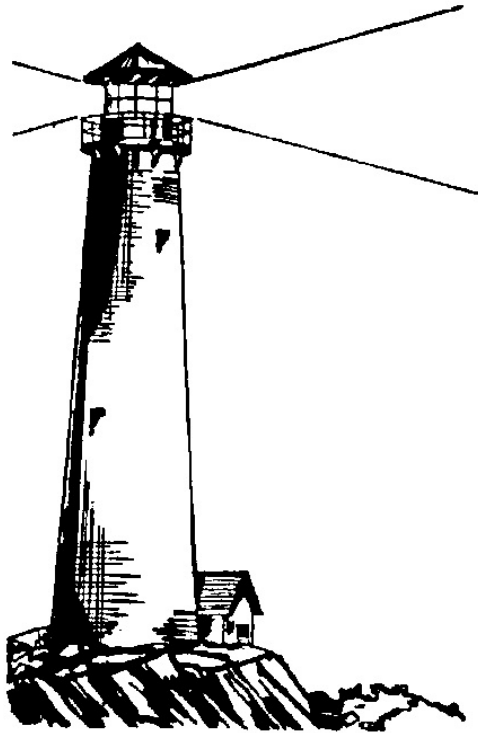


CHURCH OF GOD

SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY



**THE BIBLE,
GOD'S VOICE TO MANKIND**

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NOTE TO THE TEACHERS

This booklet is intended to be a *help* in preparing Sunday school lessons. The title, subject, and topics are only the menu. It is *your responsibility* to prepare the meal.

The proper ingredients are the salty inspirations of the Holy Spirit, seasoned with His grace. Bake the ingredients at a hot temperature in the oven of prayer. The time-tested recipe for preparing a nutritious meal is found in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

LESSON 1

THE BIBLE, GOD'S REVELATION

Scripture Texts: Hebrews 1:1-2; 2:1-3; Luke 24:27

In these lessons, we will be reminded that man possesses the mental abilities enabling him to search out many truths. He has made many discoveries, covering many fields of science. One direction in which man finds himself quite unable to make satisfactory progress without outside help is in the highest spiritual realm, including the knowledge of God. Our knowledge of Him depends on what He has revealed to us. The Bible is preeminently the channel through which such revelation of God has been given to us.

MEMORY VERSE: Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. —John 5:39

The Bible Gives a Complete Revelation

God spoke through various prophets in olden times. He talked with Adam, Noah, Abraham, and others. He gave a comprehensive revelation through Moses. These revelations contained only portions of the truth and were given at various times to various people, often for a limited purpose. Yet, these revelations pointed toward and led to the perfect revelation given through Christ. This revelation is complete, and because it is complete, it is final. Christ is the perfect image of the Father. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). In His teachings, works, and character, Christ perfectly reveals God. No other revelation could make God more fully known to man.

The need of a revelation of God is felt by the whole human race. This is shown by the fact that men everywhere are trying to make contact with the Unseen whom they regard as having control over their lives and to whom they feel responsible. This search for the Higher Being is often carried on in darkness and ignorance, even as Paul found those at Athens seeking worship of "THE UNKNOWN GOD" (Acts 17:23). The search for God continues because within human nature there is something that calls for God and cannot be satisfied with anything but God. As provision is made for all our needs (food for the hungry, fuel and clothing to keep us warm, and provision for every other need), should not provision be made for the satisfying of the greatest need of all, that of our souls? Such satisfaction requires a revelation of God.

Does God Reveal Himself to Man?

Unless there is some method and channel through which God can reveal Himself to man, our search for Him will be unrewarded. If we think of God as a personal Being, possessing the power of self-expression, and not as an abstract quality or an ethical principle, there is no reason to doubt His ability to make Himself known. The ability of God to reveal Himself cannot become fruitful except there is also on the part of man an ability to receive such a revelation.

A highly favored, select group of people was permitted to see Jesus, associate with Him, hear His teachings, and see His works. They heard His Gospel and saw it lived. This was not for their benefit and enjoyment alone but carried with it the obligation of declaring what had been seen and heard. The message told by these faithful witnesses has been made secure to us through its recording in the New Testament. Thus, the Gospel has been preserved for us, and in it, we have God's special revelation to man. It is more than mere history. It is God's will toward man, proven by miracles.

Our obligation to heed this message is greater than the obligation toward the Mosaic Law, which was enforced with dire penalties. We must not treat this revelation lightly.

The Old Testament Revealed Christ

Before the New Testament was written, the Old Testament was the only Scripture possessed by the church. Throughout the entire Book, Christ found many references to Himself. To those whose eyes are enlightened by the Gospel, a great revelation of truth also appears in the Old Testament Scriptures.

God uses many means of revelation to man. The first is the implanting of the idea of God within human nature. This idea of God finds expression in our moral thinking—in the distinction between right and wrong. God reveals Himself in nature. "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1). God reveals Himself through His providence and loving care. Man is "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). Part of God's personality has been copied in man.

God speaks through the Bible. Knowledge of God is not obtained through natural religion. Nature is silent concerning the way to get out of sin and into God's favor. Such a revelation is the Bible. The Bible explains why man is sinful. It tells the story of the fall of man and its results. The way of atonement and mercy is shown to us in the Bible. It teaches holiness, justice, love,

and moral qualities needed by men. God's revelation begins first individually, then progresses to a family, a nation, and the world.

The Bible is an authoritative revelation. It is the rule of faith and conduct for this life, and it is the standard by which we will be judged on the Day of Judgment. The greatest evidence of the authority of the Bible is in the character of its message. The revelation of God it contains could not have come from purely human sources. God gave Moses certain miracles to perform, which he did, convincing both the elders of Israel and Pharaoh of his divine calling when the people doubted his call. The miraculous birth of Christ, His life, death, and resurrection prove the Bible is God's revelation to man. Not all people can test all the evidence in support of the Bible, but this test is open to all: "O taste and see that the LORD is good" (Psalm 34:8).

JUST A THOUGHT

**The pleasures of sin are for a season,
but its wages are for eternity.**



LESSON 2

THE DEPENDABILITY OF THE BIBLE

Scripture Texts: John 5:45-47; 1 Corinthians 15:4-5; Acts 17:2; John 2:22

The dependability of the Bible involves at least three things: (1) genuineness, (2) integrity, and (3) inspiration. In this lesson, we will discuss its genuineness and integrity, leaving the discussion of its inspiration for a future lesson. The *genuineness* of the Bible has to do with its authorship. The *integrity* of the Bible has to do with the preservation of the reading without alteration. Does the Bible of today read as it did when first written?

MEMORY VERSE: Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.
—Matthew 24:35

The Genuineness of the New Testament

There are many English translations of the Bible today, chief among which is the King James Version. Earlier English versions made during the Reformation period include Tyndale's version, which was first published in 1525. Tyndale was influenced by Martin Luther's German version. Coverdale's translation, published in 1535, was the first English Bible permitted to be published in England. The Geneva Bible was the most popular English Bible until the King James Version. The earliest translation of the complete Bible into English was made by Wycliffe in 1380. The process of printing books was unknown in Europe at that time; thus, only handwritten copies were made. A few of these copies exist yet today.

Emperor Diocletian ordered all copies of the Bible to be destroyed in A.D. 303. (Thus, we know that the Bible existed before this, for Diocletian could not have ordered its destruction *before* it existed.) Diocletian destroyed so many Bibles and killed so many Christians that he believed he had made an end to the Scriptures. He ordered a medal be made that said: "The Christian religion is destroyed, and the worship of the gods restored." Yet, when Constantine became Emperor, he commissioned fifty new, accurate copies of the Bible to be made. "The word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1 Peter 1:25).

Jesus declared that Moses wrote about Him, and He accused the Jews (who would not believe in Him) of not believing the writings of Moses. This statement of Jesus must be understood as ascribing the authorship of the first five books of the Bible to Moses. Many times, Christ quoted the authority

recognized by the Jews and placed over against it His own—"But I say unto you." Matthew 5:38-39 is one example of this.

The disciples found the words of Christ harmonized with the words of the Old Testament. Christ's words were the message the disciples taught, which message they regarded as fulfilling the more spiritual teachings of the Old Testament. To sum up the whole matter, the Bible has been tried and proven to be true and genuine by millions, down through the ages of time. Who can doubt that it has proven to be the inspired Word of God?

The Genuineness of the Old Testament

The teachings of the Old Testament and the New Testament fit together hand-in-glove. Paul enforced his preaching with the Old Testament. The central theme of his preaching was the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. All this he claimed was "according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Thus, Paul accepted the authority of the Old Testament and found in it the evidence supporting the Christian message. The Old Testament was all the early Apostles had to preach from. In Acts 17:2, Paul used the Jews' own Scriptures, showing them to be in harmony with the Gospel he preached. Jesus and the disciples quoted freely from these Old Testament books. They were divided into three parts: (1) the Law, (2) the Prophets, and (3) the Sacred Writings.

The Integrity of the Scriptures

The integrity of the Scriptures can largely be determined by examining the evidence taking place in them and putting them to the test. None of the original Bible manuscripts still exist, and the translators and copyists did likely make some copying errors. Yet, the majority of these errors are grammatical or punctuation, are very few, and do not change the meaning or doctrines of the Scriptures. We have many lines of evidence supporting the Bible's reliability. Christ recognized the Scriptures as the voice of God spoken through earthen vessels. Should not we recognize this truth also?

JUST A THOUGHT

**We live in an age of
guided missiles and misguided men.**



LESSON 3

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

Scripture Texts: Exodus 4:10-13; Jeremiah 1:7; 1 Corinthians 2:13; Acts 1:16; 1 Peter 1:10-11; 2 Peter 1:21; Hebrews 1:1-2

The Bible is called the Word of God simply because it is just that. God is responsible for its content. The Bible has been proven to be different from other literature, and that difference consists of a divine element. There are at least two ways in which a book might come from God. God might speak it or write it Himself and give it to men in its completed form. The Ten Commandments were given in these two ways—*spoken* by the voice of God and *written* by the finger of God. The other method is for God to have men write for Him. The Bible freely admits that it was so written by men inspired by God.

MEMORY VERSES: All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.
—2 Timothy 3:16-17

The Meaning of Inspiration

It is not easy to define inspiration in one sentence. There is the idea of in-breathing, in which God imparts enlightenment and direction to the person inspired. The idea of inspiration is not exhausted on the mind of man but extends to the message, which is God-breathed. A loose definition of *inspiration* is that it is "the supernatural influence exerted by the Spirit of God on the minds of the prophets enabling them to give expression to the ideas and will of God." Although it is through inspiration that new ideas are received, one may be inspired by new expressions of truths previously revealed. Inspiration enables man to express the truth unerringly and effectively under the close supervision of the Holy Spirit. There are differences in degrees of inspiration but not in kind.

The writers of the Bible displayed much literary genius, but inspiration is more than genius. The Spirit of God moved on the spirits of the prophets to enable them to prophesy events of the distant future. Ordinary inspiration does not reach such heights. To place the great writers of the literary world in a class with inspired prophets is to ignore the chief qualification of a

prophet of God—the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The extent of inspiration is not to be measured by the amount of genius exhibited in the writing.

The Fact of Inspiration

Moses was well aware of his inability to deliver God's message to Israel. He thought of himself as a poor speaker, and he did not know what to say. God promised to both furnish the message and help in the delivery of it (Exodus 4:10-12). Jeremiah, likewise, was aware of his inability, and God put the words in his mouth (Jeremiah 1:7). The Spirit of God spake through the prophets.

David was regarded as a prophet. Various prophecies are found in his psalms. These were not the result of David's foresight but of the inspiration of God. The Holy Spirit spoke through David, using him as His mouthpiece. Peter said that the prophets of old "prophesied" and spoke as they were "moved by the Holy Ghost," concerning the suffering of Christ (Acts 1:16; 1 Peter 1:10-11; 2 Peter 1:21).

If the Bible is not truly inspired, we must base our faith on something else. What else is there on which to base our faith? It is not enough to admit that the Bible is divinely inspired, but we must believe it completely. This is the foundation for building a successful Christian life. The Jews accept without question the inspiration of the Old Testament. Christians accept both the Old and the New Testaments.

Within the Bible, we see God revealed in His true character. The highest and purest revelation of God ever given to man is found in the Bible. The fact that the Bible uniquely stands out amid pagan and heathen philosophies is explained only on the ground of its inspiration. The Bible stands as the highest authority in religion (Hebrews 1:1-2).

The Proof of Inspiration

Acceptance and practice of the teachings of the Bible have worked and will work a transformation both in the individual and in society. This is evidence of its divine power. "The word of God is quick, and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12). No other book can produce results such as this Book. It produces transformations in the lives of men and women. Check it out for yourself, and see if every prophecy does not prove to be true. It all falls into place, just as the prophets were inspired to write it. It is up to you and me to make our decisions as to whether or not we will put our faith in the Bible, the only

Book that can lead mankind to true happiness, purity, and spiritual success.
The Father, Son, and Holy Ghost await our answer.

JUST A THOUGHT

Truth does not need a defender—only an investigator.

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LESSON 4

GOD, THE SUPREME BEING

Scripture Texts: Exodus 20:2-3; Isaiah 45:5; 1 Corinthians 8:5-6; Ephesians 4:6; 2 Corinthians 3:17; Hebrews 12:9

In this lesson, we turn our study to the most important subject mankind can give attention to. If there is a God—and no one should dare to dismiss this belief lightly—it is most important we know all we can learn about Him and understand our duties regarding our relation to Him.

The doctrine of God lies at the very center of Christian existence. There can be no such things as morals, salvation, worship, Christian conduct, and church relations without a conception of the true God. People have many ideas about God. Some of these will be discussed in a future lesson. For this lesson, we look to the Bible to learn what it has to say about God.

MEMORY VERSE: God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.
—John 4:24

Can We Know God?

Almost everyone in the world has some idea of God. Some ideas are based on imagination and some on fact. The Christian bases his ideas of God on the fact that God is an infinite Being. It is not possible to describe an infinite Being. All definitions are built based on comparisons, but with whom and with what shall we compare God? The best we can do is to point out wherein He is like us and wherein He differs from us. The very idea of infinitude defies description. Everything with which we have to do in this world is finite (having limits).

We measure time in days and hours, but we have no scale with which to measure eternity—an infinite existence. We measure distance in miles and light-years, but we cannot begin to measure infinite space. It is difficult to conceive a trillion of anything, but impossible to conceive infinity (boundless, without limits). An accurate description of God must be made in celestial language for no human tongue can describe Him.

Nature and reason are sources from which one can learn about God. But all such knowledge will not bring us into a close relationship or fellowship with Him. The Bible is our chief source of knowledge of God. Through its revelation, we are given a picture of God, increasing in clearness until we

find Him fully revealed in Christ. To know Christ fully is to know God fully. We are responsible for everything God teaches us about Himself.

There Is Only One God

The very nature of God requires that He have no rival (Isaiah 45:5). All of creation is subject to His will. God, in His Word, refuses to share His place with any other gods (Exodus 20:3). Such is the belief of all Christians today. There is only one true God. Nothing can be taken from Him, and nothing can be added to Him. If this could be done, He would cease to be complete and would cease to be the eternal, self-existing, and perfect Being.

God is a Spirit. We can know His personality, feelings, desires, and fellowship. In giving the Ten Commandments, God asserted His claim as the only God and called upon the children of Israel to worship Him only (Exodus 20:2-3). The Bible describes many other gods, but always as inferior, false, and unworthy of our respect or worship. Paul, speaking for the Christians of his day, refused to give them any respect or consideration. He said, "An idol is nothing in the world . . . there is but one God" (1 Corinthians 8:4, 6).

God is more than a principle or an ideal, as some would identify Him. One does not pray to a principle or worship an ideal. Only persons are capable of being worshiped. God is a Spirit—a Person. There is an essential likeness between God and the soul of man (Genesis 1:26). Both are eternal. God changes not. The power of life belongs to Him. He is not the "I was" or the "I will be," but the eternal, self-existent "I AM." He announced His name to Moses as "I AM" (Exodus 3:14). In these words, God laid claim to independent self-existence—a greater claim than man can make.

God Is Eternal

God is the "high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" (Isaiah 57:15). Eternity is of unending duration, without beginning and ending. Time and eternity are quite different. We divide time into three parts—past, present, and future. The past is gone forever and no longer exists. The future has not yet come into being. We have only the present, which is a narrow line where the past and future meet.

Yet, on this narrow line, all thinking, planning, and actions take place. We live only in the present, and how brief it is! But with God, all is present and known to Him. He knows no past and future, for with Him all is eternal now. God is not growing older, nor is eternity. Eternity is changeless and so is God.

JUST A THOUGHT

**Remember that everyone who got
where he is had to start from where he was.**

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LESSON 5

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

Scripture Texts: Psalm 139:7-10; 147:5; Hebrews 4:13; Genesis 17:1; Acts 17:28; Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 19:6

Previously, we studied the eternal and infinite Being. Today, we study God's attitude and relation toward His creation. Our discussion of God's attributes must be in terms understandable by human beings. We are forced to use human terms in speaking of God for we are acquainted with no other terms. When we speak of God as "seeing," we do not mean to imply He has eyes such as ours or that when He acts, He exerts muscular effort. When we speak of His thoughts, we do not mean that He employs the same mental processes that we do.

MEMORY VERSE: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. —John 3:16

God Is Everywhere

Our God is not localized. We cannot get away from Him by fleeing to some other locality. All countries are within His jurisdiction. He is King over all creation, for He made it all, and His rule includes Heaven and the world. God's presence invades every avenue of life. He has to do not only with sacred things but with all our moving and our very being. There is no escape from Him.

Only in the atonement of Christ are the attributes of God fully reconciled and the character of God revealed. The moral attributes of God are holiness and love, which can also be understood as justice, mercy, and truth.

The Scripture texts in this lesson teach clearly that God is *omnipresent*, meaning that He is everywhere present at the same time. It is for us to seek to understand in what sense He is present and what this means to us. God is not an object of matter; therefore, He is not confined to a limited space.

God Understands All

God is *omniscient*. By this we mean God has complete knowledge of everything. This applies to the past, present, and future. He knows what has

been, what is, and what will be. It is impossible for us to form a conception of limitless space, of unending time, and of unmeasured distance. These are minute compared to God's understanding. We read in Acts 15:18, "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." His plans were made, and He knew what He would do before the world was created.

God Has All Power

"The Lord God *omnipotent* reigneth" (Revelation 19:6). God never needs to say, "I wish I could" or "I might be able to." He is not only mighty, but He is almighty. He is well able to carry out all His plans. The unlimited power of God is not only potential, but it is actual. At the present moment, He can do all He desires to do. Yet, man can limit God's power. There are things that God will not do. He will not infringe on the freedom of choice He has granted man. He cannot lie.

The greatest exhibition of the power of God is seen in the saving of a lost world. "The gospel . . . is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). The power exerted on the conscience of man, inducing him to turn from sin to holiness is greater than that required to create a world.

God Is Holy

Among the moral attributes of God are holiness and righteousness. No other gods are worshiped because of their holiness. The seraphim sang, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts" (Isaiah 6:3). Some men may have excellent characters, but only God within men can make them holy. God is holy in His feelings, desires, plans, purposes, and doings. God makes men holy because His nature is holy. God is love, therefore He shows no respect of persons (Acts 10:34). His condemnation is just and His forgiveness is perfectly fair. Because of our faith in God's holiness, we trust Him completely.

JUST A THOUGHT

**People who expect salvation at the eleventh hour
often die at ten-thirty.**



LESSON 6

RATIONAL EVIDENCES OF GOD

Scripture Texts: Acts 14:11-17; Romans 1:18-20; Acts 17:27-28

In this lesson, we consider the evidence for God as found in nature and reason. In the natural realm, much can be found that leads us toward God. When one seeks to fathom the universe, to weigh the stars, and to compute the strength of physical force, his mind must run in the direction of God. When one observes the interrelations of all nature and considers the provisions for our wants, he is led either to believe in great luck and remarkable coincidence or to have faith in the divine power of God.

Man is a rational being. He cannot help but seek the reason for things. He cannot be satisfied until he has found an answer that satisfies his longing to know the whys and wherefores. Reason and revelation support each other in sustaining our belief in God.

MEMORY VERSE: The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.
—Psalm 19:1

Creation Declares God's Glory

We read in Romans 1:18-20 that God has manifested Himself in creation, revealing "his eternal power and Godhead." The whole creation in the magnitude of the universe and the minuteness of the split atom reveals God as the Creator. The evidence is so clear that those who refuse to see are left without excuse. Their failure to see God is due not to intellectual inability but rather to moral perverseness. They "hold the truth in unrighteousness." The marks of God's creative power are abundant; thus men are held responsible for their failure to see God in creation. Since there is creation, there must be a Creator.

The law of cause and effect that results in lightning, thunder, earthquakes, tides, seasons, and water cycles (to mention a few) is traced back to the First Cause, who is eternal. Often the question is asked, "Which was first, the chicken or the egg?" For the answer, we must find a chicken that was not hatched from an egg or an egg that no hen laid. The First Cause (whom we call God) is the answer.

Nature Witnesses to God

The Lycaonians were about to worship Paul and Barnabas as gods. They had so far departed from the knowledge of the Creator as to seek to worship the creature (Acts 14:11-13). Paul called their attention to God as they might see Him in nature. The rain and fruitful seasons are evidence of His watchful care over us. We are not to worship any creature, however good, but only God, the Giver of every good gift. By making use of the data furnished by nature, one can learn much about God. There is interdependence and balance in all nature. An example is bees pollinate the flowers so that we may have fruit, and in turn, the bees receive their honey from the flowers.

God Reveals Himself in Man

God is nearer to us than the heart within us. In Acts 17:27-28, we find that our very existence is wrapped up in Him. God is evident to all who will look. Paul quoted approvingly the confession of the Greek poets, "For we are also his offspring." Man's intellectual and spiritual nature provides a field for study in which we may learn much about the nature of God, our Father.

God created man with moral values, with the ability to decide right from wrong. This ability alone proves man to be created above animals. He is aware of the condemnation of sin and also senses the forgiving mercy of God when it is received. He can have fellowship with God and enjoy eternal life, which is the result of God revealing Himself to man. Man was created righteous in God's own image. God said that he was good, very good.

After man sins away this righteousness, through salvation, God re-creates him, making him righteous again. This moral and spiritual nature of man points to the personality of God. Certainly, the true character of God is far beyond our comprehension, but we know in which direction to look for Him. Faith is the key that unlocks the door that we may enjoy God's revelation of Himself.

JUST A THOUGHT

**Moderation in sin is no more possible
than moderation in hanging.**



LESSON 7

DISBELIEF IN GOD

Scripture Texts: Job 9:16; 21:14; Psalm 14:1; 2 Corinthians 6:15; 1 Timothy 5:8

In this lesson, we will take a good look at several types of unbelief. Some of these are old, while others have taken a newer form. The Church of God is faced at times by all of these in some form. In past years, men who expressed disbelief in God were shunned as though they were dangerous characters. As freedom of thought and expression has come to be recognized more in our society, one can now freely express his skepticism without sacrificing his social position.

The right to express one's opinion should not be denied, and yet such a right does not increase the value of the opinion itself. If the beliefs or unbeliefs of the infidels were at one time false and dangerous, no amount of respectability can change their true nature. Truth is eternal, and it seems that error, too, is quite enduring. The contest between divine truth and error is not so apparent today. Sadly, many of the contentions of the infidels in former days are now believed and expressed by professed Christians. The battleground has been transferred to the nominal church.

MEMORY VERSE: And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.
—Romans 1:28

Infidels, Atheists, and Agnostics

At times, it has been questioned if there truly are infidels. The statements by Paul assume that there are (2 Corinthians 6:15; 1 Timothy 5:8). If one denies the inspiration of the Bible and the deity of Christ, he is regarded as an *infidel* (no religious beliefs) though he may not be an *atheist* (disbelief in God).

An atheist declares flatly, "There is no God." All others believe in some kind of God. The atheist denies the existence of God. He strikes at the foundation of all religion and denies all that religion stands for. His view, if accepted, would leave man with no one higher than himself to whom he can look for help. He is a forlorn creature.

What can be more absurd than an unbelief that refuses to admit evidence

that cannot be disputed, as in Job 9:16? Yet, it is common for unbelievers to reject such evidence as it is opposed to their theories. Unbelief does not require a great amount of intelligence; even a fool can deny God's existence (Psalm 14:1). In that case, the conclusion is clearly the result of desire and not of logic. Unbelief comes from the heart. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10), and with the heart, man denies, to his own condemnation.

The *agnostic* (one who is skeptical of God's existence) seeks to escape responsibility by pleading ignorance. He does not know whether there is a God or not. He thinks it impossible to know, and he is glad he does not know, for he thinks his ignorance excuses him. He doubts very much that anyone else knows.

Love, hope, and sorrow cannot be measured or analyzed by science, but who will say that they are not real? If the agnostic would attempt to find out about God, he would soon know that God exists. One man declares honey is not sweet; another man says he does not think it is either, but he does not know. Neither man benefits from the honey because neither eats it. If they would taste it, they would know. Only the man who shuts his spiritual eyes can find no trace of God. Psalm 34:8 says, "O taste and see that the LORD is good."

None of these people have ever experienced the joy of sin pardoned and fellowship with God. They try to live as though they were not a man but only a beast without moral distinctions.

Materialism

Materialism teaches that matter is the only real substance and that all mental and spiritual states are the effects of physical causes. The materialist believes there was a time when only unorganized matter existed. Then began a process of development that resulted in our orderly universe. No explanation is offered as to what caused the process or why it began at that time except that God had nothing to do with it.

The materialist teaches man's actions are the results of brain and nerve stimulation and can be attributed only to his environment. All his moral attitudes and beliefs are products of outside causes, and for this reason, he is entirely free from responsibility. They deny the existence of all spiritual forces; thus, they deny the existence of God.

Humanism

Quite akin to materialism is the doctrine of humanism. An element of humanitarianism pervades humanism and gives it a flavor that makes it more acceptable. But beneath all this, there is an opposing element that poisons the whole system.

It values man for himself as a personality, the highest form of a living being, made to rule and enjoy life. It exalts man to the place of possessing within himself every power necessary to his highest development. He can lift himself by his own bootstraps to the full achievement of his dignity and power. He needs no outside help and looks for none.

In humanism, man has taken the place of God; hence man is left with no one but himself to worship and with no moral law other than his own ideals. Humanism may be a refined paganism, but it is not Christianity.

JUST A THOUGHT

**The right train of thought can take you
to a better station in life.**



LESSON 8

THE HOLY TRINITY

Scripture Texts: Genesis 1:26; Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 3:17; 28:19; John 1:1; 16:13-14

When considered philosophically, the Trinity is the most difficult doctrine in the Bible. Nothing just like it is found in any religion other than Christianity. Other religions have many separate individuals and separate gods. Christianity acknowledges but one God yet regards this one God as existing in three Persons.

The difficulty encountered in trying to express the doctrine of the Trinity in philosophical terms bears witness to the truth that the idea is not the product of reason. The doctrine grew out of known facts and is of practical value. What we believe concerning this teaching affects our attitude toward Christ and the Holy Spirit. Though we cannot adequately explain or understand the doctrine of the Trinity, it becomes a matter of practical experience in our relationship with God.

MEMORY VERSE: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.

—2 Corinthians 13:14

The Meaning of Trinity

The term "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, but it comes to us from the early creeds of the church. It is a term that expresses the three Persons of the Godhead (the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost). It means "three in one." While there is only one God, the Triune Godhead consists of three distinct yet inseparable Persons. Each has an important part in what Hebrews 2:3 calls "so great salvation." The Father was the originator of the plan of salvation, the Son implemented the plan, and the Holy Ghost is the administrator.

It is quite impossible to comprehend how three Persons can be separate and yet in such perfect unity as is found in the Trinity. There is no clashing of wills or conflict of desires, but only perfect unity. Personality, as we know it, cannot accurately describe the personality of God. By studying the Trinity, we can learn much about the nature of God, but full knowledge of the nature of God is far beyond our comprehension. A clear comprehension of the doctrine is not necessary for salvation or fellowship with the Three in

One, but a love of and obedience to what we do learn is needful for our salvation and fellowship with the Trinity.

The Trinity in the Old Testament

Two methods may be used in tracing the Trinity in the Bible: (1) trace direct statements that may support the doctrine, and (2) assemble facts that can be explained in no other way. The direct statements are not plentiful, but an abundance of facts is found supporting the deity (divine nature) of the separate Persons making up the Trinity. We first consider the evidence as found in the Old Testament.

The first mention of the Trinity is found in Genesis 1:1. The Hebrew word *Elohim* is translated as "God." This is a plural noun, letting us know all three Persons were there. Isaiah 48:16 shows that three Persons are under consideration. Other Old Testament texts ascribe deity to the coming Messiah, which would complete the divine Godhead. Indications of the Trinity may be seen in the three holies of Isaiah, Chapter 6, and the benediction of Numbers 6:24-27.

We cannot expect to find the Trinity clearly revealed in the Old Testament during the dispensation of the Law when the light of truth shone but dimly. There were rays of light to those with sufficient spiritual understanding to discern the light. Isaiah, Chapters 9 and 11, are good examples.

It was necessary that Israel be well-grounded in the truth of one God, living as they were among idolaters, without the necessity of complicating their thinking with the doctrine of the Trinity, which became of practical value with the coming of Christ to the world.

The Trinity in the New Testament

The truths from which the doctrine of the Trinity is constructed are drawn chiefly from the New Testament. One of the chief evidences—the deity of Christ—will be discussed in a later lesson and will be lightly touched on here. The other line of principal evidence concerns the personality of the Holy Spirit in 1 John, Chapter 5. Direct statements are not abundant, but many Scriptures are in strong support of the Trinity.

The deity of the Father scarcely calls for discussion. He has declared Himself to be the I AM, the Eternal, the Almighty, the only God. The great mass of Christians, Jews, and Mohammedans without hesitation recognize His deity. The only question arises among those who confuse His Person with that of Christ. The "Jesus Only" people hold that Jesus Himself was the

Father. They tend to believe that Jesus prayed to Himself in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross.

The deity of the Father being admitted, we come to a discussion of the personality of the Holy Spirit. It is quite true that we speak of impersonal spirits, such as a fearful spirit, a trusting spirit, and such like, meaning attitudes. But when we speak of the Holy Spirit, we are not thinking merely of an attitude or influence but of an intelligent Being.

The people who refuse to believe the teaching of the Trinity argue that the Holy Spirit cannot be a Person because He is a Spirit. The New Testament speaks of Him as a Person and says He possesses the qualities that make up a person. Jesus made the explanation that it is better and necessary that He return to Heaven so that the Holy Spirit may come, a Comforter whom the Father would send (John 16:7). The three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are here associated. The Holy Spirit is identified with the Comforter, or Counselor, in some such manner as Christ is identified with the Savior.

Further evidence of the personality of the Holy Spirit is seen in the fact that He possesses and exercises personal powers. It is said of Him that He abides, He dwells, He reminds us, He teaches us, He hears, He speaks, He testifies, He reproveth, He is grieved, He glorifies, and He may be resisted. The Spirit chooses the ministers and directs them where to go. The Spirit sets members in the body of Christ. The Spirit imparts gifts to members as He wills.

Having admitted the personality of the Spirit, His deity cannot be denied. If there is any question at this point, one might observe Peter's words to Ananias. It is clear that in lying to the Holy Spirit, he lied to God (Acts 5:3-4). In this, the deity of the Spirit is shown. We may not understand it or be able to explain it, but we may know it through a personal revelation by that Spirit.

JUST A THOUGHT

**Wise men always know more than they tell,
but fools tell more than they know.**



LESSON 9

THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Scripture Texts: John 8:58; 17:5; 6:38; 1:14; Hebrews 1:8-10

This lesson is a continuation of the discussion of the Trinity. The fact of the deity of Christ is the foundation on which the whole structure of Christianity stands. It is because He is God that our souls are saved. Without the Divine Son of God, there would be no atonement, no salvation, no church, and no future glory. There could be no Christian religion without a divine Christ and nothing to justify our claims to having the truth.

The doctrine of the deity of Christ is the target of many clever assaults. Without directly attacking Christ, the method is to magnify His humanity while slyly denying His deity. We are left with a well-meaning Christ with certain limitations. But the issue is clear: either Christ is God, or He is not. He cannot be half-and-half, and there is no neutral place for Him.

MEMORY VERSE: And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.
—Matthew 16:16

Christ Claims Preexistence

Abraham had been dead nearly two thousand years when Christ made the statement in John 8:58, "Before Abraham was, I am." Christ not only lived at the time of Abraham but before Abraham. Abraham was born at a particular time, but of Christ, it is said, "I am," which includes no suggestion of becoming but rather of eternal existence.

In His prayer to the Father in John 17:5, Jesus spoke of Their association before the beginning of the world. It is clear that Christ does not date His beginning from His birth in Bethlehem. In declaring that He came down from Heaven, Christ affirmed His preexistence with the Father whose will He came to do (John 6:38). He affirmed that He was going to return to where He was before. Christ's statements of preexistence were not made to prove His great age, but rather His agelessness or His eternity.

Christ's Incarnation Is Affirmed

In John 1:14 Christ did not simply enter a physical body, but He became flesh. He did not put on humanity as one puts on a coat, but rather as one

puts on weight. His humanity was a part of His Person. The divine Christ and the human Jesus are not two persons but one and the same. He lived with us for over thirty years. Christ took not the nature of angels but of the seed of Abraham. In physical form, He was the same as we are. His human nature was the same as ours, except for sin. He accepted the limitations that accompany humanity in that He became tired, hungry, and tempted like other men. The method of the incarnation was through the Virgin Birth.

Christ's Deity Is Affirmed

The doctrine of the deity of Christ rests on claims made by Christ Himself, and evidence of deity seen in His life and works. Proofs are abundant that Christ is the Son of God (Matthew 3:16-17; Luke 9:34-35). Either Christ laid claim to full deity, or He allowed Himself to be convicted by the Jews on a false charge without any attempt to clarify His real claim. He claimed to be equal with God. The Jews sought to kill Him for blasphemy, which He did not deserve. He healed the palsied man, and He said to Him, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mark 2:5). The Jews desired to stone Him because He claimed to have power that belonged to God alone.

Christ assured the thief on the cross, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). On another occasion, Christ told certain people that they would die in their sins, and they could not come where he was going (John 8:21). In this, He claimed authority over the future destiny of man. Christ proclaimed Himself the final Judge of the living and the dead. This right belongs only to God. In Hebrews 1:8, the Father not only called Christ His Son, but He also calls Him God. There is no conflict here for Christ is God. At the close of John's Gospel (John 20:31), John stated his purpose in writing as being "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

JUST A THOUGHT

**By yielding to temptation,
one may lose in a moment
what it took him a lifetime to gain.**



LESSON 10

GOD'S CREATIVE WORK

Scripture Texts: Isaiah 37:16; Jeremiah 10:12; Acts 17:24; Hebrews 11:3

The origin of things is a problem that has engaged the minds of philosophers and scientists for ages. Ancient fables picture the heavens and the earth as coming from the bodies of the gods. Scientists have studied the formation of the earth and formulated theories as to its development. But no science goes back to the very beginning to explain the origin of things.

The Bible alone presents an intelligible and believable explanation of the origin of the earth. One need not feel at all uncomfortable to admit that he accepts the Biblical revelation as the true and only account of the origin of things. This record declares that all began through the work of the Creator, under the direction of the true God. Ephesians 3:9 and other Scriptures tell us Christ was the Agent in Creation.

*MEMORY VERSE: In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
—Genesis 1:1*

The Creation of the Universe

Christ is identified as the Creator (John 1:1-3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:13-17; Revelation 3:14). The Bible declares the beginning of things to have come through the Creation. This is the only answer found in God's Word. Creation was not wrought by some impersonal force that men might condescend to call "God" but by a personal Being. By the nature of the case, this is necessary, for only a Divine Being possessing a will could bring about the work of Creation. Genesis records that "God said." This was simply the expression of the will of God. He willed it ("*of whom are all things*"), and Christ performed it ("*by whom are all things*"); 1 Corinthians 8:6.

Creation is not the reshaping or reforming of existing materials but the bringing of something into existence that did not exist before. Matter had a beginning, and therefore could not be eternal, as science would have us believe. We read this in Hebrews 11:3. This goes back to the actual beginning of things—only Divinity can make something out of nothing.

There is a difference between *making* and *creating*. The Bible makes this distinction, though the two terms are often used loosely as synonyms. The

Lord made many things out of existing material after He had created it. Likewise, men can make things using the material the Divine has provided. However, man cannot *create*. Observe in Genesis, Chapter 1, three distinct acts of Creation by Christ: (1) creation of material substance, (2) creation of animal life, and (3) creation of man. In each instance, something new came into existence.

The Date of Creation

Based on supposed scientific investigation, the erroneous conclusion is the Earth is supposedly 4.5 billion years old and the universe is much older than that. Although the Bible assigns no specific date to Creation, the genealogies from Adam to Christ are a timeline consisting of only thousands of years (not billions). Many Biblical scholars estimate the origin is in the 6,000 to 10,000 years range. According to astronomers, the Big Bang Theory is the most accepted explanation of the beginning, but the Bible says, "God created" (not a random explosion but a well-thought-out plan).

Geologists use rock layers and fossils as evidence of animals and humans slowly evolving from simple life forms. However, the Bible tells us "by him [Christ] were all things created" (Colossians 1:16), not over billions of years but in six days (Genesis 1:31). Adam was fully grown when he was initially formed. All were created to reproduce "after his kind" (Genesis 7:14), or according to his species.

There were no human eyewitnesses to the beginning of Creation. Scientists, astronomers, geologists, and others have "theories" (ideas to explain something), but at best, these are suppositions or speculations. Only the Triune Godhead was present at the beginning, and His Word is the highest authority in answering questions concerning Creation. "Through faith we understand that the worlds [universe] were framed [formed, put in order, and equipped for their intended use] by the word of God" (Hebrews 11:3).

JUST A THOUGHT

**What we believe concerning man's beginning
determines how we live.**



LESSON 11

THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF MAN

Scripture Texts: Hebrews 2:6-8; 4:12; Genesis 1:26-27, 31; 2:7; 1 Corinthians 2:11; Colossians 3:10

The study of the origin of man should include more than biology, and the study of his spiritual nature involves more than psychology.

A boy received a beautifully painted wagon as a gift. He thought it would make very nice kindling; so he broke it into very small pieces. It did make good kindling, but it was made for a higher purpose. In the way many people live their lives, it appears they have failed to consider our origin, our purpose, and our ultimate destiny. The study of man is not complete until the spiritual and religious realms have been explored. The information needed for an adequate study of man's origin and nature is found in the Bible.

MEMORY VERSE: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. —Genesis 1:27

Man Is of Divine Origin

It is important for man to know where he came from. This has great bearing on where he is going and thus on his present state. If man is only a product of chance, his end is the grave. However, if he was created for a specific reason, an understanding of his purpose affects his choices and ultimately his future.

When God, through Christ, finished all His creative work, He said that it was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Concerning the creation of man, Hebrews 2:7 says, "Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands." Standing at the apex of Creation, man should be conscious of his honor and responsibility. Man was designed to rule ("have dominion"; Genesis 1:26).

There is something about man entirely distinct from all other creations. The creation of man was the fulfillment of a plan. Before God had made man, He had a plan. God had made man from that which had been created earlier ("dust of the ground"; Genesis 2:7). This is the physical part of man, the body. Man is a threefold being ("spirit and soul and body"; 1 Thessalonians 5:23) for man operates in three realms (spiritual, eternal, and earthly). The body of man is his *world-consciousness*.

Man Created in God's Likeness

"The breath of life" that God "breathed into" man (Genesis 2:7) is not the soul of man. The word *breath* in the original language means "life essence." With this breath, "man became a living soul [the Hebrew word *nephesh* means 'a living being']." Keil and Delitzsch Commentary says, "The breath of life does not denote the spirit by which man is distinguished from the animals, or the soul of man from that of the beasts, but only the life breath."

There is a distinction between the soul and the spirit (Hebrews 4:12). God said, "Let us make man . . . after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). What part of man is *like* God? It is the eternal soul because God is eternal (Deuteronomy 33:27; Isaiah 57:15). When man dies, the body returns to dust and the spirit returns to God (Ecclesiastes 12:7), but the soul lives forever. It is the eternal soul that is like God.

The soul is the true center of man's life. The soul is the real you. It is your *self-consciousness*. The soul is where personality, conscience, emotions, desires, thoughts, and feelings reside. The soul is the seat of will and purpose.

Man Created in the Image of God

God is a Spirit Being, and communication with Him must be on a spiritual level (John 4:24). Hebrews 4:12 compares the "spirit" to "marrow," the life-giving tissue inside the bones. Our spirit is designed to be inhabited by the Holy Spirit, which is essential for spiritual life (2 Corinthians 3:6). Our spirit is how God speaks to us; it is our *God-consciousness*.

The image of God is "righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). Every child is born (created) in God's image, but when sin enters, the spirit is defiled (no longer pure and holy). Thus, the need for salvation, for a "new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Colossians 3:10). Communication and fellowship with a Holy God requires a clean spirit that is directed through the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit.

JUST A THOUGHT

**Man *has* a body, he *possesses* a spirit,
but he *is* a soul.**



LESSON 12

PROBATION AND THE FALL OF MAN

Scripture Texts: Genesis 2:16-17; 3:6, 17-19

Some educators teach man has had a history of consistent upward progress—slow indeed, but ever upward. This view starts with the assumption that primitive man was a base savage and through the slow processes of evolution, he has passed through the various stages of civilization to his present high position near the pinnacle of human perfection. Such theories are at variance with the Bible and the Christian religion.

Obvious facts furnish an abundance of evidence there is something fundamentally wrong with human nature that education and culture have not corrected and show no evidence of an ability to correct. Either man, as he came from the hand of God, was defective, or a terrible calamity has befallen him. The Bible declares the latter. The dispute is between the Biblical doctrine of the fall of man and the need for redemption OR the theory that man is essentially good and can (by his own efforts) bring himself to a higher plane of perfection.

MEMORY VERSE: Wherefore, 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.
—Romans 5:12

Man Was Placed Under Probation

We must take the essential teachings of Genesis 2:16-17 as literal lessons to us from God, or we will miss the significance of the whole story. God gave a definite command to man that he should not partake of a certain tree. This command placed man under direct responsibility concerning a certain act. His response to this command would prove his loyalty to God or his lack of it. Adam was plainly told the consequence of disobedience.

Man was created with a moral constitution, which includes the power of moral choice and the exercise of free will. God declared the man whom He had created to be very good. There was nothing about his nature that was sinful. He was created pure and upright (righteous). God was to Adam a loving companion, offering him every incentive to do right. He promised blessings for obedience and warned of the effects of sin. The responsibility for obedience remained with man.

Love for God can be proved only through voluntary obedience. For this reason, the first man was placed under probation, and likewise, all men must pass through a period of probation to develop character. Character is developed by making decisions for right or for wrong.

Man Yielding to Temptation Caused the Fall

The tempter, in the form of a serpent, began to question God's Word. First, doubt was hurled at God's command. Next, he boldly challenged the truthfulness of God's statement, and after calling God a liar, he tried to attack God's motive. He broke down Eve's resistance and persuaded her to disobey God. Adam and Eve's eyes were opened as the serpent had promised, and they experienced the pangs of a guilty conscience. They had come to know evil. This is seen in Adam's effort to evade God and his attempt to excuse his sin by placing the blame on Eve. Adam experienced spiritual death. He lost fellowship with God; no more did he walk with God in the cool of the day. He had been cut off from the Tree of Life of the soul.

Adam immediately became enslaved to sin. He found he was no longer the master he had been. Suffering and sorrow increased.

Eve conversed with the serpent, yielded to his temptation, made her decision, and disobeyed God. Then she induced Adam to join her in her sin. Now judgment was pronounced on their disobedience. The result of this sin was spiritual death.

JUST A THOUGHT

**The power of all temptation is the prospect
that it will make me happier.**



LESSON 13

THE NATURE AND EFFECTS OF SIN

Scripture Texts: 1 John 3:4; James 4:17; Galatians 3:22; Mark 7:21

There are widely differing views about sin. One view is that man may sin or not sin as he pleases and that his sins are only the forming of bad habits. Another view is that man is a helpless sinner by nature, and therefore he cannot help sinning; thus he is not responsible for his actions. Another view calls attention to sin as an act of willful transgression, and sin as the fountain source from which transgressions issue. We believe the Bible declares the latter to be true.

*MEMORY VERSE: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.
—Romans 3:23*

The Sin of Commission

Sin is usually thought of as an evil deed. Many things are prohibited in the Bible, and these are regarded as sins. There are many things we are commanded to do, and failure to do them is also considered sin. There are two types of sin. The sin of *commission* is doing those things that God has instructed us not to do, and the sin of *omission* is failing to do those things that God, in His Word, has instructed us to do. Long lists of sins may be assembled from the Bible. These would include such sins as murder, adultery, theft, bearing false witness, drunkenness, profanity, idolatry, and many other things. No such list can be made complete, for man is constantly inventing new ways to sin.

Sin may be committed in thought, word, and deed. All our human faculties may be used either for good or for evil. Sinning in thought usually precedes the other methods. The Law of Moses had no way of knowing the thoughts of men's hearts and could only deal with the outward acts of sin. But the Gospel deals with thoughts as well as with deeds. Jesus spoke of sinning in thought. The man who entertains thoughts of hatred toward his brother, though he never performs the act, is a murderer. The man who entertains unlawful thoughts of lust for a woman is an adulterer.

There is a vast difference between thoughts of evil and evil thoughts. Many Christians suppose they have sinned in thought when they have not sinned at all. They have only been tempted. Temptation is not a sin until we

yield to it. We disclaim evil thoughts by casting them from our minds as soon as we recognize the fact that they should not be there. Sometimes evil thoughts impress us so deeply that we find it difficult to banish them unless we take them to God in prayer. To consent to do evil, if it were not for the consequences, is sinning in thought.

The Sin of Omission

Sin is a heart ailment. Jesus taught clearly that one's conduct is determined by the attitude of his heart. It is the tree that determines the nature of the fruit. One may NOT do something God said not to do and yet sin by refusing to DO something God has impressed him to do. This is the sin of omission as stated in James 4:17. The greatest sin of omission is to fail to obtain salvation through Jesus. Sins of omission are as wicked as evil deeds.

How Sin Is Imputed

Sin is the willful transgression of God's law. It is not conceivable that someone whose heart is free from sin will indulge freely in sins. As a general rule, it is quite proper to judge a person by his conduct. When we speak of living free from sin, we do not lay claim to absolute perfection and freedom from all mistakes. Many people believe it is impossible to live free from sin simply because they do not understand how God imputes sin. Sin is not a mistake, and neither can we sin unknowingly.

Some people feel sin is not imputed to them because they are Christians and have been given a license to sin. One might do wrong through ignorance or mistaken judgment while holding a perfect heart attitude. When one's motive is pure, he is not condemned for a mistake or an error in judgment. One man may do wrong ignorantly from a perfectly pure motive and be excused; another man may do the same thing with a wrong motive and be condemned.

One's responsibility is measured by his knowledge of God's will or the light that he has been shown or the light he has had the opportunity to see. To turn down light is a fast way to have sin imputed against one. Sin does not destroy human nature, but it perverts it. The imputing of sin incurs guilt, enslavement, and defilement on the sinner. The preaching of the Gospel and the convicting power of the Holy Spirit arouses in man a sense of guilt. Christ came to wipe the slate clean through the forgiveness of past sins and to change the motive of the heart so that the outside acts are right. The only way to have our sins erased is through the blood of Jesus Christ, in accepting His full plan of redemption.

JUST A THOUGHT

**God is in the CLEANING business not the
WHITEWASHING business.**

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