

# **This We Believe**

An introductory survey of the Christian faith

STUDY NOTES

By Stuart Olyott

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## **This we believe**

about

# **1. The Bible**

Psalm 19:1-4; 119; 2 Timothy 3:12-4:5

## **God has spoken...**

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- The whole universe speaks of God (Psalm 19:1-3; Rom 1:20)
- Man, before the Fall could see the meaning of it all (Genesis 2:19-20)
- Even today every man and woman knows about the truth about God (Romans 1:18-32, 2:14-15)
- It is a truth which they suppress (Romans 1:18,21-25,28)
- All this does not tell a man how to get right with God, or how once more to become His willing subject
- God has been pleased to reveal this by words, in a gradual process, with the result that His saving word is now deposited in the Bible.

### Lesson 1:

You do not need to argue for the existence of God. Declare the truth! Every man's conscience knows it to be so.

## **...in a book**

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We may know for certain that the Bible is God's Word:

- The Old Testament claims to be God's Word, and this is expressly affirmed by Christ and the New Testament writers (eg: 2 Samuel 23:2; John 10:35; Acts 4:25; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21)
- Inspiration was promised to the Apostles, and claimed by them (eg: John 14:26; 15:26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Peter 3:16)
- The Bible teaches truths beyond or comprehension, and beyond our power to devise
- Its prophecies come true
- Although there are 66 books, it speaks as one book
- It has been wonderfully preserved
- It has withstood all attacks
- It has wonderfully been proved right – again and again
  
- The Bible is God's Word *in its own right*, and not because the Church, or 'proofs', say so. (The art gallery)
- Not everyone can see this, because not everyone has the 'requisite perceptive faculty' (1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 4:18)
- It IS what it IS, whether I see it or not

### Lesson 2:

Do not apologise for the Bible. Let it loose!

P.T.O.

## **...but not in all books.**

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The 66 books of the Old and New Testaments are to be accepted as the Word of God, and no others.

- There is no dispute about the 27 books of the New Testament. The Christian Church has come to unanimity in recognising which books have the marks of inspiration, and which do not

The books of the Apocrypha, accepted by the Roman Catholic Church, form no part of the sacred canon, and are to be treated as having no more authority than any other human writings, because:

The Scriptures of our Lord's day were a known collection, comprised of 39 books, and our Lord and his Apostles approved these as the Word of God (Mark 14:49; Luke 24:44; John 5:39). Christ often rebuked the Jews for disobeying the Scriptures, but never for forging or corrupting them (Matthew 22:29)

The Lord and his Apostles never quoted from the Apocrypha, nor were its books ever accepted by the early church, or even finally by the Roman Catholic Church until the sixteenth century

None of the books of the Apocrypha claims inspiration, and several disclaim it. Some of them consist of childish fables, and encourage bad morals

### Lesson 3:

The reverence and submission which must be given to God's Word must not be given to any other book.

## **Yes – The Bible is the WORD OF GOD!**

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Therefore:

- Become a careful student of the Scriptures. Give your life to understanding exactly what God has said
- Submit your whole life in loving obedience to the Scriptures – your own life; family life; church life; etc.

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- Next Message: The Study of the Bible -

## **This we believe**

about

# **2. The Study of the Bible**

Mark 7:1-23

## **The Bible is complete**

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- Revelation 22:18-19 teaches the impossibility of adding to the Bible
- No addition to it is necessary (2 Timothy 3:15-17; Acts 20:27; Jude 1:3)
- We have to *apply* the Scriptures to our own situation, but the Scriptures themselves may never be altered, reduced or added to

### Lesson 1:

Have nothing to do with groups that teach that the Bible alone is not sufficient.

## **The Bible is clear**

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- Some *things* in Scripture are hard to understand, but not the Scriptures themselves (2 Peter 3:15-16)
- Ordinary people are capable of searching them (Acts 17:11)
- Ordinary Christians may understand them (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:12)
- Ordinary parents may teach them (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)
- Ordinary believers are expected to obey them (Ephesians 5:22,25; 6:1,5,9)
- Ordinary folk may live in light of them (Psalm 119:105,130)
- Ordinary Christians have the Holy Spirit to lead them into an understanding of the truth (1 John 2:20,27)

### Lesson 2:

Search the Bible for yourself, and check everything you hear.

## **The Bible has been preserved**

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- There is only *one* Bible – the original writings of the authors (in Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek)
- It is that alone which has been given “by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16)
- Copies were made, but did not all err at the same points – so we can work out with virtual certainty what the original manuscripts contained
- The text of the Bible has been preserved like no other ancient book
- This is because of God’s special care, and his wonderful providence which rules all history

### Lesson 3:

Read your Bible with confidence, but remember that it is a translation, not the original.

## **The Bible is to be interpreted correctly**

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- Roman Catholicism and many cults claim that they alone can that they alone can properly interpret God's Word
- They deny Psalm 109:105, and call the light 'darkness'
- In fact, Scripture interprets itself. (If this were not so, our first two points would be untrue.)
- Apparently difficult passages are clarified by other relevant passages
- When we compare Scripture with Scripture, each part becomes clear
- We also see that the Bible speaks with one voice, and not many
- This is why we can dogmatically formulate what it says in confessions and catechisms

### Lesson 4:

Get to know the whole of the Bible, and keep the whole in mind as you approach each part.

## **The Bible rules, OK!**

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- Only in the Bible has God spoken infallibly
- Only here has He revealed what we are to believe and how we are to behave
- So we do not accept the authority of any individual or council unless they are true to the Word of God (Mark 7:6-7,9,13)
- But we value them and submit to them when they *do* point us to the truth of God's Word

### Lesson 5:

Do not believe anything, or be pressed into anything, unless you are convinced of it from the very pages of God's Word.

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- Next Message: God, the Holy Trinity -

**Note:** This series is based on the *Westminster Confession of Faith (1646)* (or more accurately, on its 'daughter' - the *1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*). An excellent guide to the Confession, and thus a very fine textbook of Christian teaching, is *The Westminster Confession: A Study Manual* by G. I. Williamson. It guides you through the Confession, and provides searching questions - and answers!

## This we believe

about

# 3. God, The Holy Trinity

Isaiah 40:12-31

## God

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### God is

- We covered this point in our first talk
- It is not a fact that needs to be 'proved'
- Nobody can come to Him unless they believe that He is (Hebrews 11:6)

### God is a spirit

- This is taught in John 4:24
- He is invisible (1 Timothy 6:15-16)
- Yet He is often spoken about in physical terms (**anthropomorphisms**)
- He is a someONE, not a someTHING (Exodus 33:11; James 2:23)

### God is very great

- So far as space is concerned, He is everywhere (**omnipresent** - Jeremiah 23:24)
- So far as time is concerned, He is eternal (Psalm 90:2)
- So far as knowledge is concerned, He knows everything (**omniscient** - Psalm 147:5)
- So far as power is concerned, He does whatever he chooses (**omnipotent** - Psalm 115:3)

<b>God possesses certain <i>INcommunicable</i> attributes</b>		<b>God possesses certain <i>communicable</i> attributes</b>
unique to GOD <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Original</li><li>• An eternal Spirit</li></ul>	being wisdom power holiness justice goodness truth	shared with MAN <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The image of God</li><li>• A living body/soul</li></ul>
In God these attributes are: infinite eternal unchangeable		In man these attributes are: finite temporal changeable

### God is self-existent

- He is in no way dependent on any created being
- He is the fountain of His own being - and all else
- Romans 11:33-36

**P.T.O.**

## **The Holy Trinity**

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### **Only one God**

This is one of the most basic teachings of the Word of God (Deuteronomy 6:4; 4:35)  
This One God is 'one indivisible essence' (Deuteronomy 6:4)

### **Three Persons who are God**

Even the Old Testament prepares us for the truth that there is more than one who *is* God  
(Genesis 1:26-27; Isaiah 6:8)

The Father is God (Matthew 6:9)

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son, is God (John 1:1-3; 20:25; 1 John 5:20)

The Holy Spirit is God (Matthew 12:31-32; Acts 5:3-4)

Yet these Three are distinct Persons (John 15:26; 16:13-15)

### **Each of the three has His own 'personal properties'**

- *"It is proper to the Father to beget the Son, and the Son to be begotten of the Father, and to the Holy Spirit to proceed from the Father and the Son, from all eternity."*  
Westminster Larger Catechism (Question 10)

### Today's Lesson:

We are able to say what the truth about God *is*, but we are not able to explain *fully* how it can be so. There is no appropriate reaction except to be a REVERENT WORSHIPPER

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- Next Message: God's Eternal Decree -

## This we believe

about

# 4. God's Eternal Decree

Roman 9:1-26

- Most people object to the truth that we are declaring here
- It is sinful to pander to what sinful men & women think by watering down the truth
- We must teach this truth, because it is taught in the Word of God
- We will try to do so as wisely as we can

## God is God

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- There is nothing anywhere that God does not perfectly control (Psalm 13:19; Ephesians 1:11)
- This applies to the free actions of men:  
    God's predestination makes such actions certain,  
    yet those who do them, perform them freely  
    Matthew 26:24; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Philippians 2:12-13
- Men and women are free from external coercion – but not free from the control of their own natures (Matthew 7:17-19)
- Remember: It is God's predestination that makes things certain – it's not simply that He sees things before they happen (Ephesians 1:11)

### Lesson 1:

Take heart! God is still on the throne!

## God is God over men and angels

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- It is God who determines who shall, and who shall not, be saved (Romans 9:15-16)
- He gives to some what they deserve (**damnation** – Romans 9:22)
- He gives to others what they in no way deserve (**salvation** – Romans 9:23)
- It is God who puts a difference between them (Romans 9:11; Exodus 11:7)
- His decision is conditioned, *not* upon something in the creature, but rather upon something in Himself (Romans 9:15,18,21)
- Why did He do what He did? For His own glory! (Romans 11:36)

### Lesson 2:

Rejoice! Heaven will be full!

## God is God over the elect

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- God gives us our daily bread, but uses complex means and agencies to do so
  - So it is with our salvation, which is God's gift (Romans 6:23)
- God gives this salvation, by His Son, through His Spirit (1 Peter 1:2)
- God the Father chooses who is to be saved (John 10:26-29)
  - God the Son has died for them, and them alone (John 10:11)
  - God the Holy Spirit brings them to experience and enjoy what has been planned for them (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5)

Salvation is the work of the Triune God!!

**P.T.O.**

Lesson 3:

Go with expectancy to the work of Evangelism. It cannot fail!

**God is God over the rest of mankind**

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- God has determined to pass them by, and not save them (**preterition** – Romans 9:15-16)
- They are no more and no less sinful than the elect
- The reason for preterition lies solely with God (Romans 9:10-13)
- God determines to treat them with strict justice, so that they receive what they deserve (**reprobation** – Romans 9:22; Jude 1:4)
- God *is* arbitrary (Romans 9:18) – but he is *not* unfair or unjust (Romans 9:14; Psalm 145:17)
- He does nothing other than what is right for Him as God to do (Romans 9:20-21)

Lesson 4:

All who are saved, are saved by God's mercy alone.

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It is time to pray:

*"Pass me not, O gracious Saviour,  
Hear my humble cry;  
While on others thou art calling,  
Do not pass me by!"*

A hymn by  
Fanny Crosby (1870)

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- Next Message: Creation -

## **This we believe**

about

# **5. Creation**

Genesis 1:1-2:3

When we open our Bibles, the first thing we read about is creation.

## **The basic facts**

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- This universe is not self-existent or eternal (Genesis 1:1; 1 Corinthians 6:6)
- It derives its existence from the true God alone (Genesis 1:1; Revelation 10:6)
- He made all things from nothing, by the power of His Word (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 33:6,9)
- He did not need to do this – it was an act of His free and sovereign will (Acts 17:25; Revelation 4:11)
- He did it for His own glory (Colossians 1:16; Romans 11:33-36)

## **Some points to note about Genesis 1**

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- Some things God created were fundamentally new (1:1,21,27; 2:3)
- All else He 'made' (fashioned or formed from existing material – 1:7,16,25; 2:3)
- He did the whole work in six days (a 'day' being one revolution of the earth upon its axis – 1:4,8,19,23,31; Exodus 20:11)
- The whole work was perfect – precisely what God wanted it to be (1:31)

## **Some points to note about the creation of man**

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- This was preceded by a divine counsel (1:26)
- Man was God's crowning creation - and distinct from the animals (1:26)
- He was made in God's 'image' (1:26)
- They were male and female from the beginning, and the whole human race has descended from a single human pair (1:27; 2:4-25)
- Upon him rested a blessing, and to him was given a mandate (1:28)
- To them were given creation ordinances of: procreation and marriage; the Sabbath; and work (1:28-2:25)
- They had a sufficient knowledge of God's will (Romans 1:19; 2:15; Genesis 2:16-17)
- He was capable of obedience, but also of falling (Genesis 3)

**P.T.O.**

## **Some points to note from other parts of the Bible**

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- It was through Christ that everything without exception was made (John 1:1,3,10; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2)
- He also upholds the whole universe together (Colossians 1:17; Hebrews 1:3)
- The Holy Spirit is the agent of creation (Genesis 1:2; Job 26:13; Psalm 104:30)
- From the very beginning the things God has made display His eternal power and deity (Romans 1:20)

In the final analysis, we believe this because God has revealed it (Hebrews 11:3)

### Today's Lesson:

We can know our creator! We rejoice to be able to say 2 Corinthians 4:6!

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- Next Message: Providence -

**Note:** There are now many resources available that demonstrate that the evolutionary model cannot be substantiated by the known facts, and that the Biblical account is the only explanation of the universe that can account for the evidence. Some good websites to start with are:

- Answers In Genesis  
<http://www.answersingenesis.org/>
- Biblical Creation Society  
<http://www.biblicalcreation.org.uk/>
- Center for Scientific Creation  
<http://www.creationscience.com/>
- Institute for Creation Research  
<http://www.icr.org/>
- True Origin Archive  
<http://www.trueorigin.org/>

## This we believe

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# 6. Providence

Job 1-2:10

## The truth of providence

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We want to underline the truth that GOD CONTROLS EVERYTHING

### 3 key verses

- Daniel 4:35
- Psalm 135:6
- Ephesians 1:11

### 4 reasons why this should not surprise us

- God made everything – should we therefore be surprised that he also controls it?
- God has perfect foreknowledge (Acts 15:18; 1 Peter 1:11-12), so there is no eventuality that 'takes Him by surprise'
- God is **omnipotent** (all powerful – Psalm 115:3) – nothing can break from His control
- God is free (Daniel 4:35). There is nothing within Himself to prevent Him from doing all His will

### Two Lessons to learn:

1. God controls everything – so 'chance' is ruled out (Proverbs 19:21; 21:1)
2. God controls everything – so 'fate' is ruled out (Psalm 103:9)

## Objections to the truth of providence

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- I. **"If God controls everything, then I am not responsible for what I do."**  
We do our own will. But such is God's sovereignty that He is able to let us do as we please, and yet render certain what we will do that he has predestined we should do. (Genesis 45:3-8; 50:20; Acts 4:24-28)
- II. **"If God controls everything, then things will turn out the same no matter what I do."**  
Our actions are not unimportant, but exceedingly important. God not only ordains the *end* (d), but also *means*: (a), (b) and (c) which lead to (d). Yet those actions are free - as we have seen.
- III. **"If God controls everything, then that makes Him the author of sin!"**  
God has nothing to do with sin (James 1:13; Isaiah 6:3). We must face the fact that the responsibility for sin lies with us, although even our wicked acts bring God's purposes to pass (Acts 4:24-28). But in proclaiming God's holiness, we must never play down His total and complete sovereignty (Isaiah 45:7)

P.T.O.

IV. **“If God controls everything, how do you account for the sins of the righteous, and the prosperity of the wicked?”**

Sin still remains in a believer’s ‘members’ until the resurrection day (Romans 7:14-25). Other men and women are in open rebellion against God (Romans 1:18-32) – but all will be rectified at the Judgment (Romans 2:1-16)

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- Next Message: The Fall of Man -

## This we believe

about

# 7. The Fall of Man

Genesis 3:1-24

Adam, God's highest creature, walked with Him in knowledge, righteousness and holiness. But...

## Adam fell

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- 'Rationalism' denies the Fall completely
- 'Neo-orthodoxy' teaches that man is fallen, but does not take Genesis 3 as it stands
- There is no doubt that Genesis 3 is a literal and historic record (Romans 5:12-21)
  - Adam & Eve sinned by eating the forbidden fruit
  - They were seduced to this activity by the subtlety & temptation of Satan
  - God permitted this, having ordered it for His own glory (Romans 11:36)
- The results of this first (**original**) sin were that:
  - they lost communion with God (3:8,24)
  - they lost their original righteousness (3:11)
  - they became dead in sin and wholly defiled – a defilement which polluted all their faculties of soul and body (Genesis 2:17; 6:5 – **total depravity** = like poison or ink staining a glass of water)

## We fell in Adam

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- Adam was a 'public person' and represented the whole human race (**federal** principle – eg: head of a family; president of a country.)
- Our character and destiny depended upon his conduct:
  - This is proved by his name: Adam (literally: "The Man")
  - Everything God commanded, promised or threatened him related as much to his descendants as to himself personally (eg: cursed earth; death; pain in childbearing; etc. – 3:16-19)
  - This representation is the clear teaching of the New Testament (Romans 5:12-21)
- The guilt of Adam's sin is laid to the account (**imputed**) to all his natural descendants (Romans 5:12-21)
- They inherit the same corrupt nature (Psalm 51:5)
- We are *born* sinners – and this explains *why* we sin (Mark 7:21-23 – measles and spots)

P.T.O.

## **We are guilty – under God’s wrath and curse**

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- God requires us to *be* holy, as well as to *act* justly (1 Peter 1:16)
- We are not – so we are sinners (1 John 3:4)
- Sin is said to ‘reign’ and have ‘dominion’ over us – we are its servants (Romans 6:12-17; Ephesians 4:18-19)
- We are ‘dead’ in our sin – unable to save ourselves (Ephesians 2:1-5)
- We are by nature, the ‘children of wrath’ (Ephesians 2:3)
  - Even in this life, God’s curse on us is evident (3:16-19; Romans 1:18-32)
  - This is to be followed by eternal miseries (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Revelation 20:11-15)

But ...

*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*

Romans 1:16-17

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- Next Message: God’s Covenant With Man -

## This we believe

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# 8. God's Covenant With Man

1 Corinthians 11:20-26; Hebrews 8; 12:22-24; 13:20-21; Romans 5:12-21

## 'Covenant': an explanation

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- God is God, and we are His creatures – there is a great distance between us
- Even if we have lived perfectly, we should only have done our duty (Luke 17:10)
- We can never claim anything from God as a *right*

yet...

- God undertakes to give certain things to us upon certain conditions
- This is a great condescension on His part
- *He* chooses the gifts. *He* decides the terms
- A divine covenant is not an agreement between 2 equal parties, each imposing conditions on the others. It is GOD bringing Himself to graciously do certain things for His undeserving creatures, upon whom he lays certain conditions or obligations (conqueror and conquered)
- Such an undertaking by God is called a **covenant** or **testament**

## The Covenant of Works

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Genesis 2:15-3:24

- At the beginning of history God clearly held before Adam two alternatives:
  - obedience and life
  - disobedience and death
- God alone decided that there should be such a covenant – and its terms
- It was a covenant of life – for this is what God held out to Adam
- It was a covenant of works – because God Adam to obey Him before He confirmed him unchangeably in his original state
  - Yet Adam fell – with all the consequences we studied last week
  - *In theory* the covenant of works is still in operation (Galatians 3:12)
  - but in practice it is no good to us. We all sinners. We cannot possibly meet the condition (of perfect obedience). If we are to have eternal life, it must be by some *other way*

## The Covenant of Grace

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- God has mercifully instituted another covenant – the “everlasting covenant” (Hebrews 13:20)
- In it GOD HIMSELF meets the conditions required to save His people
- God did not consult man to see if he would make such a covenant
- He consulted nobody but Himself – it was an eternal act of grace
- so we call it the **Covenant of Grace**

**P.T.O.**

- It is plain from the Scriptures that there is a covenanted agreement between the three persons of the Trinity regarding the salvation of sinners:
  - It was *God the Father* who eternally gave a chosen people to His Son, and sent Him into the world to save them (John 6:37-40)
  - It was *God the Son* who lived a perfect life on their behalf, and died in their place (John 10:11,14-15; Romans 4:24-25)
  - It is *God the Holy Spirit* who brings them into the enjoyment and benefit of what Christ has obtained for them (1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10)
- This covenant was announced in an old way (**Old Testament**)
  - The promises, prophecies, sacrifices, types and ordinances of the Old Testament all pointed forward to the Lord Jesus Christ, and spoke of salvation obtained by God's doing, not ours (Luke 24:27,45-46; Romans 1:1-3; 3:20-22; 16:25-27)
- This covenant was announced, and is announced, in a new way (**New Testament**)
  - by: preaching (2 Corinthians 3:6; 4:5); baptism (Colossians 2:12-14); and the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26); in which the truth comes over more clearly, yet more simply, with less outward glory

## Only ONE Covenant

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- Not even the covenant of works and the covenant of grace are different. Both are the gifts of God's grace. The Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled the terms of the first, that we might benefit by the second!
- There is only ONE way by which salvation becomes ours. Dispensationalists believe that God dispenses His saving benefits in different ways at different times, and are therefore in error
- Arminians believe that Christ did not actually *accomplish* anything on the cross, but only made salvation possible. The work is not complete until we do our part and 'accept Christ'. They thus hold that in the final analysis, salvation depends on something we do, and preach a form of salvation by works. This error springs up whenever people do not properly understand the Covenant of Grace

### Today's Lesson:

Once grasp the Bible's teaching about the covenant, and the whole of the Bible makes sense – it is 'the unifying principle of Scripture'. Until you do, the Bible will appear to you to be a muddle.

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- Next Message: The Lord Jesus Christ (i) -

## This we believe

about

# 9. The Lord Jesus Christ (i)

Luke 4:16-32; John 7:25-46; Mark 10:32-45

Last week we learned that no-one can be saved from the misery and consequences of sin, except by our Lord Jesus Christ. But who is He?? There are 3 fundamental points to remember:

## 3 Offices

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- Adam, when sinless, was a prophet, priest and king to God's creation
- These 3 offices were prominent in the Old Testament, but all three were never found again in one person
- The Last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, exercises all three:
- On earth:
  - As **Prophet** He spoke through all the prophets, and came Himself as God's final revelation to men (1 Peter 1:10-12; Hebrews 1:1-2)
  - As **Priest** He made the one final and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of His people (Hebrews 9:11-12; 10:14)
  - As **King** He held together the world He had made, and often displayed this kingship (Colossians 1:17; Mark 4:35-41)
- In heaven:
  - As **Prophet** He sends His Spirit to lead His people into the truth (John 16:7,13)
  - As **Priest** He applies the benefits of His sacrifice to His people, and intercedes for them (1 Thessalonians 1:4-10; Hebrews 7:25)
  - As **King** He exercises all authority in heaven and earth, subduing sinners to Himself, ruling and defending his church, and hastening the end when all His enemies will be put down. (Matthew 28:18-20; John 14:7-11; Ephesians 4:15; John 10:27-20; 2 Timothy 4:18; 1 Corinthians 15:25)

## 2 Natures

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### The Lord Jesus Christ is God

- His life did not begin when he was born (John 8:58)
- He is given divine titles (Isaiah 40:3; John 1:19-34; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 5:20)
- He has divine attributes (Isaiah 44:6; Revelation 22:13)
- He does divine works (John 1:3,10; Colossians 1:16-17)
- He is given divine worship (Hebrews 1:8; John 20:26-29; Revelation 5)

### The Lord Jesus Christ is Man

- He became man without ceasing to be God (John 1:1-3,14; 1 John 1:1-3)
- He was born of a human mother (Luke 2:6-7; Galatians 4:4)
- He was revealed in human form (Philippians 2:7-8; Romans 8:3)
- He had a body, soul, will and affections (Hebrews 2:14-17; Matthew 26:38-39)
- He knew tiredness, thirst, tears (John 4:6-7; 11:35)
- He shared fully in our experiences, except that He never sinned (Hebrews 4:15)
- He endured bodily suffering, and died (1 Peter 4:1; 3:18)
- He remained man after His resurrection (Luke 24:36-43; Acts 1:11)
- He is a Man today, and will be forever (1 Timothy 2:5; Philippians 2:9-11)

**P.T.O.**

## 1 Person

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- Christ's two natures are entirely distinct – they do not mix, merge reduce, dissolve, change, or run into each other
- There are not Christ's, but One only
- He is but one Person, and is always spoken of as such
- It is because of this that such statements as Acts 20:28 are possible
- The Person who purchased the Church is both god and Man
- Because He is but one Person in two natures, we may (in the same breath) speak of Him as God, *and* as shedding human blood (Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5)

### Today's Lesson:

These truths about the Lord are written in His name:

- He is **the Lord** (divine name: the LORD/Yahweh)
- He is **Jesus** (human name: "God saves")
- He is the **Christ** (title: "the anointed one" – Messiah)

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- Next Message: The Lord Jesus Christ (ii) -

## This we believe

about

# 10. The Lord Jesus Christ (ii)

Isaiah 52:12-53:12

Last week we learned that our Lord Jesus Christ exercises 3 offices (Prophet/Priest/King); has 2 natures (God/Man); yet is 1 Person. Now we consider:

## His life

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- The Son of God came among us by being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin, Mary (Luke 1:31,35)
- The God-Man did not occupy the highest and best position on earth (Luke 2:7; Philippians 2:5-8)
- Even though He was the giver of the Law, He became subject to it – it was His duty, as a man, to keep it perfectly... (Galatians 4:4)
- ..and He did! Tempted at all point, just as we are, He never sinned (Hebrews 4:15)
- He knew hunger, pain, sorrow and poverty – all the effects of the Fall – except that He was without sin (Isaiah 53:3-4; Hebrews 7:26)
- Yet in this period He did miracles which displayed His glory (John 2:11)
- His coming among us was voluntary... (Hebrews 10:5-7)
- ...yet it was the result of a special call from God (Hebrews 5:5)
- God who sent Him to His Messianic task (Prophet/Priest/King) gave the Man Christ Jesus strength to do it, by His Holy Spirit (John 3:34; 8:28; Acts 10:38; Luke 4:18)

## His death

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- The climax of Christ's sufferings was His death upon the cross (Matthew 27:45-46)
- There He endured both the malice of man and the wrath of God (Isaiah 53:3,10; Acts 2:23)
- It was the Father's will that He should thus suffer (Isaiah 53:10; John 3:16; Philippians 2:8)
- Yet even this was voluntary – He willingly laid down His life (John 10:17; Matthew 26:39,42,46)

### As the Lord Jesus died on the cross:

- He was an *actual* **substitute** for sins (Hebrews 2:9-10) - Whose sins?
- He *actually* turned away the righteous anger of God (**propitiation** - Romans 3:25; 1 John 4:10) - Who from?
- He *actually* **reconciled** a people to God (Romans 5:10; Hebrews 2:17) – Who?
- He *actually* **redeemed** from the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:13) – Who?

In other words...

- He didn't merely make something *possible* by His death
- He *actually* did achieve these things for those whom He represents!!

Who does He represent?

- See: Mathew 1:21; John 10:11,15,26; 6:37-40; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27; etc.

**P.T.O.**

## His deathless life

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- Our Lord's body did not decompose in the grave (Acts 2:27)
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> day after His death, He arose again! (1 Corinthians 15:3-8)
- He presented Himself alive by many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3)
- 40 days later He ascended into heaven, returning to His Father (Acts 1:9-11)
- He now occupies the place of highest glory (Ephesians 1:20-23) on "David's Throne" (Acts 2:29-36)
- From heaven He sent the Holy Spirit to His people (Acts 2:33)
- All the Holy Spirit's workings in the world are to be attributed to our Lord Jesus Christ (John 16:7-15; Ephesians 4:8,11-13)
- In heaven He prepares a place for His people (John 14:2-3)
- He is their forerunner, preparing the way for them (Hebrews 6:20)
- He lives forever, holding a permanent priesthood (Revelation 1:18; Hebrews 7:24-25)
- He **intercedes** for His people, and is their **advocate** with the Father (Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1)
- Our Lord awaits His final victory, when all His enemies will be subdued (Acts 2:34-35; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26)
- We shall not see Him until He comes again in power as the Divine Judge (John 14:28; Acts 10:42; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26)

### Today's Lesson:

Worship the "Lamb who was slain"!! (Revelation 5:6-14)

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- Next Message: Free Will -

## **This we believe**

about

# **11. Free Will**

John 3:1-21

- For over 1500 years there has been heated discussion on this subject
- Your views will decide what message you spread and what methods you use

But we turn from the views of others – to the words of our Holy Lord:

- In Matthew 12:33-37 He gives us 3 pictures:
  - a tree, bearing fruit (v33)
  - a man, bringing treasure from a chest (v35)
  - a stream, overflowing from a fountain (v34: abundance = overflow)

## **Man has a will**

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- He has power of choice and selects his own words, thoughts and deeds
- He is free to choose what he prefers; what he desires
- The will is a vital part of the human personality
- God never forces people to act against their wills (hornets / Saul)
- This sort of freedom is essential to responsibility (see Matthew 12:36-37) – a man is held responsible for his words because he *chose* to speak that way
- The power of choice is also central to repentance and faith (Revelation 22:17)
- In evangelism, we call on our hearers to *choose*
- The great guilt of sinners is that they will *not* come to Christ (John 5:40; Matthew 23:37; 2 Thessalonians 1:8)

## **Man's will is not neutral**

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- This is what some people teach: that the will is likely to go one way as another (like the weathercock turning, whatever the wind)
- This is NOT the teaching of the Lord
- What a man *is* determines what He chooses (3 pictures / mission control)
- If this were not so, your will would be an uncontrollable monster (restaurant / clothes / company)
- The will is *not* in a state of 'neutrality' – *not* a sovereign faculty – *not* supreme over all parts of our personality
- By itself, it *cannot* bring a person from sin to righteousness; from unbelief to faith

## **Man's will is in bondage to sin**

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- If the root is bad, the tree cannot produce good fruits (Matthew 7:16-20)
- See also other pictures (Jeremiah 13:23; John 6:44; Romans 8:7)
- Nor are things different when the Gospel is preached to a person
- Nor is it essential to have a neutral will to be held accountable – people are responsible for what they do, even though because of their sinful natures they cannot chose to be anything different (Matthew 12:33-36)
- We also need to remember that God Himself does not have a neutral will – He is *not* free to choose evil but is free to choose that according to his Holy nature and will (James 1:13; Titus 1:2). Likewise, as made in his image, we are free to choice what we want – which is determined by our nature.

**P.T.O.**

- Neither can the Saints in glory choose to sin – showing that the highest liberty lies in the inability to sin!
- But men and women on earth commit sin, and are the slaves of sin, and totally unable to be anything *except* sinners (John 8:34)

## **Man's will is not his hope**

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- For the fruit to be different – the TREE must be changed!
- The human will does not have the power to change the personality/nature, but only to serve its desires
- All who rely on the human will for the conversion of sinners will be disappointed (John 1:12-13)
- The Spirit of God alone can do what needs to be done (John 3:1-13)
- He actually does **regenerate** some as we present the Word to them (1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18 – Lazarus / impotent man)
- WE address God's Word to them (Acts 17:30; 1 John 2:23)
- HE makes them willing in the "day of His power" (Psalm 110:3)

### Today's Lesson:

- We stand with no power to make the tree good...
- ... nor can gimmicks like: church growth plans, dramas, dance, etc.
- It is the work of God's Spirit alone, through His Word ...

therefore:

"we will give ourselves continually to prayer,  
and to the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:4)

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- Next Message: Effectual Calling -

## This we believe

about

# 12. Effectual Calling

1 Corinthians 1:17-2:16

- All people everywhere are guilty before God and condemned (Romans 3:10-20)
- Their only hope of getting right with God lies in the Gospel... (Romans 1:16-17)
- ...so God has commissioned His people to preach it to every person (Matthew 28:19-20)
- It is by the Gospel message alone that people are brought to faith in Christ, and therefore to salvations (Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 1:21)

## Why do some people accept the Gospel, while others do not?

### **The reason is NOT in the Gospel itself**

- The same message is preached to all
- Jesus Christ is freely offered to all sinners in the without exception (Romans 10:13; John 3:16; Rev 22:17)
- There is nothing in the message itself which prevents any person from accepting the offer of salvation contained in it

### **The reason does NOT lie in the nature of the hearers**

All are equally sinful (Isaiah 54:6), equally dead spiritually (Ephesians 2:1), equally unable to grasp spiritual things (1 Corinthians 1:23; 2:14), equally determined NOT to come to Christ (John 5:40)

Whatever their intellect, culture or background, all of them, left to themselves, would never accept the saving Gospel and would certainly perish

### **The reason IS that some are *effectually called*, and some are not**

- All hear the same message, but to some it is a life-giving message which gives spiritual understanding, and the power and desire to choose the Lord Jesus Christ freely offered to them in the Gospel (1 Peter 1:23; James 1:18)
- This is because of the work of the Holy Spirit. What is taking place is "the new birth" (**regeneration**). John 3:1-8 tells us that the new birth is:
  - **Prevenient** – God's work *precedes* all spiritual activity in man
  - **Monergistic** – it is accomplished *solely* by the Holy Spirit (rather than by any cooperation between man and the Spirit = **synergism**)
  - **Mysterious** – it cannot be observed or described (v3)
  - **Sovereign** – it takes place when and where he wills
  - **Effectual** – it produces the desired result – the person concerned DOES come to see and enter the Kingdom

**P.T.O.**

## **An Objection to effectual calling**

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### **This makes men and women into mere pawns!**

- No-one is lost or saved against their will. Natural men do not want the Gospel, and effectually called people do! (1 Corinthians 1:18)
- Effectual calling is not an act of 'forcing', but an act of creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:10). A new nature is given, and thus the will chooses new things. The effectually called person WANTS to do what he did *not* want to do before (as we saw in the previous study). An effectually called person now:
  - sees the Gospel; as true, as a blind man now sees the sun (1 Corinthians 4:4-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14)
  - sees his unworthiness and guilt before God (Acts 2:37)
  - sees the saviour as Substitute and Advocate (John 6:44)
  - wants the Saviour, not his sin, so turns from it to Him (Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26-27)
  - trusts what the Saviour has done for sinners and relies on this and nothing else for his standing before God (Acts 17:30; 16:31)

## **2 Dangers to avoid**

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### **Presumption**

- Effectual calling may be sudden, or it may be gradual. It may be accompanied by strong feelings, or it may not

#### Response:

Do not assume that because you have had a sudden religious experience accompanied by deep feelings, that you have been effectually called. TRUE calling leads to CONTINUING faith. 'Where is your faith *now*?' - that is the question to decide whether you are truly called or not (see Hebrews 6:4-8; 2 Peter 2:20-22)

### **Delay**

Some people say that they would repent and believe if they could, but they can't because God hasn't given them His Spirit

#### Response:

Do not assume that you must feel that you have the Spirit before you repent and believe. You are COMMANDED to repent and believe, whatever you do or do not feel. Do so without delay (Acts 17:30; 16:31). God does not permit ANYONE to know they are regenerate before they believe. But all who obey the Gospel invitation, and are trusting Christ NOW, may be certain that the Spirit has worked in them (1 Corinthians 12:3)

### Today's Lesson:

"Give diligence to diligence to make your calling and election sure ..." (2 Peter 1:10)

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- Next Message: Conversion -

## This we believe

about

# 13. Conversion

Acts 9:1-22

We have studied regeneration, and now we come to **conversion**.

- Regeneration is the giving of a new nature, while conversion is the first *act* of the new nature – the new nature asserting itself
- Regeneration is an act of God alone, while conversion is also an act of the sinner. It is the first thing a renewed sinner *does*

Conversion consists of both **repentance** and **faith**

- These two are always found together, and are never separated (See: Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21. Also consider the following pairs of references: Acts 3:19/4:4, 10:43/11:18, 17:30/17:34, 26:18/26:20)

## Conversion is God's gift

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- See what is said about repentance in: Acts 5:31, 11:18; 2 Timothy 2:25
- See what is said about faith in: Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 12:3; Ephesians 2
- Salvation really *is* the gift of God's free grace!

## Conversion is essential to salvation

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- Jesus said so! (Matthew 18:3)
- Only those who have faith have life (John 3:16-18; Hebrews 10:39; 1 Peter 1:5)
- Without repentance, we perish! (Luke 13:3,5, 24:47; Acts 3:19, 5:31, 17:30-31)

## What repentance is

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- It is *not* mere confession of sin or remorse (Proverbs 28:13; Matthew 27:3-5; Hebrews 12:17)
- It is something DONE. It is TURNING (Acts 3:19, 26:20)
- The turning is *from* sin to God (Acts 14:15; 26:18)

## What faith is

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- It is knowing *certain* facts (Romans 3:19-28; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5)
- It is *believing* them to be true (Acts 17:2-4, 18:4,19)
- It is *resting* upon them:
  - All other supposed ways of salvation are abandoned (Philippians 3:3-8)
  - All confidence in good works is forsaken (Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:9; Romans 3:28)
  - The person believing the facts puts his personal trust in a person – the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 15:11, 16:31, John 1:12, 3:16, 4:42; Galatians 2:20; 2 Timothy 1:12; etc.)

**P.T.O.**

## Mistakes to avoid

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### (i) Do not confuse genuine conversion with counterfeit conversion

- Genuine conversion involves the mind, the emotions, and the will
- The repentant person knows his lost condition, and has a broken heart, and turns
- The believing person knows the divine remedy, feel his need of Christ, and receives and rests upon Him alone as He is offered in the gospel
- An emotional 'walk to the front' is not conversion
- Believing the right things is not conversion
- Fitting in with Christian behaviour patterns is not conversion

### (ii) Do not mix up repentance with 'penance'

- The Roman Catholic Church has a doctrine of 'penance'
- It says that if you are sorrowful for your sin, confess it to a priest, and do the work imposed on you by him, he may then absolve you of your sin
- The notion is that the sinner can pay for his own sin, and thus secure favour with God
- This is in direct contradiction of Biblical teaching
- No priests exist today – but our Lord Jesus Christ
- Repentance recognises that the sinner is justly condemned, and without any escape, except that provided in the Gospel
- It goes hand-in-hand with faith, and rests for its acceptance with God entirely upon the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ

### (iii) Do not think that repentance and faith precede regeneration

- It is widely taught that if you repent and believe, THEN you will be 'born again' (regenerated)
- This is plainly contradicted by God's Word (as we have seen in this and the two previous studies)
- We must at all costs preserve the truth that salvation is a gift of God's free grace
- It is not faith in itself that saves – not even faith in Jesus Christ. Don't have faith in 'faith'.
- It is JESUS CHRIST who saves – THROUGH faith!

### Today's Lesson:

Repent & believe – and be saved!

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- Next Message: Justification -

## This we believe

about

# 14. Justification

Galatians 1:1-12

When God calls a person...

- that person repents and believes (as we saw in the last study)
- God then **justifies** that person (Romans 8:30)

## Justification is a declaration

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- It is something the sinner is *said to be* – something *pronounced* concerning him
- It is NOT something *done* to the sinner – something which *happens* to him
- Look at Deuteronomy 25:1
- When a judge justifies a man, he is *declaring* that innocent man to be righteous. (The opposite is *condemnation*)

But we are guilty! How can the righteous Lord declare the *guilty* to be righteous?

- The answer lies in **imputation**

## Imputation

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Imputation means that God has *reckoned* or *credited* to *one* person what originally belonged to *another* person

- For instance, the sin of Adam is imputed or 'laid to the account' of all Adam's race. We receive this from him, but Adam receives nothing from us
- In the case of Jesus Christ and His elect people there is a *double imputation*:
  - My sin is laid to His account – and He is treated as if *He* had sinned *my* sin (Read 2 Corinthians 5:21)
  - His perfect righteousness is laid to my account. God treats me as if I had never sinned. I am treated as if *I* had lived *Christ's* perfect life (Read 2 Corinthians 5:21 again)

## God is the author of justification

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"It is God who justifies" (Romans 8:33b)

He declares us to be righteous

- Do not think that it is *your* faith that makes you righteous. Faith is not a 'good work' which commends us to God's favour. Faith is not the ground of righteousness
- The work of Jesus Christ alone is the ground of righteousness (Romans 3:24) There is no other sin-bearer. Faith in Him is an INSTRUMENT ONLY – the 'hand' by which we receive the righteousness of God – NOT the source of that righteousness (Romans 5:1)

**P.T.O.**

## Other important points to grasp

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**Justification is an *act* completed in a moment, NOT a *process* that is only gradually completed**

- You are either justified or you are not
- Once justified, you cannot become Unjustified! You are legally righteous in God's sight, forever – and free from wrath and condemnation (Romans 8:1)

**Nobody is justified until he repents and believes the Gospel**

- It is God's plan to justify His people, but they are NOT IN FACT justified until they are united to Christ in effectual calling. Until then, they are lost (Galatians 2:16; Colossians 1:21-22)
- Justification is not yours *until* you believe, but becomes yours *as soon as* you believe (Acts 13:38-39; Romans 3:22)

**We are justified by *faith alone*, but not by a faith that is alone**

- No law-keeping is necessary or possible for salvation (Romans 3:20-22)
- But the faith that justifies is NEVER alone – it is *always* accompanied by good works (James 2:26)
- These works do not commend us to God – they are the fruit of faith
- Whoever God justifies He sanctifies (as we shall see), and so their lives just *cannot* be the same as before
- The very faith we have is God's gift, so it is clear that justification is an act of God's free grace (Romans 3:20-24, 4:16)

Today's Lesson:

The doctrine of **justification by faith alone** is the VERY CENTRE of the Gospel

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- Next Message: Adoption -

## **This we believe**

about

# **15. Adoption**

Matthew 6:1-34

- The message of the New Testament is 'sonship through propitiation'
- A 'Christian' is someone who has God as their Father

## **Not all people are the children of God – only believers**

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- In the Old Testament God is only the Father of Abraham's seed (Exodus 4:22; Hosea 11:1)
- In the New Testament God is only the Father of those who repent of their sins and turn to Christ as sin-bearer and master, thus becoming Abraham's spiritual seed (Galatians 3:26-29, John 1:12, 14:6)
- This sonship is not natural. It is a gift of grace – an **adoptive** sonship (Galatians 4:4-7; Romans 8:14-17; Ephesians 1:4; 1 John 1:1-3)

## **Some important things to know about this adoption**

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- It is the highest privilege which the Gospel offers
- Your sonship is to be the controlling thought in every point of your Christian life:
  - When you think what a disciple *is* (Mark 3:35, Matthew 28:9-10; John 20:17-18; Hebrews 2:11-13)
  - When you want to know how to behave (Matthew 5:43-45a,48, 5:16, 6:1-8)
  - When you pray (Matthew 6:5-18, 7:7-11)
  - When you worry about material things (Matthew 6:25-34)
  - etc

## **Some things that happen to a Christian who remembers their adoption**

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### **He is overcome by the greatness of God's grace**

- See: 1 John 3:1-3; Luke 15:18; John 17:23

### **He longs for heaven**

- Adoption means being a 'chosen heir'
- He cannot help thinking of what awaits him! (Galatians 4:7; Romans 8:14-19)

### **He stops seeking second experiences**

- He is well aware that the *basic* ministry of the Spirit is not to give us power, etc., but to be to us the Spirit of adoption! (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6)

### **He longs for personal holiness**

- He can see what it is – family likeness
- He has a motive for seeking it – to avoid shaming his Father
- He knows it will come about – instruction and discipline

**P.T.O.**

Today's Lesson:

We badly need to rediscover the truth that Christians are sons of God! It is one of the choicest jewels in the treasure-box of the God's Word – and one of the most neglected

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- Next Message: Sanctification -

## **This we believe**

about

# **16. Sanctification**

2 Peter 1:1-11

- We are not put right with God by good works – as we have seen (see Study 14: Justification)
- EVERY justified person has a changed lie, and grows in godliness
- This process is called **sanctification**:  
God alone sanctifies, so you cannot take any credit for it  
Yet you are active and responsible in the process

## **Sanctification begins with an inward change**

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- When God saved you, the Holy Spirit entered you (Romans 8:9, Galatians 4:6)
- He renewed you inwardly (Titus 3:5)
- He gave you a new heart – a heart which wants to obey God (Ezekiel 11:19-20)
- You are a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:1)
- You have received a new nature (2 Peter 1:4; Ephesians 4:24, Colossians 3:10)  
Your whole nature was made new in a moment...  
...yet it is not made perfect or complete in a moment  
The newborn babe must grow  
The new life must assert itself more and more – sin is still in your ‘members’ (The manger and the factory)

## **Sanctification is a process**

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- Believers are not sinless – yet they are at war with sin (Romans 7:7-25)
- Sanctification is thus a humbling process (housekeeper and wife / man and puddle)  
They endeavour continually to bring holiness to completeness (2 Corinthians 7:1)  
This progressive work extends to every part of the personality (1 Thessalonians 5:23)  
The goal is always likeness to Christ (Romans 8:29 Philippians 1:9-11)  
But entire sanctification will not be ours until our bodies are changed into the likeness of Christ’s glorious body at his coming (Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:2; Romans 7:24)

## **Sanctification is our work, yet God’s (*synergistic*)**

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- To us comes the call to be holy, the commands to throw off sinful ways, and the directions to be like Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:3,7; 1 Peter 1:16; Ephesians 4:17-5:21; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 2:5)
  - There is something for US to do!
  - WE must work!!
- From God comes the promise that He Himself is at work in us, and that He will strengthen and assist us (Philippians 2:13; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:16; 1 Peter 1:2)

**P.T.O.**

## **Sanctification is brought about, chiefly, by God's Word**

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- It is declared to be God's chosen instrument (Psalm 119:9; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- This is why Christ has given to His church men who will enable the people of God to be instructed in His Word (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Timothy 5:17)
- So nothing is more important to us in our Christian lives than the proper hearing of the Word of God (Luke 8:18)
- THAT is our part. God also brings into our lives experiences which are not pleasant at the time, but which lead to greater sanctification (Hebrews 12:10-11)

### Today's Lesson:

Sanctification is the supreme test that our conversion is genuine, and without growing in holiness nobody will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14)

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- Next Message: The Perseverance of the Saints -

## This we believe

about

# 17. The Perseverance of the Saints

Luke 8:4-15

- In the New Testament, 'saints' are ordinary believers
- They do not turn their faith on and off – but continually believe forever  
They are thus saved – always saved – and never lost

## All true believers persevere to the end

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- God saved His people by giving them faith in His Son (Ephesians 2:8-10). If they ever should lose their faith, they would lose their salvation (1 Peter 1:5)
  - This would mean that God's purposes would be defeated. He would no longer be GOD! Isaiah 46:10 and Ephesians 1:11 would not be true.
  - For God to thus lose His elect would mean He had changed, denied Himself, and done something which would not stand forever. This is impossible (see Malachi 3:6; 2 Timothy 2:13; Ecclesiastes 3:14)
- Specific texts make it clear that true believers will never be lost, but will **persevere** to the end (see John 10:27-30; Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:13-14; Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:3-5)
- The pictures to describe salvation make it clear that all true believers will persevere to the end, and finally arrive in glory:
  - eternal life
  - born again
  - united to Christ as His body; His bride; His building
  - sons of God, and brothers of Christ

### Lesson 1:

This is a truth giving unspeakable comfort. But it does not lead us to take our salvation for granted, and to live as we please, as we shall now make clear...

## Those who do not persevere to the end are not true believers

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- We are not talking here about 'backsliders'. There *are* such people. But backsliding in Scripture is exceptional, never normal. It is a temporary condition, eventually repented of – never a settled state in which a believer is content to remain permanently
- We are asserting that those who do not return to the faith, but rather depart from it, are NOT God's children. They are not true believers. They are lost.
- The Father chose His people to be His HOLY people; the Son died to purify them; the Spirit gives them a new nature (Ephesians 1:4; Titus 2:14; Ezekiel 36:26). Those who fail to bring forth such continuing characteristics just cannot be considered to be part of the people of God
- This is the whole point of the 'Parable of the Sower' (Luke 8:5-15). The only genuine believers are those who hear the Word, *keep* it, and bring forth fruit with patience.
- This is the Lord's teaching in the figure of the Vine (John 15:1-8). Only those who consistently bear fruit are true branches and real disciples (v8). All others only *appear* to be joined to Him; but are ultimately lost (v6)

Nowhere in the New Testament is a professing believer who has failed to persevere in holiness permitted to think of himself as a child of God (Romans 8:13; Galatians 4:11, 5:19-26; Hebrews 3:6,14, 6:4-8; 2 Peter 2:20-22; 1 John 2:4-5,15, 3:14, 5:1,18)

**P.T.O.**

## So...

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Do not say that just because you have made a profession you are 'eternally secure'. YOU are not exempt from falling away (1 Corinthians 9:27; 10:12)

Take steps to ensure that you DO persevere, counting on God's help. (Philippians 2:12-13; 2 Peter 1:10)

- Mortify sin (Matthew 5:27-30; Romans 8:13)
- Use the **means of grace** (Acts 2:42)

Tenderly warn professing believers who sin wilfully that IF THEY STAY AS THEY ARE they will be lost. Urge them to repent and to return to the Lord (see Acts 8:20-24; Galatians 6:1)

### Lesson 2:

Perseverance is the mark of a true Christian

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- Next Message: Assurance -

## **This we believe**

about

# **18. Assurance**

1 John 1:1-2:17

- We became Christians by being effectually called (as we have seen)
- We then enjoy **justification, adoption, sanctification** and **perseverance**
- Another blessing which we enjoy in this life is **assurance** of our salvation

## **Why some believers do not have assurance**

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### **Some look upon the very idea with suspicion**

- Yet the Bible makes it plain that it is the believer's NORMAL experience (see Romans 5:1-2; 2 Timothy 4:7-8; 1 John 3:14; Galatians 2:20, etc)

### **Some are put off by their failures and sins**

- Because they are not sanctified as they should be, they doubt their justification

### **Some have a stereotyped idea of conversion**

- This often comes from listening to testimonies. They do not fit the 'normal' pattern, so they wonder if they are saved

### **Some confuse 'faith' and 'strong faith'**

- Because they are not as 'saintly' as somebody else, they doubt they are saints at all

## **Some people have false assurance**

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- They think they are true believers but they are NOT
- NONE of the following things is necessarily proof that you are a believer:
  - Possession of spiritual gifts
  - Correct doctrine
  - Conviction of sin
  - Disillusionment with the world
  - The Bible 'speaking' to you

## **True assurance**

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### **True assurance comes this way:**

- You see how God describes true believers in His Word
- You ask yourself whether you fit the description (2 Corinthians 13:5)

### **Marks of a Christian (see 1 John):**

- Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
  - Know the truth
  - Believe in the truth
  - Rest in the truth
- A unique attitude to indwelling sin
- Brotherly love

**P.T.O.**

### **The work of the Spirit (Romans 8:16)**

- He it is who has provided the true description of believers in the Word
- He does not work independently of (or additionally to) these evidences
- But He takes hold of the description, BY MEANS of them persuades *you*...
  - that *you* are such a person as has been described
  - that the general description is personally true of *you*

So then:

- assurance does not come by the Word alone...
- nor does it come by the Spirit alone...
- it comes by the Spirit working *through* the Word
  - It was by this means that you were effectually called, and brought into the blessings of justification, adoption and sanctification
  - It is by the SAME means that you are brought to be SURE that you are in such a happy condition

### Today's Lessons:

We may then expect:

- Your assurance to increase the more you are exposed to the Word which the Spirit uses
- Your assurance to decrease if you turn from the Word, or neglect it
- It is important to stress that the ordinary believer, by using ordinary means, may come to FULL ASSURANCE of his salvation.

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- Next Message: The Law of God -

## **This we believe**

about

# **19. The Law of God**

Exodus 20:1-17

There is great confusion on this subject. To be completely clear, there are 5 points we should grasp:

## **By "the law" we mean God's expressed will**

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- The word "**law**" is used in many senses:
  - Of the Old Testament, or part of it (Romans 3:19; Matthew 5:17)
  - Of the Pentateuch (first 5 books of the Bible - Luke 24:44)
  - Of the laws that came through Moses (Romans 5:13)
  - Of the whole Scripture (James 2:8)
- "The law", then is used to define those demands which God makes upon us
- The law springs from God's right to command His creatures (Genesis 2:16). It is holy, just, good, spiritual and royal (Romans 7:12,14; James 2:8)
- The **10 Commandments** are a comprehensive summary of the law, telling us what is our duty to God and to our fellow men (Exodus 20:1-17). These were further summarised by our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:17-48)

## **The law is meant to kept - but we can't do it**

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- God requires that we should keep the whole of His law perfectly (James 2:10-11; Galatians 3:10), with the heart as well as outwardly (Matthew 5:27-28)
- This we cannot do. It is impossible to fallen men and women (Romans 8:7). We have all transgressed the law, and stand guilty before God (Romans 3:9,19)
- The law is like a chain with links - breaking any one link breaks the whole chain

## **The law does not bring life, but condemns us to death**

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- All who are not perfectly obedient to the law are under God's curse (Galatians 3:10), and are condemned to death (Romans 7:10; 2 Corinthians 3:6)
- The fault does not lie in the law, but in our sinful natures which cannot, and do not, keep it (Romans 7:10-13). It shows us our sin (Romans 3:19-20) but has no power to give us eternal life (Galatians 3:21)
- Nobody can be justified by the law (Romans 3:20-22,28; Galatians 2:16, 3:11)

**P.T.O.**

## **The law shows us of our need of Christ - who delivers us from law-keeping as the way to salvation**

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- The law brings us to recognise our sin (Romans 3:20), and shows us how crooked we are (Romans 7:7)
- We see that, left to ourselves, we can never earn our way into God's favour. So we start looking *outside* of ourselves for a righteousness which will commend us to Him (Romans 3:10-28; Philippians 3:8-9)
- We are then glad to hear that the penalty we deserve for breaking the law has fallen on Another (Galatians 3:13)
- Coming to Christ means the end of struggling to get right with God by keeping His law (Romans 10:1-4)
- The law is not the Gospel. The law leads to the gospel, and the Gospel depends on the law

## **The law of God remains the rule of life for the Christian**

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- We are not saved by law-keeping. But right is still right. The law is written on every believer's heart (Hebrews 8:10; Jeremiah 31:31-34), and he does not find it burdensome (1 John 5:3), but is his inexpressible delight (Romans 7:22)
- The Christian sees that the law is good, and that it is directed against everything which contradicts the wholesome teaching of the Gospel (1 Timothy 1:8-11)
- **Sin** is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4) and the Christian has been saved so that he will not sin (Romans 6:11-23). Because he loves God, he seeks to keep His commandments (1 John 5:1-3). Law-keeping is thus one of the marks of a genuine Christian

### Today's Lesson:

"So then, I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ... What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to our God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:21,24-25)

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- Next Message: Christian Liberty -

## **This we believe**

about

# **20. Christian Liberty**

Romans 14:1-23

## **Christian liberty explained:**

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- This is a message about DAILY BEHAVIOUR – “would it be right for me as a Christian to do this, or go there...?”
- Second-hand convictions will not do. Too many Christians decide what to do by referring to the traditions and taboos that prevail among their fellow-believers. This approach is condemned in the Word of God (Mark 7:9,13; Romans 14:3-4; Colossians 2:20-23; Galatians 4:9-11; 4:31-5:1)
- We are not slaves accountable to a steward, but sons accountable to God alone (Galatians 4:5). Only God may dictate to us how to live – nobody else (Romans 14:4-5). Christ dies to set us free, and nobody must therefore be permitted to infringe our liberty (Galatians 5:1). Nobody may command us to do anything, unless God commands it in Scripture. NOBODY!
- So we have terrific **liberty** as Christians. The fact that this liberty can be abused (Galatians 5:13) is not a reason for stealing it from each other. All God’s gifts are dangerous in the wrong hands.

## **The Facts Are That We May Live Exactly As We Please, PROVIDED:**

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### **1. We do not disobey Scripture**

- Some things are clearly commanded; others, clearly forbidden. We are not saved by law-keeping (as we saw last week). But right is still right, being saved doesn’t alter that. The whole Bible is necessary to know what is right and what is wrong. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

### **2. We do not disobey lawful authority**

- The State is to be obeyed, provided it does not violate divine law; and provided it keeps within its own province, and does not meddle in the family, the Church and my individual walk with God (Romans 13:1-7, etc)

### **3. We do nothing to hinder our own Christian lives**

- Some things are not wrong in themselves, but hinder *my* spiritual effectiveness, weaken my faith, dampen my zeal, reduce my power to resist temptation, and tend to enslave. These things must be laid aside (1 Corinthians 6:12; Hebrews 12:1)

### **4. We do nothing to hinder the spread of the Gospel**

- Some Christians are weak, and we need to support and consider them (Romans 14:1, 15:1; 1 Corinthians 8:9,11). Such a person is easily tempted and falls. He is weak in faith (Romans 14:1), in knowledge (1 Corinthians 8:7); in conscience (1 Corinthians 8:12). He is unable to grasp the fact that we can enjoy ALL God’s gifts without scruples
- We are not to despise him (Romans 14:3), or to destroy him (1 Corinthians 8:11) – that is, cause him to fall spiritually (Romans 14:21,13), or cause him to go against his own conscience (Romans 14:14). We may sometimes need to hurt his feelings, and should not be put off trying to instruct his conscience
- He, in turn, is not to pass judgement on us (Romans 14:3), and to consider that we are less sincere in following the Lord (Romans 14:6). Let both consider Romans 14:9-12.

**P.T.O.**

**5. We do those things that build up Christ's Body**

- We are not only free individuals, but also members of a body. We are to seek each other's benefit (Galatians 5:13; 1 Corinthians 10:23; Romans 13:10). We do *not* ask this thing: "How can I enjoy it?", but: "How may I use it to build up the Lord's people?"

**6. We do nothing to hinder the spread of the Gospel**

- We are free. But we are prepared to forgo our freedom, if doing so will serve the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:12,19, 10:33). We are not bound to a particular culture, but we may choose to observe it carefully, if doing so will serve the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:22)

**7. We do everything to God's glory**

- See 1 Corinthians 10:31. This is what our freedom is for. As we exercise our liberty, we are to carry ourselves as men and women actively seeking to glorify our Father in heaven. If we are to do a thing, we must be able to do it to His glory. It must be capable of being consecrated to HIM!

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- Next Message: Worship -

## This we believe

about

# 21. Worship

Deuteronomy 10:12-22

## What is worship?

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- To **worship** means to 'subscribe worth'
- In the Bible, *worshipping* God is the same as *servicing* God, as countless verses show (eg: Matthew 4:10; Exodus 3:12; Deuteronomy 11:16; 2 Timothy 1:3; etc.)
  - Because I *ascribe worth* to God in my heart, I *do* His will
- Worship and activism are not opposed – they go hand-in-hand

## WHO is to be worshipped?

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- God alone! (Matthew 4:10; John 5:23)
- NOT anything else (Deuteronomy 11:16; Romans 1:25)
  - Images (Exodus 20:3-5)
  - Angels (Colossians 2:18; Revelation 19:10, 22:8-9)
  - Saints (Acts 14:14-15, 10:25-26)

## WHY is God to be worshipped?

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- Look at:
  - Deuteronomy 10:12-22
  - Psalm 95:1-7a
  - Psalm 100
  - Daniel 100
  - Revelation 4:8-11, 5:9-14
- We see that God is to be worshipped because of...
  - who He is
  - what He has done: creation, providence, redemption, judgement, etc.

## HOW is God to be worshipped?

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### In the way He has said

- We may not worship Him as we please
- He Himself has instituted the way in which He is to be worshipped
- We may introduce nothing into the worship of God without the clear warrant of His Word: the **Regulative Principle**
- See: Deuteronomy 12:32; Matthew 15:9
- Exodus 20:4-6; Deuteronomy 4:15-20; Colossians 2:18-23
- Not forgetting John 4:24!!

**P.T.O.**

### **...and this is the way He has said:**

- He is to be approached only through the Mediator that He has appointed (John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; Ephesians 2:13-18; hence Colossians 3:17)
- The ONLY Biblically permitted ingredients are:
  - Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13, etc.)
  - The ministry of the Word (Acts 2:42; 1 Timothy 4:12-16; 2 Timothy 2:2, 4:1-2)
  - Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:41-42, 20:1; 1 Corinthians 11:23-24)
  - Congregational singing (1 Corinthians 14:26; Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19; James 5:13)
- ANYTHING ELSE is an addition to what God has revealed, and is therefore illegitimate

### **What else is to be said?**

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- As long as worship is in the Spirit and in truth, it does not matter *where* it takes place (John 4:21)
- Both private and family worship are commanded in the Word of God, but the emphasis is on the communal worship in the fellowship of *the church* (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:25; etc.)
- It may be daily (Acts 2:46) or on other occasions (4:23; 12:12), but it is always to be on the **Lord's Day** (Acts 20:4, Revelation 1:10) – as we shall see more clearly in our next message.

#### Today's Lesson:

Worship is the heart of Christian faith and life:

"Question 1: What is the chief end of man?"

Answer: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever"

*Westminster Shorter Catechism*

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- Next Message: The Sabbath -

## **This we believe**

about

# **22. The Sabbath Day**

Genesis 1:26-2:3; Exodus 16:22-30, 20:8-11

## **The commandment to keep the Sabbath is still in force**

- It is part of God's moral law, written on man's heart (Roman 2:14-15)
- It is a creation ordinance, given to man AS MAN before the fall (Genesis 2:1-3)
- It is ½ of one of the 10 Commandments, none of which have been withdrawn
- The whole moral law is still found in operation – as we have recently seen (Matthew 5:17; Romans 3:31)
- Jesus Himself taught that man needs the Sabbath; that it is for his benefit; and that without it he is poorer (Mark 2:28)
- Do not confuse the permanent command with the temporary ceremonial regulations. Those have passed away, but the Sabbath hasn't
- It is the unalterable will of God for all people of all times

## **It is now to be observed on the first day of the week**

- The 4<sup>th</sup> commandment did not specify *which* day, but simply the 1-in-7 principle. WHICH day has to be decided by other factors
- God's own pattern was to be the pattern for His image-bearer – Adam
- Being part of the moral law, it continued after the Fall – Sinai did not establish it, but only underlined its perpetuity (Exodus 16:22-31, 20:8-11)
- Jesus observed the Sabbath, and declared Himself to be its Lord. The Saturday following His burial was the 'last of the sabbaths', and the day of His resurrection the 'first of the sabbaths' (Greek). He then Himself hallowed that day with many redemptive acts.
- Sunday/first-day/Lord's Day sabbath observance was therefore the practice of His church (John 20:26; Acts 2:1; 20:6-7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Revelation 1:10)
- Some early Jewish believers continued *also* with the Saturday "Sabbath", but this eventually fell away. It is to this that the following texts refer: Romans 14:5-13; Colossians 2:16; Galatians 4:10-11

## **The way it is to be observed is perfectly clear**

### **NOT:**

- in copying the Pharisees. Sunday is the God-ordained day of rest. But we are not to impose upon it Mosaic regulations which have passed away (like Exodus 35:2-3 and Numbers 15:32-36); nor a man-made list of do's and don'ts (like in Matthew 12:1-2)
- in working. All that comes under the Bible meaning of the word "work" (earning your living; recreation; the thought which goes into both; etc.) is to be laid aside. Nor are we to cause others to do these things. This is not because these things are sinful or unholy, but because God has commanded that they should be done on the other 6 days of the week (Exodus 20)
- in doing nothing. God's 'rest' after creation is not inactivity, but a ceasing from one sort of activity (John 5:17). Sunday is to be a holy resting from one set of objectives, as we now see:

**P.T.O.**

**BUT:**

- in coming together with other Christians (Acts 2:1, 20:7; John 20:26)
- the purpose should be edification – and both the preaching and the Lord’s Supper should feature in the church’s weekly Sunday pattern (Acts 20:7)
- in evangelism. The Spirit’s coming on the assembled church at Pentecost consecrated the day to this purpose (Acts 2)
- in works of mercy. (Luke 4:9; Matthew 12:5,10-13; Luke 13:10-17, 14:1-6; John 5:6-17)
- in works of necessity. We must not narrow these down to just those things which are necessary for our survival! The Sabbath and our best interests are not opposites. (See Matthew 12:1-8,11-12)

Today’s Lesson:

All the above is a summary of what the Word of God teaches on this subject. Now see: 1 John 2:4-6; Luke 12:48; Romans 14:12 and 2 Corinthians 5:9-10

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- Next Message: Marriage -

## **This we believe**

about

# **23. Marriage**

Genesis 2:18-25

## **It is an ordinance of God**

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- God created man male and female, and gave them the gift of **marriage** even before the Fall (Genesis 1:27; 2:18-25)
- The Lord Jesus Christ declare that men and women united in marriage are united by God (Matthew 19:4-6)

**So:**

- Marriage must not be looked upon as a useful custom, but as a divine institution. It is not man's idea, but God's idea for men and women.
- Men and women are God's creatures, and have no right to enter into any sexual relationship with each other – except for marriage, which He has ordained
- No State has the right to have a law of marriage which is different from that which is taught in God's Word (such as same-sex or polygamous 'marriages')

## **It is to be a lifetime union between one man and one woman**

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- Its original institution makes this clear (Genesis 2:18-25)
- The words of the Lord Jesus Christ makes this clear (Matthew 19:3-10)
- The Bible permits divorce in certain limited and specific cases (adultery and wilful desertion: Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:12-17), but it never encourages or approves of divorce. In fact God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16)
- Marriage is for life – all divorce and separation is contrary to God's order

## **It is given for clear reasons**

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- Husband and wife complement each other, and find in each other satisfying companionship and mutual help (Genesis 2:18-25)
- They cleave to each other, and this is God's ordinance for the increase of the human race (Genesis 1:28) and the prevention of uncleanness (1 Corinthians 7:2)
- In this context they subdue and replenish the earth (Genesis 1:28-29). The family is the basic unit of human society, where authority, love, care and nurture are to be found. The health of family life decides the health of society at large (10 Commandments / whole Bible)

## **It is a gift which has certain restrictions**

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- Marriage is honourable and lawful in all people (Hebrews 13:4). The Bible does not teach that it is 'more holy' to remain single (1 Corinthians 7:8-9,25-38). A Christian however, may only marry a fellow believer (1 Corinthians 7:39)
- Nobody may marry a close relative – that is anybody closer than a cousin, even if that relative is only a relative of your deceased partner (Leviticus 18:6-23; 20:10-21 still applies because it refers to permanent relationships, not to the temporary ceremonies of the Jews)

**P.T.O.**

## **It is a gift which has certain rules**

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- It requires a public wedding ceremony. Private ('de facto') consent is not sufficient
  - This was the practice in the Bible, referred to many times
  - Jesus approved of it. He attended a wedding (John 2:1-11), and often referred to them in His own teaching
  - There should not be a physical union of husband and wife before a ceremony is performed (see Matthew 1:18)
- It sets up a new relationship
  - It means leaving one's parents and joining to your partner (Genesis 2:24)
  - This new relationship has priority over all previous relationships
  - Forms a stable committed environment within which children can be raised
- ONLY in marriage may physical union take place
- The is true, even if a couple must wait a long time before being married (see Jacob's example: Genesis 29:15-30)
- The act of physical union makes two people into ONE (1 Corinthians 6:15-20). We are only to be united as one person with a partner to whom we are totally and exclusively committed for life
- Any departure from God's order is prohibited and condemned (Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:20; Hebrews 13:4. See also 2 Peter 2:6; 1 Corinthians 6:18)
- Clearly defined roles are given in God's word for each member of the family
  - Loving husbands (Ephesians 5:25,28,33; Colossians 3:19)
  - Submissive wives (Ephesians 5:22-33, Colossians 3:18-19)
  - Obedient children (Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20)

### Today's Lessons:

- So sacred and holy is the marriage relationship, that God uses it to picture Christ's relationship with His people (Ephesians 5:22-33). Let us honour it too by setting an example in our own homes.
- True happiness and blessedness lie in keeping God's Word (Psalm 1). Those considering marriage do well to remember this, as do those already joined together by God
- For those who have failed there is cleansing and forgiveness available in the Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 1:19)

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- Next Message: The Church -

## **This we believe**

about

# **24. The Church**

Acts 2:29-47

## **The word "church" is used in 2 ways in the Bible**

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- Of the whole number of those redeemed through Christ (the **universal Church** – Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22, 3:10,21, 5:23-32)
- Of an assembly of professing believers in a particular area (the **local church** – Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 11:16,22, 14:19; 1 Timothy 3:5,15)

## **Members of *THE* Church should join *A* church**

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- The Biblical pattern is that converts were immediately baptised and identified with a local church (Acts 2:37-41, 9:18-19,26, 18:1-11)
- It is taken for granted that Christians living in the same locality will assemble together as a church (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1)
- Christians are commanded to not neglect meeting together, and are to excel in building up the local church (Hebrews 10:25; 1 Corinthians 14:12)
- The early Christians were in such an established relationship with each other that they could speak of some who "went out from us" who "were not one of us" (1 John 2:19)
- As soon as possible churches ordained elders, and were regarded as defective until this was done (Acts 14:22-23; Titus 1:5)
- Thus all Christians had certain men as their leaders, who were guardians of the spiritual life of the local assembly (Hebrews 13:7,17; Acts 20:28)

## **God's Word gives clear directives for local church life**

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### **Submission**

- The church is Christ's body, and is to be subject to its Head in everything (Ephesians 1:23, 4:15-16, 5:24)
- The purpose of church discipline is to restore wandering believers to such a spiritual condition (Hebrews 13:17, Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Corinthians 5)

### **Worship**

- The church exists for the glory of God, and He dwells there (Psalm 4:3; Ephesians 2:22) It is the place where corporate praise is to be offered (1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 13:15)

### **Teaching**

- Christians are to be instructed to observe all that the lord Jesus Christ commanded (Matthew 28:19), and the local church is the place where such teaching is to be given (Acts 2:42) by those authorised and gifted to do it (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:12-16; 1 Peter 5:1-4).
- The local church *alone* is God's custodian of truth in the world (1 Timothy 3:15)

**P.T.O.**

**Fellowship**

- We are members of one another. This is to be expressed around the Lord's Table (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 11:23-24); in a shared life (Galatians 6:1-10); and in united prayer (Acts 2:42, chapter 12)

**Evangelism**

- The local church is the means of sounding forth the Word of God in an area (1 Thessalonians 1:1,8), the commissioning agency for Gospel preachers (Acts 13:1-3, 15:40-16:5), and the family into which new converts are welcomed (Romans 14:1)

Today's Lessons:

- God's purposes are totally bound up with the Church (Ephesians 1:22). He loves and died for her – and so should we seek her best interests
- We must be careful never to despise its local manifestation – the local church (1 Corinthians 11:22)

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- Next Message: Baptism and the Lord's Supper -

## **This we believe**

about

# **25. Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

Acts 8:26-40

- These are the 2 symbolic acts or "sacraments"
  - Commanded by Christ
  - Of perpetual obligation
  - Outward visible signs of inward and spiritual graces

## **Baptism**

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### **Baptism is commanded**

- Baptism is commanded of every convert as long as the Gospel is preached (Matthew 28:19-20), and is not set aside by Spirit-baptism (Acts 10:44-48)

### **The subjects of baptism are to be believers**

- Our Lord's command, and all the examples in Acts, demonstrate this clearly and show that it is to be an immediate act
- *Household baptisms* (Acts 16:32-34, 16:15,40, 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:16,15) do not disprove believer baptism, but rather confirm it
- *Infant baptism* is absent from the New Testament. There is no command to do it; no example of it; and no passage implying it (not even 1 Corinthians 7:14)
  - Baptism has NOT come in the place of circumcision (see Galatians 3; Acts 15, 16:3; Colossians 2:12)
  - The administration of the covenant sign has ALWAYS depended on the limits set by the command of God, and has NEVER been co-extensive with those in the covenant

### **The mode of baptism is immersion**

- This is the clear meaning of the Greek word "baptizo"
- It is the mode used in the New Testament (Matthew 3:13-17; John 3:22-23, 4:1-2; Acts 8:38-39)
- No other mode can symbolise what baptism is intended to symbolise (Romans 6:4-5; Colossians 2:12)
- There was no significant departure from this mode for 1300 years of church history

### **The meaning of baptism is union with Christ**

- This is plainly set forth in Romans 6:1-11; Colossians 2:9-15
- Baptism is thus the divinely ordained badge of discipleship, and the visible sign of entry into the church
- It is therefore to be practiced but once for each professed disciple
- Baptism does not create this Union – but testifies to it. Baptism does not save, but is the profession of the saved person

### Lesson 1:

We need to declare our faith in Christ through Baptism, and thereby declare and confirm what God has done for us in Christ

**P.T.O.**

## **The Lord's Supper**

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### **The Lord's Supper is known by many names**

- The Lord's table (1 Corinthians 10:21)
- Breaking of bread (Acts 2:42; 20:7)
- Eucharist, or 'thanksgiving' (1 Corinthians 10:16, see Matthew 26:27)
- Communion (1 Corinthians 10:16)

### **Its chief marks are simplicity and solemnity**

- The 2 elements (bread and wine) are distributed
- The Lord is not physically present, except at the first Supper
- No miracle takes place
- See accounts of its institution: Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

### **The only eating/drinking is in a spiritual manner**

- Transubstantiation and consubstantiation are errors, for both imply that we partake of Christ "after a corporal and carnal manner". This teaching is ruled out by examining the original institution, and also by the New Testament's teaching on 'worthy receiving'

### **We must come in a fitting frame of mind and heart**

If we do not we will be judged (1 Corinthians 11:29-30), so we must examine ourselves to ensure that we are aware of the full import of what we are doing:

- Enacting a living memorial to Christ's person and work – to His saving mercy (Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25)
- Proclaiming the Lord's death (1 Corinthians 11:26)
- Discerning the Lord's body – that is, symbolising a death different from every other death (1 Corinthians 11:29)
- Coming to Him, communing with Him, and considering what benefits are secured for us by His body and blood (1 Corinthians 11:16-17)
- Anticipating His return and the final glories (1 Corinthians 11:26; Mark 14:5; Luke 22:14-18)
- Joining in thanksgiving (1 Corinthians 10:16, 11:24-25)

### Lesson 2:

There are 2 points of which we must not lose sight:

- Worthy eating *is* demanded, but the table is for sinners saved by Christ's atonement, and a sense of unworthiness should not keep us away (Psalm 51:17; Luke 18:10-13)
- Such eating and drinking is to be an integral part of our Christian lives within the local church – as we in the last study. When we come Scripturally, we partake of Christ by faith, and are thus greatly strengthened and helped (1 Corinthians 10:16)

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- Next Message: Church Discipline -

## **This we believe**

about

# **26. Church Discipline**

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

- We are talking about attempts to restore straying sinners at the local church
- Remember:
  - Only those who persevere to the end are saved
  - It is the life and ministry of the local church which God uses to keep us persevering
  - When the local church implements divine ordinances, they are to be received as if from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself

## **What discipline actually involves**

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The Scriptures reveal 3 ways of reclaiming wandering sheep:

### **Admonition**

- When the issue is a *private dispute*, admonition is to be used by every church member. The action to be taken is set out in Matthew 18:15-17
- When the issue is *spiritual deterioration*, admonition is to be left to the spiritually mature in general (Galatians 6:1), and the oversight in particular (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). It is a principal part of their work to engage in authoritative correction, without witch-hunts, bullying, or treating every case in the same way

### **Suspension**

- The passage to study is 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15. These people could still be considered as brothers in the Lord (v6,15), but their lives *obviously* did not match the Gospel (v7-8,10-12,14)
- The church is told what to do in v6,14-15. Today we suspend people from all participation in church life, and from normal social contact
- The purpose is to restore them, by making them ashamed (v14). But if they will *not* be restored, the principles of Matthew 18:17 apply

### **Excommunication or expulsion**

- We need to carefully study 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. Excommunication is clearly the act of the gathered local church (see also 2 Corinthians 2:6), and its precise import is defined in v2,5,7,11,13
- v5 in particular shows how serious it is – yet its purpose is still to win them back to repentance

## **The manner or spirit in which this work is to be done**

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- We must *be clear as to the precise areas in which corrective discipline can operate*. The church does not make its own laws, but applies Christ's. The sin to be disciplined must be an outward sin, indisputably forbidden by God's Word (immorality / heresy / contumacy). When we are clear here, church discipline becomes 'plain and easy'

**P.T.O.**

- We must *be clear as to precisely what spirit the Scriptures demand of us*. Our purpose is to restore. NOTHING ELSE. This we are to do with:
  - meekness (Galatians 6:1)
  - seeking the other's good (2 Corinthians 10:8)
  - not treating all alike (Jude 1:22)
  - restoring immediately all those who *hear* and repent (Matthew:15-17; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8)

## **What we may expect as we do this work**

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- Misunderstanding!
- A broken heart!
- Opposition
- Joy!

### Today's Lesson:

Where to get the will-power from, to do this work?

- Concern for the glory of God should give it. So should concern for the purity of the church, and concern for men and women's souls
- If these things will not move us, we should consider our future accountability (Romans 14:12; Hebrews 13:17). We need to live and labour that we may accepted by HIM!!

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- Next Message: Church and State -

## **This we believe**

about

# **27. Church and State**

Romans 13:1-14

The passage always to keep in mind is Romans 13:1-7

## **7 important principles**

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- There is no absolute power in the universe except God (v1)
- The governing authorities which exist are established by God – their authority is thus real, but it is not absolute, for it is delegated (v1)
- Being a divine ordinance, government is to be obeyed in all ordinary circumstances. To resist it is to resist the ordinance of God (v2,5)
- Government exists not for its own benefit, but for the benefit of those who are governed (v1-4)
- Its God-given task is to promote justice – to restrain evil by punishing evil-doers, and encourage righteousness by rewarding those who do good (v3-5)
- It can, then, only concern itself with people's actions and deeds – nothing more (v3)
- Our attitude to government is to be one of cooperation – we are to give to it all that it has a right to demand (v6-7; Mark 12:17)

## **...which help us to answer 12 important questions...**

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- Should I as a Christian vote?
- Who should I vote for?
- Must I obey government policies I don't agree with
- Is it ever right to disobey a government? (Mark 12:17; Acts 5:29; Daniel 3, 6)
- May the government have any say in the affairs of churches?
- May the churches have any say in the affairs of the government?
- How should I behave toward unconverted people in authority?
- How serious are "minor offences"?
- Can revolution ever be right?
- Does the state have power to inflict capital punishment?
- May the state wage war?
- Must I pay my tax?

**P.T.O.**

## **...and also help us avoid 2 widespread errors**

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### **Popery**

- The Roman Pontiff claims that he exercises the swords of power and authority in both the spiritual and temporal realms. He claims civil authority. He teaches that the civil power is answerable to him for the way in which it yields its authority. This is why (when it has been in a position to do so) in history the Roman Catholic Church has insisted on a privileged position for its clergy in civil matters; has released subjects from their vows of allegiance; and has deposed sovereigns because of supposed heresy or rebellious attitudes of their lands. This explains why the Queen must wear black to visit the Pope.

### **Erastianism**

- This regards the State as a divine institution, whose purpose it is to provide for all the needs of men and women, spiritual as well as temporal. It believes that it is the State's job to support the [State] Church, appoint its officers, define its laws, and superintend its administration. Erastianism has plagued England for 400 years, and is just as evil as Popery. The 'Church of England' is 'established', and the ungodly and unbiblical idea of a 'Protestant nation' still persists.

### Today's Lesson:

Both these errors lead to the civil persecution of all who do not conform. We must strenuously resist both errors over which the blood of many Baptist martyrs has been spilled. Likewise today we must resist attempts by the state to interfere in the church with hate speech and other restrictions on those who do not conform to the State's secularist and relativist views.

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- Next Message: Death and Resurrection -

## This we believe

about

# 28. Death and Resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

## The intermediate state

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- At death we do not reach our final state; nor do we remain as we were. It is therefore an **intermediate state** – between our present and final states  
You are not just a body, but body and spirit/soul (Genesis 2:7)  
Physical death is the separation of body and spirit  
The body returns to the dust and sees corruption (Genesis 3:9; Acts 13:6)  
Believers, without their bodies, pass into glory (Hebrews 12:23; Philippians 1:23; Luke 23:43)  
Unbelievers begin their torment while awaiting final judgement (Luke 16:19-31)
- The bible contains no mention of **soul sleep** or **purgatory**
- As far as the *body* is concerned – death is the same for believers and unbelievers
- As far as the *soul* is concerned – death is entirely different for the two

## The body is not forgotten

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- Not only the spirit matters to God, but also the body – the *whole* person
- To be with Christ, but without a body, is to fall short of our ultimate hope (2 Corinthians 5:1-8)
- The believer longs, not for the intermediate state, but the final state – the resurrection (Romans 8:23; 2 Corinthians 5:4)
- He may be certain that this will take place, and that he will have the glorious body he waits for (Job 19:26-27; John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:49-58; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:1)

## The main points about the resurrection

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- The *fact* of the resurrection is clear, although it is a truth offensive to the unconverted (Daniel 12:2; Acts 24:15; Revelation 20:11-15; Acts 17:32, 26:8)
- The *manner* of the resurrection is revealed to believers, but nothing is said on this point about unbelievers (1 Corinthians 15:35-58; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:1-3)
- The *certainty* of the resurrection rests upon the already-accomplished resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:12-13,15-16,20-23)
- The *time* of the resurrection is the end of the world, but people will be raised in a certain order (1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)
- The *effect* of that resurrection truth should have on our earthly lives is also made plain (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; 2 Corinthians 15:18-19,31-32,55,58)

P.T.O.

## **Why must believers die?**

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Death is the 'wages of sin', and Christ has borne our sin – so why do we need to die?

### **Be sure of this:**

- Death will one day lose *all* its power over the believer (1 Corinthians 15:26)
- Even now, it has already lost its sting (1 Corinthians 15:55-56)
- If you die – even this will be for your good (Romans 8:28)
- And you will be no further from God's love (Romans 8:38-39)

### **Remember this:**

- Death is not something which happens at the end of life – it is the state we are in by nature, of which physical death is the logical context (Genesis 2:17; Ephesians 2:1)
- When we are saved we are delivered from the *spiritual condition* called death (John 5:24; 1 John 3:14). This is the 'first resurrection' (Revelation 20:5)
- But we are NOT YET delivered from the *physical condition* called death. In this way both saved and lost live side-by-side in the world, and God's method of saving (the preaching of His Word by mortal men) continues
- But just as he HAS delivered our souls from death's power, He WILL deliver our bodies (John 5:25-29)

### Today's Lesson:

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

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- Next and Final Message: The Last Judgement -

## **This we believe**

about

# **29. The Last Judgement**

Matthew 25:1-30

## **The last judgement is certain**

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- It is as certain as death (Hebrews 9:27)
- God has fixed the day, and appointed the Judge! (Acts 17:31)
- It will take place at Christ's second coming (2 Timothy 4:1; Matthew 25:31-46)
- It will be preceded by the Resurrection (John 5:28-29)
- It will be followed by the dissolution of the present universe (2 Peter 3:7)

## **All of us will be present**

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- All nations will be there (Matthew 25:32)
- And every person (Romans 14:10,12; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
- Every work will be judged (Ecclesiastes 12:14)
- Even the fallen angels must face that Judgement (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6)

## **It will be an awful day**

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- It is the day of God's righteous judgement to be unveiled (Romans 2:5-6)
- Every thought (1 Corinthians 4:5), secret thing (Ecclesiastes 12:14), word (Matthew 12:36) and action (Revelation 20:13) will be judged – justly! (Genesis 18:25)
- Christ's word will witness against those who have rejected Him (John 12:48)
- All will be found guilty, and all excuses will die on our lips (Psalm 143:2; Romans 3:19)
- "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Hebrews 10:31)

## **Believers will be acquitted – and rewarded**

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- For there is no condemnation for them (Romans 5:1, 8:1)
- Christ will present them guiltless (1 Corinthians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:13)
- This is because the punishment that their sins deserve has fallen on the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:20-22; 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10)...
- ...and so they will enter everlasting glory (John 14:1-3; Revelation 21:1-4)
- Nonetheless, every Christian's work will be scrutinised (1 Corinthians 3:9-14)
- There will be rewards for faithful service (Matthew 25:19-23; Revelation 11:18)
- It will have been worth serving Christ!! (2 Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 2:16)

## **Unbelievers will be condemned – and punished**

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- For them the Last Day will be misery (Revelation 1:7)
- Their eternal punishment will be terrible (Romans 2:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Jude 1:14-15; Revelation 20:11-15)
- Those who had the most light will receive the worst punishment (Matthew 11:20-24; Luke 12:47-48; Hebrews 10:26-27)

**P.T.O.**

Final Lessons:

- Meet the Lord in mercy now, lest you meet Him in anger then (Isaiah 55:6-7)
  - Live holily, as those who are certain to be judged (2 Peter 3:11,14; 2 Corinthians 5:9-10)
  - Out of compassion for the perishing, give yourself to evangelism (2 Corinthians 5:11)
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- End of Series -