremiah 7:4-11,30-34; Proverbs 30:9; Deuteronomy 18:10-14; 2 Timothy 4:3-4

### **BIBLE STORY**

Leviticus 24:10-16; The son of Shelomith who blasphemed the NAME.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"and if you swear, 'As the LORD lives,' in truth, in justice, and in righteousness, then nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.'" (Jeremiah 4:2, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

We must take special care to guard our tongues with which we are so prone to curse God and mankind. The tongue, being the very world of iniquity and untamable, requires special grace and care that we should use it to bless YAHWEH and that which He has created. Let us, each one, pray God for this grace.

## SUMMARY

A world of iniquity is the tongue but the tongue is merely the organ whereby the thoughts and intentions of the heart are expressed. Therefore if the name YAHWEH is defiled with the tongue it is the heart from which the evil has derived. The son of Shelomith "blasphemed the Name and cursed,"<sup>1</sup> for which he was put to death. So heinous is this sin that capital punishment was to be administered even to the alien who blasphemed the Name. The Name is YAHWEH. It is the name YAHWEH that is above every name, to which name every knee should bow of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth and every tongue should confess that Jesus is YAHWEH to the glory of God the Father.<sup>2</sup> The third commandment is broken, therefore, when God the Father, God the Son or God the Spirit is blasphemed.

Blasphemy (from the Greek *blasphaimo*) refers to the act of injuring the reputation of, reviling, defaming or slandering someone. We do this commonly when we "damn" someone or something. For anything or anyone to be damned to hell God must do it. Only God has the power to damn or condemn. Therefore whenever we curse in this manner we necessarily involve the name YAHWEH. All epithets that are of this nature are irreverent of YAHWEH and frivolous.

The Scribes and Pharisees would enter into legal agreements which they sealed with an oath. They delighted in taking the binding power out of some oaths which they would swear with all solemnity, yet according to Pharisaic casuistry would not mean a thing. Those who were not acquainted with this, when they heard a Pharisee swear by the Sanctuary (the part of the Temple containing the Holy of Holies), imagined that a binding oath had certainly been sworn. For what was more sacred than the Sanctuary? But no; unless the Pharisee swore by the gold of the Temple he was under no moral obligation. Such people were not merely ignorant, they were fools,<sup>3</sup> just as we are when use the word damn but argue that it is not blasphemy because we have not attached the word God to it or that we meant god with a little "g". Jesus set the matter to rights when he said, "You fools and blind men; which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold - he who swears by the temple, swears by the temple and by Him who dwells within it . And he who swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it."

Swearing is a form of oath taking and making false or frivolous oaths amounts to blasphemy because all oaths necessarily implicate YAHWEH even when God's Name is not invoked explicitly. This follows from the Matthew passage previously adduced. An oath is an appeal to God for the sanction of the solemn declaration being made.

"Where an oath is falsely taken, it is a heaven-daring attempt to enlist the Almighty in the sanction of the creature's lie; and thus it is the most outrageous

levity, or the most outrageous impiety, of which he can be guilty."<sup>4</sup> Masonic oaths are of this genre. Let us take note of the Word of God, "You shall not swear falsely by My Name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am YAHWEH."<sup>5</sup> The view that we are not to make oaths of any kind is incorrect and unbiblical. Jesus affirmed an oath administered by the High Priest<sup>6</sup> and Paul also.<sup>7</sup> In fact God Himself swore an oath, "...since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself".<sup>8</sup> In our common communication we are not to swear at all because the circumstances do not warrant an oath and it is therefore frivolous. But when is it appropriate what is more reasonable than to appeal to the True and Living God as a witness to the solemn declaration? Such a circumstance is, for example, the marriage ceremony.

We may believe that if we pray in Jesus' name God has to grant our request. To do so is to use God's name as a sort of charm. It is to use God's name superstitiously. We may worship God with our lips but not our hearts (Isaiah 29:13) thus making irreverent use or false use of God's name. We curse our fellow man with the same tongue with which we bless God. This too is sin. We may use God's name in idle discourse, flippantly or frivolously and so we break the commandment.

Let us therefore take heed to our tongues and sanctify our speech. Indeed, may we say with Isaiah, "In the path of your judgments, O LORD, we wait for you; your name and remembrance are the desire of our soul."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Leviticus 24:11

<sup>2</sup> Philippians 2:9-11

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 23:16-22

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<sup>4</sup> Robert L. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972, p364.

<sup>5</sup> Leviticus 19:12

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 26:63-64

<sup>7</sup> Romans 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 1:20

<sup>8</sup> Hebrews 6:13, Genesis 22:16f

<sup>9</sup> Isaiah 26:8, ESV



**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the meaning of the Sabbath Day and the significance of the word remember in connection with the Sabbath.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Which is the fourth commandment?
- A. The fourth commandment is; "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. 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.

S.C. 57, L.C. 115, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 86

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Exodus 31:12-18

**Support Passages:** Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Hebrews 4:1-10; Ezekiel 20:10-13; Genesis 2:1-3; Isaiah 58:13-14; Jeremiah 17:19-27; Matthew 12:1-14

**BIBLE STORY**

Matthew 12:1-14; Jesus and His disciples pick grain to eat on the Sabbath.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.'" (Mark 2:27-28, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

We must preserve the knowledge of the True and Living God among mankind. For the universe to be created it must have a designer who is not part of His creation, out of and independent from the world. This designer must be all powerful and infinite in His knowledge and goodness if we are to account for the wonders of creation. Therefore, so long as people believe in creation they must believe in God. To this end we must lay great stress on the right observance of the Sabbath.

## SUMMARY

The word sabbath (shavath - Hebrew) means cease, desist or rest and the Hebrew word for "seven" bears the same root (shavah). Therefore the Sabbath Day is correctly understood as one day out of seven which is set aside for ceasing, desisting or resting from activities which are common to the other six days.

The design of the fourth commandment is (1) to commemorate the work of creation. We are to remember the Sabbath-day and to keep it holy because God created the earth, the seas and the heavens and all that is in them in six days and rested on the seventh. (2) The commemoration of the Sabbath-day preserves the knowledge of the True and Living God in society. Belief in creation requires belief in the God who is infinite, eternal and unchangeable in all of His attributes. (3) The force of the commandment is to turn the thoughts of mankind to spiritual things. We are all too easily enmeshed in worldly thoughts and occupations but one seventh of the time, at the least, we are to devote entirely to God and to our spiritual refreshment. (4) This commandment provides for time for people to be instructed in the worship of God. (5) It prohibits our common labor to the end that we find rest for our bodies and refreshment for our souls. (6) As such the day is a type of the rest spoken of in Hebrews 4:1-10. And (7) the Sabbath-day is a sign of the perpetual covenant between God and His people for, as we read in Exodus "You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.'" (Exodus 31:13, ESV) "It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed." (Exodus 31:17, ESV)

We are to remember the Sabbath Day. This implies that the Sabbath Day as a special day, set aside for a special purpose, was known to God's people before the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses. Moses himself was to remember the Sabbath. In fact, the observance of the Sabbath Day began with creation itself and is a perpetual obligation. In Genesis we read, "And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation." (Genesis 2:2-3, ESV)

"That the law of the Sabbath was not first given on Mount Sinai, may also be inferred from the fact that it was referred to as a known and familiar institution, before the law was promulgated. Thus in the 16th chapter of Exodus the people were directed to gather on the sixth day of the week manna sufficient for the seventh, as on that day none would be provided. - There was therefore a Sabbath before the Mosaic law was given. - 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep

it holy,' naturally implies that the Sabbath was not a new institution."<sup>1</sup> Therefore, argues Hodge, the Sabbath day is not to be construed as a ceremonial law applicable only to the Old Testament theocracy of Israel. Rather it is a perpetual creation ordinance.

The Lord Jesus Himself kept the Sabbath Day.<sup>2</sup> If the Lord of the Sabbath did so how much more should we who are His disciples? True, His detractors charged Him with breaking the Sabbath but from Jesus' reply we learn that it is proper to do acts of necessity and compassion. Taking the ox from the ditch, healing the sick and eating do not constitute a breaking of the Sabbath. To the contrary, Jesus said, "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." We shall consider more of this in future lessons but here we draw the conclusion that Jesus recognized the abiding value and purpose of the Sabbath Day and gave us a sublime example of keeping it holy.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Wm. B. Erdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, Vol III, p328.

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 12:1-14, Mark 2:23-28

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the issue of making a distinction between days, namely, the distinction between the Sabbath and the other six days of the week.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What is required in the fourth commandment?
- A. The fourth commandment requires the keeping holy to God such set times as He has appointed in His word; expressly one whole day in seven, to be a holy Sabbath to Himself.
- Q. Which day of the seven has God appointed to be the weekly Sabbath?
- A. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath; and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian Sabbath.

S.C. 58-59, L.C. 116, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 87-89

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Romans 14:1-12

**Support Passages:** Deuteronomy 5:12-14; Genesis 2:2-3; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Acts 20:7; Revelation 1:10

**BIBLE STORY**

Numbers 15:32-36: A man gathers sticks on the Sabbath.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." (Romans 14:7-8, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

God forbid that we should seek to overthrow what God has established. We must not argue about differentiating the days of the week. God tells us to keep the Sabbath-day holy and we are to do just that. Furthermore, each one of us will give an account of ourselves to God in this matter because we belong to Him.

## SUMMARY

The study text for this lesson was chosen because it is urged by many to support the contention that we should not separate one day of seven unto the Lord. "Every day is the Lord's day," it is said, because Paul writes, "One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind." (Romans 14:5, ESV)

The context would seem to indicate that either position on the Sabbath is tenable following the analogy of vegetarianism as opposed to eating meat.

"The question is whether the weekly Sabbath comes within the scope of the distinction respecting days on which the apostle reflects in Romans 14:5. If so then we have to reckon with the following implications."<sup>1</sup>

A. This would mean that we are not now bound by the fourth commandment. In fact, if there is to be no special day of the week designated as a Sabbath to the Lord, then those who keep the Sabbath holy are guilty of "Judaizing". That is to say we would be guilty of upholding a ceremonial law which was abrogated by the death of Christ.

B. This would mean that there is no special significance to the first day of the week. The resurrection of Christ would not be commemorated by the Christian Sabbath on the first day or any other day of the week.

C. One would conclude that in this case the person who kept the Sabbath holy is the weaker brother who had not yet attained the more mature position that all days are alike.

On the other hand, the Sabbath-day is a creation ordinance as was set forth in last week's lesson. Not being instituted at the time the Ten Commandments were given to Moses, **the Sabbath has no relevance to the ceremonial law.** The same can be said for all of the Ten Commandments. God's Moral Law was not instituted on Mount Sinai rather it was reiterated in stone having been in force since creation.

In addition, the first day of the week was, in fact, the day of Christ's resurrection. This day of the week was known in the early church as the "Lord's Day" as the apostle John also mentions, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day..."<sup>2</sup> Paul preached in the church at Troas on the first day of the week, the special day upon which the church gathered to observe the Lord's Supper (breaking bread refers to the fellowship meal which preceded the Eucharist). On the first day of the week, when the Corinthian church gathered for worship, a collection was to be gathered as was also done in the Galatian church.<sup>3</sup> The first

day of the week, therefore, had special religious significance in the early church and we today are not to despise it.

All this notwithstanding, the text in Romans 14 does speak to ceremonial feast days other than the Sabbath. We may conclude that Paul places no special emphasis on any religious feast day except for the Sabbath-day and indeed the weaker brother is the one who insists on observing these ceremonial feasts. Similarly it is the weaker brother who insists on circumcision and on abstinence from eating meat. In matters such as these we are to learn that whether we live or die we belong to the Lord. He owns us and loves us with an everlasting love. We are not to hold our brothers in contempt nor are we to judge one another because we will all stand before the judgment-seat of God to give an account of the things we have done in this life. Let us remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy.

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<sup>1</sup> John Murray, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Epistle to the Romans, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1968, p257.

<sup>2</sup> Rev 1:10

<sup>3</sup> I Corinthians 16:2

**TEACHING GOAL**

To understand what God requires of, provides for, and prohibits from His people who would remember His day.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. How is the Sabbath to be sanctified?
- A. The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy.
- Q. What is forbidden in the fourth commandment?
- A. The fourth commandment forbids the omission or careless performance of the duties required, and the profaning of the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about our worldly employments or recreations.

S.C. 60-61, L.C. 117-119, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 90

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Acts 20:6-12

**Support Passages:** Exodus 16:22-30; Psalm 92; Isaiah 66:23; Luke 4:16; Leviticus 23:3; Ezekiel 23:36-39; Colossians 3:16-17

**BIBLE STORY**

Nehemiah 13:15-22; Nehemiah forbids merchants to enter Jerusalem on the Sabbath.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night," (Psalm 92:1-2, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Our attitude toward the Sabbath is of great importance if we are to keep the Sabbath-day holy. If we are to please God we must delight to spend the whole time (except what is taken up by necessary and merciful things) in public and private worship of God. Delight! Not grudging, complaining service to God which is not really service at all.

## SUMMARY

Eutychus provides an example of what not to do on the Sabbath. He fell asleep during the sermon and tumbled to his death from the window sill where he was sitting. Paul brought him back to life and restored him to the fellowship of the church. We learn from this that we must prepare ourselves to hear the word of God attentively with a good night's rest. As we have learned, the word Sabbath means a resting, however, we are not to construe this to be idleness. We are to rest from employment and recreations that are lawful on other days in order to worship God properly. If we exhaust ourselves during the week so that we spend the Sabbath in bed we profane the day by idleness. Then we use the Sabbath to benefit only the body but the soul is not refreshed and God is not worshipped as He requires.

We also profane the Sabbath if we employ ourselves with activities that prevent the worship of God. Nehemiah found himself in just such a situation. It was under Nehemiah's governance that Jerusalem was rebuilt, the wall dedicated, the Temple cleansed and worship restored, foreigners removed, and tithes restored. Nehemiah observed that some were treading wine and bringing merchandise into Jerusalem for sale on the Sabbath. To the nobles of Judah he said, "What is this evil thing that you are doing, by profaning the Sabbath."<sup>1</sup> He put an end to this practice immediately in order to sanctify the Sabbath but then the merchants began to spend the night outside the walls of the city waiting for the gates to open on the day after the Sabbath. This too was a distraction to the proper worship of God and after being threatened with force, the merchants no longer came near Jerusalem on the Sabbath-day. Thus the Sabbath was restored to the people of God.

During the days of Israel's wandering in the wilderness, they were not to collect Manna on the Sabbath. Normally, if the Israelites collected too much Manna it would become foul or would melt when the sun grew hot. But to prepare for the Sabbath they collected enough for two days, however, the Manna did not spoil or melt on the Sabbath as it did on all the other days. Moses said, "See, the LORD has given you the Sabbath, therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day."<sup>2</sup> Like Israel, we are to similarly prepare for the Sabbath that we minimize the preparation of food. We should buy gasoline for our automobiles before the Sabbath. We should not travel unnecessarily. Television, newspapers, sports events and such like all distract us from the proper worship of God on that day.

What should we do on the Sabbath? We should spend the whole day doing what the Sabbath was designed for; worship and rest. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."<sup>3</sup> We should assemble ourselves together

for the purpose of worship and encouragement. (Hebrews 10:25) You are to, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which you are called in one body; and be thankful." You should, "Let the word of Christ dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God."<sup>4</sup>

According to its title, Psalm 92 was written as a song for the Sabbath day. In this Psalm we find delight, praise and thanksgiving to YAHWEH. "It is good to give thanks to YAHWEH ... For Thou, O YAHWEH, hast made me glad by what thou hast done, I will sing for joy at the works of Thy hands." This is what we should do on the Sabbath and we should delight to do it. May God give us His grace and peace as we remember the Sabbath to keep it holy, as we subject ourselves to the faithful preaching of God's word together with the saints.

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<sup>1</sup> Nehemiah 13:17b

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 16:29-30

<sup>3</sup> Mark 2:27

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<sup>4</sup> Colossians 3:15-16

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment which serve to motivate us in our duty to observe it and all the more enforce it.

### **DOCTRINAL**

- Q. What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment?
- A. The reasons annexed to the fourth commandment are, God's allowing us six days of the week for our own employments, his challenging a special propriety in the seventh, his own example, and his blessing the sabbath-day.

S.C. 62, L.C. 120, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Exodus 20:8-11

**Support Passages:** Deuteronomy 15, Genesis 2:2-3; John 20-21; Hebrews 4

### **BIBLE STORY**

John 20:11-18; The message of Mary Magdalene to the disciples.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his." (Hebrews 4:9-10, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Let us by the grace of God find delight in the Sabbath-day for it is the prelude to our eternal rest in heaven. May it be to us a foretaste of eternal delight in the presence of God.

## SUMMARY

We should not need further motivation to delight in the law of God or to find delight in the Sabbath-day. El Shaddai has commanded it. But God has been pleased, nevertheless, to give additional motivation to keep the fourth commandment.

We find this motivation in the equity of the commandment itself. We observe that God has given us six days of the week in which to do all our work reserving but one day for Himself.<sup>1</sup> This is not an imposition or a hardship since the great majority of our time is granted to us for our lawful labors and recreations and the Sabbath day of rest is a great physical and spiritual blessing. Even the foreigner that is within our gates is blessed by it. That the Sabbath-day is immensely practical is thus a strong reason to keep it holy.

“Either body or mind can do more work by resting one day in seven, than by laboring all the seven days. And neither mind nor body can enjoy health and continued activity without its appointed rest. Even the structure of the brutes exhibits the same law. Again, as a moral and social institution, a weekly rest is invaluable. It is a quiet domestic reunion for the bustling sons of toil. It ensures the necessary vacation in those earthly and turbulent anxieties and affections, which would otherwise become inordinate and morbid. It brings around a season of periodical neatness and decency, when the soil of weekly labor is laid aside, and men meet each other amidst the decencies of the sanctuary, and renew their social affections. But above all, a Sabbath is necessary for man’s moral and religious interests.”<sup>2</sup>

God also claims a special propriety in the Sabbath by saying, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of YAHWEH your God." It is His day! Our creator, the Lord of the Sabbath, lays claim to one day in seven as His own. In like manner God lays claim to His people, "But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Cush and Seba in exchange for you."<sup>3</sup> Therefore, what God owns, He loves and safeguards. What stronger reason can there be for taking delight in the Sabbath-day for God Himself takes delight in it and owns it.

In addition we are motivated to keep the fourth commandment from the example God gives to us in that in six days He "made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day." The Father worked

(Creation) then rested.<sup>4</sup> The Son worked (Redemption) then rested.<sup>5</sup> The Holy Spirit works (Sanctification) and will enter into His rest in glory. (Hebrews 4) Surely so eminent an example demands our obedience.

God blessed the Sabbath-day not only in sanctifying it to be a day for His service, but in ordaining it to be a means of blessing to us in our sanctifying it. "Wherefore YAHWEH blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it." What God has blessed will surely redound to our good. Are we not therefore moved to keep the Sabbath holy if the Sabbath accrues to our good? Indeed, may we take delight in this special day, set aside by our creator for our present good and as a foretaste of our eternal rest in the presence of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 20:8-11

<sup>2</sup> R. L. Dabney, Topical Lectures on Scripture, (Simpsonville, SC: Christian Classics Foundation) 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 43:1-3, ESV

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<sup>4</sup> Genesis 2:2-3

<sup>5</sup> John 20-21



### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the foundational concepts of the fifth commandment.

### **DOCTRINAL**

Q. Which is the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment is, Honor thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

S.C. 63, L.C. 123, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 91

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Mark 7:1-23

**Support Passages:** Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16; Ephesians 6:1-4; Matthew 15:1-20; Proverbs 23:22-25; I Timothy 5:1-2; Romans 13:8-10

### **BIBLE STORY**

John 19:26-27: Jesus honors His mother at the cross.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old." (Proverbs 23:22, ESV)

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### **APPLICATION**

The Ten Commandments are not conditional laws. Hence, when it comes to honoring our father and mother we must honor them whether they are good to us or not, simply because they are our parents.

## SUMMARY

Our purpose in this lesson is to deal with the basic concept explicit in the fifth commandment which concerns our relationship to our natural parents. In future lessons we will deal with the broader concerns of the commandment relating to anyone who is our superior and our attitude toward higher authority.

We are commanded to "honor" our natural parents. Paul teaches us to give honor to whom honor is due.<sup>1</sup> We are to honor the aged.<sup>2</sup> Honor in the New Testament translates the word *timao* and in the Old Testament the word *cabadh*. These words in the original languages of the Bible refer primarily to the concept of heaviness and the verb forms mean: give weight to, give reverence to, set a value upon, etc. In the Leviticus passage, "honor the aged" parallels "revere your God". To honor human beings, then, means to treat them as persons, showing them the same honesty, appreciation, love and respect that you would want them to show you. Our Lord gave us an example of honoring our parents when, at the cross, He gave His mother to the care of John. Shortly His earthly ministry would come to an end so Jesus provided for His mother in this manner showing her His love and respect.

If we are to give honor to whom honor is due are we then to honor parents or other authorities who have treated us badly? The answer, of course, is yes. Those in authority over us, including our natural parents, are not due honor for their own sin. You should not honor an alcoholic or adulterous father in such a manner as to encourage his sin. However, you may well honor him because he is your father and therefore seek to bring him to repentance helping him to turn away from alcohol and adultery. In like manner we are to "Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."<sup>3</sup> We are to respect our masters even if they are unreasonable.<sup>4</sup> The honor that is due them is not related to their unreasonableness or their sin rather it is related to their authority over us. We honor them not necessarily for what they do but for who they are.

The fifth commandment is addressed primarily to the adult community and the force of the commandment is that we as adults should not forget our parents when they become old. This was the very charge Jesus lodged against the Pharisees in our study text. "And he said to them, "You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban" ' (that is, given to God)— then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down.

And many such things you do."'<sup>5</sup>

The practice of declaring something to be a Corban (a votive offering) was used for the express purpose of sheltering one's resources or wealth from being used to provide for one's aged parents. If you had an extra house that you did not wish to give to your parents to use in their old age, you could say it was Corban. This legally declared that the property was a gift to God, for His use, therefore the property could not be requisitioned for anyone else's use. The Lord said that this practice was a flagrant violation of the fifth commandment. It was the very opposite of rendering honor to one's parents. Furthermore, He said that this practice "made void the word of God" and that it was an example of hypocrisy.

Children are to "obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right,"<sup>6</sup> and to obey them is to love them and honor them. Paul goes on to adduce the fifth commandment in support of his assertion. Of course he speaks to those who are not yet adults but the principle remains, our natural parents are to be honored whether we are young or old, whether they have been good to us or not. This then is the foundational concept in the fifth commandment but it applies to a much wider set of relationships as we shall see in the next lesson.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 13:7

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 19:32

<sup>3</sup> I Peter 2:17

<sup>4</sup> I Peter 2:18

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<sup>5</sup> Mark 7:9-13, ESV

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 6:1

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the broader concerns of the fifth commandment.

### **DOCTRINAL**

Q. What is required in the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment requires the preserving the honor, and performing the duties, belonging to everyone in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals.

Q. What is forbidden in the fifth commandment?

A. The fifth commandment forbids the neglecting of, or doing anything against, the honor and duty which belongs to everyone in their several places and relations.

S.C. 64-65, L.C. 124-132, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 92

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Ephesians 5:22-6:9

**Support Passages:** Genesis 4:20-22, 45:8; Numbers 12; II Kings 13:14; I Corinthians 4:14-21; I Peter 2:13-17, 3:6; Romans 13:1-7; Colossians 3:18-25

### **BIBLE STORY**

II Kings 2:12-25; Elisha and the disrespectful children.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Given that the fifth commandment concerns relationships beyond that of children to their natural parents, we must therefore be careful to obey those who are in authority over us, and we are to care for and nurture those who depend on us.

## SUMMARY

As indicated in the previous lesson, the fifth commandment has a broader application than that of children to their natural parents. In fact, we observe three different applications of the fifth commandment in our study text; the husband-wife relationship, the parent-child relationship, and the master-servant relationship.

In the immediate application of the fifth commandment, the parent-child relationship, Paul states that Children are to obey their parents "in the Lord". This phrase "in the Lord" is used some 40 times by Paul in his epistles as in the parallel passage, Colossians 3:18-25, where he writes, "Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord." In this manner, Paul "sums up the relationship existing between fellow-members of Christ - a relationship which does not supersede earthly relationships but subsumes them and lifts them on to a higher plane."<sup>1</sup> He exalts filial obedience to the same heavenly domain as he does the marriage relationship. In addition the scope of the family is broadened to include all those who are "in the Lord".

It is a matter of personal godliness to obey your parents, however, such obedience demands a corresponding duty on the part of the parents. The children are to obey their parents and the parents are to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. In a similar manner a wife is to obey her husband but he in turn is to love his wife. Employees are to obey their employers but the employer is to be good to his employees. Younger people are to respect older people.<sup>2</sup> Members of a particular church are to submit to their elders who in turn are to watch over the members and to shepherd them.<sup>3</sup> Citizens are to obey those who are in authority over them and authorities are to reward those who do that which is good.<sup>4</sup>

The term "father" is also broader in concept than the natural father. It includes all who are superiors in age and gifts, in particular, those who are over us in place of authority, whether in the family or the church or the commonwealth. Elisha addressed Elijah as a father saying, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!"<sup>5</sup> Joash similarly addressed Elisha as his father.<sup>6</sup> Paul was a father of the Corinthian church, "for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel".<sup>7</sup> Timothy is Paul's "beloved

son"<sup>8</sup> yet Paul was not Timothy's natural father. Sarah "obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right..."<sup>9</sup> and here Peter is referring to those who "reside as aliens ... who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father... ".<sup>10</sup> We hasten to note that we address God Himself as "Our Father".

Therefore we conclude that the scope of the fifth commandment is the performance of those duties which we mutually owe in our several relations, as inferiors, superiors, or equals.<sup>11</sup> Let us therefore be careful to obey those who are in authority over us and care for and nurture those who depend on us as our inferiors.

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<sup>1</sup> E. K. Simpson and F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1970, p290, footnote 139.

<sup>2</sup> II Kings 2:23-25

<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 13:7,17; Acts 20:28

<sup>4</sup> Romans 13:1-7

<sup>5</sup> II Kings 2:12

<sup>6</sup> II Kings 13:14

<sup>7</sup> I Corinthians 4:15

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<sup>8</sup> II Timothy 1:2

<sup>9</sup> I Peter 3:6

<sup>10</sup> I Peter 1:1-2

<sup>11</sup> *Westminster Larger Catechism*, question 126.

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study Christian education as an application of the fifth commandment.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What is required in the fifth commandment?
- A. The fifth commandment requires the preserving the honor, and performing the duties, belonging to everyone in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals.
- Q. What is forbidden in the fifth commandment?
- A. The fifth commandment forbids the neglecting of, or doing anything against, the honor and duty which belongs to everyone in their several places and relations.

S.C. 64-65, L.C. 124-132, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 92

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Psalm 78

**Support Passages:** Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 119:97-104; Proverbs 22:6; Matthew 7:6-12; Ephesians 6:1-4; II Timothy 3:12-17

### **BIBLE STORY**

I Samuel 2:12-17, 22-36, 3:12-13; Eli raises his children improperly.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

""Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you." (Matthew 7:6, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

The people of God have a special duty to train up their children in the way they should go. That our children not be like the sons of Ephraim who turned back in the day of battle we must be especially diligent in this matter.

## SUMMARY

As we have learned, the fifth commandment applies to a wide range of relationships that exist between superiors, equals and inferiors. Incidentally, this terminology only refers to one's social position, for example, father to son or employer to employee. It does not refer to one's spiritual position, for, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."<sup>1</sup> Because the subject is so large we shall undertake the study of only two applications albeit very important ones. In this lesson we shall deal with Christian Education and the next lesson will undertake the study of the church state relationship.

In his commentary on the fifth commandment, Paul writes, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."<sup>2</sup> Having applied the commandment to the child - parent relationship, the apostle proceeds to give attention to the duty the parent has to the child, namely, that of instruction. But does this refer to more than Sunday school or family devotions? Indeed it does! If any part of the daily instruction received by our children confuses them with regard to the True and Living God, or encourages them toward humanism or evil then that part of their education does not qualify as the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

In fact, all that we come to know is to be filtered through the precepts of the Lord according to the Bible, where we read, "Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way."<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, it is abundantly clear that we are to engage in daily Christian education. Moses writes concerning the sum total of God's Law, "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew word translated "diligently" means to whet or sharpen. Therefore we are to teach God's precepts to our children trenchantly or incisively and we are to do it on a daily basis. The verse refers to activities that are done on a daily basis such as sitting in the house, lying down, and rising up.

If we, by reason of employment among other things, cannot teach our children on a daily basis, then we must use other means to teach them, including among other means, homeschooling or private Christian schools or supplemental Christian education. We cannot expect the ungodly to teach God's precepts to our children. Furthermore those who teach in our place should be able to relate all areas of knowledge to the precepts of God else it cannot be said that through the precepts of God we get understanding.

Now the scriptures speak of the ungodly in very strong terms. Jesus, in

fact, likens them to pigs or dogs.<sup>5</sup> In the non-literal sense these are un-baptized and therefore impure people. Paul uses the word *dogs* in this sense in another passage, "Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh."<sup>6</sup> Jesus would not have us give our children (pearls) to ungodly teachers. "Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?"<sup>7</sup> Many children cry out to us for answers and godly instruction but all too often we give stones and snakes to them. We instruct them with the humanism of government education.

The fathers of Israel were to teach the testimony in Jacob and the law in Israel to their children. "He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God."<sup>8</sup> They miserably failed in this duty. We read that Ephraim turned back in the day of battle because they were not properly taught. Eli, too, was culpable and was punished. "And I declare to him that I am about to punish his house forever, for the iniquity that he knew, because his sons were blaspheming God, and he did not restrain them."<sup>9</sup>

One of our greatest responsibilities as parents is to bring up our children to know and love the Lord. May God grant us the grace, resources and spiritual strength to provide daily Christian education for our children.

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<sup>1</sup> Galatians 3:28, ESV

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 6:4, ESV

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 119:104, ESV

<sup>4</sup> Deuteronomy 6:7, ESV

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<sup>5</sup> Matthew 7:6

<sup>6</sup> Philippians 3:2, ESV

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 7:9-10, ESV

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 78:5-8, ESV

<sup>9</sup> I Samuel 3:13, ESV

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the enforcement of the fifth commandment as seen particularly in civil government.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment?
- A. The reason annexed to the fifth commandment, is a promise of long life and prosperity (as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good) to all such as keep this commandment.

S.C. 66, L.C. 133, W.C. of F. XXIII, Savoy 24, Young 92

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Romans 13:1-7

**Support Passages:** 1 Peter 2:13-18; Matthew 22:15-22; Genesis 9:5-7; Numbers 35:29-34; Luke 3:7-14; Acts 4:19-21, 5:27-32

### **BIBLE STORY**

Acts 17:1-9; Jason is arrested for his allegiance to King Jesus.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"For the Lord is our judge; the Lord is our lawgiver; the Lord is our king; he will save us." (Isaiah 33:22, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

God requires loyalty to the civil government which is in authority over us as our superior. However this loyalty is limited by and controlled by our obedience to YAHWEH. We must give honor to whom honor is due.

## SUMMARY

The proper relationship of the Christian to civil government is one of the most difficult inferior - superior relationships to maintain. "So extensive and important, and so many questions arise as to its limits and nature, the propriety of holding office, the powers exercised by the magistrate,"<sup>1</sup> that we need to be well grounded in the scriptural concepts concerning civil government.

Our study text states directly that we are to be "subject to the governing authorities." Paul, of course, refers to civil government and indeed in Paul's day history records one of the most repressive tyrannies the world has ever known. Authorities have the right to govern and the subjection demanded of the governed derive entirely from the fact that God instituted human civil government. As Paul writes, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God."<sup>2</sup> The problems we have with civil government generally derive from the evil which all humanistic governments have promoted. On the other hand, God is not the author of moral evil. Therefore, God is not the author of evil tyrannies. What then are these authorities that God establishes?

According to the study text, the authorities to which we must subject ourselves are not a cause of fear for good behavior. These authorities praise us for doing what is good and bring wrath upon those who practice evil. Good and evil, of course, are defined by God's Law not by human majority opinion or by human authorities. These particular servants to which Paul refers, are servants of God to us for good, not servants of the devil to us for evil.

Because, as Paul writes, the authorities that exist are from God and are instituted by Him, some have taken the position that royalty enjoys Divine privilege. They assert that no matter how oppressive or unjust the government may be, the citizen has no duty nor right but passive submission, and that the divinely selected form is hereditary monarchy. But this position in fact sets forth two extremes that are not biblical and that need to be avoided. The first error is that human government (royalty) is Divine and the second that citizens must give unlimited submission to their government.

We read the account of Jason,<sup>3</sup> who was arrested for his submission to King Jesus. The charge was that "they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another King, Jesus". This was not a false charge. It was, in fact, what Paul the apostle had taught them and follows from the fact that Jesus is the Messiah. There is a King who is higher in authority than Caesar. Jason's King is also Caesar's King. Furthermore, we note the principle that regulates and

limits our submission to human government.<sup>4</sup>

It is this, "But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.", or "we must obey God rather than men". We cannot submit to our government to the point of sin against the True and Living God.

On the other hand, the government does have the right of taxation,<sup>5</sup> punishment including capital punishment for capital crimes,<sup>6</sup> and defensive war.<sup>7</sup> The authorities of Romans 13 have the power of the sword with which they are to bring wrath upon evil doers as an avenger of God. So then as Jesus Himself taught us regarding our relationship to governmental authorities, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's."

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972, p862.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 13:1, ESV

<sup>3</sup> Acts 17:1-9

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<sup>4</sup> Acts 4:19-21 and 5:27-32

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 22:21

<sup>6</sup> Numbers 35:30-31

<sup>7</sup> Exodus 17:9 and similar passages, Luke 3:14-15, Acts 10:1-2



### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the duties required of us by the sixth commandment and the definition of murder.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. Which is the sixth commandment?

A. The sixth commandment is, Thou shalt not kill.

Q. What is required in the sixth commandment?

A. The sixth commandment requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others.

S.C. 67-68, L.C. 134-135, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 93

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Numbers 35:9-28

**Support Passages:** I John 3:15; Matthew 5:21-26; John 8:44; Exodus 21:22-32; Deuteronomy 22:8; Joshua 20,21

### **BIBLE STORY**

I Kings 21: The murder of Naboth.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.” (Genesis 9:6, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

The unjust taking of human life is murder and can never be recompensed because apart from an act of God the dead cannot be brought back to life. Since murder is a particularly heinous sin we must all the more keep ourselves from hatred or anything that in fact or tends toward murder.

## SUMMARY

The Authorized Version of the Bible (King James) states, "thou shalt not kill." Many have understood, therefore, that all taking of human life is prohibited, and even further in some cases that the taking of animal life is prohibited. However, the Hebrew Bible states *lo tirtsach* or "not shall you murder." It is clear that that the commandment speaks only of manslaughter from biblical use of the verb *ratsach*.<sup>1</sup>

According to these passages which deal with the establishment of the cities of refuge, intentional manslaughter (*ratsach*) is to be recompensed with the slayer's death at the hands of the "blood avenger". If the manslaughter was unintentional the slayer was to be delivered from the hands of the blood avenger and could live in a city of refuge for his own safety until the death of the incumbent high priest. Intentional homicide or murder is clearly defined here and the sixth commandment explicitly prohibits it.

Murder can, however, take other forms.<sup>2</sup> "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer..." Thus can murder or that which is tantamount to it can be done merely through the thoughts and intents of the heart. Often we get so angry with other people that we desire to murder them. This is sin because we desire to preempt the due process of the law and dispatch the object of our hatred forthwith. Not all hatred is sinful<sup>3</sup> but because this hatred intends to issue in murder it opposes the duty required by the commandment and is therefore sin.

We can cause the death of others by negligence or carelessness and thus commit murder. It is murder to cause a woman to abort her pregnancy resulting in the death of her baby.<sup>4</sup> The case law here concerns the result of careless fighting but applies to any human agency that would cause the death of an unborn child. In addition, an ox known to be dangerous, if permitted through negligence to cause the death of a human being, implicates its owner in murder. Some leniency is permitted in this latter case. It can be deemed murder to cause the death of a human being by not placing a railing about a balcony or swimming pool.<sup>5</sup>

Life is a gift of God and therefore can be taken away only by God or at His command. "In robbing man of life, you would virtually rob him of every valuable thing which life includes. It is committing against a fellow-man every species of robbery in one."<sup>6</sup> The scriptural ground for prohibiting murder is that man was made in the image of God thus we may not shed the blood of another

human being unjustly; else justice requires that our own blood be shed.<sup>7</sup> Therefore we must give great attention to our thoughts words and actions with regard to the sanctity of human life.

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers 35, Joshua 20 and 21.

<sup>2</sup> 1 John 3:15, Matthew 5:21-26.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Psalm 139:21-22.

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 21:22-32.

<sup>5</sup> Deuteronomy 22:8

<sup>6</sup> Robert L. Dabney, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972, p400.

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<sup>7</sup> Genesis 9:6

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the concepts of justice, revenge and the sanctity of life implicit in the things forbidden by the sixth commandment.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is forbidden in the sixth commandment?

A. The sixth commandment forbids the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly, or whatsoever tends thereunto.

S.C. 69, L.C. 136, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 93

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Romans 12:9-21

**Support Passages:** Deuteronomy 32:35; Matthew 5:38-48; James 2:1-13; Genesis 9:1-7; Romans 5:20-21; Acts 25:11; Luke 23:39-43

### **BIBLE STORY**

Acts 21:1-14; Paul is willing to put his life in jeopardy for the sake of Christ.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'" (Romans 12:19, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

The sixth commandment requires us to preserve our own life and the life of others, and we are not to take our own life nor anyone else's life unjustly.

Therefore we are to always pursue peace with enemy and friend alike "if at all possible." But there can be no peace where there is no justice and there can be neither peace nor justice where evil is permitted to flourish.

## SUMMARY

The sixth commandment prohibits all homicide that is malicious or contrived from hatred and implicit in the commandment is the sanctity of life itself. We understand, therefore, that we may not wantonly or carelessly take the life of anyone including murderers. However the Bible teaches very clearly that we are also to promote and establish justice.

Justice must be defined on God's terms and this is crucial to any consideration of how we are to deal with sin. That is to say that in order for justice, to be correct or right it must be in accord with the Law of God. We are instructed by scripture how we are to deal with theft. The thief is to restore what is stolen to the owner and in addition, satisfaction is to be rendered in the form of additional property or money. When it comes to murder, however, there is no way of making restitution or satisfaction. The victim was murdered and cannot be restored. So far as murder is concerned there is no possible remedy thus murder is a very grave offense. Therefore God commands the death penalty as the right or just way of dealing with this sin as we have studied in the previous lesson.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, many are opposed to capital punishment and also base their opposition on certain Bible passages.<sup>2</sup> It is said that capital punishment is revenge, and that we are to leave the punishment of murder to God. We are to "turn the other cheek." "If our enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink" and in this manner we are to deal with murder. They would say that capital punishment is hardly being "at peace with all men." "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." "Do not resist him who is evil." To put our enemy (murderer) to death would violate these principles.

Paul wrote, "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men."<sup>3</sup> He refers to revenge as he does explicitly in Romans 12:19. Like murder, revenge derives from hatred; however, justice is just the contrary. Justice obviously derives not from hatred but from doing what is right therefore revenge and justice are mutually exclusive. They cannot apply simultaneously to a particular case. Paul also modifies his command to "be at peace with all men," with "If possible, so far as it depends on you." We are to control our own attitude toward others but it is certainly possible that we may not be able to control the attitude of others towards us. If our enemy will receive it we are to give him food and drink instead of revenge. Often, however, even though our attitude might be godly, our enemy remains hostile and will not receive our hospitality. Then, too, we are not to provoke our enemy to murder. This is what Paul teaches here in Romans 12. He does not address himself to the

issue of self defense nor to justice realized in obedience to God's command to put the murderer to death through the due process of God's law.

To refuse to bring a murderer to justice is sin against the murderer. To love our enemies goes far beyond the attempt to be at peace with them or to offer them food and drink. It also involves obeying the law of God in their regard. We may not murder them or steal from them or bear false witness against them etc. And we are to provide them the same due process of God's law that we want provided to ourselves. In addition to the "lex talionis"<sup>4</sup> (law of retaliation) we are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us." When the Lord tells us to turn the other cheek He is referring to harassment that falls far short of murder. He mentions law suits and forcing one to go a second mile, which are examples of the kind of harassment experienced under Roman occupation.

Let us therefore be careful of our attitude toward others including our enemies, that we pursue peace and justice for everyone.

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<sup>1</sup> Numbers 35 and Genesis 9:1-7

<sup>2</sup> Romans 12:9-21 or Matthew 5:38-48

<sup>3</sup> Romans 12:17

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 5:38

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the issues of self defense and war.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Which is the sixth commandment?  
A. The sixth commandment is, "You shall not kill."  
Q. What is required in the sixth commandment?  
A. The sixth commandment requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life, and the life of others.  
Q. What is forbidden in the sixth commandment?  
A. The sixth commandment forbids the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly, or whatsoever tends thereunto.  
S.C. 67-69, L.C. 134-136, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 93

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

- Study Passage:**      Matthew 5:21-26  
**Support Passages:**    James 2:1-13, 4; Exodus 21:12-14; Joshua 20:1-6;  
Numbers 35:29-34; John 2:13-22; Psalm 144;  
Matthew 5:38-48

### **BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 14:1-16; Abraham uses deadly force to rescue Lot.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask." (James 4:1-2, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

There is a righteous hatred which under careful biblical constraints issues in the lawful taking of human life. Nevertheless, we may never be motivated to such hostility by mere pique, greed, or ambition for power. It is the law of love that is to rule our relationship with others.

## SUMMARY

Clearly, human life is not so sacred that it can never be taken. Human life is not so sacred that justice and righteousness take a place of lesser importance or even become irrelevant. Human life is sacred but so are justice and righteousness and the Bible places these things in a carefully defined relationship.

Self defense and righteous warfare are not only permitted by God in scripture but they are commanded by God. We are to preserve our own life and well as the lives of others. It is obvious that we do not preserve our own life if we permit others to take it away unjustly. We are not to murder someone else and we are not to permit others to murder us. If it is within our means to protect our own life and we refuse to do it we sin against God whose will it is that we preserve innocent life. It is the life of the criminal that should be forfeit not that of the innocent.

The study text<sup>1</sup> is often urged to defend the position that we are not to take human life under any circumstance. All hatred, it is said, is murder. Furthermore the statement of Christ, "You have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not commit murder;' -- **but** I say to you...", is urged to say that Christ has instituted a new covenant; a new law. He now says that we must not be angry with another person as if to say that the sixth commandment has been abolished and now a new law takes its place. He says, "**but**."

In English the conjunction "**but**" connects two clauses that contrast with one another. In order to connect two clauses that do not contrast with one another we use the conjunction "and." In the Greek language, however, the conjunction "*de*" which is used in verses 22, 28, 34, 39 and 44 does not possess this sharp distinction. It means either "but" or "and" depending on the context. Here in this text, it is used as a transitional particle pure and simple without any contrast intended just as it is used very frequently elsewhere in scripture.<sup>2</sup> The Lord simply expands our understanding of the commandments adduced in here<sup>3</sup> rather than replace them with new ones. He teaches us that while we are not to engage in murder, unjust hatred or denigration of another person is tantamount to murder. Some ancient manuscripts even add the phrase "without a cause" in verse 22 to read "... angry with his brother without a cause ..."

How can it be said that all self defense and warfare is immoral if Gideon, Barak, Sampson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets; "who by faith conquered kingdoms -- escaped the edge of the sword -- became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight," engaged in these things and were commended to us as righteous and faithful for doing them?<sup>4</sup> How can this be maintained in view

of the fact that civil government is a minister of God only when it rewards righteousness and punishes evil doers with the sword, in other words, with death?<sup>5</sup>

Dabney writes, "Unprovoked war is the most monstrous secular crime that can be committed: it is at once the greatest of evils, and includes the worst forms of robbery and murder. -- It is perfectly clear that Sacred Scripture legalizes (sic) defensive war. Abram, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Josiah, the Maccabees, were such warriors: they were God's chosen saints. It was 'through faith they waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.' -- Aggressive war is wholesale murder; and when the government sends out its army to repel and chastise the invader, it does but inflict summary execution on the murderer caught in the act."<sup>6</sup>

James teaches us to control our hatred towards other people which may issue in murder.<sup>7</sup> He notes that armed conflict may be the result of our greed and usually is. However, James speaks to the problem of aggression not defense. Surely we cannot permit an aggressor to murder without any justice or restraint. This would surely lead to anarchy and tyranny. We should be very careful not to let greed, desire for power or hatred rule our lives, but biblical love necessarily involves us in promoting the sanctity of life along with justice and righteousness.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 5:21-26

<sup>2</sup> e.g. Matthew 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:1; 8:30

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 5:21-48

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 11:32-34

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<sup>5</sup> Romans 13:3-4

<sup>6</sup> Robert L. Dabney, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972, pp 402-403.

<sup>7</sup> James 2:1-13, 4

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the basis for the integrity of the family unit.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. Which is the seventh commandment?

A. The seventh commandment is, Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Q. What is required in the seventh commandment?

A. The seventh commandment requires the preservation of our own and our neighbor's chastity, in heart, speech, and behavior.

S.C. 70-71, L.C. 137-138, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 95-96

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** I Corinthians 7

**Support Passages:** Genesis 1:26-28, 2:23-24, 39:1-18; Matthew 5:27-32, 19:3-12; Hebrews 13:4; Ephesians 5:22-33

### **BIBLE STORY**

Acts 18:1-3,26; Romans 16:3; I Corinthians 16:19; The happy marriage of Priscilla and Aquilla.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

The institution of marriage is one of the most important means to accomplish God's redemptive plan for the earth. It is through the Christian family that God brings His children up in discipline and instruction. Believing parents are the ministers of God to this end. Therefore it is essential that the integrity of the family not be compromised by the sin of adultery.

## SUMMARY

That the main issue comprehended by the seventh commandment is the integrity of the family is seen in the obvious destruction of the family by marital infidelity. In our day the great majority of all marriages end in divorce and in some areas all of them do. When divorce occurs the children are usually separated from one or both of their parents and any ethical or moral instruction suffers from the poor example set before them. On the other hand many of our young people live together without getting married and this too attacks the integrity of the family unit.

The Lord quotes the seventh commandment to the Pharisees<sup>1</sup> and continues to say that adultery has been committed even when a man "looks upon a woman to lust after her in his heart". His reference to inward lust provides illumination to the seventh commandment which deepens our understanding of its nature. Jesus does not replace the commandment with a new one but His statement concerning lust stands in stark contrast to the Pharisaical position that adultery is confined to the overt physical act. We have already taken note of the fact that the Greek conjunction "de" can be translated as "and", "but", "furthermore", "then", "now", etc., therefore, Jesus makes no contrasting statement relative to the commandment but to the Pharisaical understanding of it. He is telling us that preoccupation with extra marital sex is not only adultery but can lead to a breakdown of the family unit. Sexual desire per se is not wrong and Jesus does not say so. What is wrong is the desire to have sexual relations outside the estate of marriage.<sup>2</sup>

According to our study text,<sup>3</sup> "it is good for a man not to touch a woman." Paul does not mean to imply that sexual union is bad. Quite to the contrary he states, "But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion". He also writes, "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous."<sup>4</sup> It is the subject of celibacy that Paul undertakes at the beginning of this text where he teaches that it is not wrong to remain unmarried. However, being unmarried one must remain a virgin. Sexual intercourse while unmarried is fornication and as such cannot be the basis for a viable God-pleasing family. For one thing the inheritance cannot legally pass to illegitimate children which may result from such a union. An inheritance can serve to strengthen a family unit unless it cannot be legally passed to the heirs or it is taxed away by the government. In addition, sexual promiscuity can lead to venereal disease which in turn may render a person incapable of raising a family for the Lord. And more importantly, fornication does not please God who has forbidden it.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 5:27

<sup>2</sup> John Murray, Principles of Conduct, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1957, p56.

<sup>3</sup> I Corinthians 7

<sup>4</sup> Hebrews 13:4, ESV

If, however, one chooses to be married, certain obligations and proprieties regulate the marriage relationship. Paul writes, "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband."<sup>5</sup> He is referring, of course, to the conjugal obligation. Neither the husband nor the wife may refuse the marriage bed to the other. If celibacy is chosen, virginity is the obligation. If marriage is chosen sexual union is the obligation. There are circumstances in which sexual union is impossible as is sometimes the case following an accident or a disease. In such a case sexual union may be impossible but the obligation to be faithful to one's spouse remains.

Furthermore, our text takes up the situation in which one of the marriage partners is an unbeliever. This can occur when one of the marriage partners is converted to faith in Christ after the marriage takes place but the other one remains an unbeliever. If the unbeliever consents to continue the union the marital obligations remain in force. If, however, the unbelieving partner wishes to dissolve the union, "let him leave; the brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases..." The obligations of marriage may in this case be dissolved and the family unit remains, consisting of the remaining spouse and the children who are termed by Paul as *holy*. We shall have more to say about divorce in the third lesson on the seventh commandment.

The point of all this is the integrity of the family unit. We are enjoined, therefore, by the commandment to abstain from fornication or adultery which will certainly debilitate or destroy the family.

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:3, ESV



### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the prohibitions of the seventh commandment.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. Which is the seventh commandment?

A. The seventh commandment is, Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Q. What is forbidden in the seventh commandment?

A. The seventh commandment forbids all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions.

S.C. 72, L.C. 139, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 95-96

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** I Corinthians 5

**Support Passages:** Genesis 2:23-24, 20:2-18, 34:5-7, 39:9; Leviticus 18, 20:10-26; Deuteronomy 22:22-27, 27:20-23; Proverbs 7:6-27; Romans 1:24-27

### **BIBLE STORY**

II Samuel 11,12: David and Bathsheba

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." (Hebrews 13:4, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Among the things forbidden by the seventh commandment are adultery, fornication, rape, incest, bestiality and homosexuality. Television, motion pictures and other public media present these sins as normal behavior. Therefore we must be very careful with our exposure to such sinful behavior lest we be enticed to sin against God and our families.

## SUMMARY

Having defined adultery and its relationship to the integrity of the family in the previous lesson, we now turn to a discussion of other sins implicit in the seventh commandment. The study text,<sup>1</sup> deals with just such a sin. The apostle Paul notes that among other things, a certain man in the Corinthian church "has his father's wife" and he uses the Greek word "porneia" (immorality or fornication) to describe this practice. The step-mother is probably in view here rather than the mother since the word for "mother" would probably be used if that was intended. In any event it is a serious infraction of the seventh commandment to have a sexual relationship with one's step-mother as the context makes plain. So much so that Paul decided to deliver the man to Satan "for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord" and he was to be excommunicated and treated as an infidel.

Actually such relationships are explicitly forbidden in several passages, for example, "Cursed is he who lies with his father's wife."<sup>2</sup> Sexual relations with any blood relative or any immediate relative by marriage are forbidden. Furthermore, sexual relations with animals (bestiality) are forbidden in these same passages, and as well, homosexual relationships. This latter is referred to by Paul as utter degradation.<sup>3</sup> He uses the terms, impurity, degrading passion, an indecent act, error and a depraved mind do describe homosexual behavior. Clearly homosexuality is forbidden and is a most base sin.

Another type of relationship that was not ever condoned by God is digamy (marriage to a second husband or wife) or polygamy (marriage to many husbands or wives). The only such practice mentioned in scripture is the taking of a number of wives, there being no case of a woman taking more than one husband at once. The marriage ordinance<sup>4</sup> implies monogamy where one man is united with one woman to become one flesh. Thus "digamy or polygamy was a departure from the original institution and therefore, though suffered or tolerated under the Old Testament, was, nevertheless, a violation of God's instituted order."<sup>5</sup> There is not one instance in scripture where polygamy was a successful or happy relationship.

Lamech's digamy was accompanied with murder. Abraham's brought bitterness and sorrow to his house and instituted nations that are murderously hostile to each other to this day. David's polygamous and immoral relationship with Bathsheba brought him much grief. Solomon's wives turned him away from the Lord. Clearly the Lord desires monogamy when He states that an Elder or a

Deacon must be the husband of one wife (this also implies that church officers must be male).<sup>6</sup>

Joseph refused to fornicate with Potiphar's wife calling such a thing a "great evil, and sin against God." Here is a great positive example to us in a society that flaunts such relationships as desirable. It is said that any sexual relationship between consenting adults is permissible, but to this the Lord declares, "For everyone who does any of these abominations, the persons who do them shall be cut off from among their people. So keep my charge never to practice any of these abominable customs that were practiced before you, and never to make yourselves unclean by them: I am the Lord your God."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I Corinthians 5

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 18:8 or Deuteronomy 27:20

<sup>3</sup> Romans 1:24-27

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 2:24

<sup>5</sup> John Murray, Principles of Conduct, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1957, p45.

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<sup>6</sup> I Timothy 3:2 & 12

<sup>7</sup> Leviticus 18:29-30, ESV

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the seventh commandment in relation to divorce.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. Which is the seventh commandment?

A. The seventh commandment is, Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Q. What is forbidden in the seventh commandment?

A. The seventh commandment forbids all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions.

S.C. 72, L.C. 139, W.C. of F. XXIV, Savoy 25, Young 95-96

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Matthew 19:3-12

**Support Passages:** Matthew 5:31-32; Mark 10:2-12; Deuteronomy 24:1-4; I Corinthians 7:8-16;

### **BIBLE STORY**

John 8:1-11; The woman taken in adultery

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy." (1 Corinthians 7:14, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

One of the greatest social evils today is divorce and in some areas of our nation nearly all marriages are terminated by it. The Scriptures teach that divorce is a monstrous evil and that marriage is not to be terminated for frivolous reasons, in fact "by nothing but adultery, or such willful desertion as can in no way be remedied by the church or civil magistrate." (W.C. of F. XXIV) Though divorce is permissible, it is at best a necessary evil, a testimony to the fact that we live in a sinful world.

## SUMMARY

A great deal of debate and misapprehension exists concerning the teaching of the Bible on divorce. This is obvious in the plethora of positions taken by modern commentators and writers. However the subject was difficult even in the early New Testament Church as seen in the textual problems concerning Matthew 19:9. For example, the ESV reads, "And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery." With this agree the NIV and the RSV. However, the AV (King James) adds, "and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." And there are other variations among the Greek sources but scholars at present generally agree with the text as translated by the ESV.

In this text Jesus answers a question put to Him by the Pharisees as a trap. They asked, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" And the Lord answered a resounding no! It is not lawful to divorce one's wife for any reason but one, namely, immorality (Gr. *porneia*). The foil against which Jesus reacted was the licentious, self-righteous practice of the Pharisees who, as one of their most unquestioned privileges, "claimed the right to repudiate a wife, after the lapse of years, and birth of children, for any caprice whatever."<sup>1</sup> The trap they laid for Christ consisted of compelling Him to either speak out against a widely held popular view or to substantiate their interpretation of the law. To do the one would debase His public image and to do the other would elevate the Pharisees' image. But Jesus clearly did not uphold the Pharisaical interpretation of the Mosaic statute given in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, and furthermore cleared Moses from their perversions and actually repealed the statute by His authority as God. Quoting Genesis 2:24, Jesus argued that divorce was never intended for those who were married but due to hardness of heart Moses permitted it. The one who commits adultery, according to verse 9, is the one who divorces for grounds other than adultery. The Westminster Confession correctly infers that the innocent party in such an improper divorce can marry again as if the offender were dead. Mark 10:11-12 simply includes the wife in the same principle, "-- and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." The passage in Matthew 5:32 does not teach that if the innocent party remarries, he or she commits adultery. This interpretation ignores the fact that *moichouthenai* (to be considered by others as adulterous) and *moichatai* (considered by others as adulterous) are passives. The subject of these passive verbs is the wicked husband who by improperly divorcing his wife causes her to be considered socially as an adulteress even though she is innocent. Not only has he injured her by committing adultery against her but he, by his immorality, causes her to be a social outcast. The one who marries the innocent party is also considered by society to be adulterous though he is innocent which further compounds the

heinousness of the improper divorce.<sup>2</sup> This is very clearly observed in modern Palestinian society.

As for the statute given in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, what is contemplated is not divorce for "any cause" as practiced by the Pharisees but simply the annulment of a poorly arranged marriage before consummation. In that ancient culture the bride and bridegroom typically had never been acquainted until the day of marriage. Consider the marriage of Isaac and Rebecca for example. It was to relieve the wretched fate of such a rejected woman that Moses law was framed. She could return to her single, eligible status again to be married properly albeit not to the man who previously rejected her.<sup>3</sup>

On the subject of wilful desertion as grounds for divorce we must study I Corinthians 7:8-16 but your attention is invited to the summary of Year 2 Lesson 34 which deals with this passage. So then, we who are married need to take special care to enhance and protect this holy relationship bearing in mind the Lord's will in the matter. From the beginning, divorce was never intended.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1972, p. 408.

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<sup>2</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Augsburg Publishing House, 1964, p. 230.

<sup>3</sup> Dabney, op. cit., p. 409.

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the positive requirements of the eighth commandment.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. Which is the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment is, Thou shalt not steal.

Q. What is required in the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment requires the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others.

S.C. 73-74, L.C. 140-141, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 97-98

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Ephesians 4:17-32

**Support Passages:** Genesis 3:17-19; Leviticus 6:1-7; II Thessalonians 3:6-15; I Timothy 5:8; I John 3:16-18

### **BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 2:10-20; Adam takes care of the beautiful garden.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need." (Ephesians 4:28, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

To get something for nothing or to receive a "free lunch" has been the goal in life for many throughout the history of mankind. As popular as it is, the lottery remains a prime example of this sinful attitude. To the contrary God requires of us the sanctity of labor to the end that we glorify and enjoy Him and have the means to help our needy neighbor. This is every one's responsibility and not just that of the wealthy or the relatively few recipients of lottery largess.

## SUMMARY

As with all of God's law the underlying principle is the law of love. We are to love YAHWEH our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind and as well, our neighbor as ourselves. Therefore the prohibition of stealing is based on love for our neighbor as is clear from the study text before us in Ephesians chapter 4. We are no longer to steal, as we once did when we were alienated from the life of God, laboring with our own hands to have "something to share with him who has need." It is an act of love to further the outward estate of our neighbor. To deliberately impoverish ourselves or our neighbor is an act of sinful hate.

Furthermore it is completely contrary to the fruit of conversion. Paul's reference to Gentiles in verse 17 is a reference to our manner of life when we were unconverted. These particular Gentiles were typical of all who were deadened in their understanding and excluded from the life of God through ignorance and hardness of heart. In this estate they were callous, given to sensuality and the practice of every sort of impurity with greediness. "But you did not learn Christ in this way", writes Paul. A life of greed and indolence may be typical of many in our modern society but it is not the life style wrought by the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit renews our mind-set and our inmost being in the likeness of God Himself "in righteousness and holiness of the truth." Therefore "let him who steals steal no longer." Why? Because the one whom God regenerates is much different than this. Radically different behavior is the true fruit of the Spirit.

"When a person sins and acts unfaithfully against YAHWEH, and deceives his companion in regard to a deposit or a security entrusted to him, or through robbery...",<sup>1</sup> restitution must be made in full and one fifth more must be added as a means of satisfaction. How loving and kind is this treatment of both the perpetrator of the crime and the victim. According to the law of the Gentiles the hand of such a person would be cut off or he might be imprisoned. He could not then perform the labor necessary to repay what was stolen and mollify his victim with a token of satisfaction. Robbery, extortion or deceit is a hateful thing in itself but the ungodly remedy of such a crime is equally hateful. God would have us restore what was taken. He would have us labor with our own hands for that which is good so that we would have the means to help our neighbor.

Labor, not indolence, is the mark of a godly man. Adam labored in the garden of Eden being placed there for the express purpose of cultivating and keeping it.<sup>2</sup> Therefore it follows that the curse of Genesis 3:17-19 is not the curse of labor; it is rather the pain and hardship connected with labor and the frustration mankind experiences as the result of the curse upon the ground.<sup>3</sup>

Adam would still eat bread and labor with its appropriate reward was not abrogated. Neither is sweat necessarily bad for our bodies. The great sting of the curse in any event is death not labor. "For you are dust and to dust you will return", is a curse of death.

In fact, if one does not labor to provide for his family, according to I Timothy 5:8, he is worse than an unbeliever. In II Thessalonians 3:10 Paul teaches that anyone who will not do labor should not eat. Indolence, doing no work at all, leads people to act like a busybody and Paul commands and exhorts such people to "work in a quiet fashion and eat their own bread." It is John, however, who gives us our final application of this truth. "Whoever has this worlds goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" At the heart of this prohibition against stealing, therefore, is the law of love for our neighbor.

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<sup>1</sup> Leviticus 6:1-7

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 2:15

<sup>3</sup> John Murray, Principles of Conduct, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957, p. 82

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the negative requirements of the eighth commandment.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. Which is the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment is, Thou shalt not steal.

Q. What is forbidden in the eighth commandment?

A. The eighth commandment forbids whatsoever does or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbor's wealth or outward estate.

S.C. 75, L.C. 142, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 97-98

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Luke 16:1-14

**Support Passages:** Proverbs 11:1, 20:10, 18:9, 21:17, 23:10,20-21, 28:19; Isaiah 5:8; Ezekiel 22:29; Leviticus 25:13-17; Deuteronomy 19:14, Malachi 3:8; Amos 8:5; Psalm 37:21; James 2:15; I Timothy 1:8-11, 6:10

### **BIBLE STORY**

Achan's sin; Joshua 7:1-26

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.'" (Luke 16:13, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

There are many things that are forbidden by the eighth commandment. Among them are kidnapping, receiving stolen goods, fraudulent dealing, false weights and measures, removing land-marks, violation of trust, oppression, extortion, exorbitant usury, bribery, price fixing or collusion and wastefulness. These things are typical of those who are "lovers of money". To the contrary we need to be faithful in little things such as Mammon or riches which are very small compared to the treasures of heaven. We must be careful with our use of wealth and the possessions of others.

## SUMMARY

Quite simply, the eighth commandment forbids stealing or anything that amounts to it. The support texts in this lesson detail a long list of such things. Theft, robbery, kidnapping, receiving and dispensing stolen property, fraud, counterfeiting, false weights and measures, removing land-marks, breaking legitimate contracts, oppression, extortion, exorbitant usury, bribery, trivial lawsuits, eminent domain property seizures, price fixing, gambling, envy, idleness, wastefulness, complaining about our circumstances, are all the sort of things that amount to stealing but the Lord Jesus teaches us a very different and important principle in our study text.<sup>1</sup>

Luke 16:1-14 relates the parable of the unjust steward which has been greatly misunderstood by many, some even suggesting that Jesus approved of the dishonest steward and instructed His disciples to imitate him. Others suggest that since the unjust steward was praised by his master, the wrong of dishonest gain can be atoned for by charity. Jesus, however, makes a much different use of the parable.

There is strong evidence that the steward was dishonest in that it was reported that he was squandering the possessions of his master. In addition, he fraudulently modified the bills of his master's debtors downward, in order to ingratiate himself with them. By feathering his nest in this manner he is termed "shrewd" and Jesus observes that "*-- the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.*"<sup>2</sup> The sons of this age know how to gain an advantage for themselves and are not deterred by conscience and moral considerations. Christians, to the contrary, are often not as shrewd in their own dealings with each other and with the world. The Christian's heart is set on the treasures of heaven but the hearts of the sons of this age are set on the things of this world. It is no wonder then, when it comes to dealing with people in their generation, that the sons of this age are far shrewder than the sons of light. It could not be otherwise, and this is by no means a criticism of the Lord's people.

Though this parable has been the object of much perplexity, only one interpretation commends itself as the truth, namely, the interpretation given to it by the Lord. Jesus draws our attention to the very opposite of what the steward really is. The complete unrighteousness of this steward regarding Mammon or riches helps us to see and attain to the very opposite, complete righteousness regarding our use of unrighteous Mammon. Jesus wants us to use our money properly, for the glory of Christ and His kingdom. He wants us to be careful with the value we place on money and we are to strenuously resist the temptation to sin with regard to money.

The steward used the money of another shrewdly to make friends for

himself. We are to do the same thing but to make our use quite the opposite. The manager was a steward and so are we. He was entrusted with money and so are we. To him it was unrighteous Mammon and so it is also to us. He makes friends with it and so do we. He comes to an end and so do we but one that is completely different. The sons of this age end up with the things of this world, but the sons of light, the Lord's people, end up with eternal habitations. The one is motivated by unrighteousness but the other by righteousness. Use your money, Christians, so that you end up with eternal dwellings. By no means should we rob God or anyone else.

Verses 10 through 12 of the text teach us the value we are to place on money. To the sons of this age, Mammon is everything. They will sell themselves into unrighteousness for the love of money which is a "*-- root of all kinds of evils.*"<sup>3</sup> But to the sons of light, who judge Mammon in the light of the Scriptures, it is a "*very little thing.*" It is the least as compared to their eternal possessions. As the steward used Mammon to make friends of this world we should use it to make friends of God.

By saying that no servant can serve two masters the Lord teaches us that no man is his own master. It is our very nature to be governed by someone or something else. The question is, who or what shall this be? The two masters Jesus has in mind are God and Mammon or wealth. Only one of these can be our master and the lord of our hearts. We might think that we could give half-hearted service to Mammon but whole hearted service to God. The danger is always that we will hide our love for Mammon by a half-hearted show of service to God. We must constantly resist the power of Mammon in our lives. We must purge our hearts of the unrighteousness of Mammon, and serve God alone.

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<sup>1</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St Luke's Gospel*, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Augsburg Publishing House, 1961, p. 823ff

<sup>2</sup> Luke 16:8, ESV

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Timothy 6:10, ESV



**TEACHING GOAL**

To study special considerations of the eighth commandment with regard particularly to civil government.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Which is the eighth commandment?  
A. The eighth commandment is, Thou shalt not steal.
- Q. What is forbidden in the eighth commandment?  
A. The eighth commandment forbids whatsoever does or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbor's wealth or outward estate.
- S.C. 75, L.C. 142, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 97-98

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Matthew 22:15-22

**Support Passages:** Isaiah 1:18-26; Leviticus 19:35-37; Deuteronomy 25:13-16; Proverbs 20:10; Ezekiel 22:18; II Samuel 24:24

**BIBLE STORY**

Luke 19:2-10; Zaccheus makes restitution.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Unequal weights and unequal measures are both alike an abomination to the Lord." (Proverbs 20:10, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

What is immoral for individuals is also immoral for corporations and institutions. As we are not to steal, neither is the government to steal. Debasement of money is a very serious national sin that defiles the land, profanes God's name, and brings people into bondage to debt.

## SUMMARY

Our attention in this lesson is turned to corporate responsibility to the eighth commandment. According to our study text in Matthew 22, the Pharisees were once again trying to trap Jesus. Hoping to force Jesus to incur the wrath of either one or both of the Roman government and the Jewish government they asked him, "Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?" If Jesus responded negatively, the Herodians who were witnessing the affair would report to Herod and therefore the Roman government under whose authority Herod was governing that Jesus had committed treason. The Herodians favored the Roman tax. If he responded affirmatively, the Pharisees themselves would report to the Jewish Sanhedrin that Jesus was a Roman supporter. Either way they assumed that Jesus would find himself in disgrace.

Jesus' response, however, was completely unexpected and confounded those who would trap him. He asked to be shown the coin used for the poll-tax. When a denarius was produced which of course had Caesar's likeness and inscription on it Jesus instructed his hearers to "render to Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." The poll-tax in fact was paid with Roman currency which the Pharisees possessed and used. The coin which contained Caesar's likeness and inscription belonged to Caesar and as it was used as legal tender by the Pharisees they therefore subjected themselves to civil responsibility to the Roman government. Jesus answer was to the effect that if you are using Caesar's property you are to use it on his terms and it is interesting that Jesus apparently was not in possession of such coins.

Thus we learn that civil government may legitimately tax those whom it governs, but God is also entitled to his own. To Caesar belongs coins, tribute and money. To God belongs tithes, first-fruits, vows and sacrifices. The Pharisees rendered to neither one what was properly due. While the civil government may be entitled to certain taxes, it may not take more than what is due. Zaccheus, acting for the Roman government just that. He exacted more tax than what was due and was therefore guilty of fraud according to Luke 19:8. By way of repentance and restitution he returned four times the amount overtaxed.

There are however other means by which a government defrauds its citizens. According to Isaiah 1:22 governmental fraud is perpetrated by debasing silver currency with dross or impurity or by watering down goods that are used for barter. This is clearly an act of governmental theft. In addition the support texts refer to unjust weights and measures as a means of theft. While our government is careful to regulate the instruments of measurement used in business and commerce it in fact defrauds the nation by systematically debasing our currency which contributes heavily to inflation. A prime cause of inflation is the increase of money supply beyond a standard.

Inflation is what happens when gold and silver are no longer used to back the currency in circulation. Our silver then becomes dross. Unrighteousness prevails. Inflation, which is in essence stealing, becomes the national norm. Those that saved money early in this century have had their money stolen from

them. The elderly and those living on fixed incomes have become the prey of thieves.

The Scriptures teach us that currency debasement is an abomination to the Lord and brings very difficult times to the nations of the earth. The solution to this massive problem in our own country and in many others is not at all easy but is it the same solution that must prevail for all of our problems with sin. We must repent. The nation must be converted and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Our great social evils can only find relief through repentance unto life.

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the positive requirements of the ninth commandment.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Which is the ninth commandment?
- A. The ninth commandment is, Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
- Q. What is required in the ninth commandment?
- A. The ninth commandment requires the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, and of our own and our neighbor's good name, especially in witness-bearing.
- S.C. 77-77, L.C. 143-144, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 99-100

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      John 14:1-17

**Support Passages:**    Titus 1:1-3; Hebrews 6:17-18; Romans 3:1-18;  
John 8:12-47; Exodus 23:1-9; Colossians 3:8-9

### **BIBLE STORY**

I Samuel 19:1-6; Jonathan's witness.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

" So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" (John 8:31-32, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

The Scriptures tell that God is love, but they also tell us that God is truth. Since truth is an attribute of God and given that we must be imitators of God to be pleasing to Him, it follows that we must be truthful in all that we say and do. Truth is indeed a very precious commodity in our day and age.

## SUMMARY

Standing before Pilate Jesus confirmed that He was a King saying, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice. Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" Pilate, like many others in this world did not know what truth was. He was face to face with truth in the flesh and did not recognize it. What a tragedy! Jesus is the "way, the truth, and the life" yet so many do not know it!

Perhaps we are a bit rusty in our understanding of the nature of truth so as we undertake the study of the ninth commandment we shall begin with the nature of truth. If we are not to bear false witness against our neighbor then we are to do the opposite, we are to be truthful in our dealings with other people. Truth is the opposite of falseness or lying. It bears the qualities of accuracy, honesty, sincerity, reality or certainty. Truth is one of God's attributes in which He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. Thus Paul writes that he is "--an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began--." <sup>1</sup>

Again, in Hebrews 6, Paul writes concerning God's oath to bless Abraham, "So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, --" <sup>2</sup> The two unchangeable things, of course are His Promise and His Person. As Paul writes, "--Let God be true though everyone were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged."" <sup>3</sup>

Compared with God who is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His truth, every human being is a liar. Yet we may know the truth and through the process of sanctification the Holy Spirit enables us to be more and more conformed to it. God's word is truth, that is to say, it is accurate, honest, factual, real, sincere and certain. "-- "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."" <sup>4</sup> As the ninth commandment states, "you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor", so also does Paul command us, "Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices" <sup>5</sup>

We see in Jonathan's witness before Saul a good example of keeping the ninth commandment. Saul was seeking to put David to death but Jonathan

spoke well of David saying, "--"Let not the king sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his deeds have brought good to you. For he took his life in his hand and he struck down the Philistine, and the Lord worked a great salvation for all Israel. You saw it, and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?"" <sup>6</sup>

Saul did in fact listen to Jonathan and promised not to kill David. Jonathan told the truth about David and his life was spared. So are we to be truthful in a world that is given to prevarication and suppression of the truth in unrighteousness. <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Titus 1:1-3, ESV

<sup>2</sup> Hebrews 6:17-19, ESV

<sup>3</sup> Romans 3:4, ESV

<sup>4</sup> John 8:31-32, ESV

<sup>5</sup> Colossians 3:9, ESV

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Samuel 19:4-5, ESV

<sup>7</sup> Romans 1:18

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study a special application of the ninth commandment namely that of truthfulness and espionage.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Which is the ninth commandment?
- A. The ninth commandment is, Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
- Q. What is required in the ninth commandment?
- A. The ninth commandment requires the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, and of our own and our neighbor's good name, especially in witness-bearing.
- S.C. 77-77, L.C. 143-144, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 99-100

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Exodus 1:8-22

**Support Passages:** Genesis 20; Genesis 27:1-27; Proverbs 11:13; Joshua 8:3-29; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25; I Samuel 16:1-13; II Kings 6:8-23

### **BIBLE STORY**

Joshua 2; Rahab and the spies.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth." (1 John 2:21, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Given that truthfulness is the hallmark of godliness how shall we deal with acts of espionage? We must realize that concealment of the truth is not necessarily an act of lying. Neither is deceiving the enemy in warfare disobedience to the ninth commandment.

## SUMMARY

In the previous lesson we studied the necessity of being truthful as demanded by the ninth commandment. Indeed we studied the very sanctity of truth. The apostle John writes, "For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth."<sup>1</sup> But the question of truthfulness, as it turns out, is not all that easy.

Some commentators believe that we may never tell a lie and they quote the very passages that we studied previously. However, we are informed by the Bible passages that support this lesson that concealing the truth does not necessarily implicate us in lying. For example I Samuel 16:1-13 is the account of David's anointing. Samuel was very apprehensive of going to the house of Jesse for that purpose for fear that Saul would kill him. So the LORD told Samuel to take a heifer with him and inform Jesse that he came to "sacrifice to the LORD." To the contrary, Samuel went to Jesse's house to anoint David and the sacrifice would appear to be an evasion of the truth. The true reason for Samuel's visit was suppressed. Since this was done at God's command we must conclude that concealment of truth is not a breaking of the ninth commandment.

Another example is seen in the account of the midwives of Israel during their bondage in Egypt.<sup>2</sup> Intent on murdering the male babies to control the growing population and leadership of Israel, the king of Egypt commanded the midwives to kill these babies when they were born. The midwives refused to do this and when called to account for their disobedience they gave the following reason, "-- Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women, for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them."<sup>3</sup> At best this reason was partially true for no doubt some Israeli women gave birth without the help of a midwife. However, the compelling reason was simply that they obeyed God rather than men and would not do murder. God rewarded the midwives for their act of disobedience and from this we conclude that we are under no obligation to tell the truth to an enemy intent on murdering us.

Elisha deliberately deceived the Syrians intent on capturing him by telling them that they had come to the wrong city, for they thought (correctly) that Elisha was in Dothan. They were smitten with blindness and while in that condition Elisha took them to Samaria into the hands of the king of Israel. This was accomplished by deceiving the enemy and again Elisha was under no obligation to inform them while they were blind that he was the man that they sought. It must be noted that this deception was not based on a lie but on the concealment of truth and there is indeed a difference between the two.

Now we come to Rahab who hid the Israeli spies on her roof top and sent

the authorities of Jericho away to search in the wrong direction.<sup>4</sup> She is commended by God for welcoming the spies in peace<sup>5</sup> and for sending them out another way. <sup>6</sup> This obviously involved deception of the enemy. If viewed in the context of the impending war against Jericho her deception was an act of espionage and not an act of bearing false witness against her neighbor. If viewed otherwise we could say that God simply commended her for protecting the spies and not for her deception. Even so, she could not have protected the spies had she not been deceptive. When the king of Jericho asked her concerning the spies that came to her house she answered, "--True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them."<sup>7</sup> This was clearly not true. She did know who they were and where they were from and in fact they were hidden under stalks of flax on the roof of her house. Should she have said, "I am glad you asked! They are up on my roof." Perhaps she should have remained silent. If so would not her house have been searched given that the enemy knew that the spies had gone to the house of Rahab? We conclude, therefore, that deception of the enemy in warfare is not lying just as killing the enemy in warfare is not murder.<sup>8</sup>

We may never bear false witness against our neighbor that is to say that truth is indeed the hallmark of godliness. We are to promote the good name, the reputation of ourselves and our neighbor. The deception of an enemy in warfare does not violate this principle but in fact preserves our integrity and our lives.

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<sup>1</sup>3 John 3-4, ESV

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 1:8-22

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 1:19, ESV

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<sup>4</sup> Joshua 2

<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 11:31

<sup>6</sup> James 2:25

<sup>7</sup> Joshua 2:4-5, ESV

<sup>8</sup> Robert L. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1972, pp 425-426.

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the negative requirements of the ninth commandment.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. Which is the ninth commandment?

A. The ninth commandment is, Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Q. What is forbidden in the ninth commandment?

A. The ninth commandment forbids whatsoever is prejudicial to truth, or injurious to our own or our neighbors good name.

S.C. 78, L.C. 145, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 99-100

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Proverbs 6:16-19

**Support Passages:** Genesis 38:12-30; Leviticus 19:15-16;  
Deuteronomy 18:9-22; Nehemiah 6:1-9;  
Psalm 35:17-26; Matthew 27:27-31; Luke  
18:9-14; James 2:12, 3:1-12, 4:11-12; Jude 16

### **BIBLE STORY**

Matthew 26:69-75: Peter's denial of Jesus.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will not escape." (Proverbs 19:5, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Given that the tongue is "a fire, the very world of iniquity," and that sins of the tongue are an abomination to the Lord, we must learn to bridle our tongues and speak the truth. The God who is perfect truth requires truth of His creatures.

## SUMMARY

The lying tongue is said by Solomon to be an abomination which YAHWEH hates. Of the seven abominations listed in the study text, three are sins of the tongue; a lying tongue, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers. According to James this small part of the body, the tongue, "-- the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell."<sup>1</sup> It is very clear, therefore, that the sin contemplated by the ninth commandment is very serious. Indeed, lying is one of the most heinous transgressions of God's law and Satan is the father of it.

The Westminster Larger Catechism enumerates sixty six different ways in which our speech constitutes a breaking of the ninth commandment and leads to and aggravates other sins. For example, included in the genealogy of Christ is one Tamar. She is one of four women mentioned in Matthew's genealogy each one of which were of dubious character. To Tamar and Judah was born Perez through whom came the Messiah. Tamar deceived Judah, her father-in-law, by pretending to be a prostitute and Judah made use of her services. When it became apparent that she was pregnant she proved Judah's paternity by producing Judah's staff, seal and cord which he had left with her as a pledge of his promised payment. In this case the sin of her lie was compounded by the sin of Judah's adultery. That our Savior came from this illicit union illustrates the marvelous grace and sovereignty of God, but in no way commends such sin.

The truth is prejudiced when unjust opinions are held regarding the condition of our neighbor. Such unfounded opinions inevitably lead to gossip and slander.<sup>2</sup> The gravity of such sin is given perspective by considering the sin of theft by comparison. The thief steals property belonging to his neighbor but does no harm to his reputation. However, a liar can do considerable damage to another's reputation and can rob him permanently of his peace. The scriptures consider such sin as an act against the very life of the neighbor.

Not only is false witness regarding our neighbor forbidden but false witness concerning God as well. He tells us that anyone who practices witchcraft, divination, sorcery, casting of spells, calling up the dead (necromancy), spiritism and such like is a false prophet.<sup>3</sup> Occult practices represent God falsely, that is to say, from Satan's viewpoint and whoever does these things is detestable to God.

Sanballat invented a false report of Nehemiah's reason for rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem the object of which was to frighten and discourage the workers. This too is prejudicing the truth with the result that Nehemiah should

sin against God and bear reproach.<sup>4</sup> Mockery is based on false premises as seen in the treatment Christ received at the hands of Pilate. Here was not merely an abomination to God but supreme blasphemy as the soldiers sarcastically shouted, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and spat on Jesus and crowned Him with thorns. Indeed, this was an unspeakable prejudicing of the truth. In many ways, therefore, is the tongue a very world of iniquity, set on fire by hell itself; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.

The proud Pharisee prejudiced the truth when he boasted, "I thank Thee that I am not like other people, swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get".<sup>5</sup> This estimation of his spiritual condition was entirely false, the truth being that his heart was deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. He like the tax-gatherer should have beat his breast saying, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!"

Let us guard our tongues that we not compromise the truth and displease God by doing what is forbidden in His ninth commandment.

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<sup>1</sup> James 3:6, ESV

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 19:15-16

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 18:9-22

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<sup>4</sup> Nehemiah 6:13

<sup>5</sup> Luke 18:11-12



### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the positive requirements of the tenth commandment.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. Which is the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment is, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

Q. What is required in the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment requires full contentment with our own condition, with a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbor, and all that is his.

S.C. 79-80, L.C. 146-147, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 101-102

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** I Timothy 6:1-10

**Support Passages:** Psalm 16:5-6, 37:3-26, 73:25-26; Proverbs 15:13-17, 16:7-11; Luke 3:14; I Corinthians 7:17-24; Philippians 4:10-12

### **BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 13:1-18; The contentment of Abraham.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you.""  
(Hebrews 13:5, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

The tenth commandment teaches us to be content with what God has given us. If we delight ourselves in the LORD and wait patiently for Him, we will surely be on the pathway to true and godly contentment which is great gain.

## SUMMARY

Contentment is the very opposite of covetousness. On the one hand contentment is delightful such that God is the strength of our heart and our portion forever.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand covetousness brings with it the baggage of quarrels, conflicts, war and murder. We lust and do not have, we are envious and cannot obtain so we commit murder if not in fact, in the thoughts of our mind.<sup>2</sup> Those who want to get rich, writes Paul in our study text, "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction."<sup>3</sup>The tenth commandment, therefore, deals with area of our lives that is of great importance to us.

If obeyed this commandment leads to great contentment and peace as is the case with all of God's laws. However, if it is disobeyed it can lead to great unhappiness. Using Paul's words, it can lead to our ruin and destruction. Paul tells us that when accompanied by contentment, godly living is a means of great gain as opposed to a life of envy, strife, abusive language and evil suspicions. He characterizes the life of covetousness as one of constant friction. Peace as opposed to friction. What a contrast! Furthermore, we have no real motive to be covetous for as he says, "we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either." We need to learn contentment, "if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content."

It is with contentment that Paul is here concerned. Money and desire for the things money can buy often serve to diminish or destroy our contentment. It is not **money** that is the root of all evil rather it is the **love of money** that is this terrible source of evil. It was not to their credit that the Pharisees were lovers of money as we read in Luke 16:14. They heard the Lord Jesus speak of the unrighteous steward and they heard Him draw His powerful lessons from it but they scoffed at the Lord of Glory because they loved their money more than God. The great lesson the Lord taught in this parable was this, "You cannot serve God and money." You cannot serve the True and Living God and unrighteous wealth at the same time. As He said, either we will hate the one and love the other, or else we will hold to the one and despise the other. The problem is not with wealth or money rather it is our slavery to it. Indeed Jesus would have us be faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth or money. If we have wealth we must use it to the glory of God. We must make friends of heaven with it.<sup>4</sup> To do otherwise is to destroy our contentment and alienate those who would receive us into the eternal dwellings. There can be no contentment through slavery to that which is unrighteous, through the love of money. Such is the stuff of covetousness.

We must not yield to covetousness. How much better it is to make YAHWEH the portion of our inheritance and our cup.<sup>5</sup> And when we contemplate our estate as Christians we will see that our portion has fallen to us in pleasant places. Indeed we will see that our heritage is beautiful. We will see that the little we may have is better than the abundance of the wicked.<sup>6</sup> Instead of envy and covetousness let us delight ourselves in YAHWEH, and He will give us the desires of our heart. Instead of envying the prosperity of the wicked, we need to commit our way to the Lord, trusting in Him, resting in Him, waiting patiently for Him who is El Shaddai, God Almighty. With Paul we need to learn to be content in whatever circumstances we are.<sup>7</sup> So shall we know the joy and delight of contentment.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 73:26

<sup>2</sup> James 4:1-2

<sup>3</sup> Timothy 6:9, ESV

<sup>4</sup> Luke 16:9

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<sup>5</sup> Psalm 16:5

<sup>6</sup> Psalm 37:16

<sup>7</sup> Philippians 4:11

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the negative requirements of the tenth commandment.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. Which is the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment is, Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

Q. What is forbidden in the tenth commandment?

A. The tenth commandment forbids all discontentment with our own estate, envying or grieving at the good of our neighbor, and all inordinate motions and affections to any thing that is his.

S.C. 79 & 81, L.C. 146 & 148, W.C. of F. XIX, Savoy 19, Young 101-102

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Colossians 3:1-17

**Support Passages:** I Kings 21:4; Esther 5:13; Romans 13:8-10; I Corinthians 10:10; Galatians 5:26; James 3:14-16

**BIBLE STORY**

I Samuel 18:1-30; Saul's envy of David.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."  
(Colossians 3:2-3, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Too often we set our minds on the better condition, as we would suppose, of someone else. We become discontent with the things given to us by God. To the contrary we should set our affections on things above and rejoice with those who rejoice. We should be like Jonathan who rejoiced in the success of David.

## SUMMARY

Viewed positively, the tenth commandment requires contentment of us. Contentment as opposed to constant friction, the baggage of envy and greed. Viewed negatively, the tenth commandment forbids such things as envy and greed which Paul says are idolatry, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry."<sup>1</sup> How is greed idolatry?

Greed or covetousness is idolatry because through it our affections are placed on things that are on earth. An idol is something that takes the place of God in our affections. We strongly desire to obtain something that we do not have so we lust after it and perhaps steal it or murder to get it if not outwardly, then inwardly. The point being that our affections are seriously misplaced and this is the essence of idol worship. Instead of this list of things we should not be, such as greedy or envious, Paul would have us, "-- put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator."<sup>2</sup> Greed and envy, you see, are completely inconsistent with the new birth, with regeneration. The new man created by God in our conversion, embarks on a path that moves away from the greedy, idolatrous ways in which we once walked. If we indeed have been chosen by God, we should act like it. Compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience will mark our lives instead of immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire and greed. What a difference there is when we, "Let the word of Christ dwell in (us) richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in (our) hearts to God."<sup>3</sup> Thankfulness instead of covetousness. The peace of Christ instead of bitter envy and quarreling.

Saul envied David bitterly according to I Samuel 18:8. As the result of his jealousy of David's military success Saul became very angry. He looked upon David with suspicion and was possessed by an evil spirit such that he raved within his house. Even as David played the harp to soothe him Saul hurled a spear at David in an attempt to kill him. Saul's covetousness led from bad to worse to the point of God's departing from Saul. Saul, like his son Jonathan, should have rejoiced with the success of David but instead he was in dread fear of David and lost any hope of personal peace and happiness.

Ahab "turned away his face and ate no food," when Naboth refused to give his land to him.<sup>4</sup> Ahab's covetousness carried with it a sullen spirit, refusal to eat, unhappiness and ultimately the judgement of God. Elijah correctly noted that because Ahab had done evil in the sight of the Lord, evil which consisted of coveting Naboth's vineyard and murdering him to get it, God would punish him. Indeed God would utterly sweep him away and cut off from Ahab every male,

both bond and free, in all Israel, and Jezebel would be eaten by dogs. So odious was Ahab's sin of covetousness, murder and idolatry that it was said of him, he "sold himself to do evil in the sight of the LORD."<sup>5</sup>

So let us not be as these who coveted. Far better for us that we be content with God's grace and live at peace with God and with our fellow man.

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<sup>1</sup> Colossians 3:5, ESV

<sup>2</sup> Colossians 3:10, ESV

<sup>3</sup> Colossians 3:16, ESV

<sup>4</sup> I Kings 21:4

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<sup>5</sup> 1 Kings 21:20

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To understand that no one is able to be sinless in this life even though God has commanded us to be perfect.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God?  
A. No mere man since the fall is able in this life perfectly to keep the commandments of God, but does daily break them in thought, word, and deed.

S.C. 82, L.C. 149, W.C. of F. VI, Savoy 6, Young 103

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Ecclesiastes 7

**Support Passages:** Genesis 6:5, 7:21; Romans 3:9-20, 7:18-25; Galatians 5:17; James 3:2-13; I John 1:8-2:1

### **BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 40; While in prison, Joseph decided to rely on a man, the chief cupbearer to get him out, but as always the arm of flesh failed him.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8-9, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Too often we set our minds on the better condition, as we would suppose, of someone else. We become discontent with the things given to us by God. To the contrary we should set our affections on things above and rejoice with those who rejoice. We should be like Jonathan who rejoiced in the success of David.

## SUMMARY

In many ways this lesson is a review of principles we have already touched upon. We have taken note of the fundamental nature of mankind which is wholly given to sin and we read, "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."<sup>1</sup> Even after the Flood, Noah and his family had to sacrifice for sin and though God promised never to destroy the earth again with water He said that, "the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth".<sup>2</sup>

Even the godly Apostle Paul cries out, "Wretched man that I am!"<sup>3</sup> Lest we think Paul is speaking of his life before he was converted, we should be reminded that before conversion we are dead in our trespasses and sins and we have no problem with sin. Before conversion we do not do battle with evil and we would never say as Paul does, "So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good."<sup>4</sup> These are the words of a regenerated man who is very mindful of his true nature as he writes, "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin."<sup>5</sup> Even though we do not do the good that we wish to do as God's people, and though we practice the very evil that by God's grace, having been converted, we do not wish to do, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus".<sup>6</sup> Paul continues to say that because no human being is capable of perfection God sent His own Son as a propitiation for our continuing sin and we are urged to walk in the Spirit and be putting to death the deeds of the flesh. The whole creation will continue to suffer with the effects of sin until the day of resurrection.

All of this notwithstanding, we are commanded by God to be perfect even as He is perfect. This is to be our goal in life though we cannot ever attain to it while on this earth. God gives us the means of grace, His Word, the Sacraments and prayer to help us as we "press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus".<sup>7</sup> He also gives the Holy Spirit to His people and "if any one sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous".<sup>8</sup> There would be no need for all of these aids and helps to us if we could achieve perfection.

The Qoheleth (the Preacher), though he is the wisest man on earth, has come to see that every thing human is an exercise in futility. He writes, "Surely

there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins."<sup>9</sup> The Preacher wishes to be wise but even in this he cannot be perfect for he is yet human. "See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes."<sup>10</sup> Often in this chapter the Preacher bemoans the fact that even the best of us cannot do anything perfectly. We must recognize our complete dependency on the grace of God for our well being. He tells us to enjoy life but not to play the fool by placing ourselves above law and discipline.<sup>11</sup> We must deal with the fact that we are sinners and will continue to sin during our lifetime. No amount of earthly wisdom, no sophistication or maturity will ever render us perfect before God. Therefore we must confess our sins and walk humbly before the God who made us. Let us say with the Psalmist, "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." <sup>12</sup>

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1 Genesis 6:5, ESV

2 Genesis 7:21

3 Romans 7:24

4 Romans 7:12, ESV

5 Romans 7:14, ESV

6 Romans 8:1

7 Philippians 3:14

8 I John 2:1

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9 Ecclesiastes 7:20, ESV

10 Ecclesiastes 7:29, ESV

11 verses 15-16

12 Psalm 73:26, ESV

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To understand that no one is able to be sinless in this life even though God has commanded us to be perfect.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous?
- A. Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.
- S.C. 83, L.C. 150-151, W.C. of F. VI, Savoy 6, Young 104

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Psalm 78

**Support Passages:** I Kings 11:1-13; Matthew 12:22-37; Proverbs 6:20-35; Ezekiel 23:36-39; Isaiah 58:3-5

### **BIBLE STORY**

I Kings 13:1-32; The disobedient prophet of God.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression." (Psalm 19:13, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

We should turn ourselves away from all sin and our highest priority must be those sins which are the most grievous. David prays to be restrained from presumptuous sin or sin that is aggravated by brazen, brash behavior and so should we be particularly careful in this regard.

## SUMMARY

According to the Westminster Larger Catechism, the things that cause some sins to be worse than others are four, namely: (1) The persons offending; (2) The persons offended; (3) The nature and quality of the offense, and; (4) The circumstances of time and place (Question 151).

Ordinarily, accepting gracious hospitality would not be wrong and may even be advisable. But it was wrong for the prophet of I Kings 13 to do so because God had commanded him not to eat or drink in the locale of his prophecy against Jeroboam. His prophecy of judgment on the sins of Jeroboam was valid and correct and God did in fact blot out and destroy the house of Jeroboam as the prophet said He would. However, this man of God, this prophet disobeyed the commandment of his Lord. He was culpable even though his disobedience was predicated on a lie (verse 18). His sin was aggravated by the fact that he was a prophet of YAHWEH and also because it was God whom he primarily offended and not another human being.

Solomon certainly should have known better than to burn incense and sacrifice to the gods of all his foreign wives. He sinned grievously against the Lord and his sin was aggravated many times over. Solomon was knowledgeable and experienced in the ways of the Lord therefore he was more culpable. He sinned directly against God by erecting and worshipping idols thus because God was the offended party his sin was the more heinous. Then too the worship of gods such as Molech was grisly and detestable since it involved burning up ones children in its red hot arms. God terms Molech worship an abomination. The quality and nature of Molech worship greatly aggravated Solomon's sin.

Our study text deals with the various sins of Israel, who greatly aggravated their sin by the fact that they were God's people and witnesses of His almighty power. Their problems began with a faulty educational process. They should have caused<sup>1</sup> their children to know God's character and commandments but even though the sons of Ephraim were skilled and well armed they did not keep God's covenant and turned back in the day of battle. Their sin was first of all an aggravation of the sin of their fathers who were stubborn and rebellious and did not teach their children properly. Furthermore, their sin of rebellion was aggravated by the fact that they had been eye witnesses of the majesty and power of God. They had no reason to disobey God. The rest of the Psalm chronicles continued national sin against God. Israel put God to the test at Massah when Moses struck the rock in anger. They complained about God's provision of Manna. They provoked the holy God with their idolatry and rebelled against God often in the wilderness even refusing to enter the promised land. Thus did Israel add to their sin, aggravation upon aggravation.

According to Matthew 12:31 sins against the Holy Spirit are more heinous than sins against the other persons of the Godhead. Proverbs 6:30-32 tells us that while theft is sin, restitution and satisfaction can be effected, but adultery is

more heinous because we can be destroyed by it. Oholah (Samaria) and Oholibah (Jerusalem) "committed adultery with their idols and even caused their sons, whom they bore to Me, to pass through the fire to them as food".<sup>2</sup> As grievous as this sin was it was aggravated by the fact that it was perpetrated against God Himself, in His sanctuary and on the Sabbath. What an indictment is this that Jerusalem and Samaria "slaughtered their children for their idols" but how much worse that they entered God's sanctuary on the Sabbath to do it!

So let us strive to keep God's Law and not sin. We are especially counseled by God to avoid sins of presumption; brash aggravated sins.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 78:5

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<sup>2</sup> Ezekiel 23:37



**TEACHING GOAL**

To understand the reasons why every sin deserves God's wrath and curse.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What does every sin deserve?

A. Every sin deserves God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come.

S.C. 84, L.C. 152, W.C. of F. VI, Savoy 6, Young 37

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Ephesians 5:1-21

**Support Passages:** Proverbs 21:2-4; Isaiah 64:6; Lamentations 3:39-45; Matthew 7:15-23; Matthew 25:41-46; Galatians 3:10-14; James 2:1-13

**BIBLE STORY**

I Kings 3:16-28; Solomon judges as a wise but human king. Although it is appropriate, his judgment is limited to the occasion and the singular situation before him. With God judgment is not limited in any way and His punishment is based on a complete knowledge of the outward and inward being of the individual being judged.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

" For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."" (Galatians 3:10, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Given that God judges the heart and is "intimately acquainted with all my ways" (Psalm 139:3-4), we can readily understand that every sin, even the least, is known to God and therefore we are guilty of not just one sin but a whole lifetime of disobedience and rebellion. Even the least of our sins is actually part of a great fabric of sin against the sovereign God. Therefore we must come to Christ for forgiveness and make every effort to live as would please God.

## SUMMARY

We have previously studied the nature of sin which is transgression of the law. We have also studied the horrors of eternity in hell which God has prepared for the devil and his angels and all who refuse to repent and believe on Christ. Now we shall consider the narrow issue of the exceeding gravity of even the least of our sins for even the least one deserves an eternity in hell.

That sin is punished by an eternity in hell is a doctrine that sinners strongly resist. We are quick to argue that we have not done any violent crime, nor are we perverted. We would say with the rich man, "Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth up".<sup>1</sup> Yet we all are found lacking even as the rich man who came to Christ on this occasion. And it is never a simple issue of "One thing you lack", for our one sin is invariably woven into a lifetime fabric of sin against God. Our one sin is part of a whole world and life view which involves us in immorality, impurity and greed and does not qualify us or commend us in the least for an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.<sup>2</sup> In fact it is because of this very thing, says Paul, that "the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." Paul tells us not to be partakers with them, in verse 7, because we in fact have been partakers in the filthiness and silly talk, among other things, of the sons of disobedience and this remains a constant problem to us. It is never just one sin, or the least of sins that condemns us.

We are prone to measure the guilt of sin the way a civil court does. When the women presented their case to Solomon,<sup>3</sup> he passed judgment based on the situation before him. The fact that the women were prostitutes and that their babies were illegitimate was irrelevant. Solomon simply determined who the true mother was. A court of law determines the guilt or innocence of a person with regard to specific charges. Any other sin is irrelevant. However, it is not this way with God. He does not judge our sin in a partial or fragmentary manner. Nor can He because no one whose nature it is to do evil continually commits one solitary sin.

"Is it an oath? God sees in it, first, a specific breach of the 3rd Commandment; then, an expression of pre-existent sentiments of willfulness, irreverence, levity or malice, in the profane man: then thirdly, an evil influence on spectators, to be propagated, unless grace intervene, forever: fourth, a confirming influence, intensifying the wicked temper and habit; and last, a natural tendency involving a series of increasing profanities forever. In a word, God, as final and omniscient judge, has to judge each sinner as a concrete whole, and each transgression as index, part, and cause, as well as fruit, of a disease of sin, a deadly, spiritual eating cancer, whose tendency is to involve an immense evil, eternal death. Thus judged, sin is an infinite evil, and deserves an eternal penalty. One reason why God punishes forever is, that the culprit sins

forever. God's point of view is that this everlasting series of sins is the fruit of the first rebellion."<sup>4</sup>

Since this is the case with mankind, we must come to Christ for forgiveness and we must make every effort to please Him by obedience and service.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 10:20

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 5:1-5

<sup>3</sup> I Kings 3:16-28

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<sup>4</sup> Robert L. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1972, p. 429.

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the only escape from God's wrath and curse; a life of faith, repentance and obedience.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What does God require of us, that we may escape His wrath and curse due to us for sin?
- A. To escape the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin, God requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, repentance unto life, with the diligent use of all the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption.

S.C. 85, L.C. 153, W.C. of F. XIV-XV, Savoy 14-15, Young 55

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Acts 20:17-35

**Support Passages:** Luke 13:1-3; Acts 17:30; John 1:12, 3:16, 3:36, 6:47; Romans 3:23, 6:23; II Timothy 2:25

### **BIBLE STORY**

Acts 26; The life of Paul. Paul was condemned by God for sins that he actually did and Paul admitted his sinful condition in I Timothy 1:12-15. Paul escaped judgement because God in His sovereign mercy chose him and sought him out for salvation and then provided all the means necessary for his growth in grace.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him." (John 3:36, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

In order to be saved from our sin we must first admit that we are not only by nature sinners but that we have actually sinned. Then, recognizing that it is not enough to believe for the moment, we must constantly believe, repent and use the means of grace which God has given to help live a continual life of obedience.

## SUMMARY

Paul visited Ephesus on his third missionary journey where as usual his message was very controversial. For three months he spoke out boldly, reasoning and persuading about the kingdom of God,<sup>1</sup> then he taught daily in the school of Tyrannus for some two years such that "all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks".<sup>2</sup> The result of all this was a terrible riot in Ephesus, lasting for several hours of shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" and charges of sedition and undermining the livelihood of the silversmiths who made images of Artemis. Fearing for his life Paul left Ephesus journeying Northwest to Macedonia, down into the Grecian peninsula and then back to Miletus, a short distance South of Ephesus. There he called the Ephesian elders to himself and reminded them of his ministry to them.

Paul could have come to them as a learned philosopher debating and teaching Plato or Socrates which would not have been inflammatory or divisive. As it was, his message and teaching was very much different. He reminded the elders, "And when they came to him, he said to them: "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> Thus we see that Paul's message was one of repentance and faith and not one of "cleverly devised tales".<sup>4</sup> His hearers naturally rebelled against this message because they refused to believe that, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God",<sup>5</sup> and this is a first principle in escaping the wrath and curse of God. People will never repent from something they do not believe to be sin so that in Ephesus idolatry and idol serving businesses were more important than the truth that they were on their way to hell unless they repented. They did not want to hear that and neither do we, hence the violence and rebellion.

Typical of Pilate was the outrage reported to Jesus in Luke 13:1-3. It seems that Pilate ordered his soldiers to murder some Galilean Jews who had come to the temple to sacrifice. Certain sacrifices required laymen to bring their offering to the court of the priests which surrounded the great altar and brass laver. While they were laying their hands on their sacrifices to symbolically transfer their guilt Pilate murdered them, literally mingling their blood with their sacrifice. Jesus' disciples supposed that this terrible thing happened to the Galileans because they were guilty of some extraordinary sin to which Jesus replied, "I tell

you, no, but, unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." So we must again take note of the absolute need the repent and believe in order to escape the fires of hell.

In Acts 26, Agrippa permitted Paul to speak for himself at his trial pursuant to his journey to Rome. So Paul related certain details of his life in order to show that he was not guilty of insurrection or sedition. Paul acknowledged that he sinned against God through hostile acts against the name of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>6</sup> In fact he was guilty of directly persecuting the Lord Jesus.<sup>7</sup> In order to escape the wrath and curse of God for his sins, in order to be delivered from the dominion of Satan, Paul had to be forgiven and sanctified by faith in Christ.<sup>8</sup> He had to repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. Paul's own great sin required faith in Christ and repentance unto life. As Paul gave this same testimony to the Jews at the temple they became violent and seizing Paul they tried to put him to death. They did not want to hear that they needed to repent from their sin and believe on Jesus to be saved. So they rebelled with violence.

Thus we have taken account of several texts that teach the necessity of faith in Christ and repentance unto life in order to be saved. This is the consistent testimony of the Bible so let us receive this truth from God's Word and hasten to do it.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 19:8

<sup>2</sup> Acts 19:10

<sup>3</sup> Acts 20:18-21, ESV

<sup>4</sup> II Peter 1:16

<sup>5</sup> Romans 3:23

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 26:9-11

<sup>7</sup> Acts 26:15

<sup>8</sup> Acts 26:19-20

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To understand the nature of saving faith.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is faith in Jesus Christ?

A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is freely offered to us in the gospel.

S.C. 86, L.C. 72, W.C. of F. XIV, Savoy 14, Young 57

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Galatians 2

**Support Passages:** Isaiah 26:1-4; John 1:12-13; Romans 10:14,17; Ephesians 2:1-10, 3:8-11; Hebrews 10:32-39

### **BIBLE STORY**

Luke 2:36-50; The woman who anointed the feet of Jesus came to Him at great cost and deep anguish of soul.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

To be saved we must possess a basic knowledge of our need for the Saviour, Jesus Christ, and He alone must be the object of our complete hope and trust. It is of the essence that we actually receive Him and rest in Him alone.

## SUMMARY

Faith, according to Webster, is unquestioning belief. It is complete trust, confidence or reliance. It is fidelity, loyalty or allegiance. The faith considered in this lesson concerns Jesus Christ and matters pertaining to our salvation so it is very important to us because the Scriptures inform us that without faith in Christ there is no possibility of salvation and we cannot live. "But the righteous will live by his faith".<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, saving faith is certainly not unquestioning faith in the sense that it is a blind leap. It is an informed faith, informed by the Word of God such that Paul writes, "-- I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me."<sup>2</sup>

We must have some knowledge of certain things to order to have saving faith. We must know that we have a great need and we must know about God's gracious provision in Christ. The woman who came to Jesus, according to Luke 7:36-50, knew that she was a sinner and her tears testify to it. She was, in fact a sinner<sup>3</sup> and the Pharisees who saw themselves as righteous, constantly reminded her that she was immoral.<sup>4</sup> She must have known that Jesus was the Messiah and the Savior for she came to Him willingly, braving the embarrassment of gaining entrance to the home of a self-righteous Pharisee. She must have been convinced of this because she came to Jesus at great cost in terms of the social stigma but also in terms of the gift she bestowed upon Him. It was only to Jesus that she came, "--, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment."<sup>5</sup> Such anguish of soul! Such strength of conviction that Jesus was her Savior! Surely this was saving faith and Jesus absolved her of her sin and guilt and pronounced her saved saying, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace".<sup>6</sup>

We do not have our faith in a vacuum nor does it come from thin air, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."<sup>7</sup> Paul preached the gospel everywhere he went so that God's people might come to repentance and be saved. Paul visited the Galatian cities, Lystra, Derbe, Iconium and Antioch on each of his three journeys into Asia Minor. He did not receive the gospel that he preached there from man but from God as he indicates in Galatians 1:12 so that what he preached was the truth. The faith of the believers, according to Galatians chapter 2, was informed by the truth of the gospel<sup>8</sup> which is the Word of God such that they were justified not by works of the Law

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<sup>1</sup> Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, etc.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Timothy 1:12, ESV

<sup>3</sup> Luke 7:37

<sup>4</sup> ibid verse 39

<sup>5</sup> ibid. verse 38, ESV

<sup>6</sup> ibid. verse 47-50

<sup>7</sup> Romans 10:17

<sup>8</sup> Galatians 2:14

but through faith in Christ Jesus.<sup>9</sup> He goes on to say that no one can be justified by keeping the Law. No one can receive pardon for sin and the imputation of Christ's righteousness apart from faith in Christ. Therefore he writes, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (verse 20 ESV)

According to Ephesians 2:8-9 we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ but this faith, this ability to believe in Christ for salvation, did not come from within ourselves. It came to us as a gift from God. It came to us as the result of God's free grace and it is not simply that salvation is the gift of God's grace but our personal ability to believe in Christ is a gift from God. Paul writes, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."<sup>10</sup> We have seen then, that saving faith consists of trusting and resting in Christ alone for our salvation. Furthermore we have seen that both the object of our faith and our ability to believe are of God and from God. There is salvation in no one else but Jesus Christ so let us come to Him quickly and trust Him completely for pardon from sin. Let us rest in Jesus who will certainly help us and keep us until the day of redemption.

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<sup>9</sup> ibid. verse 16

<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 2:10, ESV

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To understand the nature of repentance unto life.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is repentance unto life?

A. Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of and endeavor after, new obedience.

S.C. 87, L.C. 76, W.C. of F. XV, Savoy 15, Young 56

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      II Corinthians 7

**Support Passages:** Psalm 51:5-13, 80:3,7,19; Acts 2:37-38, 5:30-31, 11:18; II Timothy 2:25;

### **BIBLE STORY**

Luke 15:11-24; The prodigal son underwent a radical change of direction in his life and so illustrates repentance.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause." (Isaiah 1:16-17, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Given that the ability to repent from sin comes to us as a gift from God and that the Lord Jesus came not "to call righteous men but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32) establishing repentance as a priceless evangelical grace, we ought to see to it that we bring forth fruit that befits our repentance.

## SUMMARY

In the previous lesson we studied saving faith and now repentance unto life. These two evangelical graces go hand in hand. They are both "the exercises of a regenerate heart alone; they presuppose the new birth"<sup>1</sup> which is not of ourselves but comes from above.<sup>2</sup> It is the Living and True God who "has caused us to be born again to a living hope ..." <sup>3</sup> That the ability to repent comes from God is stated clearly in passages such as Acts 5:31 where God grants repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. In Acts 11:18 God grants "repentance that leads to life" to the Gentiles and in II Timothy 2:25 the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome with those who oppose Christ "if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth." In Psalm 80 Asaph prays, "O God of hosts, restore us, and cause Thy face to shine upon us, and we will be saved." He prays thus because he knows that all that is involved with effecting our salvation comes from God including the Savior, our saving faith and our repentance unto life. According to Dabney, "Repentance and Faith are twin graces, both implicitly contained in the gift of the new heart; and they cannot but coexist. Repentance is the right sense and volition which the renewed heart has of its sin; faith is the turning of that heart from its sin to Christ. Repentance feels the disease, faith embraces the remedy."<sup>4</sup>

Both the Greek New Testament and the Hebrew Old Testament use two different words which we translate as "repent" in English. One means sorrow or regret while the other means change or turn away toward another course of action. Both words are used in almost all cases as synonyms; words which refer to the same thing. Thus the English word repent bears the meaning of turning away from sin unto God and to do so with grief and hatred for our sin. In addition, the word "repent" is used in connection with God. He is said to repent in Genesis 6:6, "And the LORD was sorry (repented) that He had made man on the earth ...". In the context of the sin at Horeb where Israel made the golden calf in Exodus 32:12 and 14 God is said to repent in the sense that He changed His mind about doing harm to His people. This is speaking anthropomorphically. This is to use human terms to describe some aspect of God's person or activity. So then we have seen several contexts in which "repent" is used to refer to a turning away and a feeling of sorrow.

The prodigal son was an example of just such a repentance. He willfully departed from the house of his father and wasted his substance on things that gave no lasting satisfaction or that through which he could not survive. Rather than return home, he sought out other fathers, other means of survival which

failed him completely. As such the prodigal typifies each one of us. We, just like this young man, are prodigals. By nature we have left any claim to our heavenly home and to God the Father. By nature we are completely estranged from God and we like the prodigal will not go home to God the Father and we try to find any other means to survive and to escape from the guilt of our sin.

The son is lost and so are we. The focus of the parable really is on the fact that the son was lost rather than that he was a prodigal. He could not rise up to go home to his father until he had a change of mind; until he repented. And lest we think that this prodigal changed the course of his life by himself, consider just how rare such behavior really is. Actually no one will by himself see returning to God the Father as the only viable alternative to the problems of life.

We read, "'But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'"<sup>5</sup> God himself must have caused this young man to know his great need such that he recognized that he sinned against God as well as his earthly father. His repentance consisted in that he turned away from his sin and his appalling condition to the only one who could and would help him. There is much more for us in this parable but we take special notice here of the act of repentance.

Paul considers the other aspect of repentance in 2 Corinthians 7, namely the aspect of sorrow. A letter that Paul wrote previously to the Corinthians caused them certain sorrow.<sup>6</sup> He probably rebuked their sin as he did in I Corinthians 5. However, Paul rejoices in the sorrow he caused in that church because as he writes, "For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death."<sup>7</sup> There is then a repentance that leads to salvation. There is a repentance unto life. It is a repentance that is brought to pass in a believer by God.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing house, 1972, p. 656.

<sup>2</sup> John 3:3

<sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 1:3

<sup>4</sup> Robert L. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing house, 1972, p. 658

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 15:17-19, ESV

<sup>6</sup> 2 Corinthians 7:8

<sup>7</sup> 2 Corinthians 7:10, ESV



### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the nature of the Christian life seen as a life of Faith and Repentance.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What is faith in Jesus Christ?
- A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the gospel.
- Q. What is repentance unto life?
- A. Repentance unto life is a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, does, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of and endeavor after, new obedience.

S.C. 86, 87; L.C. 72, 76; W.C. of F. XI, XV; Savoy 11, 15; Young 56, 57

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Hebrews 11

**Support Passages:** Isaiah 43:1-3; Matthew 10:34-39; Romans 8:18-39; Revelation 2:1-3:22

### **BIBLE STORY**

II Corinthians 11:23-28; Examples of Christian living from the life of Paul.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," (2 Timothy 3:12, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

The life of faith and repentance is a very difficult thing. On the one hand there is the spiritual struggle with evil and on the other there is persecution. We must therefore count the cost of discipleship and set our affections on things above if we are to endure to the end.

## SUMMARY

The Christian life, though it is filled with many exciting experiences involves a constant walk of faith and struggle against sin. In previous lessons we have studied the nature of faith and repentance and the origin of these graces in the Christian. Now we must be reminded again of the consequences of faith and repentance in our lives. Paul writes, "Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure."<sup>1</sup> You may say that these things came to Paul because he was an apostle and he experienced things that the average person never does. However, Paul notes that all Christians, those who live godly lives, will suffer persecution.

It is therefore typical of the Christian life that it is difficult. Not **if** you pass through the waters will I be with you but "**when** you pass through the waters, I will be with you".<sup>2</sup> It was a foregone conclusion that God's people would experience many problems in their lives. Christ came to this earth for a number of reasons but peace in the life of the Christian was not one of them. He said, "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword".<sup>3</sup> To many, faith in Christ means strife in the home. To others it means a broken marriage, typical of people converted from Islam.<sup>4</sup> It may mean that our property is seized by the state or that we are made a public spectacle.<sup>5</sup> There may be scourging, mocking, chains or imprisonment.<sup>6</sup> But if we are to be disciples of Christ we must be willing to take up His cross; we must be willing to endure tribulation for His sake.

John writes to the seven churches of Asia Minor to the effect that they will suffer persecution but to be saved they must endure to the end. In my view John is writing to these churches about sufferings that they will experience during the events that led up to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 AD. He wrote to these churches to encourage them and to prepare them for what they were soon to face. He wrote the book of Revelation so that they would know that, "-- in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."<sup>7</sup> Seven times he speaks to those who overcome. The one who overcomes will be granted to eat of the tree of life, he will not be hurt by the second death,

he will be given hidden manna, he will be given authority over the nations, he will be clothed in white garments and represented by Christ before God the Father, he will be made a pillar in the temple of God, and he will be granted to sit with Christ on His throne. All of this presupposes a life of difficulty as a Christian.

So we have been forewarned of the ramifications of faith in Christ and repentance unto life. We have been forewarned of the spiritual and physical problems we will have to face. However, we must rest assured in Christ because God loves His people and they will not be eternally hurt. Nothing can separate us from the love of God and at the end of all this is a crown of life. Let us therefore be faithful unto death. Let our repentance be genuine and lead us into fruitful, productive lives for the glory of Christ and the good of His kingdom.

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<sup>1</sup> II Corinthians 11:24-27, ESV

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 43:2

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 10:34

<sup>4</sup> I Corinthians 7:13-15

<sup>5</sup> Hebrews 10:33-34

<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 11:36

<sup>7</sup> Romans 8:37,ESV

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the nature and efficacy of the means of grace.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?
- A. The outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption, are His ordinances, especially the word, sacraments, and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

S.C. 88; L.C. 154; W.C. of F. I, XXI, XXVII; Savoy 1, 22, 28; Young 14, 105, 125

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Proverbs 2

**Support Passages:** Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 10:17; Ephesians 5:15-20; Colossians 3:12-17

### **BIBLE STORY**

Acts 2:41-47; The early church uses the means of grace to their great benefit.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." (Acts 2:42, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

We need to be diligent in our use of the Bible, the Sacraments and Prayer. In fact we ought to be excited about the use of these means of grace. So let us pray God to move our hearts to this end that we might grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior.

## SUMMARY

One of the marks of the Christian is love for the means of grace. This is one of the most visible and perhaps the most important activities of the believer in the pursuit of a godly life. It is essential that we love God's word as we love the God who wrote it. It is essential that we partake of the Lord's Supper regularly and it is essential that we pray both as a means to worship God and to make our requests known to Him. If we have been truly converted we will hunger for these means of grace and as we grow in grace we will more and more delight in their use.

"By means of grace are not meant every instrumentality which God may please to make the means of spiritual edification to His children. The phrase is intended to indicate those institutions which God has ordained to be the ordinary channels of grace, i.e., of the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit, to the souls of men. The means of grace, according to the standards of our Church, are the word, sacraments, and prayer."<sup>1</sup>

The early church certainly used the means of grace and is an example to us in this regard. In Acts 2:41-47 we find that they continually devoted themselves to the word of God (the apostles teaching), to the sacraments (fellowship and the breaking of bread), and to prayer. They did this with the result that their fear of God grew (sense of awe), the power of the ministry grew (wonders and signs were taking place), their unity and sense of purpose grew, their generosity increased and they rejoiced in the Lord. We should pray God that His means of grace should be as effectual in us.

The people in this early fellowship, "had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need." Lest we suppose these people were the first communists let us take note of certain facets of this assembly that would instruct us to the contrary. Their sharing was not mandatory, it was done out of love and concern for one another in times of persecution. It was a temporary expedient to aid in survival, not a means to achieve a permanent social utopia. And notice also that it was God centered as opposed to atheistic humanism. It simply was a natural result of the diligent use of the means of grace, which provided great benefits for the individuals involved and their corporate fellowship.

If the treasures of the means of grace are to be ours we must, according to Proverbs 2, make our ear attentive to wisdom and incline our heart to understanding. We must cry out to the Lord for discernment and lift our voice for understanding. The point of all this is to "discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God." Through the means of grace, "wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; discretion will guard you, understanding will watch over you." According to Romans 10:17, through the

word of Christ comes faith and James writes,<sup>2</sup> "the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." The means of grace cause God's chosen people to grow in grace, they are the source of faith and they bring comfort and help to us in times of trouble and illness. They are made effective by the Spirit of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965, v. III, p. 466.

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<sup>2</sup> James 5:16

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study how God makes His word effective in bringing us into an estate of salvation.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. How is the word made effectual to salvation?
- A. The Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort, through faith, unto salvation.

S.C. 89; L.C. 155-160; W.C. of F. I, XXI; Savoy 1, 22; Young 14

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Romans 10:13-21

**Support Passages:** Nehemiah 8:7-8; Psalm 19:7-10; Acts 20:32, 26:16-18; Romans 15:4; I Corinthians 14:24-25; II Timothy 3:14-17

### **BIBLE STORY**

II Chronicles 17; The reforms and revival under Jehoshaphat.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." (2 Timothy 3:15, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Given that the preaching of the Bible is the primary means whereby our salvation is effected in us we must give all diligence to subject ourselves to the ministry of godly pastors and teachers.

## SUMMARY

The rest of the Catechism addresses separately the three means of grace, the word, the sacraments and prayer. This lesson is the first of two on the word of God as an effective means of grace. In particular we shall study the preaching of the word in this regard. Though the Bible which is the word of God be readily available to us and though we are hearing a gifted preacher expound it, yet it is only the Holy Spirit that makes the preaching of the word of any spiritual value to us. The word of God is spiritually discerned and is but foolishness apart from the sovereign work of God's Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

The Spirit of God makes the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of enlightening, convincing, and humbling sinners; of driving them out of themselves, and drawing them unto Christ.<sup>2</sup> Whether read or heard the word of God restores the soul, makes the ignorant person wise, rejoices the heart, and enlightens the eyes.<sup>3</sup> It was the preaching of the word, however, that brought Israel to repentance in the days of Nehemiah.<sup>4</sup> The Levites explained the law of God to the people, reading from the book, the law of God, expounding the scriptures such that the people could understand it.

This, of course, was a public thing, with the people of Israel in place before the priests who were preaching and it was very effective. We read that the people wept when they heard the words of the law, not because the priests were eloquent or persuasive but because the Holy Spirit moved them through the word of God. When they heard the law of God expounded to them they realized how sinful they were and they were humbled before God. Then Nehemiah encouraged the people saying, "Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."<sup>5</sup> All this was done publicly yet we should also read the Bible in private. The Ethiopian eunuch did so<sup>6</sup> but Philip was sent by God to explain the Scriptures. Philip preached Jesus to him.<sup>7</sup> We are blessed if we read the word of God,<sup>8</sup> but it is not sufficient to read the Bible neglecting to hear the preaching of it. The preaching of the word is of particular importance and necessary in God's plan of redemption.

A great revival took place in Israel during the days of the godly king Jehoshaphat. Judah was brought to revival and prospered not because a great preacher persuaded them with oratorical skills but because the Levites patiently taught the book of the law to them. We read that "they went throughout the cities of

Judah and taught among the people".<sup>9</sup> We might also note that the Levites did not use drama or music to teach the people. They were not entertained, they were taught. And this is the great commission, is it not? Jesus would have us teach all nations in order that they should become His disciples. Drama and music have their place in certain elements of the worship of God<sup>10</sup> but it is especially the preaching of the word of God that is the effective means of grace.

In Romans 10:13 Paul quotes Joel 2:32, "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved." Anyone can call upon God to save them but not everyone will do so. Paul continues to say that we cannot call on God to save us unless we believe and we won't believe unless we hear the gospel from a preacher who is called and sent to us by God. He therefore tells us that preaching is essential to our personal salvation. According to I Corinthians 14, it is not speaking in tongues that bring the unsaved to believe in Christ for salvation. Rather it is prophesying or preaching that convicts the sinner and discloses the secrets of his heart so that he will fall on his face to worship God.<sup>11</sup> Therefore we need to place ourselves under the preaching of the word of God if we are to be saved and in order that we should grow in grace.

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<sup>1</sup> I Corinthians 2:10-14

<sup>2</sup> Larger Catechism 155a

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 19:7-10

<sup>4</sup> Nehemiah 8:7-8

<sup>5</sup> Nehemiah 8:10

<sup>6</sup> cf. Acts 8:30

<sup>7</sup> Acts 8:35

<sup>8</sup> Revelation 1:3

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<sup>9</sup> II Chronicles 17:9

<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16

<sup>11</sup> I Corinthians 14:25

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study how we are to read and hear the word of God.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. How is the word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation?
- A. That the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.
- S.C. 90; L.C. 157, 160; W.C. of F. I, XXI; Savoy 1, 22; Young 14

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

- Study Passage:**      Matthew 13:1-23
- Support Passages:**      Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Psalm 119:11, 18-19; Proverbs 2:1, 8:34; Luke 8:18, 9:44; I Thessalonians 2:13; II Thessalonians 2:8-12; Hebrews 2:1, 4:2; James 1:21, 25; I Peter 2:1-3

**BIBLE STORY**

Acts 17:1-14; The Christians at Berea eagerly study the word of God.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." (Acts 17:11, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

It is necessary that we receive the Bible for what it really is, the word of God, in order for it to be a means of grace to us. We are to delight in this. We are to receive God's word eagerly and diligently study it for our spiritual good.

## SUMMARY

Not only are we to subject ourselves to the faithful preaching of the word of God but we are to carefully and prayerfully study it. One reason why we do not do this as we ought is we do not deeply believe that the Bible is the word of God. In addition, Satan would turn our attention to other things if he could. The great enemy of Christ's Church does not want us to study the Bible or attentively hear it.<sup>1</sup> We are prone to occupy ourselves with work or entertainment and are often so tired on the Lord's Day that we cannot give the proper attention to the preaching of the word. Or we find many excuses from studying the Scriptures therefore they do not become the means of grace to us that they should.

The study text, Matthew 13:1-23, contains the parable of the soils. Christ spoke of four different types of people who hear the word of God. The first type do not understand it, the second receive it temporarily, the third receive it carelessly, but the fourth type alone understand it. It is only this latter who bear fruit but the others do not. The devil snatches the word of God away from those who do not understand it and there is no fruit. Persecution renders the second type unfruitful and riches and worry ruin the third. We need to take heed to ourselves to see what kind of soil we are. The word of God, the good seed, is a means of grace only to those hearers who are characterized as "good ground." Fruit is produced only by the seed that falls on the good soil and although the amount of fruit varies good soil is never unfruitful.

We must treat the word of God like the treasure it is, "Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee".<sup>2</sup> Our minds must be open as we read and study the Bible that we may see, "the wonderful things from Thy law".<sup>3</sup> That is to say that we cannot be so fatigued we cannot think properly, nor can we be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If we are fatigued, as we often are, we should sleep or rest ourselves so that we will be able to receive the word of God properly. "Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my doorposts".<sup>4</sup> So says the personification of wisdom which in this context is Jesus.

According to Luke Jesus tells us that we are to hold fast to the word of God,<sup>5</sup> and we are to take care how we listen to it,<sup>6</sup> letting it sink into our ears.<sup>7</sup> Paul gives thanks that the Thessalonians received the word of God's message from the apostles for what is really is, "the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe".<sup>8</sup> We see clearly from this text that the word of God is a means of grace to believers when it is received properly. It should be milk to us

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<sup>1</sup> II Thessalonians 2:8-12

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 119:11

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 119:18

<sup>4</sup> Proverbs 8:34

<sup>5</sup> Luke 8:15

<sup>6</sup> Luke 8:18

<sup>7</sup> Luke 9:44

<sup>8</sup> I Thessalonians 2:13

and we should long for it as new born babies in order that we may grow in grace.<sup>9</sup> If we have tasted the kindness of the Lord we need to lay aside all of the things that hinder our proper access to the Bible and read it with joy and understanding. We need to hear it as becomes the people of God.

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<sup>9</sup> I Peter 2:1-3



### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the basic rules of interpreting the Word of God.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. How is the word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation?
- A. That the word may become effectual to salvation, we must attend thereunto with diligence, preparation, and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives.

S.C. 90; L.C. 157, 160; W.C. of F. I, XXI; Savoy 1, 22;  
Young 14

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** II Timothy 2:14-26

**Support Passages:** Proverbs 1:7, 9:10; Acts 17:11; Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 4:2; II Peter 1:12-21

### **BIBLE STORY**

Acts 16:25-34; Paul and Silas and the Philippian Jailor.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

God has been faithful to give us the Bible where He reveals all that we need to know in order to glorify and enjoy Him. We must be faithful to receive the Bible as the word of God and to interpret it accurately. We must take great care in this matter in order to avoid the instability of false doctrine (Ephesians 4:14)

## SUMMARY

The Bible is the word of El Shaddai, God Almighty, therefore, we must handle it appropriately. According to II Timothy 2:15 we are to handle it accurately. If we do not it will not teach us or reprove us or correct us or train us in righteousness as it should.<sup>1</sup> It requires no extraordinary skill or education to properly interpret most of Scripture but the Bible does contain some very difficult passages that lead poorly equipped or unbelieving interpreters into great error. This of course is the interpreter's problem and not God's problem.

Milton S. Terry writes, "We cannot believe that the sacred writers desired to be misunderstood. They did not write with a purpose to confuse and mislead their readers. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that the Scripture, given by divine inspiration, is of the nature of a puzzle designed to exercise the ingenuity of critics. It was given to make men wise unto salvation, and in great part it is so direct and simple in its teachings that a little child can understand its meaning. But the Bible contains some riddles and dark sayings, and many revelations in the form of types, symbols, parables, allegories, visions, and dreams, and the interpretation of these exercised the most gifted minds."<sup>2</sup>

He goes on to say that, "Sound hermeneutical principles are, therefore, elements of safety and satisfaction in the study of God's written word." Hermeneutical principles are rules of interpretation and it is the purpose of this lesson to briefly examine the basic ones. A first principle is that the interpreter must be a believer. That is to say the interpreter must be a person whom the Holy Spirit is enlightening and sanctifying otherwise much of Scripture will be foolishness at the outset.<sup>3</sup> This is particularly important when we turn to others for help in understanding difficult passages. The commentators we use must be believers.

To understand the language of a writer we must know the meaning of his words. Furthermore, we must know the meaning of his words at the time he wrote them for the meaning of many words has changed considerably over the years. In addition, we must know the meaning of his words in the language he used and this means Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek. In God's providence we have a number of very good English versions of the Bible but certain features of these original languages cannot be translated into any other language for example the acrostic features of certain Psalms.<sup>4</sup> However, this linguistic problem does not hinder anyone from knowing the truth. Indeed, it is possible for anyone to determine the current usage of words as employed by a particular writer, or prevalent in a particular age, from modern English versions of the Bible.

In order to determine the historical and grammatical meaning of words

we may, (1) study the immediate context, (2) study the nature of the subject, (3) study contrasts or opposition, (4) study parallelisms of Hebrew poetry, (5) compare parallel passages, (6) ascertain the general and familiar usage, (7) compare the text in ancient versions, (8) consult godly, believing commentators. We may also ask ourselves the following questions concerning the text we are studying: (1) what does the passage say and mean; (2) what does the passage ask me to believe; (3) what does the passage ask me to do; (4) in what way is the passage suggestive of Christ; (5) what applications and lessons are to be drawn?

Let us study the Bible as we should but let us be careful to handle the word of truth accurately. Then we will grow in grace and reach a stable, mature, and fruitful understanding of God's word.

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<sup>1</sup> II Timothy 3:16

<sup>2</sup> Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1967, p. 161-162.

<sup>3</sup> I Corinthians 2:14

<sup>4</sup> e.g. Psalm 119, a double acrostic

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the manner with which the sacraments become an effective means of salvation.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?
- A. The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that does administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them.

S.C. 91; L.C. 161; W.C. of F. I, XXVII; Savoy 28; Young 121-125

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** I Peter 3:13-22

**Support Passages:** Matthew 3:11-12; I Corinthians 3:1-9; I Corinthians 12:13

### **BIBLE STORY**

Acts 8:9-25; Simon Magus, baptized but unsaved.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." (John 6:63, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Because salvation is not a onetime occurrence but a state of being, a life of redemption from which we receive great benefits such as the sacraments, we must not neglect them. They give grace to us and salvation which is one of the benefits of redemption.

## SUMMARY

Saved by baptism! Many denominations put forth the doctrine that baptism saves us from our sin. I once asked a Roman Catholic friend if he was saved. His answer was, "Yes, I have been baptized, and I attend Mass regularly." Even our own catechism, at first glance, suggests that the sacraments save us when it asks, "How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?" Then there is the statement in I Peter 3:21 that, "baptism now saves you."<sup>1</sup> So it is the purpose of this lesson to study how it is that the sacraments are effective means of salvation.

To understand the passage<sup>2</sup> we must apply some of the hermeneutic principles mentioned in the previous lesson. For example let us note the plain and simple meaning of the words. Noah was saved by water, in a figure of baptism or as the Greek puts it, in an antitype of baptism. Not "baptism now saves you" but "Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you."<sup>3</sup> Calvin writes, "As Noah obtained life through death, when he was buried in the ark just as in a grave, and among the total ruin of the world he was preserved together with his small family, so today the death which is set forth in baptism is to us an entrance into life, and no salvation can be hoped for, unless we are separated from the world."<sup>4</sup>

However, the correspondence is lacking in certain respects. For example, just because there were few saved (eight souls) by the Ark does not mean that few will be saved now. Peter limits the correspondence by saying that it is not the removal of dirt from the flesh. The flood was not ritual water baptism as the sacrament of baptism is so the correspondence fails here too. Again Calvin writes, it is "as though he were saying that what happened in the age of Noah would always be the case, that mankind would rush to their own destruction, but the Lord would in a wonderful way deliver his little flock."<sup>5</sup>

On the one hand baptism is not just an empty ritual without power or efficacy. On the other hand it is not the means whereby we are saved. If this latter were true then the Roman Catholic missionary Xavier was right when he sought to save the masses of India by riding through their towns and villages shaking holy water on them from the back of his horse. Another rule of hermeneutics would require us to examine salvation in the wider context of the rest of Scripture. We are saved, according to Paul in Ephesians 2:8-9, by grace. We are saved through faith by the power of God. Baptism is rather an outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption and this is the

sense in which we are saved by it. In this context salvation is seen as a process or state of being rather than an act of God. "How can there be a good and pure conscience until our old man is reformed, and we are renewed in the righteousness of God? And how can we answer before God, unless we rely on and are sustained by the free pardon of our sins? In short, Peter had in mind to set forth the effect of baptism that no one might glory in a bare and dead sign, as the hypocrites are wont to do."<sup>6</sup>

We are not saved because we have received the sacraments but we are blessed with certain benefits of salvation through the sacraments. Simon the Sorcerer<sup>7</sup> had been baptized by Phillip after he was said to have believed. However, Peter later rebuked the sin of Simon's presumption that he could purchase the gift of God with money. He said, "You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."<sup>8</sup> Simon clearly was baptized but unsaved.

In any event it is God alone that saves and that renders the means of grace effective to their intended outcome. No man can ever make the sacraments effectual even to the least extent. The sacraments bless the people of God with the benefits of salvation only through the blessing of Christ and the working of His Holy Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> "There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism" NKJV

<sup>2</sup> I Peter 3:13-22

<sup>3</sup> ESV

<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, Calvin's Commentaries - The First and Second Epistles of St. Peter, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976, p. 295.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 296.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 297.

<sup>7</sup> Acts 8:9-25

<sup>8</sup> Acts 8:21-23, ESV

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the definition and meaning of the sacraments.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is a sacrament?

A. A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ; wherein, by sensible signs, Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers.

S.C. 92; L.C. 162-163; W.C. of F. XXVII; Savoy 28; Young 121-125

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Matthew 26:26-29

**Support Passages:** Genesis 17:7-10; Exodus 12:48; Acts 2:38; Romans 15:8 I Corinthians 10:16, 11:24-25

### **BIBLE STORY**

Matthew 12:38-40, Jonah 1-4; The sign of Jonah.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well," (Romans 4:11, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

When we rightly observe the sacraments they not only represent Christ to us but they seal God's grace to us. Therefore we may find a great measure of assurance that we belong to Jesus.

## SUMMARY

The concept of sacrament is actually quite simple as it is presented in Scripture. Certainly not the complex formalism with which they are treated by many but especially the Roman Catholic church. According to the Westminster Confession of Faith there are four things which constitute a sacrament. "

- (a) A visible material element.
- (b) A covenanted grace or graces aptly symbolized and represented to the sense by the element.
- (c) A mutual pledge and seal of this covenant between God and the soul.
- (d) An express divine institution."<sup>1</sup>

God has appointed many ceremonies in the Scriptures but they are not all sacraments because most do not have a physical element that symbolizes a spiritual grace. Furthermore, all symbols that God has appointed are not sacraments because they may not be seals of a covenant. For example consider the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, or the rainbow after the flood. These are indeed signs but they are not sacraments because they do not possess all of the characteristics of a sacrament.

It is generally recognized that the Lord's Supper is a sacrament so it will serve us as a model as we seek to understand the nature of the sacraments. According to Matthew 26:26-29,

- (a) There are visible material elements namely the bread and the wine,
- (b) The covenanted graces are clearly the substitutionary atonement for and forgiveness of our sins,
- (c) The pledge and seal consist in the fact that Christ blessed the elements and promised that His blood would be shed for many for the remission of sins, and
- (d) He commanded His disciples to eat and drink the sacrament.

This latter is one of the most important features of the sacrament. Christ commanded us to eat of it and to drink from it and therefore it is an act of worship to obey Christ in this matter.

Dabney notes that our word sacrament comes from the Latin word *sacramentum* which means, in the biblical context, a holy secret. The Greek word for this is *mysterion* from which our word mystery comes. Some of the early church fathers such as Tertullian believed, "that the Christian is a soldier enlisted and sworn, in the Lord's Supper, to die for Jesus."<sup>2</sup> So it is that as Christ covenants gospel blessings to us in the sacraments, He requires pledges of ser-

vice and loyalty from us who partake. It follows, then, that a sacrament is more than a mere symbol, more than a mere representation.

In fact there are two extremes which we should avoid. One is to hold that the sacraments perform a work of saving grace when we observe them because they have an intrinsic power. The other is to hold that the sacraments are merely symbols that represent certain elements of God's grace. Being more than a representation of Christ, the sacraments supply to us a guaranteeing sign that the benefits of redemption are in fact applied to us who partake. Furthermore the sacraments are seals of grace. We read in concerning Abraham, "He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised".<sup>3</sup> Without a seal, circumcision would simply be an illustration of cleansing from sin. But with a seal, the sacrament is a means of confirmation and verification of God's saving grace.<sup>4</sup>

We must remember that the sacraments, as a means of grace, do not stand by themselves. They are not efficacious in and of themselves. However, as they are applied to us by Christ through his Holy Spirit, together with the Word and prayer they are a means of grace effectual unto salvation.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1972, p. 727.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 728.

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<sup>3</sup> Romans 4:11a, ESV

<sup>4</sup> John 6:27, Ephesians 1:13ff, Ephesians 4:30, Revelation 7:22ff

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To establish that under the New Testament Christ instituted in His church only two sacraments.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. Which are the sacraments of the New Testament?
- A. The sacraments of the New Testament are, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.
- S.C. 93; L.C. 164; W.C. of F. XXVII; Savoy 28; Young 121-125

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Matthew 28:18-20, I Corinthians 11:20-26

**Support Passages:** Acts 2:32-8:4

### **BIBLE STORY**

Acts 16:11-15; The conversion of Lydia. Her whole household was baptized.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

" And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."  
(Acts 2:42, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Spiritually healthy people take much pleasure in the means of grace and the fellowship of the saints as seen especially in their hospitality.

## SUMMARY

Of those who claim to be Christians, the vast majority hold that there are either seven sacraments or that there are only two. The Roman Catholic Church holds to seven sacraments: Baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, marriage, ordination, penitence, and extreme unction. Protestant and Reformed churches hold to only two: Baptism and The Lord's Supper.

The Roman Catholic Church bases its teaching of seven sacraments on the romanticized view that the sacraments constitute a series of supernatural acts that infuse supernatural grace into all of life from beginning to end.<sup>1</sup> The sacraments are said to be radiations into the here and now of history from the redemptive work that was finished at Calvary. Hence, (a) Baptism corresponds to birth, (b) Confirmation corresponds to the growth of the body, (c) Eucharist corresponds to nourishment, (d) Penitence corresponds to healing, (e) Extreme Unction corresponds to the destruction of the last remains of sin, a preparation for glory, (f) Consecration of the Priest and Marriage relate to perfection with respect to society. It is said that these seven represent seven mouths into which the stream of the divine grace, which has its meaning in the cross of Christ, empties itself in the wilderness of human existence through the hands of the priest.

On the other hand, the Protestants and Reformed churches rest their case for two sacraments on the Bible. Instead of appealing to beauty and harmony we must let the Bible define the meaning and nature of the sacraments which it does in the context of Christ's historical work of redemption. The Bible teaches that through the Word, baptism and the Lord's Supper and prayer, man receives all the grace he needs in life and death for time and eternity. That is not to say beauty and harmony are without value for they are but they are not saving graces. They do not communicate to us the benefits of redemption and are not made effectual to the elect for salvation.

The only sacraments mentioned throughout the book of Acts are baptism and the Lord's Supper so it is apparent that the early church recognized these two only as sacraments. For example Peter would have his hearers repent and be baptized in Acts 2:38. Following the conversion of the Ethiopian Eunuch he was baptized.<sup>2</sup> Similarly Cornelius' whole household was baptized as was Lydia's and the Philippian jailer's.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, in Acts 2:42 and 46 we read of the practice of breaking of bread. The only other context in which we find this terminology *breaking of bread*, concerns the two disciples who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. Their eyes were opened as Luke writes, "When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to

them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight." (Luke 24:30-31, ESV).<sup>4</sup> Therefore we believe that this is a reference to the Lord's Supper. The washing of feet practiced by some in connection with the Lord's Supper is not itself a sacrament and in any event there is no reference to it ever having been observed in the early church. Other than its main reference in John 13, it is mentioned in one other context in I Timothy 5:10 as a means of showing hospitality.

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<sup>1</sup> Berkouwer, *The Sacraments*, p. 27-42.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 8:38

<sup>3</sup> Acts 10:48, 16:15, 16:33

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<sup>4</sup> Luke 24:30-31



### **TEACHING GOAL**

To understand the meaning of Baptism.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is Baptism?

A. Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, does signify and seal our engrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's.

S.C. 94; L.C. 165; W.C. of F. XXVIII; Savoy 29; Young 126-128

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Romans 6:1-11

**Support Passages:** Matthew 28:18-20; John 3:5; Acts 2:38, 22:16; I Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27; Titus 3:5

### **BIBLE STORY**

Acts 8:26-40; Phillip and the Ethiopian Eunuch.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:3-4, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

We cannot take baptism lightly because we are saying in effect, "I accept the death of Christ on the cross as my cleansing from sin and I commit myself to Him as the Head of the Church and her King." We need to be united to Christ through baptism so that we might walk with Him in newness of life.

## SUMMARY

"The main idea of Baptism is purification: and the element applied, the detergent element of nature, symbolizes the two-fold application of Christ's satisfaction (called His blood) and the Holy Spirit, cleansing from guilt and depravity, and thus also consecrating the cleansed person to the service of a holy God."<sup>1</sup> Thus the Ethiopian Eunuch, having heard the word of Christ preached by Philip the evangelist was converted and sought to be baptized.<sup>2</sup> This Philip did and we read, "And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him." Water was used but how it was used is not given to us. That they went down into the water simply means that they waded out into the pool of water. Given that Jewish ritual baptism involved sprinkling water on the object to be purified, it can be assumed that Philip baptized the man by taking a handful of water and sprinkling it on his head.

The early church according to the Didache, Justin Martyr, and Hippolytus commonly used immersion because, to many, it symbolized dying and rising again with Christ or regeneration. The reformed view of baptism, however, is that it symbolizes purification; consequently, ritual sprinkling is used to denote this. Furthermore, many in the early church preferred to baptize by sprinkling. Pictures from the Roman catacombs depict the initiate being drenched with water poured on him from a seashell. Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage in the middle of the third century, wrote that the method of sprinkling was used.<sup>3</sup>

Those who prefer immersion make baptism primarily symbolical of Christ's burial and resurrection using Romans 6, our study text, as the basis for their view. Indeed, purification is not the point of Romans 6:1-11. This text refers to spiritual baptism as opposed to water baptism and the thing symbolized here is regeneration rather than purification. It is "a circumcision made without hands".<sup>4</sup> It is a baptism into death not water, namely death to and freedom from sin the result of which is newness of life and engrafting into Christ. Water baptism does not bring about regeneration rather it signifies and seals our engrafting into Christ. The spiritual baptism or regeneration spoken of in this text does indeed bring to pass our engrafting into or union with Christ.

Another baptism mentioned in Scripture is John's baptism of repentance.<sup>5</sup> John did not baptize in the name of the Trinity and it did not bring the one baptized into covenant with Christ. For these reasons and for others John's baptism

was not the New Testament sacrament. It was in fact one of those purifications that prepared the way for the Messiah with which the Jewish mind was familiar, which brings us to a consideration of John's baptism of Christ.

What was the intent or meaning of Christ's baptism? He had no need to repent and He needed no remission of sins. Furthermore, He did not repent for imputed guilt. Though He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, this in no way made Christ a sinner. He was punished for our sins not His. Though the guilt of our sin was imputed to Christ God did not pardon this sin but Christ fully paid for it at Calvary. Therefore there is no sense in which the sacrament of Baptism applies to Christ. We are left with only one possible answer to the question of Christ's baptism. His baptism can be viewed as His rite of inauguration into the priesthood. John was a priest after the order of Aaron and had the authority to administer this rite. And indeed a purification of water was part of the original consecration of the Aaronic family.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1972, p. 759.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 8:36-38, ESV

<sup>3</sup> Walter W. Oetting, The Church of the Catacombs, Saint Louis, Missouri, Concordia Publishing House, 1964, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> Colossians 2:11

<sup>5</sup> Luke 3:3

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<sup>6</sup> Leviticus 8:6; Exodus 30:17-21

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To understand who are the proper subjects of baptism.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. To whom is baptism to be administered?

A. Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him; but the infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptized.

S.C. 95; L.C. 166; W.C. of F. XXVIII; Savoy 29; Young 129-132

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Colossians 2:6-15

**Support Passages:** Genesis 17:10-14; Luke 18:15-16; Acts 2:38-39; Romans 4:11-12; I Corinthians 7:14

### **BIBLE STORY**

Exodus 4:19-31; Moses is subjected to great peril and anguish because he neglected the circumcision of his children.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you."  
(Genesis 17:7, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Given that it is a serious matter to withhold the sign of the covenant from our children or to misapply the sacrament to those who are not believers, let us accept and rejoice in God's covenant sign rejoicing in the truth that God delights to be the God of us and our children after us. We need to improve our baptism all our lives by a serious and thankful consideration of its nature and the ends for which Christ instituted it.

## SUMMARY

That we are to baptize believing adults is generally accepted by the entire Christian community and we need not spend time defending it. The debate concerning the proper subjects of baptism centers on whether or not infants are to be baptized. At the outset we note that the grounds for baptizing infants under the New Testament are the same as for circumcising infants under the Old Testament. If Abraham had any grounds for circumcising the infants in his household we have the same grounds for baptizing the infant in our households. The grounds for the sacrament in both testaments are the same, namely, the command of God.

In Genesis 17, El Shaddai (God Almighty) appeared to Abram to establish His covenant between Himself and Abraham. God promised to give Abraham many descendants (seed) and to be God to Abraham and these seed. As the sign of this covenant every male, child and adult, was to be circumcised. Those not circumcised would be cut off from the people of God for they had broken His covenant. Furthermore, it is clear that this covenant of grace centered upon Christ as its mediator. In being a God to us, El Shaddai redeemed His people with His own blood on the cross and afterwards required us to baptize our whole households following the example of Abraham. Thus were the households of Cornelius, Lydia, the Philippian jailor and Stephanus baptized including their children, servants, apprentices etc., as was the entire household of Abraham included in circumcision; his sons, servants and retainers. The Scripture does not require faith of the members of the household other than that of Abraham, Cornelius, Lydia, the jailor and Stephanus yet all these received the sign of the covenant. Certainly we can assume that many if not most of the adults became believers but all notwithstanding were to be brought under the terms of the covenant of grace.

Abraham was to give the sign of the covenant to his entire household represented before God through the males, for the covenant promises were to extend, "to you and to your descendants after you".<sup>1</sup> Similarly, on the day of Pentecost the covenant promises were to be sealed by baptism, "For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself".<sup>2</sup> Circumcision and baptism are really the same sacrament. They are both initiatory rites into the covenant promises and terms, and are signs and seals of the benefits of the covenant of grace.

Abraham, "--received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well".<sup>3</sup> He was circumcised with true circumcision that is made without hands in Christ just as we have been "buried

with Him in baptism".<sup>4</sup> The removal of the body of flesh by the circumcision of Christ is identical with being buried with Him in baptism. Both are signs and seals of our mystical union with Christ.

Though infants cannot express belief in Christ it is a glorious truth that they can nevertheless be capable of redemption. That elect infants, dying in infancy, go to be with the Lord in heaven, is proof that these infants are capable of redemption. Therefore we conclude that it is not unreasonable that they should partake of the sacraments of redemption. Surely there is meaning to a pledge of God's covenant grace applied to an infant within the pale of the Church. Then too when an infant is baptized his parents are directly involved as well. Though the infant cannot express acceptance of the covenant terms his parents can and do in his behalf. Infant baptism is a sacrament to the parent as much as it is to the infant. As the parent is to improve his baptism throughout his life by giving serious consideration of the nature of it and the ends for which Christ instituted it, so also is the infant's baptism to be improved by bringing him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

We cannot leave this subject without considering the penalty for neglect of the sacrament. Circumcision had been required of Abraham by El Shaddai as a covenant sign for all his descendants, and the sentence of death was pronounced upon any neglect of it.<sup>5</sup> Therefore it was a most serious breach of God's covenant for Moses to neglect the circumcision of his sons.<sup>6</sup> Zipporah, Moses Midianitish wife, obviously disdained the bloody act of circumcision. She was not of Jewish origin and perhaps Moses neglect stemmed from deference to Zipporah's dislike of the ceremony. God threatened Moses himself with death to bring him to a consciousness of his sin and to show him that the terms God's covenant of grace are to be taken very seriously. That Zipporah threw her son's foreskin to the ground at Moses feet and termed Moses a bridegroom of blood indicates to us her repugnance of this sign of the covenant. In any event, God's hand of judgment was stayed because she circumcised her sons in Moses place and thus in a manner of speaking, purchased Moses with the blood of her sons. Perhaps this is the meaning of "bridegroom of blood." Like Moses, we all need to obey God by applying the sign of the covenant to our children.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 17:7

<sup>2</sup> Acts 2:39, ESV

<sup>3</sup> Romans 4:11, ESV

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<sup>4</sup> Colossians 2:11-12

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 17:14

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 4: 24-26

**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the meaning of the Lord's supper.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is the Lord's supper?

A. The Lord's supper is a sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace.

S.C. 96; L.C. 168; W.C. of F. XXIX; Savoy 30; Young 133-135

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      Mark 14: 12-25

**Support Passages:** Matthew 26: 17-29; Luke 22:7-20; I Corinthians 5:6-8, 10:16, 11:23-26

**BIBLE STORY**

Exodus 12: 1-14; The Passover. Christ is our Passover and replaced the observance of Passover with the remembrance of His own death called the Lord's supper.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'" (1 Corinthians 11:24, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

It is essential to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace that we observe the Lord's supper.

## SUMMARY

The Lord's Supper is often referred to as the Eucharist for when Christ took the bread and the cup He gave thanks or *eucharistaesas*. It was "on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed"<sup>1</sup> that the Lord instituted the sacrament of The Lord's Supper. This first Lord's Supper consisted of eating the Passover according to Mark 14: 14 ( thus if we would know the design of the sacrament we must review the meaning of the Passover. Christ is said to be our Passover by Paul in I Corinthians 5:7.

The Passover is to be a perpetual ordinance throughout the generations of God's people<sup>2</sup> therefore it is incumbent upon us to observe Christian Passover and not neglect it. YAHWEH'S Passover commemorated the occasion upon which the death angel passed over the homes of the Israelites which had the blood of the Passover lamb placed on the door posts and lintel. The blood of Christ shed on the cross of Calvary means precisely this. When we by faith place the blood of Christ on the door posts and lintel of our hearts the sentence of death for our sins is passed over. When we partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we show forth His death as the Passover lamb and having by faith been made partakers of His body and blood we are nourished and grow in grace. Furthermore we thus obey His command to remember His death in this manner until He comes again.

The Passover lamb was to be the first of the flock, healthy and vigorous, and indeed it is the blood of Christ's perfect sacrifice alone that cleanses us from our sin. It was to be completely consumed. We cannot lay hold of Christ half way. We are either His intimates or His enemies. The lamb's blood was placed on the door posts and lintel where it would not be trodden under foot. The blood of Christ is precious to us as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. The lamb was to be eaten in haste and in readiness thus we are reminded that many of us will be thrust into eternity suddenly and we must be ready. Our sins must be covered by the Lamb's blood or we will spend our eternity in hell. The lamb was to be roasted, eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. Christ our Passover is not to be the object of doubtful disputation. In Christ we find blessed release from the bitterness of our sin and we are to partake of Him without the leaven of malice and wickedness. Thus is Christ our Passover.

The Scriptures clearly teach that bread and wine are the sacramental elements.<sup>3</sup> Unleavened bread was used and alcoholic wine. The bread was unleavened because that was stipulated for use in the Passover and since the Passover was in the spring of the year without means of preservation the wine necessarily

was fermented. The issue of leavening in the bread and alcohol in the wine, however, has no sacramental significance such that leavened bread and unfermented grape juice may be used. We should also note that so far as the new sacrament, the Lord's Supper is concerned, only the bread and wine are significant. The rest of the Pascal elements such as the bitter herbs and the roasted lamb are not a part of the Lord's Supper. The design of the sacrament is to show forth the death of Christ.

Finally there is the issue of the meaning of the Lord's statement, "This is My body." According to the Westminster Standards the elements are not the body and blood of Christ in any corporal (physical) or carnal (fleshly) manner. Although the passages that set forth the institution of the Lord's Supper do not deal specifically with this issue, other views of the nature of the sacrament lead not only to absurd conclusions but blasphemous ones as well. For example the Roman- Catholic view known as transubstantiation leads to the absurdity of the elements becoming the very physical body and blood of Christ without appearing to be flesh and blood. In addition, because it is believed that the elements are physically Christ's flesh and blood they are venerated and worshipped which is blasphemy.

To the contrary we are made partakers of Christ's body and blood, that is to say we are intimate with Christ by faith. By faith the sacrament provides us with spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 14:12

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 12:14

<sup>3</sup> e. g. the support passages in this lesson

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study who it is that can partake worthily of the Lord's Supper and how it is to be observed.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?
- A. It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon Him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience; lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves.

S.C. 97; L.C. 169-175; W.C. of F. XXIX; Savoy 30; Young 136

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** I Corinthians 11:17-34

**Support Passages:** I Corinthians 5:7-8, 10:16-17; II Corinthians 13:5

### **BIBLE STORY**

John 13:1-20; Jesus washed the feet of His disciples.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup." (1 Corinthians 11:28, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

We have strong reason to be careful with partaking of the Lord's Supper. If we cannot judge the Lord's body rightly in the sacrament we eat it at our peril. However, for the truly repentance sinner the sacrament is a great blessing and no depth of sin should keep us from it.

## SUMMARY

Those who would rightly partake of the Lord's Supper must possess saving faith in Christ must believe that He is the LORD, they must repent from their sin, love the Triune God, and they must be willing to take up the cross of Christ and follow Him. It is also incumbent upon worthy partakers that they examine themselves to see if they possess a measure of the forgoing qualities.

There are certain requirements for observing the Lord's Supper in terms of the qualifications of the partaker and the manner with which the sacrament is observed. Paul rebukes the Corinthian church for impropriety regarding the manner with which they observed the Supper. According to the study text in 1Corinthians chapter 11 the church erred by, (a) coming to the table with divisions and factions, (b) coming to the table to eat and drink their usual dinner, (c) coming to the table sated with food or drunk with wine, (d) coming to the table without meeting the necessary spiritual qualifications, not even able to discern the Lord's body. These errors lead to very serious problems, "That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died."<sup>1</sup> Paul would have us eat at home such that we come to the Lord's Supper with clear minds and refreshed bodies. We are also to come with enough knowledge of Christ from the Scriptures that we properly discern His body in the sacramental elements.

"Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!"<sup>2</sup> Thus we are to examine our spiritual condition as well as prepare ourselves physically to observe the Lord's Supper. We must realize that when we come to observe the sacrament we are sharing in Christ's body and blood, therefore, it is of great importance that we do so properly or "worthily" as the catechism indicates. We share in His very body and blood by faith, spiritually not physically.

Another issue that faces us in modern times is that of paedocommunion or the practice of giving the elements of the sacrament to children and infants. In the case of infants a little wine is placed on the finger which the infant will readily take into its mouth. A small piece of bread is pushed with the finger into the infant's mouth. Proponents of this view argue that as baptism is given to infants in like manner the Lord's Supper is given to them. Infants were present at the Passover meal so they should be included in the Christian communion as well. However, we have the command of Paul to examine ourselves pursuant to taking communion. An infant cannot do this, nor can the infant discern the body of the Lord so opponents of the view believe that while children may well be present the sacrament is not to be given to them until they have the maturity to worthily partake.

The frequency of observing the Lord's Supper varies widely. Many observe it four times a year, but many feel that it must be observed weekly as part

of worship on the Lord's Day. The observance of Passover occurred yearly and due to the connection of the Lord's Supper with Passover we may be moved to observe it with the same frequency. However the practice of the early church and Paul's words indicate that the Lord's Supper should be observed more frequently than once a year; "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1Corinthians 11:30, ESV

<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:5, ESV

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:26, ESV



**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the nature of prayer with particular attention given to its scope of meaning.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is prayer?

A. Prayer is the offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies.

S.C. 98; L.C. 178-182 ; W.C. of F. XXI; Savoy 22; Young 105-106

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Daniel 9:3-23

**Support Passages:** Psalm 32:5-6; John 14:13-14, 16:23-24; Romans 8:26-27; Philippians 4:6; Hebrews 4:14-16; James 5:13-18; I John 5:13-1

**BIBLE STORY**

Daniel 6; Daniel in the den of lions

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

"Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Selah" (Psalm 62:8, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

Prayer is a means of grace that we must often use to our great benefit and God commands us to pour out our hearts to Him.

## SUMMARY

Prayer is far more than a means of asking favors from God. It is that, of course, and we are urged to "draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in the time of need".<sup>1</sup> We shall study more of this in the next lesson; however, we need to realize that prayer to God is more than asking favors of Him. It is the only means whereby we can confess our sins against God and we worship and adore God through prayer, thanking Him for His mercies, even as Daniel did.

Several occasions of Daniel's prayer are recorded for us in the Bible. On one occasion<sup>2</sup> Daniel's enemies sought to discredit him and so have him removed from office. He had distinguished himself in the government of Babylon so much so that the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom and his enemies could not discredit him because "he was faithful, and no negligence or corruption was to be found in him".<sup>3</sup> They had noticed that Daniel prayed to the God of Israel regularly and using this fact they formulated an attack on him.

Daniel's enemies arranged for the establishment of a statute forbidding prayer to anyone but Darius the king of Babylon. It was not unusual in that society for kings to claim divine rights. Earlier Nebuchadnezzar had gone to the extreme of having a ninety foot golden image of himself made and Daniel's three friends were thrown into a fiery furnace because they refused to worship it. We read that even though Daniel knew that Darius had signed the statute into law which forbade prayer to YAHWEH, Daniel continued to openly kneel "praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously".<sup>4</sup> This led to Daniel's being cast into the den of lions.

This well known account instructs us that prayer includes the elements of petition, supplication and giving thanks. It also teaches us that we are not to pray to anyone but YAHWEH. We are not to pray to any other so called God but we are particularly instructed not to petition human beings as if they were God and this certainly includes confessing sin to a priest and praying to saints or the Virgin Mary.

Daniel prayed to YAHWEH God with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. His prayer consisted of adoration; "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, and confession of sin; "we have rebelled against him and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God by walking in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. All Israel has transgressed

your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice", "we have not listened to your servants the prophets ", "to us, O Lord, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers".<sup>5</sup> In Daniel's prayer we see the elements of Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication which we can remember by the acronym ACTS.

Furthermore, Daniel addresses his prayer only to YAHWEH. He does not pray to saints or petition a human priest for the forgiveness of his sins. He has no confessor other than God himself. In fact, Paul commands us not to worry, "but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God".<sup>6</sup> When it comes to the confession of sin the scriptures teach us to confess sin against a human being to the one sinned against following the procedures given in Matthew 5:23-25, 18:15-20 and James 5:13-18. This latter passages teaches us to pray fervently and often as well. All sin is to be confessed to God alone. The apostle John writes, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness".<sup>7</sup> Moreover we are to pray in the name of Christ<sup>8</sup> for things agreeable to the will of God.<sup>9</sup> And how can we know the will of God? We know the will of God from the Scriptures alone.

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 4:16

<sup>2</sup> Daniel 6

<sup>3</sup> Daniel 6:4

<sup>4</sup> Daniel 6:10

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel 9:3-23, ESV

<sup>6</sup> Philippians 4:6

<sup>7</sup> I John 1:8-9

<sup>8</sup> e.g. John 16:23

<sup>9</sup> e.g. I John 5:14

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the nature of prayer in particular, what is an acceptable prayer?

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What is prayer?

A. Prayer is the offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies.

S.C. 98; L.C. 183-185 ; W.C. of F. XXI; Savoy 22; Young 105-106

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** I John 5:13-17

**Support Passages:** II Samuel 12:15-23; Matthew 7:7-12, 26:36-46; Mark 11:20-26; II Corinthians 12:7-10

### **BIBLE STORY**

I Kings 17 and 18 with James 5:16-18; Several examples of Elijah's prayers.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*“And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us.” (1 John 5:14, ESV)*

### **APPLICATION**

All of our prayers will be answered by God according to His will and in His own way. Having asked, therefore, we must leave our burdens with the Lord's and trust Him to work all things for our good.

## SUMMARY

YAHWEH alone possesses the attributes essential to the answering of prayer. Only the God who is there can act in our behalf, therefore, we must pray to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit alone. Only YAHWEH is infinitely good, all-powerful, all-knowing and everywhere present, therefore, prayer to any other is utterly futile. If the desperate needs of our souls can only be met by an all-powerful being, then the offering of prayer is a virtual ascription of divinity to its object and prayer to saints and angels is idolatrous.<sup>1</sup>

What is it that makes prayer acceptable to God? As has been argued, the first principle in making an acceptable prayer is that it be made to YAHWEH alone. But there are other qualities of acceptable prayer. For example, according to our study text, it must be made according to His will, "*if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us*",<sup>2</sup> and the context demands that petitions to God be made by believers. Saving faith is required of us and genuine repentance and gratitude for God's mercies in order for our prayers to be heard and such prayers, the prayers of believers, arise as incense before the Lord.

That the "*prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*"<sup>3</sup> implies that the prayers of the wicked cannot accomplish anything. Though they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves with swords and lances until the blood gushed out the prayers of the prophets of Baal were not answered.<sup>4</sup> No one answered and no one paid attention. They did not pray to YAHWEH and their prayer did not derive from saving faith. Baal and Allah are not YAHWEH and it is futile and foolish to pray to them. One may as well pray to a stick or a stone for all the good it does if one refuses to address his petitions to the True and Living God.

Why should we pray? For the simple reason that God promises to answer the prayers of His people and it pleases Him that we should do so. "*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.*" -- "*If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!*"<sup>5</sup> However, the most compelling reason to pray is the example set by Jesus. We ought to pray because Jesus did. He prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, "--*My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.*"<sup>6</sup> His natural desire was that He not go through the agonies of crucifixion so He offered up His desire unto YAHWEH and submitted

Himself to the will of His Father.

For what should we ask? We should simply ask that which is according to the will of God. We may ask for things that it is natural to desire such as recovery from sickness, a good name, our daily bread, deliverance from persecution, and the conversion of sinners. We are to pray, "*For kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.*"<sup>7</sup> We may also pray for the benefits that accompany redemption such as growth in grace, perseverance, forgiveness of sin, and sanctification. The elect may cry out to God to save them and God will in His own time move His elect to do just that.

We should pray as we are prompted by the Holy Spirit. If we belong to God we indeed have the Spirit of Christ in us,<sup>8</sup> and, "-- *the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.*"<sup>9</sup> So let us frequently and fervently come to the throne of God, the very throne of grace, that we may find grace to help in the time of need.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Dabney, Lectures in Systematic Theology, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1972, p. 714.

<sup>2</sup> I John 5:14, ESV

<sup>3</sup> James 5:16, ESV

<sup>4</sup> I Kings 18:28-29

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 7:7, 11, ESV

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 26:39, ESV

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<sup>7</sup> I Timothy 2:2, ESV

<sup>8</sup> Romans 8:9

<sup>9</sup> Romans 8:26, ESV

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the biblical model for prayer as we find it in the word of God and particularly in the Lord's Prayer.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What rule has God given for our direction in Prayer?
- A. The whole word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but the special rule of direction is that form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples, common called the Lord's Prayer.

S.C. 99; L.C. 186-188; W.C. of F. XXI; Savoy 22; Young 107

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      Matthew 6:5-15

**Support Passages:**    Jonah 2:1-9; Luke 11:1-4, 18:9-14

### **BIBLE STORY**

Jonah; The story of Jonah with emphasis on his prayer from the stomach of the fish (2:1-9).

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*“Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” (Matthew 6:9–13, ESV)*

### **APPLICATION**

We may use the Lord's prayer not only as a model for our praying but we may also use it as a prayer, so long as we do it with understanding, faith, reverence, and other graces necessary to the proper performance of the duty of prayer.

## SUMMARY

Why should we pray? The greatest motive for prayer is the example of Jesus. We see Jesus frequently in prayer often in private but also in public. He has commanded us to pray therefore it is our duty to do so and He has given us a model for prayer.

In his great need, Jonah prayed to God which reminds us that one great motive for prayer is our great need for grace and help from God. Jonah had been disobedient. God instructed him, "*Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me*".<sup>1</sup> Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah went in the opposite direction to Tarshish. God sent a great storm against His disobedient prophet such that Jonah and the ship's crew were about to perish. To bring an end to the storm the sailors threw Jonah overboard where Jonah was swallowed by a great fish. Now in the stomach of the fish, in his great need, Jonah prayed for deliverance and God heard him.

The elements of Jonah's prayer are instructive for they follow the familiar model. He adored God noting that God answered his prayer, God heard his voice, God brought up his life from the pit, and saying that "salvation is of the LORD." He confessed his sin and promised to look again toward the holy temple of God and to pay his vow. He prayed to God with thanksgiving<sup>2</sup> and supplicated God to save him "from the depth of Sheol".<sup>3</sup>

Prayer is a frequent subject in the Scriptures where it is obvious that God's people pray to Him. We may therefore take note of many examples of godly prayer which serve us as rules for direction in prayer. However, the great model for prayer is given to us by the Lord Himself in Matthew 6:9-13. This prayer consists of three parts, the preface, the seven petitions, and the conclusion and in subsequent lessons we shall study these parts of Jesus' prayer. But Jesus has more to say to us concerning prayer in this part of His discourse on the Mount of Olives.

*"But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."*<sup>4</sup> Opposed to this procedure is the practice of the hypocrites who love to stand in public on the street corners and pray in a loud arrogant manner so that all may see and hear. It is not that we may only pray in secret to God but that we are not pray in the manner of the Pharisees. Remember that Daniel prayed publicly and so did Christ before the tomb of Lazarus for example. Luke 18 gives a crass example of the prayers of hypocrites.

The Pharisee in this parable arrogantly prayed, "-- God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax col-

*lector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get*".<sup>5</sup> None of the elements of biblical prayer are here. there is no adoration of God. There is no confession of sin or thankfulness for God's mercy. There are no petitions; he doesn't ask for anything, so how is this prayer in any sense of the word? The Lord requires quite the opposite. He wishes us to remove ourselves from public scrutiny and confess, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

Then too, we are not to use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do. We have already taken note of an example of this in the prophets of Baal in I Kings 18. They called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, answer us." It was a feckless, useless exercise and we are not to use this procedure with respect to YAHWEH. He needs no prayer wheels or prayer beads or Mezuzah's.<sup>6</sup>

What God desires of us is prayer similar to the model he gives to us in Matthew 6 and Luke 11. Though we may also use this as a prayer we must not use it hypocritically or repetitiously. As with all prayer it is to be offered up with understanding, faith and reverence.

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<sup>1</sup> Jonah 1:2, ESV

<sup>2</sup> verse 9

<sup>3</sup> verse 2

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 6:6

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<sup>5</sup> Luke 18:11-12, ESV

<sup>6</sup> A prayer cylinder attached to the door post of Jewish homes containing a portion of Deuteronomy 6 and 11 in 22 lines on one side and Shaddai, one of God's names, on the other

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the implications of the preface to the Lord's prayer, "Our Father who art in heaven."

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What does the preface of the Lord's prayer teach us?
- A. The preface of the Lord's prayer (which is, Our Father who art in heaven) teaches us to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father, able and ready to help us; and that we should pray with and for others.
- S.C. 100; L.C. 189 ; W.C. of F. XXI; Savoy 22; Young 108

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      Isaiah 63:15-19

**Support Passages:** Nehemiah 1:4-6; Psalm 123; Mark 14:36;  
John 15; Acts 12:5

### **BIBLE STORY**

Luke 11:11-13; Jesus' parable of Fatherhood.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you."* (John 15:16, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

That God is our Father means that we may expect Him to be good to us and we in turn are to treat Him with child-like reverence with all deference to His sovereign power.

## SUMMARY

When we address God as our Father several things are implied; (1) God is our originator; (2) we are related to God as a child is to its father; (3) it is God who is our Father and He is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth; (4) that we may approach Him in prayer and expect Him to cause all things to work together for our good. That God is our Father does not mean that we may come to Him carelessly or irreverently, however.

Some have suggested that the Aramaic word *abba* used in Mark 14:36 by Jesus and in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6 by Paul amounts to referring to God with the familiar term daddy. In fact, the Aramaic word *abba* simply means *The Father* in English. Jesus surely was not referring the first person of the Trinity as daddy. God the Father is not the daddy of Jesus. You will recall that there are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one God, the same in substance, and equal in power and glory (Shorter Catechism question 6). We know very little about the subordination of the Son to the Father but we do know that it does not follow the human father-son relationship.

That Jesus subordinates Himself to God the Father is clear in the passages in which He prays to the Father. For example He prayed, -- "*Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.*"<sup>1</sup> His subordination was not the result of addressing God as "Abba" but by submitting to the Father's will. Similarly, when we have received a spirit of adoption as sons because we are Sons of God who are being led by the Spirit of God, the appropriate reaction is not to cry out to God with an irreverent exclamation but with Father!, or our Father who art in heaven! It is because we are sons of God by His grace that we can refer to Him as Father.

Isaiah prays to God for mercy and help, referring to Him as the Father of Israel.<sup>2</sup> Abraham was known as the father of Israel his name meaning "father of the people". However he did not know the Israel of Isaiah's day as God does. Therefore, Isaiah writes, "*For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O Lord [YAHWEH], are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.*"<sup>3</sup> Isaiah refers to YAHWEH as his Father because no one knows Israel as YAHWEH does and no one can act for the good of Israel as YAHWEH can. Therefore, as Isaiah approached God in prayer he did so with earthly son's humble submission to the sovereign power of his heavenly Father. He confessed his sin and the sins of Israel and prayed to his Father for His mercy.

Nehemiah approached God saying -- "*O Lord [YAHWEH] God of heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those*

*who love him and keep his commandments*".<sup>4</sup> Thus he approached God as a son would his father yet with great respect. He too confessed his sin as well as the sins of his own household and the sins of Israel. He came before his Father in heaven because YAHWEH alone could hear and answer his prayer. Therefore we say with the Psalmist, "*Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us.*"<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 14:36, ESV

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 63:15-19

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, verse 16, ESV

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<sup>4</sup> Nehemiah 1:5, ESV

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 123:2, ESV



### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the implications of hallowing (consecrating) the name of God.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What do we pray for in the first petition?

A. In the first petition (which is, Hallowed be Thy name) we pray, that God would enable us and others to glorify Him in all that whereby He makes Himself known; and that He would dispose all things to His own glory.

S.C. 101; L.C. 190; W.C. of F. XXI; Savoy 22; Young 109-111

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      Isaiah 30:27-33

**Support Passages:** Exodus 3:15, 33:18-19; Psalm 67, 83:18, 86:10-15; Proverbs 18:10; II Corinthians 3:5; Ephesians 1:17-18

### **BIBLE STORY**

I Kings 18:17-41; The contest of names.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*“O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.”* (Psalm 8:1, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

We should pray that YAHWEH will make His voice of authority to be heard in all the nations that all mankind will repent and turn to the Lord.

## SUMMARY

In the first petition of the Lord's Prayer we pray that God would cause His name to be sanctified by the nations. To hallow means to set apart, consecrate, make holy, or sanctify. It is a passive verb meaning that beings other than God are to hallow the name of God yet sinful human beings are utterly indisposed and unable to do so. We will not, in and of ourselves, honor God properly. Therefore we pray that God Himself would cause His own name to be hallowed.

According to Exodus 3:15 (ESV) Moses was to say to Israel, "*The Lord (YAHWEH), the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations.*" Thus YAHWEH is God's proper name and we note from the context of this verse that the word we translate I AM is closely related to it.<sup>1</sup> The name YAHWEH means The Existing One, or perhaps The One Who Lives, and is represented in the Hebrew Bible with the Tetragrammaton YHWH. English translations of the Bible generally denote YHWH with LORD. In addition God has revealed Himself with other names or titles such as El Shaddai, YAHWEH Nissi, YAHWEH Jireh, and YAHWEH Shalom.<sup>2</sup>

Moses was said to be a friend of God to whom YAHWEH used to speak face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.<sup>3</sup> But Moses wanted more than this and he prayed, "Please show me your glory!" God responded as follows: "*I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.'*(YAHWEH) *And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy*".<sup>4</sup> Moses could not see the actual glory of God and live, therefore, God revealed His goodness, His name YAHWEH, and His sovereignty to him. The glory of God is comprehended in His goodness and in His name and in His sovereignty all of which He has revealed to us in the pages of Scripture. In order to enable our foolish hearts and minds to understand and accept the things of the Spirit of God we pray the first petition of the Lord's Prayer.

In these last days God has expressly revealed Himself in His Son, Jesus Christ who, "comes with the name YAHWEH".<sup>5</sup> He too bears divine titles and names in addition to the name YAHWEH such as, Alpha and Omega, Amen, Apostle of Our Confession, Blessed and Only Potentate, Bread of Life, Chief Shepherd, Desire of All Nations, Everlasting Father, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Counselor, Faithful Witness, God, Holy One, Immanuel, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Lamb of God, Rock, Savior, The Truth, The Way, The

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<sup>1</sup> See *Family Catechism Lesson Year 1 Lesson 5*

<sup>2</sup> God Almighty, YAHWEH is my Banner, YAHWEH will provide, and YAHWEH is Peace

<sup>3</sup> Exodus 33:11

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 33:19, ESV

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 118:26, Matthew 21:9

Life, and The Word of God.

Isaiah writes, "The name YAHWEH comes from afar"<sup>6</sup> and he goes on to associate the name YAHWEH with a person who is powerful, just, holy, good and truthful. When we are rightly related to YAHWEH He gives us songs in the night and gladness of heart. We pray "hallowed be your name," and God responds by causing "his majestic voice to be heard"<sup>7</sup> and He rewards faithfulness with contentment and happiness but punishes the unrepentant in the fires of hell.<sup>8</sup> Because God is pleased to hallow His name among the nations, to make His way known upon the earth,<sup>9</sup> He blesses us and is gracious to us and brings salvation to all the nations. He blesses us in order that all the ends of the earth may fear Him.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed let us pray God to hallow His name, to teach us His way so that we may walk in His truth.<sup>11</sup> Let us pray that God would unite our hearts to fear His name, to give thanks to Him and glorify His name forever. "*The name of the Lord (YAHWEH) is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.*"<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 30:27, ESV

<sup>7</sup> Isaiah 30:30, ESV

<sup>8</sup> Topheth – Isaiah 30:33

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 67:2

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 67:7

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 86:11

<sup>12</sup> Proverbs 18:10, ESV

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the nature of Satan and his kingdom and its relationship to the kingdom of Christ.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What do we pray for in the second petition?

A. In the second petition (which is, Thy kingdom come) we pray, That Satan's kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.

S.C. 102; L.C. 191; W.C. of F. VI, Savoy 6; Young 112-113

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Revelation 12

**Support Passages:** Genesis 3:1-5, 15; Matthew 4:9, 8:29, 13:19; John 8:44; Acts 5:3; I Corinthians 7:5; II Corinthians 4:4, 11:12-15, 12:7; Ephesians 2:2-3; I Thessalonians 2:18; I John 5:18-19; James 2:19; Jude 6; Revelation 20:10; 21:14-15

### **BIBLE STORY**

Matthew 12:22-37; Jesus healed a demon-possessed man who was also blind and dumb through which the Lord taught His people about His enemy Satan.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*“The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”* (Romans 16:20, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Since the essence of Satan and his kingdom is deceit and lying, let us be careful to ask that we be kept from such things and on the other hand to increase in truth and righteousness.

## SUMMARY

When we pray that the kingdom of God would come we assume just the opposite regarding the kingdom of Satan who is the great enemy of God and the very antithesis of God. That is to say that while we pray that God's kingdom would grow in power and glory we necessarily pray that Satan's kingdom would be destroyed. It is important that we know something about our enemy therefore we give special emphasis in this lesson to the study of the kingdom of Satan.

We know very little about the origin of Satan but his person and purpose are very clear indeed. “--*He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*”<sup>1</sup> To the contrary Christ is "the way, and the truth, and the life".<sup>2</sup> The nature of God is such that He is infinite truth as opposed to Satan in whom there is no truth at all.

Furthermore, Satan is powerful but his power is limited. He can snatch away the seed sown in the heart.<sup>3</sup> The devil put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray Christ.<sup>4</sup> He filled the heart of Ananias to lie to the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup> He can tempt us to sin;<sup>6</sup> blind our minds lest we see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ;<sup>7</sup> buffet us with thorns of the flesh,<sup>8</sup> and thwart our plans.<sup>9</sup>

His purpose is one of self-glorification as seen in the temptation of Christ. Satan promised to give Christ all the kingdoms of the world and their glory if He would fall down and worship him<sup>10</sup> but YAHWEH alone deserves worship and service. Satan also purposes to retain his subjects desiring all mankind as his own<sup>11</sup> but he cannot touch those who belong to God. Moreover, his purpose is to foment sin and evil on earth and to destroy Christ and His kingdom<sup>12</sup> but the gates of hell cannot overpower it. The purpose of Satan is thwarted at all points by the coming of Christ's kingdom therefore let us earnestly pray "Your kingdom come."

Satan is said to be the prince of the devils,<sup>13</sup> the prince of this world,<sup>14</sup> and

the prince of the power of the air<sup>15</sup> and it follows, therefore, that he has a kingdom. According to I John 5:18-19, this kingdom consists of the world of unbelievers; the world of those who do not follow Christ. While some of these people are deceivers,<sup>16</sup> most are not deceivers but are deceived and blinded by Satan.<sup>17</sup> Also in the kingdom of Satan are malignant spirits called demons. Together with Satan these demons, “-- *did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day—*”<sup>18</sup> Thus we understand that Satan and his kingdom will ultimately be overthrown and be punished for the evil deeds they have done.

We are assured of victory over Satan because God covenants to crush him under the feet of His people and seals it with His benediction of grace.<sup>19</sup> However, this petition of the Lord's Prayer implies the overthrow of Satan and his kingdom. The kingdom of God will come into the fullness of its power and glory but the kingdom of Satan will not. It will be judged and overthrown and in a very real sense this process has already begun. There are restraints placed upon Satan now. Evil is restrained by the presence of the Church and Satan is "chained" into his domain such that he cannot deceive all the Gentiles.<sup>20</sup> The Lord of glory has come and has bound the strong man and is plundering his house.<sup>21</sup> Indeed the kingdom of Christ will come and is coming and we are to pray God to this end. On the other hand Satan's kingdom will be overthrown and is being overthrown. Evil cannot and will not prevail. Satan may be alive but he is not well!

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<sup>1</sup> John 8:44, ESV

<sup>2</sup> John 14:6

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 13:19

<sup>4</sup> John 13:2

<sup>5</sup> Acts 5:3

<sup>6</sup> I Corinthians 7:5

<sup>7</sup> II Corinthians 4:4

<sup>8</sup> II Corinthians 12:7

<sup>9</sup> I Thessalonians 2:18

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 4:9

<sup>11</sup> I John 5:18-19

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 3:15

<sup>13</sup> Mark 3:22

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<sup>14</sup> John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11

<sup>15</sup> Ephesians 2:2

<sup>16</sup> II Corinthians 11:12-15

<sup>17</sup> II Corinthians 4:4

<sup>18</sup> Jude 6, ESV

<sup>19</sup> Romans 16:20, Revelation 20:10

<sup>20</sup> Revelation 20:3

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 12:29

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the nature of the advancement of the kingdom of grace.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What do we pray for in the second petition?

A. In the second petition (which is, Thy kingdom come) we pray, That Satan's kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.

S.C. 102; L.C. 191; W.C. of F. XXV, Savoy 26; Young 112-113

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Romans 11

**Support Passages:** Matthew 13:1-50, 28:18-20; Luke 21:24; Acts 1:6-8, 8:1-40; Romans 10

### **BIBLE STORY**

Matthew 13:31-32; The parable of the mustard seed.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*“And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, ”* (Daniel 2:44, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

We need to pray earnestly that the Jews be called, the fullness of the Gentiles brought in, that the churches of Christ be enlarged and that the world enjoy the free and plentiful communication of light and grace to the end that they be brought to repentance unto life and people everywhere glorify and enjoy the true and living God.

## SUMMARY

When we pray Thy kingdom come we pray that the kingdom of Christ be advanced. The Savoy Declaration of Faith states, "As the Lord in His care and love for His Church, has in His infinite wise providence exercised it with great variety in all ages, for the good of them that love Him, and His own glory; so according to His promise, we expect that in the latter days, antichrist being destroyed, the Jews called, and the adversaries of the kingdom of His dear Son broken, the churches of Christ being enlarged, and edified through a free and plentiful communication of light and grace, shall enjoy in this world a more quiet, peaceable and glorious condition than they have enjoyed."<sup>1</sup> Thus we pray this petition knowing that the God of grace will indeed be pleased to bring His promise of covenant blessings to pass.

The advancement of God's kingdom is predicated on the continuing destruction of the kingdom of Satan, the propagation of the Gospel throughout the world, the fullness of the Gentiles attained, the Church and State purged from corruption working together to destroy evil and promote righteousness, and the restoration of Israel to Gospel favor. According to the parable of the mustard seed in Matthew 13, the kingdom of heaven or the Church started out very small but is in the process of growing and will grow into a very large institution. In fact the other six parables in this chapter are to the same point. Great numbers of sinners will be called to repentance and the Kingdom of God will realize enormous power and influence on earth. The preaching of the Gospel will bring certain and very significant results.

The Great Commission in Matthew 28 proceeds from the awesome power of Christ. How can the process of making disciples of all the nations not meet with great success given that Christ, who will always be with us, has "all authority - in heaven and on earth." Furthermore, The Greek text indicates that the going out of the disciples is a certainty for it says literally, while you are going make disciples... The success of the Great Commission does not depend on the quality of the obedience Christ's disciples but on the power of the sender. Even so the Lord raised up great missionaries<sup>2</sup> to make disciples of all the nations, not only in the days of the early New Testament Church but all through history to the present age. He will continue to raise up effective preachers and missionaries until the fullness of the Gentiles is brought in and the Jews are called.

Romans 11 gives us a clear view of the advancement of Christ's kingdom in which Paul pictures the Church as an olive tree. Some of the branches<sup>3</sup> have

been broken off and branches from a wild olive tree<sup>4</sup> have been grafted in their place. At this point in time the Lord is pleased to predominantly call the Gentiles into His kingdom but when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, Israel, which has been partially hardened, will be restored. Thus, Paul writes, "all Israel will be saved."

The fullness of the Gentiles and all Israel who will be saved represent a considerable number of people. It is the great tree into which the small mustard seed grows. It is the pearl of great price, the great drag-net cast into the sea gathering fish of every kind, the vast number of true wheat that will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. It is the "myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing'".<sup>5</sup> God's elect people taken from those who were Abraham's seed by birth or by adoption were to be as "the dust of the earth; so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered".<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The *Savoy Declaration of Faith*, Chapter 26, Paragraph 5. This is the confession of faith of the Congregational-Independents, 1658. It is essentially the Westminster Confession of Faith with certain changes influenced by John Owen and others.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 8

<sup>3</sup> Israel

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<sup>4</sup> Gentiles

<sup>5</sup> Revelation 5:11-12

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 13:16

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the nature of the kingdom of glory.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What do we pray for in the second petition?

A. In the second petition (which is, Thy kingdom come) we pray, That Satan's kingdom may be destroyed; and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it; and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.

S.C. 102; L.C. 191; W.C. of F. XXV, Savoy 26; Young 112-113

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Matthew 24

**Support Passages:** Matthew 25:31-46; I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11; II Thessalonians 6-12; Revelation 7:16-17, 21:1-27

### **BIBLE STORY**

Matthew 25:1-13; The parable of the five foolish virgins.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*“Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.”* (Matthew 24:42, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Because we do not know the day of His appearing we must work faithfully in the kingdom of Christ, "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (Titus 2:13).

## SUMMARY

There is a sense in which the kingdom of Christ exists now. It is in fact the Church in particular but in general all created things over which Christ is King. Yet when we pray Thy kingdom come, we are praying for the hastening of the kingdom of glory which is the ultimate eternal form of Christ's kingdom and is coincident with His second coming.

In the kingdom of glory, there will be no tears, pain or death. *"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat."*<sup>1</sup> All things will be made new in this kingdom which Peter calls the "new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells",<sup>2</sup> where the shepherd is Christ who will lead His people who dwell there to springs of the water of life.<sup>3</sup> There will be no curse there and no night for The Lord God himself will be the sun.<sup>4</sup> Our glorified bodies will be made like Christ's glorified body<sup>5</sup> and best of all we will be face to face with our Creator and Redeemer.<sup>6</sup> It is a place so wonderful that Paul, who was caught up to the third heaven, could not express in words what he saw and heard.<sup>7</sup> We can only speak of heaven or the kingdom of glory anthropomorphically but words that describe heaven in terms relative to our earthly experience are entirely inadequate.

The kingdom of glory has not come to fruition yet as is obvious and implicit in this petition of the Lord's Prayer with which we ask for its hastening. But when will this kingdom come? *"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only."*<sup>8</sup> But there are those<sup>9</sup> that claim to know when the second coming of Christ is going to be. They present a very elaborate scheme for the last days but this is a rather arrogant claim in view of the Lord's own statement here in Matthew 24. Moreover, according to Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:6-12, the second coming of Christ brings with it the judgment of those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel and the glorification of Christ and His kingdom.<sup>10</sup>

Jesus will return during times of normalcy and relative peace similar to the days of Noah, *"For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the*

*ark."*<sup>11</sup> Therefore we need to be ever watchful in hope and anticipation of His coming again to receive us to Himself and this is the point of the Lord's teaching and His parables in Matthew 24:42-25:30. But we must not stop working for the advancement of Christ's kingdom. When the Lord is pleased to return there will be a general resurrection from the dead of those who belong to Christ and those who do not. Paul describes this resurrection in I Corinthians 15 terming it a victory over death<sup>12</sup> and urging us to faithfulness, *"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."*<sup>13</sup> We are not to concern ourselves with the time of Christ's appearing but we are to keep ourselves in readiness for it and do the Lord's work as He commanded until He comes.

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<sup>1</sup> Revelation 7:16, 21:4, ESV

<sup>2</sup> II Peter 3:13

<sup>3</sup> Revelation 7:17

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 22:3, 5

<sup>5</sup> I Corinthians 15:23

<sup>6</sup> John 17:24, Revelation 21:3, 22

<sup>7</sup> II Corinthians 12:4

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 24:36, ESV

<sup>9</sup> Dispensationalists

<sup>10</sup> His saints verse 10

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew 24:38, I Thessalonians 5:3, ESV

<sup>12</sup> I Corinthians 15:55-57

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. verse 58, ESV



**TEACHING GOAL**

To study the nature of knowing the will of God.

**DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What do we pray for in the third petition?

A. In the third petition (which is, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven) we pray, That God, by His grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to His will in all things, as the angels do in heaven.

S.C. 103; L.C. 192; W.C. of F. IX, Savoy 9; Young 114-115

**SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:**      I Corinthians 2

**Support Passages:** Job 21:14; Psalm 100:2, 103:20-21; Isaiah 6:2-3; Romans 7:18, 8:7; Ephesians 1:17-18, 2:2, 3:16

**BIBLE STORY**

Matthew 26:36-46; Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane.

**MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”* (James 4:7, ESV)

**APPLICATION**

As Jesus was submissive to the will of the Father even in the agony of the Cross so should we know and do the will of God in all things.

## SUMMARY

In the third petition of the Lord's Prayer we pray that the will of God be done on earth just as His will is done in heaven. That we should pray for such a thing strongly implies that we are deficient in our inclination to know and obey God's will. In fact, by nature we are wholly inclined to disobey the will of God, to rebel against His word and to complain against His providence. By nature we are utterly unable and unwilling to do God's will. *"For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot."*<sup>1</sup>

The Westminster assembly addressed themselves to the unbiblical doctrines of Roman Catholicism which held that our wills are not totally depraved, and the assembly clearly understood that Jesus would have us pray that our understanding be opened and that our stubborn wills be regenerated so that we would be enabled to know and love God and His law. Not only are we not inclined by nature to know God's will and obey it but it is foolishness to us. Paul tells us, *"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned."*<sup>2</sup>

We would say that it is foolishness to believe that before God created the earth alone in the universe and placed in it human beings created after His own image and marked out a people who should be in Christ, holy and blameless.<sup>3</sup> Nowhere else did He do such a thing. Contrary to the views of modern science we should notice that the will of God is done only in heaven and on earth. The sun, moon and stars were created for *"-- signs and for seasons, and for days and years,"*<sup>4</sup> These were not created for the habitation of beings that were to do the will of God, thus this petition points us to the truth that the earth and the people on it are unique among all of God's creation.<sup>5</sup> We by nature defer to the great scientific minds of our day and term the true wisdom, the wisdom of God, foolishness. None of the rulers of Paul's day understood the wisdom from God as seen in the fact that they crucified the Lord of glory. Nor do we by nature understand this wisdom. *"None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory"*.<sup>6</sup>

This being the case we must ask that God would enable us to do His will on earth. We need to submit totally to the will of God the Father after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the garden of Gethsemane, though He was in agony sweating as it were drops of blood as He anticipated the cross He prayed, *"My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I*

*will, but as you will."*<sup>7</sup> In addition the angels in heaven are urged as examples to us in this matter. God will receive praise from His creatures and the seraphim in heaven stand above God and call out to one another, *"Holy, Holy, Holy, is YAHWEH of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory"*.<sup>8</sup> His angels bless Him and they obey the voice of His word and do His will.<sup>9</sup> The angels continually behold the face of the Father who is in heaven even as we should through the means of grace.<sup>10</sup> We should *"serve YAHWEH with gladness"*.<sup>11</sup>

The Son of God was glorified after His victory in the garden<sup>12</sup> and so shall we be glorified with Him who are found faithful. Let us therefore be submissive to God's will for this is pre-requisite to the coming of the kingdom. God's kingdom does not come to rebellious hearts but only where submission is found.

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 8:7, ESV

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:14, ESV

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 1:4

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 1:14, ESV

<sup>5</sup> see also Acts 17:26

<sup>6</sup> I Corinthians 2:8, ESV

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<sup>7</sup> Matthew 26:39, ESV

<sup>8</sup> Isaiah 6:3

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 103:20-21

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 18:10

<sup>11</sup> Psalm 100:2

<sup>12</sup> John 17:1

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To understand that we depend on God for even the smallest, most basic of our needs.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What do we pray for in the fourth petition?

A. In the fourth petition (which is, Give us this day our daily bread) we pray, that of God's free gift we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy His blessing with them.

S.C. 104; L.C. 193; W.C. of F. V, Savoy 5; Young 116-117

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Psalm 104

**Support Passages:** Deuteronomy 8; Luke 16:1-14; Ephesians 4:28; Philippians 4:6; II Thessalonians 3:11-12

### **BIBLE STORY**

Genesis 28; after Jacob deceives Isaac he prays to God for his daily bread (verse 20).

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*“You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man’s heart.” (Psalm 104:14–15, ESV)*

### **APPLICATION**

Given that all good things large and small come from God and therefore that we depend on God for everything we need or get for our good, we must pray God to provide for our creature comforts.

## SUMMARY

In the fourth petition of the Lord's Prayer we ask God to give us our daily bread or our needful bread. But what is daily bread? Bread is certainly one of our most basic physical needs. In order for our bodies to live they need food and water so these are universal basic needs and we need them continually and daily. However, it is not our nature to attain these basic needs with legitimate means nor do we seek for these things in reasonable amounts. We are by nature greedy and lazy.

In the early Church as in all societies of mankind theft was the means to obtain ones basic needs. The unfaithful steward<sup>1</sup> did not wish to obtain his daily bread by either begging or working so he stole from his employer in order to ingratiate himself with his employer's debtors. The apostle Paul urges, "*Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.*"<sup>2</sup> Because this is our propensity to obtain our daily bread by illegitimate means we have no right to the outward blessings of this life. No one owes us a living including the government but much less God. Because we are Adam's descendants and because we sin individually we have forfeited our right to any good things and we deserve only God's wrath and curse both in this life and the life to come. Furthermore we deserve that our very usage of the good gifts from God be cursed even as the ground Adam used was cursed.

That we must pray God to give us our daily bread indicates that God is the only source of it. More than this, by praying this petition we acknowledge our utter dependence upon God for our very existence. The term *daily bread* translates the Greek word *epiousion* which refers more to the concept of measure than a time frame. Rather than daily bread we should read it as essential bread. It is that which is needed for our very existence for which we plead. To the contrary, modern man, assuming that he has no need for God, believes that he can secure what is necessary for life on his own. However, the assumption that we do not need God is utterly fallacious.

In Psalm 104 it is argued that because God created all that exists and sustains it by His power we must depend on YAHWEH to give us needed food.<sup>3</sup> God makes great things and small and sustains all of them. He established the earth upon its foundations<sup>4</sup>, divided the dry land from the water<sup>5</sup>, causes springs in the valleys to water the earth and provide drink to every beast of the field.<sup>6</sup> He

causes the grass to grow for the cattle, food, drink and shelter for mankind,<sup>7</sup> and for all the other creatures.<sup>8</sup> Those who wish to do it their own way; to secure their own provisions through their own resources will ultimately be consumed from the earth and be no more.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore let us sing praises to YAHWEH and take comfort from and be glad in His works. Indeed let us come to God in prayer for His gracious provision affirming and depending on Him alone for His competent portion of bread to such unworthy creatures. And let us thank Him always for His grace.

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 16

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 4:28, ESV

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 104:27

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*, verse 5

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, verses 6-7

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, verses 10-13

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<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, verses 10-13

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, verses 18-23

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*, verses 31-35

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the nature of forgiveness.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What do we pray for in the fifth petition?

A. In the fifth petition (which is, And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors) we pray, That God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins; which we are rather encouraged to ask, because by His grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others.

S.C. 105; L.C. 194; W.C. of F. XI, Savoy 11; Young 118-119

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** Psalm 51

**Support Passages:** Psalm 130:3-4; Matthew 6:14-15, 18:35; Luke 11:4; Romans 3:9-26; Ephesians 1:6-7

### **BIBLE STORY**

Matthew 18:21-35; The ungrateful, unforgiving and unforgiven servant.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.”*  
(Psalm 51:1, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

It is of the essence of the human condition that we must cry out to God for the forgiveness of our sins and we need to pray this not only for ourselves but also for others. Let us be encouraged to do this all the more because we have forgiven others for their offences against us.

## SUMMARY

In this fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer we pray that our debt to God be forgiven. We are debtors not in any physical sense but in a moral sense. We are debtors to the justice of God because we have sinned against Him with Adam, "*I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me*"<sup>1</sup> and because we sin in fact, "*I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me*".<sup>2</sup> Furthermore neither we, nor any other creature, can make the least satisfaction for that debt.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, this debt is so great and it is so morally significant that all who are unforgiven face eternity in hell as punishment.

We are reminded of the nature of our moral debt to God by Paul in Romans chapter 3. There it is said of us that we have absolutely no understanding of righteousness. We do not seek God. No one of us does any moral good at all. Of course we may do great humanitarian acts or we may be philanthropic and so do social good, but we cannot in any sense satisfy God's justice by doing social good because we are at the same time enemies of God, hating Him and refusing to obey Him. While we do our social good we are liars and deceivers, we curse God and are bitter. Our social good is selective, benefitting some while we shed the blood of others. Some we build up while we destroy others. There is no shalom, no real peace if while we do our social good we do not fear the Living and True God. Therefore our debt is very considerable!

In order to escape punishment in hell forever, we must pray God to forgive our moral debts, thus according to the Luke version of the Lord's Prayer we are to pray God to forgive our sins.<sup>4</sup> David earnestly prayed for forgiveness in Psalm 51. He does so because the alternative is unthinkable, "*Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.*"<sup>5</sup> What does it mean to be cast away from the presence of God? For the rich man in Hades it meant that, "*-- being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.'*"<sup>6</sup>

Psalm 51 also provides gives us good insight into the nature of forgiveness. We understand from the Psalm that forgiveness goes far beyond the pardoning of our sin. When God out of His graciousness and steadfast love forgives, he blots out our transgressions. He washes us thoroughly of the evil we have done. He purifies us, "*Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I*

*shall be whiter than snow.*"<sup>7</sup> God goes on to convert and regenerate us, "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.*"<sup>8</sup> So then God's forgiveness is very far reaching indeed so much so that Paul terms it "*the riches of His grace which He lavished upon us*".<sup>9</sup>

The second part of this petition, "*as we forgive our debtors,*" is at best a very imperfect model of the forgiveness of God, but, as the Catechism notes, it does encourage us to ask for God's forgiveness. Jesus said, "*For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*"<sup>10</sup> Jesus also addressed the matter of our forgiving others in the parable of the unmerciful slave saying, "*So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.*"<sup>11</sup> Let us hasten, therefore, to forgive others who sin against us that we may make bold to come to Christ for the forgiveness of our own sin.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 51:5, ESV

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 51:3, ESV

<sup>3</sup> The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 194, see also Psalm 51:16.

<sup>4</sup> Luke 11:4

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 51:11, ESV

<sup>6</sup> Luke 16:23-24, ESV

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<sup>7</sup> Psalm 51:7, ESV

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 51:10, ESV

<sup>9</sup> Ephesians 1:7-8, ESV

<sup>10</sup> Matthew 6:14-15, ESV

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 18:35, ESV

### **TEACHING GOAL**

To study the nature of temptation and how we are to deal with it.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

Q. What do we pray for in the sixth petition?

A. In the sixth petition (which is, And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil) we pray, That God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted.

S.C. 106; L.C. 195; W.C. of F. XVII, Savoy 17; Young 120-121

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** James 1:1-18

**Support Passages:** Job 1; Matthew 26:41, 69-72; Mark 4:18-19; Luke 21:34; Romans 7:23-24; II Corinthians 13:7-9; Hebrews 12

### **BIBLE STORY**

II Chronicles 16:1-10; Asa, king of Judah, did not rely on God but foolishly relied on the king of Syria and punished the prophet of God for telling the truth.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”* (1 Corinthians 10:13, ESV)

### **APPLICATION**

Given that we are subjected to many temptations to sin and often led captive by them, we must pray God to deliver us from them. We need to pray for the restraining of Satan and the limitation of evil in order that our sanctification and salvation may be perfected.

## SUMMARY

That we must pray for a certain thing implies that we lack it. That we must pray for relief from temptation implies that we have no power within ourselves to resist it and indeed we cannot. Paul writes of the warfare that goes on in our lives as Christians, *“but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?”*<sup>1</sup> Paul is not writing of his life before he was converted for he says “wretched man that I am.” In addition, he obviously speaks of his experience as one who is converted because he knows that he is a wretched man before God. The unconverted do not believe that they are sinning and much less that they are wretched. Thus Paul states that he is a prisoner of the law of sin even as a converted individual. He tells us that he does the very evil that he does not wish to do and we have a similar experience.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, if we are to ever have relief from indwelling sin and our inclination to expose ourselves to temptation we must pray God to deliver us from temptation and evil.

On the other hand James writes, *“Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.”*<sup>3</sup> The word translated trials here means temptations in other contexts, for example James 1:13-14 and I Corinthians 10:13. In John 6:6 this same word is translated tests. Thus we must understand that there are good trials and bad ones. Some trials result in the testing of our faith which produces endurance which issues in ultimate perfection in heaven. For if we endure, writes James, we will receive the crown of life, *“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.”*<sup>4</sup> Those who persevere through trials and temptations are blessed by God but we must frequently use the means of grace if we are to endure to the end. We pray, therefore, “that God would so over-rule the world and all in it, subdue the flesh, and restrain Satan, order all things, bestow and bless all means of grace, and quicken us to watchfulness in the use of them, that we and all His people may by His providence be kept from being tempted to sin; or, if tempted, that by His Spirit we may be powerfully supported and enabled to stand in the hour of temptation.”<sup>5</sup>

When we pray lead us not into temptation we must be open to the possibility that for our own good God may try our faith. Satan claimed that Job loved God because God had prospered him but when He permitted Satan to tempt Job, since Job was God's workmanship and had access to heavenly

resources he remained faithful to God. Job's wife told him to curse God and die, *“But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”*<sup>6</sup> Thus was Job strengthened and his condition at the outset was better than it ever was. If God tries our faith He will always support us and help us endure it.<sup>7</sup>

In order to deal with temptation and evil it is necessary that we come to God alone for relief. The Scriptures give us many examples of people who have tried to deal with temptation with their own resources. It is a spiritually fatal error to think more highly of our ability to deal with temptation than we ought. Satan is far more powerful than we are and we are by nature inclined to expose ourselves to temptation and submit to it. Asa, the king of Judah did just that. He relied on the king of Syria, Ben-hadad, for relief from the hostility of Baasha king of Israel. Asa even used the gold and silver of the temple to buy the loyalty of Ben-hadad. Then to compound the sin of Asa when Hanani the prophet delivered the rebuke of YAHWEH upon Asa, Hanani was imprisoned. God's message was, *“Because you relied on the king of Syria, and did not rely on the Lord your God, the army of the king of Syria has escaped you.”*<sup>8</sup> When the might of Baasha came against Asa he was tempted to build up his military strength using the forces of the ungodly Ben-hadad and he succumbed to the temptation therefore he was punished by God. And when we are tempted to sin if we do not come to God for relief but proceed to do the sin, like Asa we deserve the punishment of God.

The arrogant Peter did in fact succumb to temptation and seriously offended the Lord Jesus when he thrice denied Him. If Peter who was an eye witness of the majesty of Christ could be so disloyal to Christ how much more do we need to pray God to deliver us from temptation and evil. Indeed, in the garden of Gethsemane, when the disciples fell prey to the temptation to sleep, Jesus instructed them, *“Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 7:23-24, ESV

<sup>2</sup> Romans 7:19

<sup>3</sup> James 1:2, ESV

<sup>4</sup> James 1:12, Revelation 2:10, ESV

<sup>5</sup> The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 195. See also Matthew 26:41 and the example of the Lord which follows.

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<sup>6</sup> Job 2:10, ESV

<sup>7</sup> I Corinthians 10:13

<sup>8</sup> II Chronicles 16:7, ESV

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 26:41, ESV



### **TEACHING GOAL**

To understand that God requires praise from us and because He is all-powerful we are to rely upon Him to fulfill our requests.

### **DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

- Q. What does the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer teach us?
- A. The conclusion of the Lord's Prayer (which is, For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen) teaches us to take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and in our prayers to praise Him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory to Him. And, in testimony of our desire, and assurance to be heard, we say, Amen.

S.C. 107; L.C. 196; W.C. of F. XXI, Savoy 22; Young 108

### **SCRIPTURAL BASIS**

**Study Passage:** I Chronicles 29:10-20

**Support Passages:** II Chronicles 14:11, 20:6-11; I Corinthians 14:16; Ephesians 3:20-21; Philippians 4:6; Revelation 5:13, 22:20-21

### **BIBLE STORY**

II Timothy; Paul relies upon the Lord and is encouraged and confident in God's great power.

### **MEMORY ASSIGNMENT**

*“I was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher, which is why I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.” (2 Timothy 1:11–12, ESV)*

### **APPLICATION**

Because God is sovereign, omnipotent and glorious, He deserves and requires our praise and we must place our confidence in Him to perform His will for our good.

## SUMMARY

It is appropriate in this last lesson of the Family Catechism studies to turn again to the glory of God. It is our chief end to glorify and enjoy God and the Scriptures as our rule to direct us in this, teach us to bring praise and ascribe glory to God in prayer. With our prayers we are to, "Join praises, ascribing to God alone eternal sovereignty, omnipotence, and glorious excellency."<sup>1</sup> And because He is the all-powerful, sovereign God, He is able and willing to help us and therefore we are encouraged to pray that He would. Having asked we are to rely upon Him to fulfill our requests. David writes, "*Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him, and he will act.*" "*Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices!*"<sup>2</sup>

On the occasion when the kingdom of Israel passed to Solomon, David prayed, "give my son Solomon a perfect heart to keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, and Thy statutes, and to do them all, and to build the temple, for which I have made provision".<sup>3</sup> As David approached the throne of grace he blessed God using words quite similar to those in the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer. He prayed, "*Grant to Solomon my son a whole heart that he may keep your commandments, your testimonies, and your statutes, performing all, and that he may build the palace for which I have made provision.*"<sup>4</sup> The Bible is replete with such examples of prayer and we learn that we must come to God in the same way, even as Christ taught us in His model prayer.

According to David's prayer God is the source of all riches and honor and He rules over all things, in His hand is power and might; and it lies in His hand to make great, and to strengthen everyone. Therefore it follows that we ought to thank God and praise His glorious name. It is for this reason that we are greatly encouraged to rely on God to perform His will in our behalf.

Finally let us consider the meaning of the last word of the Lord's Prayer, Amen. We say Amen in order to express our desire to be heard with sincerity. The word amen is a Hebrew word meaning *truly* as it is in the familiar passage, "*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*"<sup>5</sup> This text reads literally, "Amen, amen, I say to you ," etc. David ended his prayer in Psalm 41 with the phrase "Amen, and Amen" and in I Corinthians 14:16 we understand that it is important to do likewise. So let us praise God in prayer and rest upon Him to give our desires according to His will.

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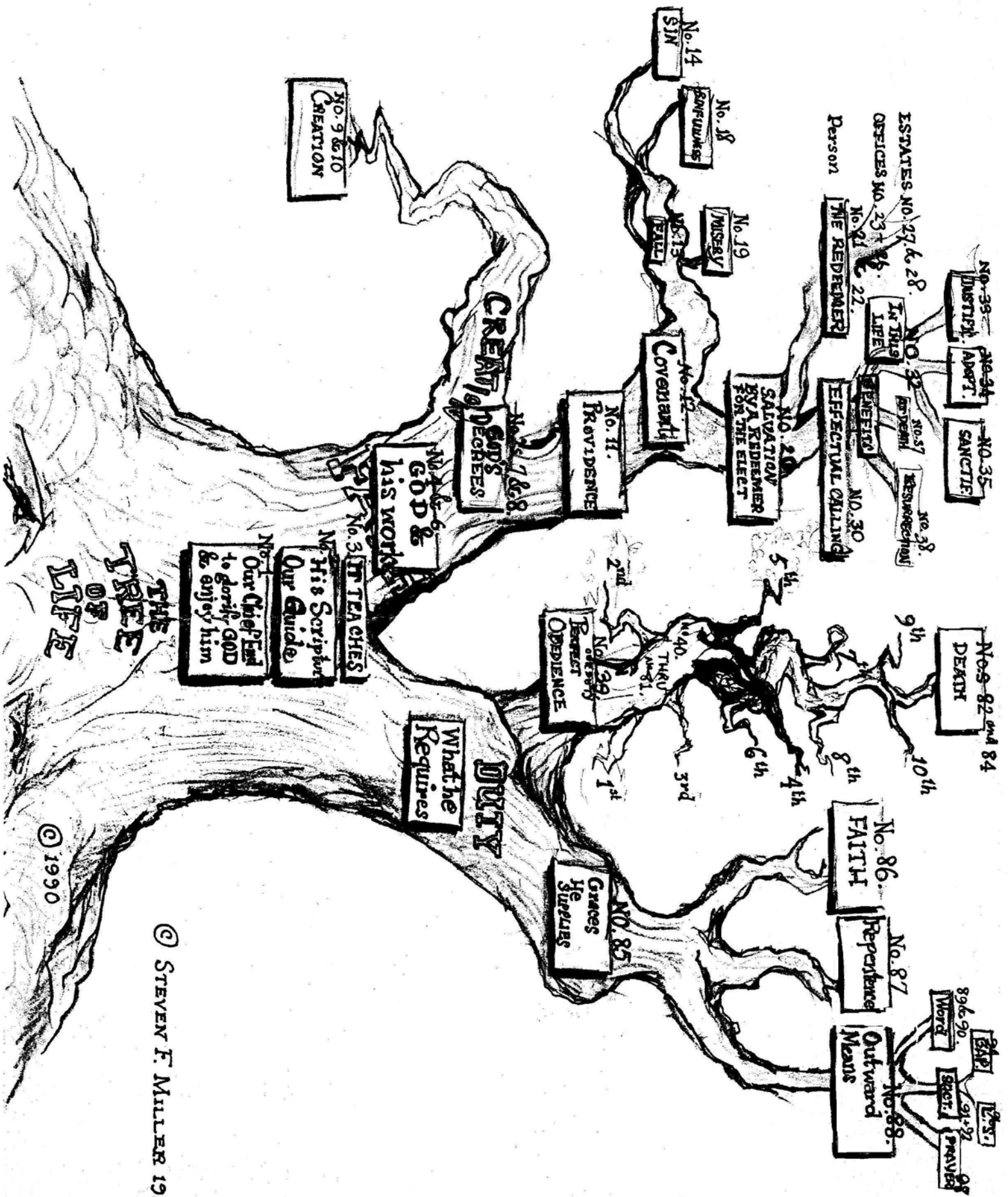
<sup>1</sup> The Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 196. See also Matthew 26:41 and the example of the Lord which follows.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 37:5, 7, ESV

<sup>3</sup> I Chronicles 29:19, ESV

<sup>4</sup> I Chronicles 29:10-11

<sup>5</sup> John 3:3, ESV



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