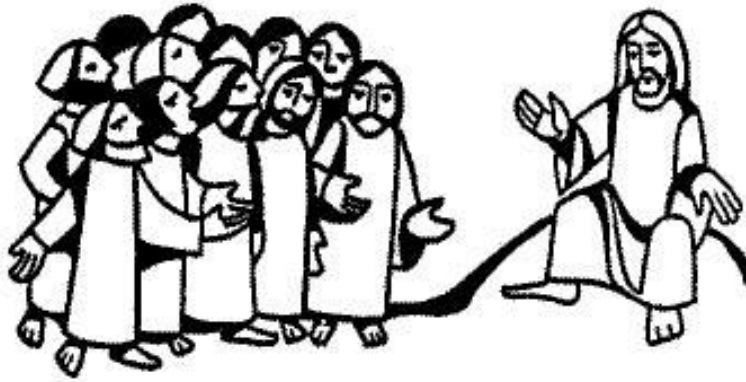


Progressing Together
DOCT 201

Christian Doctrinal Overview



Study Leader's Guide

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April 2012

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Syllabus for DOCT201 - Doctrinal Survey Certificate Level

Course objective

To prepare elders, discipleship group leaders and church planting pastors in newly responsive areas of the Arab World to ground their people in sound doctrine and to protect them from false doctrine and teachers through the foundational teachings of Scripture.

Course description

This course reviews the beliefs that unite evangelical churches worldwide. The course follows the outline of the Apostle's Creed, but also draws students to read and study those scriptures which form the basis of these basic doctrinal statements.

Learning Outcomes

Content: By the end of the course, the student will be able:

- To describe basic Christian teaching concerning: the nature of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Human Person, Sin, Salvation, the Christian Life, the Church and Sacraments, and Eschatology, and to present key scriptures related to each.
- To understand how these doctrines relate to each other to form a harmonious whole.
- To show how beliefs in these areas, properly understood, have a practical effect on the life of a believer.

Character: By the end of this course, the student will:

- Embrace and practice the memorization of scripture as a means of spiritual growth.
- Embrace the character attributes of God as a model for growth in personal holiness.
- Develop a love for Biblical teaching and a desire to safeguard others from erroneous teaching.

Competency: By the end of this course, the student will:

- Be able to recite the Apostles' Creed from memory.
- Be able to recite scriptures that support that creed.
- Develop a doctrinal statement concerning Salvation in order to better understand how doctrines are established.
- Be able to identify false teachings of specific sects and describe the heretical doctrines at the foundation of that false teaching.

Course requirements

Certificate Level

- To demonstrate knowledge of course material through
 - answering questions at the end of each section

- completion of the final exam
- To attend 18 of 20 instructor-led sessions (27 contact hours minimum)
- To participate in discussions by listening, contributing as appropriate, and responding when asked a specific question
- To memorize the Apostles' Creed and the verses assigned in the course
- To list as many character traits of God as possible which can be practiced by followers of Christ in their daily lives
- To write a short essay showing how five doctrinal beliefs have a direct effect on people's behaviour and attitudes

Evaluation methodology and scale

- Student performance and mastery will be assessed according to the following scale:
 - 40% on completion of reading, of questions, and of assignments (10% on memorization of verses and creed, 5% on character traits of God, 5% on short essay)
 - 10% on student participation and attitude in discussions
 - 10% on attendance (percentage equals number of classes attended, divided by number of classes held, times ten)
 - 40% on the final written, or oral, exam.
- The evaluation scale is as follows
 - passing grade – 70-79%
 - good grade – 80-89%
 - excellent grade – 90% and above

Credits earnable

- 2 hours of credit towards a Certificate in Christian Studies

Prerequisites

(Progressing Together level 1 or equivalent)

Textbook and related materials

- Required - Progressing Together Manual for – DOCT201
- Additional readings may be required at the instructor's discretion
- Recommended - any evangelical book which reviews all of the basic Christian doctrines

Course methodology

The student will work inductively, reading texts, answering questions concerning knowledge, application and analysis, and drawing conclusions which will be applicable to local context. After answering the questions in each lesson, students will gather to

discuss answers and practical application. When possible, the course leader will give additional talks to reinforce what the students are learning through the lessons.

Course schedule

To be announced.

Policies

- Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated, because it is deemed contrary to Christian teaching and academic integrity.
- Absences in excess of 3 class hours will lead to a reduced grade; no student missing more than 6 class hours will receive credit for the course. Students who show little or no interest in completing course work will first be warned, then asked to leave the course if they do not change their conduct.

Bibliography

- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology* (ماذا يفكر الإنجيليون في أساسات الإيمان المسيحي). Engles Publications: Cairo. 2002. Available in English and Arabic.
- Nicole, Jules-Marcel. *Précis de doctrine chrétienne*. Éditions de l'Institut Biblique: Nogent-sur-Marne. 2002.

Recommended readings

La foi chrétienne en libre accès, Paul Wells, Éditions Excelsis, Cléon d'Andran, 2001.
Précis de doctrine chrétienne, J.M. Nicole, Éditions de l'Institut Biblique, Nogent-sur-Marne, 2002.

Books of the Bible Abbreviations

Genesis	Gn.	Zephaniah	Zeph.
Exodus	Ex.	Haggai	Hag.
Leviticus	Lv.	Zachariah	Zach.
Numbers	Nb.	Malachi	Mal.
Deuteronomy	Dt.		
Joshua	Jos.		
Judges	Jg.	Matthew	Mt.
Ruth	Ruth	Mark	Mk.
1, 2 Samuel	1S, 2S.	Luke	Lk.
1, 2 Kings	1K, 2K.	John	John
1, 2 Chronicles	1 Chr, 2 Chr.	Acts	Act.
Ezra	Ez.	Romans	Rom.
Nehemiah	Neh.	1, 2 Corinthians	1 Cor. 2 Cor.
Esther	Esth.	Galatians	Gal.
Job	Job	Ephesians	Eph.
Psalms	Ps.	Philippians	Phil.
Proverbs	Pr.	Colossians	Col.
Ecclesiastes	Eccl.	1 Thessalonians	1 Thess.
Song of songs	Cant.	2 Thessalonians	2 Thess.
Isaiah	Is.	1, 2 Timothy	1, 2 Tim.
Jeremiah	Jer.	Titus	Tit.
Lamentations	Lam.	Philemon	Phmn.
Ezekiel	Ez.	Hebrews	Heb.
Daniel	Dan.	James	Jam.
Hosea	Ho.	1, 2 Peter	1 Peter 2 Peter
Joel	Joel	1, 2, 3 John	1 Jn. 2Jn. 3Jn.
Amos	Am.	Jude	Jude
Obadiah	Ob.	Revelation	Rev.
Jonah	Jon.		
Micah	Mich.		
Nahum	Nah.		
Habakkuk	Hab.		

Prologue

1. What is an evangelical church?

It is the gathering of men and women professing to know intimately the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and who desire to obey him. Their extremely varied experiences are hard to analyze, and often express themselves through testimonials such as:

I am happy to be a Christian because:

- *..I belong to the Lord and will be where he is
- *..I have become a new creation
- *..I have eternal life
- *..I have a future with the Lord; there is a spiritual dimension to my life
- *..I have purpose in life; I know that God loves me.
- *..I have a Friend to talk to, always.

✎ What about you? Why are you happy to be a Christian?

I am happy to be a Christian because...

Open answer

These are very personal testimonies. To be a Christian involves love for Christ and for his Word, “the Bible”, which the believer desires to know better that he may apply it. This also demands willingness to gather with other believers in order to share the experiences of this new life with them, to carry each other’s burdens, and to praise and learn together from the Lord. There are many blessings in the Bible which relate to fellowship.

Christians organize themselves in churches known as “evangelical” to emphasize their desire to live in accord with the Gospel. Evangelical churches originate from the Reformation from what is called the “Protestant” movement. The Protestants ‘protested’ against the Roman Catholic Church who had strayed from its biblical foundations.

Evangelical churches adhere to the three dictums of the Reformation:

- Sola scriptura (the Scriptures alone are authoritative)
- Sola fidelis (salvation by faith alone and not by works)
- Sola gracia (the grace of God is the only means of salvation, without any merit on man’s behalf)

An evangelical church submits itself to the plenary teaching of the Bible concerning doctrine, behaviour, and personal and community life. It therefore distinguishes itself from any church which would attribute equal or superior authority to the Holy Bible the following:

- traditions from its own history, without constantly reevaluating itself in light of the Bible.
- instructions from various leaders tending to replace personal study by each member.
- teachings based on interpretations of parts of the Bible that are such as they contradict its overall teaching.

✂ Can you identify a few churches or sects that do not meet the definition of an “evangelical” church? Name at least three:

The Roman Catholic Church, Jehovah’s witnesses, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Church of the Apostles, Christian Science, liberal trends in major denominations, etc.

We recognize that we do not always meet our desire to submit solely to the Lord and his Word; simply going to an “evangelical” church does not necessarily mean that we are personally obedient to the gospel. In the same way, belonging to a church having a different title does not necessarily mean that a Christian is living in disobedience to the gospel.

But our name demonstrates our agenda, and therefore we pray that the Lord would shape us to grow more and more worthy of bearing this title. We joyfully welcome all who recognize the ultimate authority of the Bible and submit to it in all things into Christian fellowship.

2. What is the purpose and value of this guide?

This Guide seeks to set forth from the Bible the basis of the faith and life of evangelical churches (or assemblies). It begins with a synopsis of basic doctrines, along with corresponding Bible verses to be learned by heart. The synopsis is followed by an exposition of these doctrines, along with more complete Bible references. Then in its second part the Guide explains the new relationship which the believer now enjoys with other believers, and how he should behave in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

The Guide can therefore be useful in the following ways:

- 1) For teaching the Christian faith and life to new believers;
- 2) For protecting the church against false teachings and practices. Sound knowledge of the truth is the best way to recognize and avert the false.
- 3) For helping a believer testify to his faith and explain the reasons for it (I Peter 3:15);
- 4) For studying the Bible topically; by studying the Guide the Christian will better understand the teaching of the Bible on the subjects it deals with;
- 5) For family worship; the family could read a part of the Guide, look up the Bible passages indicated, discuss their meaning and application, and then pray together.
- 6) For Scripture memorization; memorizing several of the verses indicated for each subject would give the believer a store of Bible knowledge which would be immediately usable to him when needed in his Christian life.
- 7) For preaching; elders and pastors could profitably use this Guide point by point as a basis for their preaching during a certain period.
- 8) For group studies for which this guide can serve as a text base. Fruitful group discussion requires beforehand preparation by each participant.

Questions for Review and Reflection:

1. What is the chief distinguishing mark of an evangelical church?

It is an assembly of men and women who personally know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and seek to obey Him.

2. Is being an “evangelical” Christian noticeable? How?

You love the Bible and a desire to know it better that you may apply it. You submit yourself to the whole teaching of the Bible concerning doctrine, conduct, as well as personal and community life. You want to gather with other Christians.

3. How can study of this Guide help you personally?

These lessons can help me understand the basic doctrines of the faith. As a result I will know how to better practice my faith and apply it to my daily life. I will understand my position and relationships with other believers; and how we can live together as the Church, the body of Christ.

4. How will you be able to use it in your ministry?

*I will be capable of teaching the faith and Christian life to new believers.
This guide is useful in protecting the church against false doctrines and practices.
I will be able to teach believers to testify of their faith.
This guide will be useful to me in studying the Bible thematically.
I will be able to use this guide in family worship.
I will be able to use this guide for memorizing the Word of God.
I will be able to use this guide to prepare a series of sermons on the doctrines.
I will be able to use this guide for group study.*

Lesson 1: The Synopsis of the Christian Faith

We believe the following to be the essential biblical doctrines which each believer should know, understand, and be able to explain. We suggest that you learn by heart at least one verse for each subject.

1. We believe in God, one in His essence, who reveals Himself in three persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - the Trinity.

In the divine Trinity there is only one Nature and one purpose.

"Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other." Is. 45:22 (See also Is. 45:18; Mt.28:19).

2. We believe in God the Father, almighty creator and sovereign ruler of all that exists in heaven and earth.

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands; and He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He himself gives all men life and breath and everything else." Acts 17:24-25.

3. We believe in Jesus Christ, God the Son, who became man to redeem mankind.

He existed with the Father as God from all eternity. At the appointed time He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, thus becoming man as well as being God. He lived a human life without sin. He gave that life in death on the Cross in the place of sinners which we all are, doomed to die because of our sin. The third day He rose again, victorious over sin and death. He returned to Heaven, where He sits at the right hand of the Father interceding for the redeemed. He is able, therefore, to save fully those who come unto God by Him.

"In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God...the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1:1, 14 (See also Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 2:9; Heb. 4:15 and 7:25).

4. We believe in God the Holy Spirit.

Equal in essence to the Father and the Son, He is the active agent of what the triune God does in the universe. He causes the believer to be born again, and dwells in him to transform his life. He animates the Church and distributes spiritual gifts to its members.

"And if the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His spirit, who lives in you." Romans 8:11 (See also John 3:5-7; 14:16-17; Acts 2:38-39; 2 Cor. 3:17; Titus 3:5).

5. We believe that the Bible is the written word of God, the ultimate rule of faith and of life.

The original manuscripts are entirely inspired by God. The Holy Spirit moved and guided men God had chosen to reveal divine truth without error. The Holy Spirit speaks to us by and through the Bible today.

"For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from god as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1:21 (See also 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Heb. 4:12).

6. We believe in the fall of man.

God created man in His own image and, like Him, without sin. But, by his decision to disobey, man submitted himself to Satan rather than to God, was separated from the life of God, and became a sinful being. Consequently, he is subject to the wrath of God and to death. He is in no way able to merit his salvation by his own efforts.

"Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned..." Rom. 5:12. (See also Gen. 1:27 and 3:16-19; Marc 16:16; John 3:18; Rom. 3:19-20).

7. We believe that the redemption (or salvation) of man is the work of God alone through Jesus Christ.

The unique grounds for it are the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; it is granted to every repentant sinner who entrusts himself to Him; it comprises the forgiveness of sins, spiritual union with Christ, and the renewal of character and conduct by the work of the Holy Spirit; and it will be completed at the return of Jesus Christ by the liberation of the redeemed from every consequence of the Fall.

"For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the spirit." 1 Peter 3:18 (See also 2 Cor. 5:21; John 3:16; Rom. 3:21-24; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 3:20-21).

8. We believe in the church of Jesus Christ, the universal community of those redeemed in Christ.

All the redeemed form one spiritual body (the Universal Church), whose head is Christ and whose animator is the Holy Spirit. The Church is called to worship God, to build up its members in the love of Christ, and to present Christ to the world in act and in word. It becomes a concrete reality wherever the redeemed come together in local churches in order to fulfill this calling.

"And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way." Eph. 1:22-23 (See also Rom. 12:5; Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18; 1 Peter 2:9; Heb. 10:24-25; Acts 2:42-47).

9. We believe that angels, Satan, and evil spirits are spiritual creatures which act in the world.

The Angels of God act to accomplish God's will and on behalf of the redeemed; Satan (the Devil) and his evil spirits oppose the accomplishing of God's will, but the redeemed can resist and conquer them in the name of the resurrected Christ.

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Eph. 6:12 (See also Ps. 91:11-12; Heb. 1:13-14; James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9; 1 John 3:8).

10. We believe in the personal return of Jesus Christ who will resurrect the dead and re-establish justice and peace.

At the end of the age, He will take the redeemed to heaven, He will condemn the wicked to hell along with the Devil and his evil spirits, and this present earth will be destroyed. God will then reign forever with the redeemed in a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no more evil.

“For the son of man is going to come in his father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done.” Mt. 16:27 (See also John 3:36; 1 Cor. 15:3-8; 1 Thess. 4:15-17; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 21:1).

11. We believe that living for Christ is the fruit of redemption.

Everyone who has been redeemed wants to and indeed must live for Christ his Redeemer, not in order to be redeemed, but because he has been redeemed.

“And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.” 2 Cor. 5:15 (See also Col. 3:17; Eph. 2:8-10;).

Questions for review and reflection

1. Read the additional verses mentioned in points 1 to 11 and write the adequate reference next to each belief in the table on the following page:

Truth	Doctrinal principle	Supporting verse
Jesus never sinned	(3) We believe in Jesus Christ	Heb. 4:15, "One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.
The redeemed can resist and overcome Satan and his demons	(9)	<i>James 4:7</i>
One cannot save himself through good works	(7)	<i>Ephesians 2:8-9</i>
Man is created in the image of God	(6)	<i>Genesis 1:27</i>
Jesus is risen from the dead	(10)	<i>1 Corinthians 15:3-8</i>
Those who haven't believed in Jesus Christ will go to Hell after death.	(6)	<i>Mark 16:16; John 3:18 and 3:36</i>
Christ is the head of the body, which is His church	(8)	<i>Ephesians 5:23</i>
The Holy Spirit is the Lord	(4)	<i>2 Corinthians 3:17</i>
The Bible is inspired by God	(5)	<i>2 Timothy 3:16</i>
Our current heaven and earth will be destroyed at the end of time	(10)	<i>Revelation 21:1</i>

The Credo (Apostles' Creed)

From the beginning, the Christian faith sought a brief and clear definition to lay out in few words what a Christian is and to define his identity in relation to others. The most ancient formulation, "The Credo" or "Apostle's Creed", is also the one that unites all the Christians of the earth, of all churches and confessions. It is their common ground, regardless of their differences. For this reason, we strongly suggest to learn it by heart and use it in gatherings and personal devotions.

"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried;

He descended into hell.

The third day He arose again from the dead;

He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy universal church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.

Amen."

Questions for review and reflection

1. What is the purpose of such a definition of the Christian faith?

The Credo can help us to define a Christian in a few words, and portray his identity in relationship to others. It is the common ground between all Christians regardless of their differences. It expresses many doctrines accurately and is easy to memorize.

2. How important is the order in which these doctrinal statements appear?

There is a logical progression starting with the person of God, continuing with Christ's work to save mankind, and finally ending with statements concerning believers who are in a relationship with God.

3. Throughout the centuries, there have been heretical ideas (false doctrines) taught by several religions, sects, and philosophies, many of which the Credo anticipates and corrects. Fill-in the boxes with the lacking information.

Heresies	Doctrinal statements that correct them
The resurrection is only spiritual (Gnosticism)	<i>Ex. I believe "the resurrection of the body"</i>
Jesus did not die on the cross (Islam)	<i>"was crucified, dead, and buried"</i>
The Earth's existence is the result of natural processes (scientific humanism)	<i>"I believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth,"</i>
No one will be judged for God is love (popular notion)	<i>"He shall come to judge the living and the dead."</i>
God had several sons of whom Jesus is one of them (Mormons)	<i>"I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord"</i>

Lesson 2: The Faith of Evangelical Churches

1. The One God

Since the faith of an evangelical church is based on the Bible, we explain hereafter what the Bible teaches concerning the 11 base doctrines outlined in the preceding Synopsis.

A. There is Only One Living and True God

(Is. 45:18-25; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 1 Tim. 2:5).

B. God Reveals Himself to Men.

The Bible teaches us that God is not content to simply "send down" instructions and laws while He Himself remains aloof and unknown; He wanted to reveal HIMSELF and has so done.

(1) God reveals Himself and His law in a general way

- 1) By the works of His creation (Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:18-20),
- 2) And to man's heart and inner being (Rom. 2:15).

(2) God reveals Himself and His law also in a special way

- 1) By speaking and acting in the world so as to make Himself known (Deut. 11:2-7; 1 Sam. 3:19-21; Acts 7:2-50).
- 2) By moving holy men to write and explain His words and deeds in the Bible for the benefit of mankind (2 Peter 1:21; Ps. 19:7-II; Jer. 36:1,2; 1 Cor. 10:11; Rom. 15:4; 16:25-27; Rev. 1:9-11).
- 3) Above all, by 'coming down' personally and revealing Himself fully to man in Jesus Christ (John 1:18; 2 Cor. 4:6; Heb. 1:1-3).

No one can approach or know God except through Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Matt. 11:27; 1 Tim. 2:5,6).

(3) God has revealed HIS ATTRIBUTES in His words and His deeds

God is:

1. Eternal; he has always existed and never will die (Ps. 90:2; Heb. 1:10-12).
2. Self-existent and the source of life (John 5:26; Acts 17:24-25; 1 Tim. 6:16).
3. A Spiritual Being, therefore not physical (John 4:24).
4. Omnipresent, everywhere present (Ps. 139:7-12).
5. Almighty; nothing is impossible for him (1 Chron. 29:10-12).
6. Omniscient, has all knowledge, past, present and future (Ps. 139:1-6).
7. Perfect in both His character and His actions (Deut. 32:3-4; Ps. 18:30; Matt. 5:48)
8. Holy and intolerant of sin and evil (Hab. 1:13; 1 Peter 1:15)
9. Just; he judges correctly and administers to all according to the truth (Deut. 32:4; 2 Chr. 19:6-7; Acts 10:34-35)
10. Loving and Merciful (Ex. 34:6-7; 1 John 4:7-8; Eph. 2:4-5)
11. Unchanging and faithful (Deut. 7:9; Lam. 3:22-23; James 1:17)
12. True (Rom. 3:4; Ex. 34:6-7; John 8:26; 1 John 5:20; Rev. 3:7)

(4) God is One in three persons

God has revealed Himself in the Bible as being one God in three persons: Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit. The Bible nowhere teaches or implies that these three Persons are three gods. They are one as concerns:

- Their **nature** (John 4:24; 10:30),
- Their **attributes** (John 14:6-11)
- Their **name** (Matt. 28:19),
- Their **purpose** and **work** for mankind (John 4:34; 6:37-46; 10:37, 38; Rom. 8:27).

The three persons have a perfect knowledge of and love for one another (John 3:34-35; 17:25-26; 1 Cor.2:10-11) and work together to accomplish all of the divine will, which includes man's redemption (1 Pet. 1:2; Jude 20, 21; 2 Cor. 13:14).

Note: The full truth about the Holy Trinity is a mystery which surpasses the capacity of man's understanding. Our affirmation of this truth is based on the teaching of the Bible. The ministry of the Trinity does not bear fruit in our lives until we fully accept the plan of salvation as described in the Bible.

2. The Father

C. God the Father is the Origin of all Existence

He is the Creator of all things and the Sustainer of all things (Gen.1:1; 2:1,2; Is. 45:18,19; Acts 17:24,25).

D. God the Father is Spirit

Therefore invisible, unknowable to man apart from His own revelation of Himself, culminating in the incarnation of His Son, Jesus Christ (John 1:18; Matt. 11:27).

Questions for review and reflection:

1. In what ways does God reveal himself to man? According to Hebrews 1:1-5, which is the most perfect way? Explain.

God reveals himself to man through the works of his creation, by speaking to the heart of man, through His deeds and actions, through His Word (the Bible), and in the person of Jesus-Christ, His Son. Jesus is the fullest revelation because he is the Lord himself, come to the earth in human form. He made it possible that man be once more united to his Creator, and He is the only way that leads to God.

2. Read Romans 1:18-25. Explain how the physical revelation of God through creation could be misunderstood if it not validated by the written revelation.

God revealed himself through creation, but men treated the created things as if they were gods. The modern version of this is the theory of evolution. Men have also seen the deeds and actions of God, but attributed them to chance, or to the achievement of other gods. Men have sometimes added books to the Word of God, or presented other books saying that they were God's true revelation. But Jesus Christ was born, lived, taught, died, and was raised in a unique fashion. He showed us the Father's authentic personality and provided the way to recognize it. It is only through Jesus Christ, the complete revelation, that we can understand the other means of revelation.

3. If the Trinity is a mystery, how can believers acquire important and valuable knowledge concerning God's nature and attributes?

This knowledge is taught in the Bible. It is mainly through faith that we accept it, because that is what the Bible teaches as a whole. Also, when we receive eternal life through Christ, the Holy Spirit illuminates our hearts and bears testimony to the truth.

4. Certain of the attributes of God have to do with His very nature, while others deal with His actions toward His creatures. List several attributes of each of those two categories.

<u>Attributes of his nature</u>	<u>Attributes referring to his actions</u>
1. Ex. Eternal	Ex. The origin of life
2. He is Spirit and not substance	He judges justly
3. He is omnipresent	He loves us
4. He is omniscient	He is all-powerful
5. He is holy	He makes no mistakes, etc.

Christians have sometimes used physical examples to illustrate the Trinity. For instance, water, while retaining one unique and fixed chemical composition, can be found in liquid, solid (ice) or gaseous (vapour) forms. In the same way, God also can reveal himself in three ways, without becoming three different gods. There is no example which perfectly illustrates the Trinity, but the example serves to visualize that which is invisible and hard to understand. (For a more concise and complete definition of the Trinity, refer to the Athanasian Creed, written approximately in 500 A.D.)

5. Keeping in mind that these examples are fallible, explain how each of the following examples could illustrate the unity and diversity of the trinity of God?

- 1) The sun: *Although there is only one sun, it gives off light, heat and energy, but it remains one unique sun.*
- 2) A triangle: *One geometrical form can have three angles without becoming three geometrical forms.*
- 3) A married man with children, and whose parents are still alive: *He still remains one human being, even if the role he plays is different depending on the person he's talking to. He does not act the same way with his mother as he does with his wife, or his daughter. In the same way, one and only God reveals himself to men as being Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, depending on the part he's playing in their life.*

6. What are the similarities and differences between the Father and a human father?

God is like a human father because...*our fathers love us and take care of us by providing us with clothes and food. They teach us according to their understanding and correct us when we act wrongly. They preserve us from the dangers of life when they can do so.*

God is not like a human father because... *He is holy, and never makes mistakes. His knowledge is perfect and he is not limited by time or space, nor by physical constraints. His love is perfect, his protection is full and his provision is unchanging. He has neither beginning nor end, as opposed to our human parents. He is never unfair towards us when we require correction.*

What do the persons of the Trinity have in common?

They share the same nature, the same attributes, the same name (Yahweh, Lord – Psalm 8:1 and 148:13; Eph. 1:20-21; Phil. 2:9) and the same will and work in favour of man. They act in perfect harmony.

7. Why is there perfect harmony between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?

It is the because of the unity mentioned in the previous answer as well as the perfect love which they share. They also know each other perfectly.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Biblically, what attribute of God our Father varies most from a Muslim's conception of God? What is this difference?

The Trinity. Muslims do not believe that God is three persons in one unique God. They view this as blasphemy. Furthermore, Muslims do not tend to view God as a loving father, but rather as an all-powerful dictator who is to be obeyed or he will punish you severely.

Lesson 3

3. Jesus Christ

A. Jesus Christ is God Become Man.

He is at the same time true God and true man (John 1:14; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 John 5:20).

(1) The deity of Christ is shown by the following:

1. He existed eternally with the Father before His human birth in flesh (John 1:1, 14; 8:58; 17:5, 24).
2. He was active in creation (Heb. 1:2).
3. At the announcement of His birth the angel called Him "*Immanuel*" which means "*God with us*" (Mat. 1:23).
4. God the Father spoke audibly from Heaven, calling Him "My Beloved Son" (Matt. 3:16-17; 17:5; 2 Peter 1:17-18).
5. Jesus Himself called God His "Father", Himself "the Son" or "the Son of God." The Jews who heard Him understood this as a claim to be equal with God, that is, to be God in person (John 5:17-18; 10:30-33).
6. Jesus claimed and exhibited divine power:
 - the power to judge (John 5:22,27,30; Acts 17:31)
 - the power to give life (John 5:25,26; 10:28; 11:25),
 - the power to forgive sin (Luke 5:20-24).
7. Jesus accepted worship (Matt. 14:33; John 20:28; Luke 5:8; John 11:27, 32)

(2) The humanity of Christ is shown by the following:

1. He was born in a human body of a human mother, the Virgin Mary, whom God caused to conceive by a miracle of His Spirit (Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38).
2. He grew from childhood to manhood as any other human being (Luke 2:40,51,52; 3:23).
3. He experienced human emotions and needs such as joy (Matt. 11:25-26; Luke 10:21), sorrow (John 11:35), hunger (Matt. 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), weariness (John 4:6), suffering (Heb. 5:7,8).
4. He experienced all of human temptation although He never sinned (Heb. 2:18; 4:15).

Note: The term "Son of God" in the Bible never means that God took a wife and begot a son by physical union; such an idolatrous concept is foreign and contrary to the Bible and abhorrent to all true Christians. The Bible uses the term "Son of God" in a spiritual, not a physical sense to indicate that Jesus Christ is indeed God, to distinguish Him from God the Father, and to indicate the perfect union existing between Him and the Father.

B. Jesus Christ is Therefore the Perfect Revelation of God

(John 1:18; 14:7-9), and the perfect mediator between God and men (I Ti. 2:5; John 14:6).

C. Jesus Christ Became Man to Redeem Men by his Death and Resurrection.

1. His redemptive death was decreed by God beforehand and foretold by the prophets (Ps. 22:16-19; Is. 53:4-12; Zech. 12:10; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28).
2. To die was the purpose for which Jesus had come. He spoke of it to His disciples many times beforehand (e.g. Luke 9:22; Mark 10:45; John 10:17,18), and after His resurrection He reminded them of this (Luke 24:44-46).
3. Jesus **actually died on the cross**, was buried, and rose again the third day (Matt. 27:33-36, 50; John 19:32-34; Mark 15:43-46; Matt. 28:1-6; Luke 24:36-43). Jesus was not killed because He could not protect Himself from His enemies. Rather, He GAVE His life, allowing the Jews to deliver Him to the Romans and the Romans to crucify Him (John 10:10-18; 19:11; Matt. 26:51-54).
4. Jesus Christ thus conquered Death itself, as well as sin and Satan. This victory was demonstrated by His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:57; 2 Tim. 1:10).
5. Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven 40 days after His resurrection (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:1-11). He sits at the right hand of the Father, interceding for the redeemed and answering their prayers (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24; 1 John 5:14-15). Because He ever lives, He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him (Heb. 7:25).

Questions for review and reflection:

1. What attributes do Jesus Christ and God the Father share?

He existed from all eternity with the father. He was at work in the creation. In the declaration of His birth, the angel called Him "Emmanuel," meaning "God with us." Jesus demonstrated that He possessed the divine authority to judge, to give life, and that He had the power to forgive sins.

2. How does Jesus Christ being both man and God uniquely qualify Him to be our Savior?

Being God, he came to us without sin and as God is infinite, the salvation he purchased for us is unlimited and for the believers of all times. Being man, he was able to shed his blood as the price of our salvation, taste death in place of us, and be resurrected from the dead to give us the hope of eternal life with him in heaven.

3. Why is Christ's death necessary for our salvation?

His death on the cross was the only way that God found to save us from the eternal condemnation that we deserve. We can recognize the spiritual and symbolic preparation for this in the sacrifices of the Old Testament. God foretold this strategy through the prophets.

4. Explain how the following verses demonstrate that Jesus was a man (John. 15:11; Mt. 26:37; Mt. 4:2; John 19:28; John 4:6; Heb. 5:7-8).

He had emotions (joy, sorrow). He knew hunger and thirst. He physically suffered and learned obedience.

5. Explain how the following verses demonstrate that Jesus was God (Mt. 1:23, 14:33; Lk. 5:20-24; John 1:1, 10:30-33, 20:28; Col. 1:15-20; Heb. 1:2).

His name was "God with us." He accepted the worship of His disciples. He forgave sins—which only God can do. Christ, the verb, was God. He claimed to be one with the Father and the Jews understood that He was thereby making himself equal to God. Thomas called him, "My Lord and my God." He is the image of the invisible God, all things are sustained in Him and the fullness of God resides in Him. Jesus is the reflection of God's glory and the exact image of his person. He upholds all things through His powerful word.

6. What would be our logical conclusion if like Jehovah's witnesses we claimed that Jesus is "a god" and not God himself? (Consider the message of the Old Testament prophets: Dt. 5:7; Jer. 1:16).

We would become polytheists, possessing at least two different gods. In John 1:1, we find in their unique and private "translation" of the Bible "the word was a god," instead of "the Word was God," which all other translations from the Greek state correctly.

Lesson 4

4. The Holy Spirit

A. The Holy Spirit is Divine

He is called "God" and "Lord" in the Bible (Acts 5:3-4; II Cor. 3:17-18). He is ascribed divine attributes (Heb. 9:14; I Cor. 2:10).

Note: The "Holy Spirit" should not be confused with the angel Gabriel or Jesus Christ. In the Bible the Holy Spirit always indicates the third Person in the Trinity.

B. The Holy Spirit is a Person

(1) The Holy Spirit has its own "intellect" (1 Cor. 2:10-11). He has emotions (Eph. 4:30). He has a will (1 Cor. 12:11). He decides which spiritual gifts to give to Christians.

(2) He was active in the work of creation (Gen. 1:1-2) and equipped spiritually those chosen by God during the time of the prophets before Jesus Christ. (Judges 13:25; I Sam. 16:13; Ezek. 2:1,2; 3:24; Hag. 2:5; Zech. 4:6; 7:12).

C. The Promise and Coming of the Holy Spirit.

Upon completion of the work of redemption by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and by his return to heaven, the Holy Spirit came to indwell the redeemed, making them His "temple". He acted in a new and different way in New Testament times and does so even now, compared to His activity in Old Testament times.

1. God had promised through His prophets to give His Holy Spirit to all His redeemed in the latter days (Joel 2:28-29; cf. Acts 2:16-18; Is. 44:3; John 1:32-33), and Jesus taught His disciples that following His ascension, this promise would be fulfilled (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,5).
2. On the day of Pentecost, 10 days after Jesus' ascension, the Holy Spirit came upon Jesus' disciples, and the Church of Christ was founded (Acts 2:1-47).
3. Since that day, all who truly repent and believe, entrusting themselves to Christ, receive the promised Holy Spirit. They thus receive spiritual life and become members of Christ's body, the Church (Acts 2:38-39; Rom. 8:9; I Cor. 12:13).

D. The Work and Ministry of the Holy Spirit

- (1) He convinces men of their sin, of Christ's righteousness, and of coming judgment (John 16:8-11).
- (2) He brings men to faith in Christ, granting new life to those who respond positively to His drawing (1 Peter 2:1-2; Jn. 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6).
- (3) He indwells the believer (John 14:16-17),
 1. giving him new life (Rom. 8:9-11),
 2. assuring him that he is God's child (Rom. 8:16; Gal. 4:6,7),

3. helping him pray (Rom. 8:26,27),
4. transforming his character and conduct so as to be the demonstration of his new life in Christ (Rom. 8:1-17),
5. producing spiritual fruit in his life (Gal. 5:22,23),
6. teaching and guiding him (John 16:13; Rom. 8:14),
7. empowering him to witness (Acts 1:8),
8. distributing spiritual gifts which enable him to do his part in building up the body of Christ, the Church (I Cor. 12:4-11; Rom. 12:4-8).

Questions for review and reflection:

1. What attributes do the Father and Son share with the Holy Spirit?

There is beyond doubt one single God as the Bible clearly states in several passages. At the same time, this unique God reveals himself in three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each one has His part to play towards mankind which differs from that of the two other persons of the Trinity. However, the three of them share the same nature, attributes and will. They are never in conflict with each other because there is perfect love and knowledge amongst them.

2. What difference do you see between the work of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and the New Testament?

He was active in the work of creation (Gen. 1:1-2) and spiritually equipped men chosen by God all through the time of the prophets preceding Jesus Christ. He also inspired the prophets with messages from God to man, and sometimes came upon people to help them carry out specific actions. However, today the Holy Spirit constantly dwells in all believers in Jesus Christ to guide, strengthen and teach them, to give them spiritual gifts, to transform them, etc.

3. What effect should the ministry of the Holy Spirit have in the life of the believer and in that of the local church?

The Holy Spirit gives every believer spiritual gifts, so that he can use them in the edification of the church, the body of Christ. He also serves as a guide, not merely for the individual, but also for the leaders of the church that they may act for the good of the community.

4. How can the Holy Spirit work in your life daily?

He makes me aware of sin, that I may live a holy life before God. He gave me at least one spiritual gift which he helps me use for the edification of the church. He speaks to me through the reading of his Word as well as to my spirit when I am in need of guidance. He gives me power to overcome sin and temptation in my life.

5. Considering He reveals Himself in three persons, how would you explain the unity of God?

Open answer

6. Should we always address ourselves to a specific member of the Trinity in our prayers and not to the others? If so, to which one, and why? If not, why?

We can address each member of the Trinity individually, or all three persons in the same prayer because there is only one God in three persons. However, we are taught to pray in the name of the Lord Jesus, since it is He who redeemed us and that God, the Father, has given Him all authority in the heavens and on the earth. This is why we usually close prayer with "In Jesus' name, amen."

7. Think of a religion or philosophy in your country. Point out at least three differences between its teaching on God and His way of working in contrast to the biblical teaching.

i.e.: The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the church is the mediator between God and men, when the Bible says that it is Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5).

i.e.: The Koran teaches that God only loves those who practice Islam, however the Bible teaches that God loves everyone (1 John 4:7-8; John 3:16).

1)

Here are some possible answers concerning the Roman Catholic Church: One must confess his sins to a priest in order to be forgiven. Only the priests are guided by the Holy Spirit. When praying, one doesn't address God directly, but the saints who have died before us and who act as intermediaries.

2)

Here are a few possible answers concerning Islam: God does not exist in three persons. The Holy Spirit is an angel of God and not God himself. Jesus is only a prophet amongst another 127,000. Jesus is neither Saviour nor Lord. Salvation is not through faith, but through the fact of being a Muslim, chosen from birth.

3)

Here are the possible responses to humanism: if God exists, he isn't worried about our concerns, and man is sovereign over his own life. Jesus was a sort of enlightened human who demonstrated an exemplary lifestyle. The Holy Spirit is not our guide, but everyone should follow what his heart tells him.

Lesson 5

5. The Bible

A. The Bible is the Only True Record of God's Revelation to Man.

God reveals himself to men in a personal way through events, people, and their encounters with Him. These are recorded in the Bible revealing God's plan to save mankind. It recounts a true story that implants itself in the story of humankind.

²²It is uniquely God's word because it is completely inspired by Him (2 Tim. 3:16). "Inspiration" does not mean merely that God "sent down" information upon His prophets, but that, by the breathing of His Holy Spirit into holy men, He moved and empowered them to record His revelation accurately and inerrantly (2 Peter 1:21). On a few occasions God dictated His revelation to men to copy down. In general He instead enlivened or empowered their natural faculties so that His Word was transmitted through multiple styles of writing and multiple historical settings. (We saw in 1.B. how God reveals Himself).

B. The Bible has Two Parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Together they contain 66 books which reveal God working in the world from its creation to its consummation. They concentrate particularly on relating the story of redemption.

(1) The Old Testament contains 39 books. Its prime purpose was to prepare mankind for the coming of the Redeemer. After recounting the fall of man and the spread of sin in the human race, (Gen. 3-11), it concerns primarily the covenant which God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the 12 tribes of Israel, whom God redeemed from slavery and established as His people. The purpose of this covenant was to manifest the true nature and effects of sin, and to prepare mankind for the coming of Christ Jesus, who was to usher in the New and Perfect Covenant with the redeemed, and constitute of them a spiritual people of God (Jer. 31:31-34; Gal. 3:19, 21, 23, 24; Rom. 3:19; 4:15; 5:20; 7:5; Luke 24:44).

(2) The New Testament contains 27 books. It concerns the Gospel (literally the "Good News") of the New Covenant, which God established with all the redeemed through the redemptive work of Christ, establishing them as His spiritual people, the Church (Heb. 9:14-15; Eph. 2:19-22). The New Testament also shows us that Jesus Christ will come back at the end of the age. He will establish the eternal Kingdom of God, and this earth will be replaced by a new earth and a new heaven.

C. It's Unity

Although the Bible was written down over a period of 1,500 years by the hand of at least 40 writers from all walks of life, it exhibits a marvelous unity. (Compare the first three chapters of Genesis, for example, with the final three chapters of Revelation.) This unity testifies to the fact that the Bible is divinely inspired.

D. Chief Instrument of God

The Bible is the chief instrument God uses to speak to men today. The Holy Spirit uses it as His “sword” (Heb. 4:12, 13; Eph. 6:17) to convict unbelievers (John 16:7-11), and to teach, reprove, correct and train the redeemed (2 Tim. 3:16; Rom. 15:4). It is their infallible rule of faith and life (2 Tim. 3:15-17) to guide them in this life and lead them to glory. The Bible is without error in the original texts.

Questions for review and reflection:

1. Explain in a few lines what the phrase "the Bible is the Word of God" means.

The Bible is inspired by God. In other words God is its author who the holy men who wrote the actual words. In a few rare occasions, God dictated His revelation so that it could be copied by men. But for the most part He empowered and guided their natural abilities. Therefore His word was communicated through different writing styles and in various historical contexts.

2. Why is it important to know the Bible?

The Bible is the main instrument used by God to speak to men today. The Holy Spirit uses it as his sword to persuade the sceptics and to teach, reprove, correct, and instruct the redeemed. It is their infallible rule of faith and life to guide them in this life, and guide them to eternal life.

3. What is the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament?

The main purpose of the Old Testament was to prepare men for the coming of the Redeemer (Saviour). It speaks of the covenant that God made with Abraham and his descendants in preparation to the work, life and teaching of Jesus. The New Testament reveals the new covenant God established with all the redeemed through the redemptive work of Christ, making them his spiritual people: the church. OT= preparation and NT= fulfilment.

4. Why is it important for the believer to study both the Old and New Testaments?

Without studying the OT, we cannot understand the fullness of the problem of sin, or the way God planned to resolve this problem: through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. If one doesn't understand the necessity of the cross, one might question whether there were another way through which humanity could have been saved from its sin and eternal condemnation.

Lesson 6

6. The Fall of Man

A. God Created Man in his Image

(Gen. 1:26-27). Man is both body and spirit. His spiritual nature which he received directly from God (Gen. 2:7) enables him to know God personally (John 17:3; 1 Chr. 28:9). Man is thus a rational and moral being, responsible to God for his decisions (Rom. 1:18-32).

B. The Fall

Adam and Eve, the first human pair, rebelled against God and disobeyed Him when tempted by Satan (Gen. 2:16-17; 3:1-6). This rebellion and disobedience comprise the Fall.

Note: This act is often referred to as "the Fall of Man." The term should not be understood to mean that man "fell from heaven to earth," an idea which is totally unbiblical. The fall means that man fell from a state of righteousness and holiness without sin into a state of sin, and, therefore, from a condition of spiritual life in union with God to one of spiritual death in separation from God (Cf. Gen. 2:7, 17 with 3:19). God's warning (Gen. 2:17) concerns spiritual life, intimate communion with God that Adam lost immediately. This warning also concerns physical life attached to the earth, that God had breathed into him (Gen. 2:7), and of which the loss is indicated in Gen. 3:19 and Rom. 8:19-22).

C. The Consequences of Adam's Disobedience

- (1) Man fears God and seeks to hide from Him (Gen. 3:8-10), preferring to live in the darkness of sin and ignorance rather than acknowledge his own guilt, and the truth about God (John 3:19-20; Rom. 1:18, 21-22; Eph. 4:18).
- (2) Man is at enmity with God and is under His wrath (Eph. 5:6; Rom. 8:7; Col. 1:21).
- (3) Man is separated from God, making Him distant and unknowable to fallen man (Is. 59:2).
- (4) This separation from God is spiritual death (Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:1-3).
- (5) Spiritual death entails spiritual and moral corruption i.e., man's nature changes from a natural inclination toward good to a bondage to evil and inability to do good from pure motives (Eph. 2:1-3; Gal. 5:19-21; Rom. 1:29-31). So we inherit from the sin nature of our parents, and reveal as we grow what we are by nature: sinners in need of forgiveness. Even the best actions of man are now stained by sin, for man has become slave of sin.
- (6) Sin results in physical death (James 1:15) as well as eternal death (the punishment of those who have refused Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, Rev. 21:8).
- (7) Man is therefore unable to merit his salvation, either by doing good works (Eph. 2:8-9), or by keeping the ordinances of religious law (Rom. 8:3, 7-8; Gal. 3:21-22; Heb. 10:1; James 2:10).

- (8) Because of his spiritual depravity before God, man is ashamed of coming closer to Him (Gen. 2:25, 3:6-11). Only faith in Jesus can take away this shame (1 Tim. 1:11-12).

Questions for review and reflection:

1. How does man differ from the rest of the creatures God created?

Man is both body and spirit. His spiritual nature, received directly from God, allows him to know God personally. Man is therefore a rational creature and morally responsible before God for his decisions. Unlike animals, he is created in the image of God.

2. Who was responsible for man's sin?

Even if he was deceived by Satan, man is responsible for his own actions.

3. What does it mean to be a sinner by nature?

This means that every human who has ever been born already carries the consequences of sin; his whole being is corrupted by sin and leads him to move away from God and His will for man. This tendency is the heritage we have received from our first parents, Adam and Eve.

4. Why can't we earn our salvation by our own good deeds?

Even the best deeds of man are stained by sin for man has become a slave to sin. Ephesians 2:9 explains that salvation is "not by works, so that no one can boast."

1. What evidence is there in your past or present which shows that you are also a sinner?

Open answer

2. Do you currently feel sentiments of guilt or shame for these sins?

Open answer

3. What can you do to be freed from these feelings? (If you do not know how to answer this question, read section 7.B. below very attentively and do what it says.)

To be freed from feelings of guilt or shame, I must believe that Jesus gave his life on the cross to redeem me from the power of Satan, death and sins. I must repent of my sins and accept, by praying to the Lord, what Jesus has done for me and believe that he frees me from these feelings.

4. Give a summary of the consequences of the introduction of sin into the world:

Man hides himself from God and does not obey him because he has become God's enemy and lives under His wrath. He is separated from God and spiritually dead, thereby deserving eternal condemnation. He sins daily because he does not have the Spirit of God to guide and teach him.

7. Redemption (or Salvation)

D. The Redemption of Man is the Work of God Alone.

It has three aspects: past, present, and future.

(1) Past:

1. God accomplished man's redemption by the death and resurrection of Christ (John 19:30; Rom. 4:25).
2. Christ gave Himself as a perfect, sinless sacrifice for sin, redeeming man from sin's penalty (1 Peter 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:24-26).
3. Christ conquered sin, death, and Satan, redeeming us from their power (1 Peter 1:18-19; Rom. 6:4-14; 8:2; Col. 1:11-14; Heb. 2:14-15).
4. Christ became the Mediator of the New Covenant established between God and His redeemed people (Heb. 9:15; Matt. 26:26-28) – See also 5.2.1 and 2.

(2) Present:

1. God accepts repentant sinners not arbitrarily, but on the basis of Christ's finished work of Redemption.
2. He forgives their sins (Eph. 1:7, 2:1-5), imputing to them Christ's righteousness and thus reconciling them to Himself (2 Cor. 5:17-21; Col. 1:21-22).
3. He brings them into spiritual union with Christ (John 17:21-23; 1 Cor. 6:17).
4. He works in the redeemed by the Holy Spirit, purifying them daily from sin, and changing their inward character and outward conduct to be increasingly like that of Christ, their Redeemer (Phil. 2:13; Tit. 2:14; Heb. 12:6, 10, 11).
5. Following are some of the marks of the redeemed:

- they are no longer slaves of sin (Rom. 6:17-18),
- but are continually cleansed by Christ (1 John 1:7,9);
- they are enabled to overcome temptation (1 Cor. 10:13);
- they keep Christ's commandments (1 John 2:3);
- they do not love the world but overcome it (1 John 2:15-16; 5:4-5). "World" here, signifies the way of life of the unconverted. The word is used in Scripture to express three meanings:
 1. the geographical world,
 2. all mankind as in John 3:16,
 3. that which is against God and unspiritual, as in the above texts.)
- they love the brethren (John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:14);
- they persevere in the faith (Col. 1:21-23; Heb. 10:23; 2 John 8);
- they have assurance that they have eternal life (1 John 5:11-13).
- they no longer feel guilty before God (Rom. 8:1-2).
- the fruit of the Spirit is more and more evident in their life (Galatians 5:22-23).
- they have a growing understanding of spiritual things, and especially of the Bible (2 Cor. 4:4-6)
- they have a growing sensibility to the sin in their life (Rom. 7:1-8:1).
- they have thirst for knowing God and his Word (1 Peter 1:1-2; Ps. 119).
- they have a desire to "preach" the gospel (Acts 5:40-42; 2 Tim. 4:2).
- He glorifies God by his life and his words (1 Cor. 10:31).

(3) Future:

God will complete His work of redemption at the return of Christ by liberating the redeemed from all the consequences of the fall. He will resurrect them with a body free from the corruption and power of sin and of death (Phil. 3:20-21; 1 Cor. 15:53-57).

E. Salvation: for Whom?

Redemption is granted to the person who acknowledges and repents of his sin, and entrusts himself to Christ for his salvation. To receive salvation, one must repent from sin and believe that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour (Mk. 1:14-15; Acts 19:1, 20:20-21; Rom. 10:9-10). When you witness to someone who is ready to receive the Lord Jesus, this is a prayer that would be suggested:

"Lord, I recognize that I am a sinner and that I deserve eternal damnation, but I thank you because you sent your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in my stead. He paid for my sins to redeem me from death and condemnation. I place all my confidence in him as Saviour and give him my life that he may become my Lord. Thank you Lord, because I now know that I am completely forgiven and purified from my sins and shame before you, in the Lord Jesus' name, Amen."

(1) True Repentance

is not merely regret for one's sins, but it is a deliberate turning from Sin itself (2 Cor. 7:10; Proverbs 28:13). Repentance could be defined as such: a conscious and intentional decision to turn away from harmful words, thoughts and actions, and to start solely carrying out the will of God as He expressed it in the Bible. Where we have

wronged someone, true repentance also involves asking the forgiveness from the one who has been wronged, and righting that wrong when possible, e.g. returning what we stole (Luke 19:1-8).

(2) True Faith

accompanies true repentance. Faith is not merely the acceptance of revealed doctrine nor the confession of that doctrine by word and deeds. It is in fact:

1. Confidence that God really works and intervenes in the world as the Bible says He does (Heb. 11:1-3);
2. Trust in God to fulfil what He promised in the Bible concerning our salvation and its blessings (Rom. 4:20-22);
3. A total commitment of oneself to Jesus Christ and an open confession of His name before men (Rom. 10:9-10; 12:1; Luke 12:8-9).

Note: What happens to those who have never heard and aren't capable of responding to the salvation message in Christ (the mentally handicapped, babies who die as infants, etc.)? The answer to this question is complex, but in short, we know that God is just and that he will do with them what is just. Here are several verses relating to the subject: Mt. 7:1-2; 12:36-37; 18:10; Jn. 3:17-19; 15:20-24; Act. 4:11-12; Rom. 1:17-25; 2:1-23; 1 Cor. 4:4-5; 7:14; Heb. 9:27-28; Rev. 20:11-15; 21:22-27; Mt. 8; 9; Act. 3...

Questions for review and reflection:

9. What does "redemption is the work of God alone" mean?

Since man cannot save himself through his own good works, and since he does not seek to know God, it is the Holy Spirit of God who begins to convict him of sin and the necessity for Salvation. What's more, only the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is acceptable before God as a perfect ransom for our sins. Jesus is the one who paid for our redemption.

1. What part does each Person of the one triune God have in man's redemption?
 - a. The Father:

He loves us, and therefore sent His only Son to save us from eternal death.

- b. The Son, Jesus Christ:

He came to die on the cross to pay our debt before God. He also revealed to us the perfection of God by living on the earth amongst us, teaching us the way to God.

c. The Holy Spirit:

He convicts us of sin and makes us understand that Christ is the only way to acquire the forgiveness of God, and salvation.

2. What must a sinner do to be partaker of God's redemption?

He must repent of his sins and believe in Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour.

3. What is true faith?

Faith is not only the acceptance of revealed doctrine, nor even the profession of this faith in word and deed. It is the sure conviction that God truly acts and intervenes in the world as the Bible claims He does; a confidence that God will accomplish what he has promised in the Bible concerning our salvation and the blessings that follow from this salvation, and a total commitment to follow Jesus Christ and to openly confess his name before men.

Lesson 7

8. The Church of Christ

A. The Spiritual and Universal Community

The church of Jesus Christ is the spiritual and universal community of those redeemed in Christ which transcends time, race, sex, and culture (Rev. 7:9; Gal. 3:26-29). In the Bible, the word "church" never signifies the Christian's place of worship; it always means the community of believers. This is shown by the following:

(1) The illustrations the Bible uses to describe the Church

1. A "spiritual house" or a temple. Christ is the "corner stone or **the people of God, a holy nation** (1 Peter 2:9-10). All true believers in Christ become citizens of this new spiritual nation. As such they are co-citizens with all other believers and share in both the privileges and the responsibilities of citizens (1 Peter 2:11-12). In that this is a spiritual and heavenly citizenship, the redeemed are "pilgrims" on earth, anticipating their heavenly homeland (Heb. 11:13-16, 39, 40; Phil. 3:20).

Christ is the "cornerstone" or "Rock" (1 Peter 2:4-10; Matt. 16:16-18). On Him is built the spiritual temple; its "foundation" is the teaching of the apostles and prophets; its "stones" the redeemed (Eph. 2:20-22). This shows us that the Church is founded upon Christ and is God's dwelling through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:11, 16-17).

2. The body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27). Christ Himself, not someone on earth, is its unique Head and therefore the initiator and controller of all its activities (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23). All the redeemed are its members and hence are **one** with Christ and with one another, united and animated by one Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-27; Rom. 12:5). It carries out the work of Christ on the earth (Eph. 4:11-16), which is to glorify God by praise, testimony, and the edification of the believers (Mat. 28:19-20; Eph. 3:20-21, 4:11-16). The Church should demonstrate its unity in its life (Phil. 2:1,2).

3. The spiritual family of God. The redeemed are "adopted" into God's family or "household" (Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 2:19). They become "children of God" (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1), and all the redeemed are their "brothers" (Rom. 8:29; I Thess. 5:25-26). Their mission is to announce Christ to the world (1 Peter 2:9-10). All true believers should recognize one another as brothers and seek to accomplish their mission faithfully in God's family (1 John 3:14).

4. The "bride" awaiting the coming of the bridegroom, Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2, 9, 10; 22:17).

These illustrations show us that the Church is "in the world" but is not "of the world" (John 17:11, 14). She recognizes that perfect peace and justice will only be realized through God's direct intervention at Christ's second coming (Acts 17:30-31), (to be developed more fully in 10). The Church does, however, contribute to peace and justice in the world in that it incites men by word and deed to be reconciled with God and with one another (2 Cor. 5:19-20).

(2). The symbolical ordinances used in the Church.

Jesus Christ commanded His Church to practice Baptism and the Breaking of Bread, better known as the Lord's Supper (Matt. 28:19; 26:26-29). These ordinances are not designed to make one a Christian or to grant merit through their practice. We have noticed under "The Fall of Man and Redemption" sections that this is impossible. Their purpose is to act as visible sermons of God's grace in order to strengthen our faith and to symbolize the spiritual unity and fraternal fellowship which exist among all the members of the Church, and between the Church and Jesus Christ.

1. Baptism is the ordinance in which the believer expresses by an outward symbol his inner faith in Jesus Christ, and by which God symbolizes His promise of purification from sin (Acts 22:16; I Peter 3:21) through the action of the Holy Spirit in uniting us to Jesus Christ (I Cor. 12:13; Gal.3:27-28; Titus 3:5-6) both in His death and in His resurrection (Rom. 6:3-6; Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:12). Through this the believer expresses outwardly and symbolically his inner faith in Jesus Christ. Those who are baptized are publicly recognized as members of God's people, the Church. As such, they should forsake sin and walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:8-14).

While some Christians teach that children of believers ought to be baptized, since the promises signified by baptism are also made to them (Rom. 5:6-8; Acts 2:30, 39), other Christians hold that only persons old enough to make a credible profession of faith ought to be baptized (Acts 2:38,41).

The word "baptize" used in the New Testament means "to immerse" or "to wash." This Biblical concept has been expressed in the Church by different modes of water baptism (full immersion, aspersion...)

2. The Lord's Supper is the ordinance in which the community of believers partakes of the bread and cup, symbols of Christ's body and of His blood, to commemorate and proclaim His death (1 Cor. 11:23-26). Participation in this ordinance symbolizes the fact that all those of the redeemed community form only one body, the Body of Christ, which is the Church (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

Note: The Lord's Supper differs from mass, the ritual practiced in the Catholic Church in which the bread and wine really become, according to its doctrine, the body and blood of Christ. When taking the bread and wine, the Catholics receive the meritorious work which grants them forgiveness. This practice shows non recognition of Scripture, as well as a faulty understanding of the biblical texts (Luke 22: 14-23; John 6:32-35 and 48-63; Rom. 10:8-10). If eternal life truly is received through faith in Jesus Christ as we read in several passages of the Bible, the Lord's Supper, of which the purpose is to remember the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus till he returns, cannot grant it. (Review the verses of lesson 6, parts 7.B.1 and 2)

B. This Universal Church Becomes a Concrete Visible Reality

Through the forming of local churches (or assemblies) of God's redeemed people everywhere upon the earth.

(1) Make disciples

Jesus commanded His followers to go into the world and preach the Good News (= the Gospel). He also commanded them to make disciples wherever they went, baptizing them in the name of the Triune God and teaching them to obey His commands (Matt. 28:19,20). After the day of Pentecost, believers were baptized and came together to form local churches (Acts 2:41-42 and 47; 11:20-26, etc).

(2) Join up with others

All true believers living in any place are responsible to join other true Christians living in that place to form a local church for purposes of corporate worship, fellowship, teaching, encouragement, and outreach (Heb. 10:24-25; Matt. 18:20).

C. The Church's Part God's Plan

Currently, the Church is the main vehicle by which God accomplishes his will on Earth. (Mt. 28:19-20; Act. 1:8; Rom. 10: 1-15). The Church (Church with a capital C means "the Universal Church") is the instrument of God to proclaim the gospel throughout the earth and demonstrate the blessing of obeying to the gospel, showing the goodness of God. The age of the Church is to last until the gospel has been preached over all the earth (Mt. 24:14). One day, Jesus will come back to establish his millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:1-7).

Questions for review and reflection:

1. What is the Christian Church?

The Church of Jesus Christ represents the universal spiritual community of all those who have been redeemed in Christ, regardless of the time period, race, sex, or the culture of its members.

2. What is the relationship between the universal Church and local churches? What distinguishes them?

The universal church represents the believers of all times and of all places in the world, whereas the local church represents the believers of a precise location at a set moment in time. The universal church is the sum of all the local churches, as well as the believers in Christ who are isolated, against their will, from fellowship with other believers.

3. How can the universal Church expand in the world?

To attain this, believers must bear witness to the work of Christ in their lives to non-believers, live in accordance with the teachings of the Bible, and teach new believers to establish them in their faith.

1. Why should believers form local churches?

It is very difficult for a believer to spiritually survive without the help and presence of other Christians. The church is the spiritual family of a believer where he can be encouraged and rebuked when it becomes necessary. Believers are there to love one another and share the joys and troubles of life. It is also through their gathering and the love demonstrated between them that the world sees and understands that Jesus truly is the way, the truth and the life.

4. What are we to do with new believers in Christ?

Jesus commanded us to baptize them, to teach them to follow all his commandments and to gather them in organized groups with other believers.

2. Why is baptism important?

It is through this ordinance that God illustrates His promise to purify the believer from his sins through the work of the Holy Spirit, by uniting us to Jesus Christ both in His death and in His resurrection. Through baptism, the believer outwardly expresses his internal faith in Jesus Christ in a symbolic way. Through this ordinance, those baptized are publicly recognized as members of God's people, the church.

3. Why is observance of the Lord's Supper important?

The bread and the wine are symbols of the body and blood of Christ, to celebrate communion with the Lord, the "host" for this meal, and to commemorate and proclaim His death until His return. By taking part, we remember His death for us and examine ourselves to discern if there is some sin in us of which we need to repent. It is a way of remembering what Christ had done for us on the cross.

5. If believers in Christ are a new holy nation, what difference is there between this nation and any other human political institution?

As Jesus told Pilate, His kingdom is not of this world. Therefore we do not produce armies, nor do we take up weapons to defend ourselves physically, nor do we impose taxes on our citizens, nor do we put sinners in prisons. All these actions are the responsibility of human governments and they take charge these things. On the other hand, we organize ourselves and work to win souls for God. Our commitment is voluntary, just as our offerings are voluntary, and our weapons spiritual.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

6. Concerning baptism, do you think we should baptize children? Why?

Open answer.

Some may answer “yes”, either because they believe we are washing away the effects of original sin, as the Catholics believe, or that we are including the babies into the covenant family of God by this act, as Presbyterians and others believe.

Some may answer “no” based on the idea that salvation is by faith. In order to have faith, you must understand what you are having faith in. Obviously, very young children will not understand what to believe, nor will they be exercising faith. Thus, baptising them is of no use.

Some Christian parents, instead of practising infant baptism, practice the dedication of the child to the Lord, just as the people of Israel were commanded to do with firstborn sons. In these ceremonies, the parents promise to raise the child in the Christian faith and in the fear of God. The believers of the local church also promise to help the parents carry out this important task in any way they can.

Lesson 8

9. Living for the Lord

The redeemed live for the Lord, obeying His commandments and doing good works.

A. Reasons for Life Change:

(1) It is the normal expression of new spiritual life.

The Redeemed have received the nature of Christ (2 Cor. 5:17; 2 Peter 1:3-7), and are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God (Acts 2:38-39; Rom. 8:1-14; 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19). God Himself is therefore working in and through the redeemed (Phil. 2:13). The result of this is new character, new conduct, and new actions (Eph. 4:17-32).

(2) It is their desire.

They live for the Lord as an expression of their love and of their gratitude to their Redeemer (2 Cor. 5:14-15; Col. 3:11-17).

(3) It is their duty.

Because they have been bought at the price of Christ's blood, they must no longer live for themselves but for their Redeemer (Rom. 6:3-13). They do not live for Him in order to be saved, but because they are saved (1 Cor. 6:19-20; 2 Cor. 5:15).

(4) It is their testimony.

They were redeemed to glorify Christ in the world by their lives (Eph. 1:11-12; Phil. 1:9-11).

Questions for review and reflection:

1. Explain Ephesians 2:8-10 in the light of the above study.

If we are saved, it is because God wants us to do good works that he has prepared for us from eternity past. Believers have been redeemed by the price of Christ's blood through faith, and because of this, they no longer desire to live for themselves but for their Redeemer. They do not practice good works to obtain salvation, but because they have already obtained it.

2. Can a person truly be saved without living for the Lord? Why or why not?

Only the Lord knows each heart and what is inside. However, it is very difficult to imagine a Christian who does not demonstrate a transformed life and does not naturally practice good works consistently. James said that it is the evidence of faith. If there is no evidence, is there any faith? If there is no faith, salvation is impossible.

3. How does the Holy Spirit enable true Christians to live for Christ?

The redeemed have received the nature of Christ, and the Holy Spirit resides in them. Therefore, God himself is at work in the life of the redeemed. Consequently the believer will possess a new character, and different conduct. The Holy Spirit resides in him and speaks to his spirit to convict him of sin if he does not do the will of the Father. He is also there to guide him if he seeks help in knowing the will of God on a daily basis.

4. How can a believer prepare him/herself to live most effectively for the Lord?

The believer must recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit in his life and understand that the purpose of his life is to be transformed to the image of Christ. With this knowledge, when the believer listens to the voice of the Holy Spirit who convicts him of sin, he must immediately repent and ask the Lord for forgiveness. He must also live a life in communication with God, asking him to guide him daily in every decision. Since he is redeemed in Christ, he has become a new creation, with a new beginning and new purposes. Now, he must die to his evil desires every day (the desires of "the flesh" or "the human nature") Roman 8:1-14. "In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus." Romans 6:11

5. How can you face temptations when you struggle with sin in your life?

I must die to my evil desires. I must consider the great price that the Lord Jesus paid to redeem me by His death. I must consider the spiritual and material damages that my sin will lead to. I must flee circumstances that can lead to sin. I must resist the devil so that he flees from me. I can speak to a trusted believer if need be to ask for prayer, counsel and his companionship to wrestle against the stronger sins. I can call upon brothers and sisters in Christ to pray for me. I can ask for the help of the Holy Spirit to give me the strength and the means to conquer sin, or to free me from temptation. I can read the Bible to find examples of victorious believers and to find verses that can guide and strengthen me. I can read books on the subject in question and, in this way, learn from others' experience. I can fast to ask the Lord to deliver me from temptation.

10. Angels, Satan, and his Evil Spirits

B. Angels

Are spiritual beings sent by God as His messengers and servants, especially to protect and help the redeemed (Ps. 34:7; Heb. 1:13-14). They are innumerable (Heb. 12:22), more powerful than Satan (Rev. 12:7-9; 20:1-2), and were used as God's instruments in the bringing of both the Law and the Gospel (Acts 7:38, 53; Gal. 3:19; Luke 1:26-38; Matt. 4:11; 28:2, 5). They sometimes take action to enable unbelievers to hear the Gospel (Acts 8:26-40; 10:1-5). They protect (Ps. 91:11-12), deliver (Acts 12:7), and encourage (Acts 27:23-24) believers.

C. Satan (the devil) and his Spirits

Are evil spiritual beings. They were created as angels, but rebelled against God and became opposed to all true good (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 5-7). Satan opposes the redeemed in their walk and witness (1 Peter 5:8; Rev. 12:9-10). He disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14), though he is the author of lies and murder (John 8:44). He blinds men's minds to the truth of the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:3-4) and ensnares men to do his will (2 Tim. 2:24-26). His evil spirits may enter certain persons to control their mind and will, and even cause sickness or insanity (Mark 5:1-20; Luke 22:3). The destiny of Satan and his spirits will be the everlasting fire of hell (Matt. 25:41; 2 Peter 2:4), for Christ's victory has already ensured their ultimate defeat and destruction (1 John 3:8; Rev. 12:9-12; 20:10).

Sorcerers, fortune-tellers, astrologists and the like are people who are under the control of Satan. He uses them to turn many people from the Gospel and to accomplish his evil purposes (Acts 13:8-10; 16:16-18). Such servitude to Satan is termed idolatry in the Bible. Their destiny, also, will be the fire of hell (Rev. 21:8).

D. Resist!

The redeemed should resist and combat Satan and his emissaries (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9) because:

- (1) This is essential to their victorious Christian life and testimony (1 John 3:8-10);
- (2) They can be confident that God is in control, limiting Satan's activities (Job 1:9-12; 2:6; 42:2; Luke 22:31-32);
- (3) They can be confident in God's power to enable them to withstand and to turn others from the power of Satan unto God (Eph. 6:10-13; 1 John 4:4; 2 Cor. 10:4-5);
- (4) God forbids believers to have anything to do with sorcery. They should confess this sin, cut all ties with these satanic influences and practices, and combat them in the name of the resurrected Christ (Deut. 18:9-14; 2 Cor. 10:3-5);
- (5) Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, our enemy (1 Cor. 15: 24-25; 1 John 3:8), and we should cooperate with Him in this.

We protect ourselves from the devils' attacks by: 1) The armour of God (Eph. 6: 10-18), 2) Obedience to God's word (Titus 3:1-8), humility (1 Peter 5:5-6), 4) Self-control over anger (Eph. 4:26-27).

Questions for review and reflection:

6. How did angels and spirits come into being?

God created them because he is the source of every living being, the physical beings and the spiritual beings alike.

1. What is the relationship and the difference between the angels on one hand, and the devil and evil spirits on the other?

They all come from the same origin, because demons themselves were angels before they rebelled against the Lord. But after the rebellion led by Satan (Lucifer), they became enemies of God and of all of His creation, especially mankind. All his efforts and those of the demons that followed him aim at the destruction of creation and of mankind, who bears the image of God. On the other hand, the efforts of the remaining angels aim at the God's glorification and take the side of creation and man against the attacks of Satan and his army.

2. How can believers benefit from the ministry of angels?

When the Lord wills it, He sends them to carry out deeds in our favour, even though I cannot do anything to call them or make them help me. Occasionally they intervene to lead people to accept Christ; they protect, deliver and encourage believers.

3. How can believers protect themselves from and resist the work of evil spirits?

We must always take refuge in Jesus Christ because he conquered Satan and the evil spirits through His sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection from the dead. If I resist the devil through my prayer in the name of Jesus, he will flee from me. I must always have the full conviction that Christ protects me, and never fear the enemy. If it is necessary, I can fast, pray and ask other brothers and sisters for prayer to overcome the more severe attacks.

11. The Return of Christ (his Second Coming)

At the end of the age, God will gloriously intervene in the world with the personal return of Christ. A number of events will then take place, which are mainly:

E. The Rapture of the Redeemed.

Christ will return in His glory at a time unknown by us to take His Church to be with Him. All the redeemed, the dead first and then the living, will be caught up to meet Christ in the air to be forever with Him (Matt. 24:29-31; I Thess. 4:13-18). We should be prepared and busy serving Him until He comes (Titus 2:11-14; Matt. 24:36-44; 2 Peter 3:11-14).

F. The Ultimate and Total Victory of Christ.

Christ will establish His universal reign of justice and peace (Is. 9:5-7). He will destroy Satan and his forces, throwing them into the lake of fire (hell) to remain there forever (Rev. 20:7-10). He will resurrect and judge the wicked according to their works, condemning them also to the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15; II Thess. 1:6-10). The present corrupted earth will be consumed (2 Peter 3:10-12).

G. The Creation of the New Heaven and the New Earth.

God will reign forever and ever with the redeemed in the new heaven and the new earth where there will be no more evil (Rev. 21:1-4; 2 Peter 3:10-13).

Note: We find that sincere Christians differ in their understanding of the chronological sequence and specific details of the Biblical passages mentioned above. Christians should unite in affirming all truths concerning the return of Christ about which there is no uncertainty without separating over questions of secondary importance. It is sufficient that each sincerely seek to interpret the Bible in full subjection to its supreme authority.

Questions for review and reflection:

1. Why is the return of Jesus Christ important to the believer?

His return is the beginning of the final victory. He will return to take his Church with Him. All the redeemed, first the dead and then the living, will be taken up to meet Christ in the clouds and to live eternally with Him.

2. Can we know when Jesus Christ will return?

No. There are clues, but Jesus clearly stated that no one knows the day or the hour of His return.

3. List the events that will take place at the return of Jesus Christ.

He will first come to take His Church up with Him in the air. After a time of suffering and of war, Christ will win a great battle against all the enemies of God and will reign on the earth for a thousand years. After one final battle against the armies of Satan, Christ will destroy them by casting them into the lake of fire (hell) where they will remain for all eternity. All the wicked will rise again to be judged by Christ according to their actions. They too will be condemned and destined to the lake of fire. The current corrupted world will be consumed by fire. Christ will then establish his universal kingdom of justice and peace and God will eternally rule in the new heavens and on the new earth with the redeemed who have their name written in the book of the Lamb (Christ) and there will be no more suffering or evil.

Lesson 9

12. The development of doctrines

Introduction

Doctrines are concise statements of a biblical truths based on significant texts. The development of doctrines is rather complex and requires deep understanding of the biblical text and knowledge of the historical development of Christian doctrines, as well as of the more significant debates between theologians. Nevertheless, every believer is encouraged to partake in lifelong study of the Bible. He will in this way come to personal doctrinal convictions, helping him to know God better and live his faith in a real and practical manner.

A. An Example of the Process

(1) Posing of the problem/question to be resolved

Say for example that someone desires to know whether the people of Israel should still be considered as the elect people of God today. Has the nation of Israel already played its part in God's plan and now lost its special position? Or again, are the Jews still God's chosen people, are they all saved and should we demonstrate our consideration for them in a special way and honour them? How can one go about finding the answer?

(2) Exhaustive Bible research

You must first find and read all the verses of the Bible treating the subject. You can use an exhaustive concordance of the Bible, a Bible dictionary, Bible software, your knowledge and recollections to find these. Do not forget to look at related concepts and themes as well.

Here is a selection of verses that are related to the theme of "Israel, the chosen nation of God":

Gen: 12:1-3, 18:17-19; Dt. 7:1-16; 14:1-2, 28:1-30-20; 2 K. 17:1-20, 23:26-27; 1 Chr.16:7-22; Neh. 1:1-10; Ps. 78,79,89, 105:4-15; Is. 41:8-13, 43:15-44:6, 49:1-19; Jer. 7:25-34; Zach. 10:1-12; Mt. 21:33-43, Acts 10, 13:45-52, 15:5-21, 18:1-11, 26:1-23, 28:16-31; Rom. 3:28-31, 9-11, 15:8-21; 2 Cor. 3:12-18; Gal. 2:1-16, 3:6-14, 6:14-16; Eph. 2:11-20, 3:1-12; Col. 1:24-27, 3:9-12; 1 Th. 2:14-16; Heb. 8:1-13; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Rev. 5:1-10, 7:1-10, 21:22-27.

(3) Analysis of the results

After finding theses verses, you must analyze and categorize them according to their contents so that the different concepts that are to be compared become evident.

God chose Abraham and his descendants as his people with the intention of blessing the nations of the world through them. The verses supporting this idea are: 12:1-3, 18:17-19; Dt. 14:1-2

God made an everlasting covenant with the people of Israel: Dt. 7:1-16; 1 Chr. 16:7-22; Ps. 105:4-15; Is. 41:8-13, 43:15-44-6

This covenant required obedience to God's commandments and worship to him alone: Dt. 28:1-30:20

If the people of Israel did not fulfil these requirements, it would be rejected by God: Dt. 2:15-68, 29:18-28, 30:15-20

God rejected the people of Israel for their disobedience and sent them in exile: 2 K. 17:1-20; Neh. 1:1-10; Ps. 78, 79; Jer. 7:25-34

Although God rejected His people, he has not completely cancelled his covenant with them for he promised to accomplish his plans through the coming of the Messiah, a descendant of kind David, Jesus-Christ. Through Jesus God established a New Covenant which is even more appropriate, and therefore better: Dt. 30:1-14; Ps. 89; Is. 49:1-10; Zach. 10:1-12; Mt. 21:33-43; Rom. 15:8-21; Heb. 8:1-13

The nation chosen by God now includes all who have believed in Jesus as their savior. These are now recipients of God's promises to Abraham: Acts 10, 13:45-52, 15:5-21, 18:1-11, 26:1-23, 28:16-31, Rom. 10, Gal. 6:14-16, 3:5-14

One must therefore distinguish between the people of Israel made up of the biological descendants of Abraham from his spiritual descendants: Rom. 9; Gal. 6:14-16; Eph. 2:11-20, 3:1-12; 1 Peter 2:4-10

Israel is no longer the elect nation of God, but is rejected by God: 2 K. 17:1-20; Rom. 11:6-22; 3 Cor. 3:12-18; 1 Th. 2:14-16

The chosen people of God now consists of the members of the universal Church made up of Jews and gentiles from every nation on earth: Rom. 3:28-31; Col. 1:24-27, 3:9-12; Rev. 5:1-10, 21:22-27

However, it is clear that the nation of Israel has always had a part to play in the events of the last days preceding the final judgment: Rom. 11:1-5 and 23-26; Rev. 7:1-10

(4) Preliminary statement of the doctrine

After analyzing the verses according to the specific concepts they enclose, we proceed to formulate the doctrine in question.

Doctrinal statement concerning the people of God:

"Known as the nation of Israel, the biological descendants of Abraham were the instrument through which God desired to bless all the nations of the world. God chose it because of the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in other words, the covenant He made with them. Despite its subjectivity to its covenant with God, the nation of Israel disobeyed His commandments numerous times by worshiping and serving other gods. For this reason

God rejected it as his people and sent it into exile. However, there always remained a faithful few, and God accomplished the salvation of mankind by one of its descendants: the Lord Jesus Christ. Through him God made a new covenant with humanity based on faith, not works. Following the death and resurrection of Jesus all who repent and believe in him, regardless of their origin or race, become the spiritual people of God assembled in what we call *the Church*. The Jews (the Jewish race) are therefore no longer the elect nation of God, though they play an important part in the end times.”

(5) Perfecting the doctrinal proposition

After formulating a doctrine, it is necessary to test it by other means. Here are a few:

- A. Read the list of all the related biblical texts once more to make sure the doctrinal statement concurs with the information found in all of these texts.
- B. Consult theological texts and commentaries to examine potential differing viewpoints. In doing this you can also realize whether you have found all the verses related to the subject, or if there are misinterpreted verses in your analysis.
- C. Test the doctrinal statement in a few real and practical situations. For example, does the current state of Israel as the chosen people of God need military protection? Is the life of an Israelite worth more than that of someone else? Is it worth less than someone else's?
- D. Discuss it with a few Christian Bible teachers or leaders who have wide experience and/or knowledge.
- E. Read debates among Christians concerning the subject throughout the centuries.

Once you have made a thorough study of the question, you can improve your doctrinal statement to a greater level of precision.

A doctrinal statement must never be used as a sword against brothers with different convictions (unless these differences are foundations of the Christian faith)! Doctrines are rather to serve as a guide or shield with which you will be able to guide and defend yourself against the enemy's attacks. Your brother in Christ is not the enemy! Rather, he is your ally. Brothers who wear themselves out fighting amongst themselves will lack the necessary strength when the real battle comes!

B. Practice in the Wording of a Doctrine

You are now going to examine a theological problem by trying to establish a doctrinal statement. Do not underestimate your ability to accomplish this exercise. The Church of our Lord is always improving its understanding of God's Word. You also may be able to contribute in a significant way. Even if this is not the case, to personally elaborate doctrines will help you know and apply the Word of God in your life.

1. Establishment of the problem/question to be resolved

The problem:

You are about to go out with brothers and sisters to share your faith in Christ. But you ask yourself, what is important to convey to those who are going to hear the Gospel, possibly for the first time! What do they need to know to be saved? How can we bring them to make an authentic decision for Christ? How can they be sure of their salvation?

2. Exhaustive Bible research

You will first research the Bible verses related in some way or another to the subject. Here are a few clues for your research: the words *salvation, to save, saved, to redeem, redeemed, believe, believed, faith, assurance, to convert, conversion, converted, to repent, repentance, repented, Gospel, to preach*; also look up the accounts of conversions in the book of Acts.

****Read the preceding and following verses of the reference to understand its context.**

****Set aside all the verses that have nothing to do with the theme you are researching.**

Write down the important verses here:

✂ Here is a rather extensive list of the verses concerned. The leader should not give all of these verses to the members of the group; he shouldn't expect them to find them all either. This list is provided to the leader so that he will be better prepared than the members of the group. He/she will have to select between ten and twenty representative verses to offer to the group in case it has difficulty finding verses.

Matthew 5:20, 7:21, 10:28, 18:3, 21:28-32, 25:34-40; Mark 2:5, 5:25-34, 9:47-48, 10:25-27, 10:45; Luke 7:48-50, 11:32, 15:7, 15:10, 18:9-14, 19:9-10; John 1:12-13, 3:3-5, 3:16, 3:36, 16:7-15; Acts 2:37-38, 4:8-12, 14:21-22, 16:23-31; Romans 1:16, 2:12-15, 3:20-30, 4:4-6, 4:19-25, 5:1-6, 13, 8:32-39, 10:8-17; 1 Corinthians 1:21, 15:1-17, 15:39-44; 2 Corinthians 5:17-19, 6:1-2, 7:10; Galatians 4:4-7; Ephesians 1:7, 2:8-10; Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Timothy 1:8-10; Titus 3:5-7; Hebrews 1:13-14, 9:11-12, 9:27-28; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:1-5, 1:18-21; 2 Peter 1:2-11; 1 John 1:8-2:1; Revelation 12:7-11

Logical progression concerning the need for and the means of salvation: Isaiah 59:1-2, 57:15; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4; Revelation 20:15; 2 Peter 3:9; Nahum 1:3; Romans 3:20; James 2:10; Isaiah 43:25; Exodus 12:13; Hebrews 9:22; Isaiah 53:6, 12; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Timothy 2:5; Ephesians 2:13; Isaiah 55:7; Luke 24:46-47; Romans 10:9-10, 13; Romans 5:1, 8:1.

3. Analysis of the results

Sort the verses according to their main ideas and organize them in categories.

****Make a rough draft for your essays**

When you have organized the verses according their concepts, summarize your results and copy them here:

- All humanity is separated from God because of their sin: Rom. 3:20-30, 5:1-6, 13.
- The penalty of sin is physical and spiritual death: Mt. 10:28; Rom. 3:20-30, 5:1-6:13.
- The punishment for those who do not save themselves is the eternal fire of hell: Mark 9:47-48; John 3:36; Revelation 20:11-15
- No one can save himself from the punishment of hell through his own efforts, his own justice or holiness: Mt. 5:20; Mark 10:25-27; Romans 2:12-15, 3:20-30; Ephesians 2:8-10; 2 Timothy 1:8-10; Titus 3:5-7; James 2:10
- There is only one way to receive the forgiveness of God and salvation (eternal life). This way is through faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord: Mark 2:5, 5:25-34, 10:45; Luke 7:48-50, 19:9-10; John 3:16; Acts 2:37-38, 4:8-12, 16:23-31; Rom. 3:20-30, 5:1-6:13, 8:1, 10:8-17; Ephesians 1:7; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 1:8-2:1
- We experience radical transformation when we believe in Jesus as Saviour: Mt. 18:3, John 1:12-13, 3:3-5; 2 Cor. 5:17-19.
- God offers us salvation through grace. In other words, since no one deserves salvation, God offers it to us as a gift because of his love, and this only because Jesus Christ paid for us through his death on the cross in our place. He spilled His blood to purchase our forgiveness: Gal. 4:4-7; Eph. 2:8-13; Titus 3:5-7; Heb. 9:11-12, 9:22, 9:27-28; 1 Peter 1:18-21, 3:18; Revelation 12:7-11
- The work of salvation is initiated by the Holy Spirit of God which convicts us of sin, justice and judgment: John 16:7-15
- Each individual must respond to God's voice expressed by the Holy Spirit, by truly repenting and believing in Christ as Saviour: Mt. 21:28-32; Luke 15:7 and 10, 18:9-14; Rom. 10:9-10; 2 Cor. 6:1-2, 7:10; 2 Peter 3:9
- When an individual believes in Christ as Saviour and Lord, God forgives him of his sins, he is justified before God and renewed (made a new creation in Christ): Luke 24:46-47; Rom. 1:16, 4:4-6, 4:19-25, 5:1-6:13, 8:1, 10:8-17; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:12-14; 1 Peter 1:1-5; 1 John 1:8-2:1
- From that point on, he ceases to live as a slave to sin and begins a life of holiness, assisted by the Holy Spirit living in him. The believer can be sure of his salvation and live confident that nothing can separate him from the Lord any longer: Mt. 7:21, 25:34-40; Acts 14:21-22; Rom. 5:1-6:13, 8:32-39; Eph. 2:8-10; Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13; Hebrews 1:13-14; 1 Peter 1:1-5
- The believer begins to live according to the will of the Lord by practising good actions as a result of his relationship with God: Eph. 2:8-10; James 2:14-26; 2 Peter 1:2-11
- The resurrection of Christ is the clear proof that he is Saviour and Lord. Also, as Jesus was raised from the dead, we have the assurance that we too will be resurrected with Christ in an incorruptible body: 1 Cor. 15:1-17, 15:39-44; Revelation 12:7-11
- The preaching of salvation in Christ is used by the Holy Spirit to produce faith in the receptive listeners: Luke 11:32; Rom. 10:8-17; 1 Cor. 1:21

4. Preliminary doctrinal statement

Try to formulate a preliminary doctrinal statement in a few sentences. Write it out on a rough draft before copying it here.

Example: Every human being is sinful and deserves eternal death, but God sent his son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place. He paid for our sins to redeem us from death and eternal condemnation in hell. We must recognize our wrong and our need for salvation, place all our confidence in Him as Saviour, and give him our life so that he may also become our Lord. Following this we are completely forgiven and purified from our sins and the resulting shame. He justifies us and renews us that we may live holy lives before him with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us, by practicing good works.

5. Perfecting of the doctrinal statement

Compare your statement with that of the other members of your group. Are their points of agreement? What are the differences? Have you forgotten an important aspect? Now, it is yours to continue developing this doctrinal statement by further researching the subject with the aid of the principles given in section 12.B.5