

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE POSTAL COURSETutor's Name: Date: Student's Name: Ref No.: **LESSON 6 • GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD**

Reading: Isaiah 53

What is wrong with the world?

There is certainly something wrong with the world we live in. Every day we hear grim news of crime and violence. All over the world there are wars and the threat of wars. Terrible diseases spread rapidly. Many die of hunger, while others have more than enough. Many kings and rulers are not concerned for the happiness of those they rule over.

These things are happening all the time. We get so used to them, we take them for granted. But if we stop to think about it, we are bound to ask "Why?" Surely, when God first made the world - and made it such a perfect place for men to live in - He intended something better than the world of trouble and uncertainty we live in today.

The beginning of the trouble

In the beginning, when God made the very first man, called Adam, He taught him His ways. He also gave Adam a simple law, and, just as a father expects obedience from his children, so God expected obedience from Adam. God said: "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die". (Genesis 2:16-17). Adam disobeyed God. His disobedience led eventually to death, as God had said it would. It also made it easier for Adam to sin next time, and more than that - every man and woman since that time has found it easy to sin. In Romans 5:12 we read: "... as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." So Adam sinned, and because he was a sinner, he died. Notice that God did NOT promise Adam and Eve that they would go to heaven when they died. That would have been a reward. They were sentenced to death - this was a punishment, not a reward.

It happens to us, too. We also sin and die. When you read the chapter in Isaiah, did you notice the words of verse 6? "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." The prophet Jeremiah tells us the same thing, in different words, when he says: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9). We read these things in the Bible, and we know from our own feelings that they are true, just as the apostle Paul did when he said: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7:18).

We all have to agree with Paul - somehow we never manage to be as good as we want to be. And many people do not even want to be good.

What is the remedy?

Before he sinned, Adam lived in harmony with God. Now that friendship was broken. Adam was a sinner, and could no longer have fellowship with his Maker. Adam probably did not know what a lot of trouble he was starting. Ever since he disobeyed God, for thousands of years, every one of his descendants (including you and me) has followed in his footsteps and sinned except Jesus, of course). And because we are all sinful, we are all cut off from God. In fact it is even worse than that. From our birth we are in Adam's family and inherit the effects of Adam's sin. We are dying creatures from our beginning. And then we all make things worse by adding our own sins.

What a hopeless state!

Men can do nothing to save themselves. Saved by God's grace God, in His love and His pity, did not leave men to die in their sins. He found a way in which they could come to Him and have life. We read in John 3:16: "God so loved the world, that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life". The apostle Paul says: "By grace are ye saved through faith" (Ephesians 2:8). God's grace is His love which He gives us freely, forgiving us for Christ's sake. He has done His part. He has given us Jesus. He has opened up the way. The way is 'through faith'. When the Bible talks of 'having faith' it simply means believing and trusting. If we do not believe God's Word, it simply is not possible for us to share in His grace: "Without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Jesus and the cross

Jesus never sinned. He always did those things that pleased God. And yet they crucified him! God did not save him from this terrible death. The verse already quoted from Isaiah 53 goes on to say: "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." The Bible teaches us plainly that through the death of Jesus on the cross, in obedience to his Father's will, we may have our sins forgiven, and have a hope of life.

There is something very wonderful about this - the love of God in giving His only Son, and the loving obedience of Jesus to his Father's will. By believing in him, we may have life. We cannot think about this too often. We shall come back to it again and again in all our searching of the Bible, because it is at the heart of the Christian's hope.

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To which family do you belong?

One way to consider salvation is to think of families. Adam was the head of the family of Man and from him, and his wife Eve, all of us are descended. Adam sinned and brought death to the human race; so all men die. The Lord Jesus Christ established a new family. He could only do this by breaking the hold of sin. It needed a perfect sacrifice to overcome the curse that Adam had brought on mankind. Jesus was that perfect sacrifice.

So there are two families - Adam's family and Christ's family. We are all born in Adam's family and if we do nothing about it and die in Adam's family we will perish for ever. We have to act! Christ wants us to join his family and we can do so by learning about Jesus and the purpose of God and then by being baptized. Baptism (as you will learn later) is a symbol of dying and rising to life again. So we die to the family of Adam and rise again into the family of Christ.

If you read Romans 5:12,18-21 you will see how the Apostle Paul uses this idea of families.

We should be very grateful to God and the Lord Jesus for making it possible for us to escape from the family of Adam.

Believing in him

We have already seen that, if we are to please God, we must believe in what He has done for us through the death of Jesus. John 3:16 tells us: "Whosoever believeth in him (Jesus) should not perish, but have everlasting life." This does not mean that we have only to say, "I believe in Jesus" and we shall be saved from sin and death. It may seem so at first, but stop and think about it. If we really believe anything, we act upon it. If our child is sick, and we believe the doctor can help him, we do not just say, "I believe in the doctor", and let the child go on suffering. Of course we do not. We send for the doctor, and, because we trust him, we do whatever he says.

Now it is just the same with believing in Jesus. If we really believe, we shall find out what he wants us to do, and do it to the best of our powers and abilities. And obeying God begins by being baptized by full immersion in water, as He commanded. Only if we do this, can we hope to be among those who 'will not perish, but have everlasting life'.

The gift of everlasting life

Life in His kingdom is God's gift to those who believe His Word and strive to obey Him. Such men and women pray every day, "Thy kingdom come". When Jesus comes, he will set up the Kingdom of God. He will sit on David's throne in Jerusalem, reigning over the whole world. Then the men and women who have waited for him, trying to live as God wanted them to, will be given the greatest of all gifts - immortal life. They will never die. They will live for ever and help the Lord Jesus in his task of ruling the world. Then they will sing the words we read in Revelation: "... thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9, 10).

Summary

1. All the troubles in the world come from man's sinful nature, inherited from Adam and Eve.
2. Because of sin we all die, and death is a punishment.
3. The gospel, the good news, is that God has provided a way for men and women to be saved from the effect of sin.
4. We cannot save ourselves, however hard we try. We are saved by God's grace - salvation is a gift.
5. The way of salvation is through the Lord Jesus Christ and was made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus.
6. Our part is to believe - trust - have faith.
7. Those who show real faith will respond by being baptized and striving to obey and follow the Lord Jesus.
8. God promises that those who believe and follow the Lord Jesus will live forever in His Kingdom on the earth with Jesus as their King.

Chapters to read: Ephesians 2

Learn by heart: John 3:16

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."