

20th Century Bible Course

Dear Student;

The old caretaker of Winchester Cathedral never tired of telling the story of one of the most significant battles in world history—that of the Duke of Wellington and Napoleon Bonaparte. The news of the battle reached England by a sailing vessel to the south coast, and was carried overland by semaphore to the top of Winchester Cathedral and on to London.

The populace eagerly waited as the semaphore spelled out the words, "W-E-L-L-I-N-G-T-O-N D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D

Just then a dense fog settled down over the harbor, as this incomplete message was waved on to London. A pall of gloom and discouragement settled over the land. Streets were barricaded. Women and the elderly prepared to defend their country in the streets and in the fields if necessary. But finally the fog lifted, and the semaphore signals came through again:

"W-E-L-L-I-N-G-T-O-N D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D T-H-E E-N-E-M-Y."

Can you imagine the wild delirium of joy that spread like a prairie fire, made all the more exhilarating when contrasted with the earlier news so grossly misunderstood?

Does not this experience parallel that of the disciples after their Lord's crucifixion? The sun refused to shine on the scene. Darkness covered the earth. The resounding peals of thunder reduced the slender faith of those twelve men to just two words:

"J-E-S-U-S D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D."

As they laid His limp, lifeless body in a borrowed tomb, their depression deepened. "We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel," they mourned. Their expectations had been crushed. Apparently the One they had so hoped would be Israel's Messiah was not, after all, the long-awaited Saviour

But then as the light broke on that resurrection morning, the message which should have been understood by His closest followers began to be clarified. And the world has ever since been able to read the life-giving and glorious message:

"J-E-S-U-S D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D T-H-E E-N-E-M-Y."

Is there any better news? Is there any more fascinating field of vision than that lonely hill outside of Jerusalem. To understand what really happened there is the work of a lifetime. But we can begin. And the person who turns his attention toward that hill and looks long and honestly at the form of the One hanging on the rough, unpolished, ugly crossbars, between two thieves, will never be the same again. So what could be more appropriate than to ask ourselves some forthright questions today about that shattering occasion.

What really did happen at Calvary? Why was it necessary? And how does it affect me, two thousand years later? This is the content of our lesson today.

In Christian love.

Your Bible Instructor

LESSON 9

SIN AND ITS CURE

ROMANS 3:10-31 (NT 137 [107, 108]); EPHESIANS 2:1-10

Have you ever stopped to think how dangerous sin is? You cannot always see sin, nor touch it, nor feel it. God Himself could not explain it to us, for neither men nor angels would have understood. He could only stand aside and let all the universe see it at work and experience its effects.

Sin may seem harmless enough, but wherever it has touched mankind, a disintegration, a deterioration, a devastating change, has taken place. It has so completely tainted our nature that when we half recognize it and want to escape, we are helpless. Call it what you will, every man, woman and child stands helpless before it. Helpless-were it not for the selfless act of the Son of God, who dared to touch death for every man!

Part 1--THE PROBLEM OF SIN

1. What instructions did God give to Adam? Genesis 2:15-17

2. What would happen if man disobeyed and ate of the forbidden tree? (verse 17)

Although our first parents were created innocent and holy, they were not placed beyond the possibility of doing wrong. They were created with the capacity to appreciate the wisdom and benevolence of God's character and the justice of His commands, and were free to obey or disobey. The tree of knowledge would test their loyalty and love to the One who had created them. It was "obey and live; disobey and die."

3. How did Adam and Eve follow God's instructions? Genesis 3:1-6

4. Because of man's disobedience, what was God forced to do? (verses 22-24)

This does not mean that they were to die on that very day, but that the irrevocable sentence would be pronounced. Immortality was promised only on condition of obedience; the day they disobeyed they would forfeit eternal life and be doomed to death.

5. How does sin affect man's relationship with God? Isaiah 59:2

When the connection between God and man was severed by Adam's sin, man was cut off from the source of life and immediately began to die. That death would have been permanent had not God immediately put into operation His plan for saving man.

6. What was the terrible result of Adam's sin? Romans 5:12

7. What are the wages of sin? Romans 6:23

8. How many are sinful and unrighteous? Romans 3:23, 10-12; Isaiah 64:6

Christ said that the hate in men's hearts, the lust in their eyes, and even the idle words they speak are considered sin by God (Matthew 5:21-28). If you and I were to commit only three sinful acts each day, there would be a thousand sinful acts each year of which we would be guilty! (Multiply your age by 1000 to see how many that would be in your lifetime!)

9. Can man save himself from his sinful condition? Jeremiah 13:23

10. Why is man so helpless before the power of sin? Romans 7:14

What a dilemma! We are all sinners, and the wages of sin is death. Yet there is no way by which we can save ourselves.

11. How did Paul react when he realized the dilemma he was in because of his sinful nature? (verse 24) " _____

12. Is there any hope for man? (verse 25) _____. Through whom? _____

Part 2-- THE SOLUTION FOR SIN, or What Happened at Calvary

One day as a painting crew was working at the top of a lighthouse, an accident occurred that will never be forgotten by those who saw it. Suspended on a scaffold 60 feet above the ground, one of the painters stepped back too far, lost his balance, and hurtled through space to certain death on the rocks below.

The workmen hurried down their ladders to the foot of the lighthouse. You can imagine their shock when they discovered a dazed, but apparently unharmed painter sitting on the ground! Beside him was the broken body of a soft, wooly sheep. Instead of being dead, the man was only stunned. But the sheep was dead!

Sin, we learned, is the transgression of God's law, and the penalty for it is death. Man broke that law, thus coming under the death penalty. This could not be ignored. If man was to get out of the web of sin, something had to be done. That stricken painter represents you and me. The dead sheep portrays Jesus, the Lamb of God, and what He did to save us from death.

1. Through whom does God take away our sins? John 1:29 _____

2. How does Jesus, the Lamb of God, remove our sins? Romans 5:6-9 _____

3. How does Christ's death take care of our sins? 1 Peter 2:24 _____ - _____

4. As Jesus hung on the cross, what did God place upon Him? Isaiah 53:6 _____

Jesus actually took my sins upon Himself as if they were His own! He died in *my* place. He became my substitute and took my death penalty! In 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul says, "For he [God] hath made him [Christ] to be sin for us, ... that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." This is more than the human mind can grasp! What does Paul mean when he says that Jesus was made to be sin for us? It can mean only one thing: The Lord did, in reality, lay on Jesus *my* sins! It was the same as if He had committed that sin, and not I! One writer has expressed it so beautifully: "Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His right-

eousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25). When we see what really happened at Calvary, how can we help but exclaim with the song writer, "What a wonderful Saviour is Jesus my Lord!"

That is why Calvary is vitally important to every inhabitant of this sinful planet. It is the only place where guilt can be dealt with. A friend may listen and sympathize, a minister may give counsel, a psychiatrist may explain our hangups, but no one-friend, counselor or psychiatrist-can do anything about guilt except to point us to the cross. Nowhere except at the cross has anything been done about sin. Nowhere else has anyone taken my place and experienced the penalty of sin-the death penalty-for me.

For a few minutes let us try to grasp a little more fully what was actually accomplished when Jesus hung there on Calvary between heaven and earth, dying for your sins and mine.

5. What did Jesus abolish? 2 Timothy 1:10 _____ What did He bring to light? _____ and _____

Sometimes it is difficult for the human mind to understand how the death of one individual could cover the death penalty for everyone. A few texts may help us to grasp this a little better.

Part 3-- CHRIST, THE SECOND ADAM

1. Through what "one man" did death pass upon all? 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22

Why did death pass to all of us when Adam sinned? Adam, you remember, was the father of the human race. The laws of heredity state that one cannot pass on to his offspring any characteristics which his own genes do not possess. A brown-eyed man marries a woman with brown eyes. Will they have any blue-eyed children? No. So with Adam and Eve. When they sinned they no longer possessed a righteous nature. Therefore they could pass on to their offspring only that which they themselves possessed—a sinful (carnal) nature, and "to be carnally minded is death" (Romans 8:6).

The human race was doomed as the result of this one man's disobedience. What mankind now needed was a new father—a perfect father—one who had never sinned. And here lies the wonder, the marvelous beauty and simplicity of God's plan! Jesus would become man, live a perfect life, pay man's death penalty, and then offer to adopt all the children of Adam! He would take Adam's place as head of the human family. He would become our new Father!

2. What does Paul call Christ? 1 Corinthians 15:45 _____ (A "quickening spirit" means a life-giving spirit.)

In verse 47 the contrast between Adam and Christ is continued: "The first man [Adam] is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven." Now there can be no doubt to whom Paul is referring. That's why Christ is often called the "second" or "last" Adam.

3. Although we usually think of Christ as God's Son and our "elder brother," what other title does He have that shows His close relationship to man? Isaiah 9:6 "... his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The _____, The Prince of Peace."

By His incarnation into the human family, Jesus was qualified to become for us the second Adam, or the new Father to head the human race.

4. Who did Christ overcome for us? Hebrews 2:14 _____

5. What kind of life did Jesus live? John 8:46; 1 Peter 2:21, 22

Since sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4), and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), it follows that in order to have eternal life one must keep the law perfectly. But we have learned that in his sinful, carnal nature it is impossible for any human being to keep the law. Jesus is the only Man who ever walked the face of the earth to render perfect obedience to that law. This, too, plays a very necessary part in the plan of salvation.

6. What did Jesus accomplish for us through His obedience to God's law? Romans 5:19 "For as by one man's _____ many were made _____, so by the _____ shall many be made _____."

To summarize how Christ became a perfect, a complete Substitute for man, we can say:

When Christ lived, I—in fact, all humanity—lived in Him (1 John 4:9).

When Christ was punished, I was punished in Him (Romans 8:17).

When Christ died, I died in Him (2 Corinthians 5:14).

When Christ rose again, I was restored to God's favor in Him (Romans 5:10).

7. How did Paul express this? Ephesians 1:6 "He hath made us _____ in the _____." When Martin Luther grasped this concept, he exclaimed: "Mine are Christ's living, doing, and speaking, His suffering and dying; mine as much as if I had lived, done, spoken, and suffered, and died as He did."

8. How many did God's act of liberation in Christ include? Romans 5:18

Yes, Jesus purchased the whole human race by the shedding of His precious blood!

9. How many does our Saviour want to be saved? 1 Timothy 2:4

Not one person who has ever lived needs to be lost. Jesus made salvation available for everyone. He would not have paid the terrible price for us if He had not wanted us.

The ball game was in its ninth inning, the opposing team leading by one run. This was the home team's last chance. With two out and a runner on third, the crowds were tense with excitement. "Strike one!" "Strike two!" The windup for the crucial pitch, a mighty swing and crack of the ball! Would it - -? As the ball soared on over the fence into the bleachers, the fans went wild! "We won!" they screamed! We? Now really, *who* won? Did *I* play? Did the fans hit that ball? Of course not! Yet *we* claim the victory along with the team, even though all we did was to cheer them on. We identify with them. *They* are playing *for us*! No wonder it's called a "spectator sport"!

Get the point? If people can become so excited over the exploits of a few men batting around a ball or running from one end of a field to the other with a bit of pig skin, what kind of joy should animate us as we consider how Christ came to earth to take our place in the arena of life and death. In my name and on my behalf He ran to the finish line to win for me an eternal victory. "It is finished!" he cried! And in that cry He destroyed sin, crucified my old sinful nature, provided a righteousness for me that I could never secure myself, and defeated forever the devil himself! Looking to Christ, our Substitute, we can triumphantly cry, *We have won!* His victory is ours, for it was secured in our name.

This is the gospel ! *We have won by Him and in Him.* Redeemed by His perfect obedience to the law-not ours, but *HIS!*

And what is His is ours-if we accept His terms of mercy. Next week we will learn how to become the adopted children of this victorious Father.