

# 20th Century Bible Course

Dear Student:

In Lesson 9 we learned that sin is disobedience to God's revealed will, and that the wages of sin is death. Adam and Eve chose to sin, and every one of their offspring followed suit. The Bible says "all have sinned." We also learned that although God loves us and doesn't want anyone to die, He is also just, and cannot ignore sin.

God worked out a solution to this problem whereby both His mercy and His justice could be maintained. His justice would be satisfied in a two-fold way: (1) the penalty of sin would be paid; and (2) no man could say God treated him unfairly, for God would give every person the opportunity to choose for himself which side he would be on-Satan's side of rebellion and sin, or God's side of love. God's mercy would be revealed in the gift of His Son to die in man's place; then God would have grounds on which to pardon the sinner.

Today we will learn how to accept God's wonderful provision for our salvation. The Bible has made this so simple that even a child may understand it, and yet there are untold thousands who haven't the faintest idea what God's terms of mercy consist of, to say nothing of how to accept them. Sometimes it's good for us to pause and ask ourselves a few straightforward questions on things we often take for granted. It is easy to use certain terms and phrases freely without fully comprehending their significance.

To stimulate your thinking and help you take inventory of what you do or do not know, answer the questions below. Then after completing the lesson, check and see which concepts, if any, you needed to change, or which were expanded with a deeper appreciation.

I am a Christian.      ☐ Yes                      ☐ No                      ☐ I'm not sure.

Why did you answer as you did?

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A Christian is \_\_\_\_\_ How, in your opinion, does a

person receive eternal life? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you come to the place in your experience that you have the assurance of eternal life?

☐ Yes                      ☐ No                      ☐ I'm not sure.

If "yes," why are you sure? \_\_\_\_\_ If "no," why do you feel that way? \_\_\_\_\_

Are these questions a bit unsettling? On something as important as this we must be completely honest with ourselves, for our eternal future depends on whether or not we know how to respond to God's great offer of salvation. We cannot, must not, be ignorant or in doubt on this great issue. May God bless you as you study today the answer to the most important question ever asked, "How can I be saved?"

Sincerely,

Your Bible Instructor

## LESSON 10

### A FABULOUS ADOPTION

SCRIPTURE READING: LUKE 15:11-32 (NT 70, 71 [54])

Mary had just arrived in America aboard a giant jetliner. Along with hundreds of others, she passed through the long corridors of the sprawling Los Angeles air terminal to face life in a new, strange land. In order to become a registered nurse, Mary had to eventually take out her first citizenship papers. "Do you swear to give up your allegiance to all other kings, potentates, nations, or governments?" the official asked. The day finally arrived when, with 20 other immigrants, Mary stood before the judge to receive the document that made her a citizen of the United States, with the right to enjoy all the benefits this country has to offer.

Today we shall learn how to become citizens of the kingdom of heaven and be entitled to participate fully in the life that it offers.

## **Part 1-- THE ADOPTION PAPERS**

**1. What did Jesus say was necessary in order to participate in the kingdom of God? John 3:3**

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**2. What question did this prompt Nicodemus to ask? (verse 4)** \_\_\_\_\_

Converts from heathenism to the Jewish faith were often compared to newly born children, so Nicodemus must have realized that Christ was talking in a spiritual sense. Why then, did he appear so shocked? As Israelites by birth, the Jews considered themselves automatic citizens of God's kingdom and felt no need of any change. Irritated by the close application which Christ had made, the pride of the Pharisee struggled against his honest desire for truth.

**3. By what power is one born again? (verses 5-8); also Romans 8:14**

Listen to the breeze rustling the branches of the trees. You can hear it, but have you ever seen it? So it is with the Holy Spirit's work upon the heart. As the Spirit of God takes possession of the human heart, the life itself is transformed. Sinful thoughts and evil deeds are given up, and love, joy and peace take the place of anger, jealousy and strife. No one can see the hand that lifts the burden, or detect the light as it descends from above, but the blessing is none the less real. As the soul surrenders itself to God in faith, that power which no human eye can see actually creates a new being, a new heart.

**4. What else does the Holy Spirit give us? Romans 5:5** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. How does Paul describe the born-again person? 2 Corinthians 5:17**

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**6. What do those become who have experienced the miracle of the new birth? 1 John 3:1, 2**

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Only by adoption can a person change his family. The same applies to the spiritual life. Only through a "new birth" can one transfer from Adam's family to God's family. This new birth is the Christian's adoption into His new family.

**7. Who has made it possible for Adam's sons to be adopted into God's family? Galatians 4:4-7**

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## **Part 2-- THE COST OF ADOPTION**

**1. By virtue of their adoption, what else do God's children become? Galatians 3:29 and 4:7**

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**2. What is promised to Christ's heirs? 1 John 2:25** \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Where is this inheritance now? 1 Peter 1:4** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. What does it cost to become sons of God and be entitled to eternal life? Romans 6:23**

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Salvation is a gift, yet Jesus says that those who obtain it must sacrifice "all" (Luke 14:33; Matthew 13:44-46). Jesus loved me so much that if I had been the only person on earth to have sinned, He would have died for me alone! In turn, He asks me to make Him Number One in my affections-above every

other person or thing.

On November 14, 1973, Princess Anne Elizabeth Alice Louise was married to Captain Mark Anthony Peter Phillips in London's historic Westminster Abbey. Although Captain Phillips was born a commoner, he became a full-fledged member of the royal family. He stood in a new relationship-the past was put aside. Many may have smiled as they heard him vow to endow his wife with all his worldly goods. What could *he* give *her*? Yet he promised to give *all* of the little he had to the one to whom he had committed the remainder of his life. And she, in turn, pledged her entire fortune and earthly goods to meet his needs through the years ahead.

So it is with our relationship to the Lord Jesus. When we become His adopted children, all that He has becomes ours, and all that we have and are become His. It is the quality of the relationship that matters, not the quantity of what we have to offer. (Adapted from "All the King Wants Is - - -" by Marjorie Collins, in *Eternity* magazine, 1974.)

**5. How does a person experience the new birth? John 1:12,13 \_\_\_\_\_**

**6. How does one "receive" Jesus? John 3:16 \_\_\_\_\_**

A gospel worker was talking to a woman who said she wanted to believe in Christ, but didn't know how.

"How long have you been Mrs. Smith?" the worker asked.

"Why," she replied, "ever since I married Mr. Smith."

"And how did you become Mrs. Smith?"

"Well, when the minister said, 'Wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband?-----'"

"You said," the worker interrupted, "'I'll see,' or 'I hope so,' or 'I'll think about it' "?

"Of course not!" she exclaimed. "I said, 'I *will*.' "

"Mrs. Smith, God is asking you, 'Will you take my Son as your Saviour?' "

"My!" she exclaimed with relief. "Is that all? How foolish I've been not to do it before. Yes, I will-I do take Jesus as my personal Saviour."

Faith is an act of the will in receiving Christ. However, this involves more than a mere intellectual belief that Jesus is the Son of God and died for our sins. The Bible tells us that the devil believes in God and trembles (James 2:19). Well may he tremble, for who knows better than he the reality of God and the certainty of his punishment!

Paul said, "For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). "Faith ... is a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a person well known. The better we know Him, the better this relationship may be. Faith implies an attitude toward God of love, trust, and deepest admiration. It means having enough confidence in Him, based on the more than adequate evidence revealed, to be willing to believe whatever He says, to accept whatever He offers, and to do whatever He wishes-without reservation-for the rest of eternity. Anyone who has such faith is perfectly safe to save. This is why faith is the only requirement for heaven" (*Can God Be Trusted* by A. Graham Maxwell, p. 46).

**7. When the people asked Peter what they should do, what did he say? Acts 3:19 and 2:38 \_\_\_\_\_**

Repentance involves a genuine sorrow on the sinner's part that his sins crucified the Son of God. As he realizes this, he will turn from his sins to follow the Saviour.

**Part 3--THE PRIVILEGES OF ADOPTION**

**1. What assurance does God give that our sins will be forgiven? 1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, he is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to forgive" them.**

**2. How complete is God's forgiveness? Isaiah 1:18 \_\_\_\_\_**

By becoming my Substitute and dying in my place, Jesus earned the right to forgive me. The moment I place my trust in Him and am willing to believe whatever He says, to accept whatever He offers, and to do whatever He asks, I experience the new birth and become a member of His family. Paul calls this "justification." It means that God now looks upon me just as though I had never sinned! No wonder it's beyond my ability to comprehend! How can He do this? Because there at the cross God placed your sins and my sins, and the sins of every man, woman and child, upon His Son (Isaiah 53:6). He allowed Christ to die for these sins. That means that God had to treat His own Son as the sinner instead of us. And by

accepting this sacrifice-this great gift-you and I are free!

### 3. What kind of freedom does justification, or the new birth, give us? Romans 6:14,15

The person who comes away from the cross born into God's royal family, will have a deeper love for the One who made this possible. He will have a new and deeper respect for God's law and will desire to harmonize his own thinking with that of his new Father. Paul says such a person will "always be trying to find out what best pleases the Lord" (Ephesians 5:10), just as Jesus always did those things that pleased His Father (John 8:29). Never forget this! The man who is truly under grace never wants to sin again.

#### AN INTERESTING STORY

Several years ago the following article appeared in a Southern California newspaper:

"A young man who lived in the western states had never done anything very wrong: But one day while playing a game of cards he lost his temper. Picking up a revolver, he shot and killed his opponent. He was arrested and tried and sentenced to hang.

"Because of the wonderful life he had previously lived, his relatives and friends got up a petition for him. It seemed as though everyone wanted to sign it. Before long other towns and villages had heard about it, and people all over the state eagerly signed.

"At last it was taken to the governor, who happened to be a Christian, and tears came to his eyes as he looked at the large baskets filled with petitions. He decided to pardon the young man; so, writing out a pardon, he put it in his pocket, then, dressed in the garb of a clergyman, he made his way to the prison.

"As the governor approached the death cell the young man sprang to the bars: 'Get out of here,' he cried, 'I don't want to see you. I have had enough religion at home. Seven of your kind have visited me already.'

" 'But,' interrupted the governor, 'Wait a moment, young man; I have something for you. Let me talk to you.'

" 'Listen,' exclaimed the young man in anger, 'If you don't get out of here at once I'll call the guard and have you put out.'

" 'But young man,' continued the governor, 'I have news for you-the very best.

Won't you let me tell you about it?'

" 'You heard what I said,' replied the young man, 'and if you don't leave immediately I'll call the warden.'

" 'Very well,' replied the governor, and with a sad heart he turned and left.

"In a few moments the warden approached, 'Well, young man,' he said, 'I see you had a visit from the governor.'

" 'What!' cried the young man. 'Was that man dressed in the garb of a clergyman the governor?'

" 'He was,' replied the warden, 'and he had a pardon in his pocket for you, but you would not listen to him.'

" 'Get me pen, ink, and paper,' cried the young man. And sitting down, he wrote, 'Dear Governor: I owe you an apology. I am sorry for the way I treated you . . .' and so on.

"The governor received the letter, turned it over, and wrote on the back, 'No longer interested in this case.'

"The day came for the young man to die. 'Is there anything you want to say before you die?' he was asked.

" 'Yes,' he answered, 'tell the young men of America that I am not dying for my crime-I am not dying because I am a murderer. The governor pardoned me. I could have lived. Tell them,' he continued, 'that I am dying because I did not accept the governor's pardon "' (*The Arlington Times*, August 26, 1954, quoted in *New Testament Witnessing*, by Elden K.Walter, 1971 edition, pp. 110, 111).

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Have you accepted from the King of the universe, the pardon for your sins which He came all the way down from heaven to this prison house of sin to give you? No one on this earth needs to be lost because he has broken God's law and committed crimes against the government of heaven. Jesus Himself paid the death penalty for you at the cross. Everyone who is lost will be so because he has refused God's pardon.

If you have not yet experienced the peace of God's forgiving love, if you do not know the joy of a full surrender to your Saviour, won't you give yourself to Him right now, wherever you may be