

“GOOD NEWS” LESSON SERIES -- THE WORLD CANNOT MEET ALL OF MAN'S NEEDS

Are you looking for the truth, freedom? The world's greatest teacher, Jesus, said, "If you hold to my teaching, ... you will know the truth and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32)

The Bible, your road map to follow for your adventure, is far more than a doctrinal guidebook. It is God's message to this world. God's Word generates life, creates faith, produces change, frightens the Devil, causes miracles, heals hurts, builds character, transforms circumstances, imparts joy, overcomes adversity, defeats temptations, infuses hope, releases power, cleanses our minds, brings things into being, and guarantees our future forever! Always remember that the Bible was not given to increase our knowledge but to change our lives.

The Bible is divided into two major parts. One major part is called the Old Testament and the other part is called the New Testament. These titles are often abbreviated as OT and NT. Parts of the OT apply only to the Hebrew or Jewish up to the time of Jesus. But the OT also contains many unchangeable truths that still apply today.

The OT is made up of 39 separate books and they begin by telling of the beginnings of our universe, of man, and of sin. The OT also predicts (or foretells) of God's way of salvation in Christ.

The NT part of the Bible is made up of 27 separate books. The first four books, often called the Gospels, tell us about the birth, life, teachings, death, and physical resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The next book, called the Acts of the Apostles, is about Jesus' return to heaven and the beginning of Christ's kingdom or church. When people become Christians, God adds them to his church. The very same faith in Christ and obedience to Christ that makes them Christians also makes them members of the church.

The rest of the New Testament is made up of actual letters ("epistles" mean letters), written under God's guidance, to individual Christians or to groups of Christians called churches. The New Testament closes with a book about the future of the church and this present world. It is called, Revelation.

Jesus Christ has now returned to heaven to be with God, his Father. God has made him the head of his church. He is now the king reigning over this church, his spiritual kingdom. The NT is especially for those interested in becoming Christians as well as those wanting to know more about Jesus Christ. It is a daily guide for those of us who live today.

YOU CAN ACCESS TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE IN SIMPLE TO UNDERSTAND ENGLISH AT www.biblegateway.com

Enjoy your study. Ask any questions you may have about this lesson. Your teacher-helper will reply. The other lessons will give more detail about Jesus and what he taught. He can meet and fill the needs of your life.

THE WORLD CANNOT MEET ALL OF MAN'S NEEDS

All Scripture quotes are from the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible.

1. **Having Food, Clothing, and Justice.** The Bible says in the OT in Ezekiel 22:29: "The people of the land practice extortion and commit robbery; they oppress the poor and needy and mistreat the alien, denying them justice."

2. **Having Happiness.** The Bible says in the OT in Proverbs 14:12, 13: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death. Even in laughter the heart may ache, and joy may end in grief."

3. **Being Loved and Cared For.** The Bible says in the OT in Psalms 142:4: "Look to my right and see: no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge; no one cares for my life." Psalms 102:7: "I lie awake; I have become like a bird alone on a roof." Job 19:19: "All my intimate friends detest me; those I love have turned against me."

4. **Feeling Good About What One Has Done.** The Bible says in the OT in Ecclesiastes 2:11: "Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun."

5. **Having a Satisfying Purpose For Living.** The Bible says in Ecclesiastes 5:10 and 9:3: "Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless? This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of men, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead."

6. **Having Security.** The Bible says in the NT in Matthew 6:31-32: "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things."

7. **Having Deliverance.** The Bible says in the NT in Romans 7:22-25: "For in my inner being I delight in God's Law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body . . . making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. . . . Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (. . . means that part of the sentence or paragraph has not been printed)

8. **To Overcome Failures.** The Bible says in Psalms 40:12: "For troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see. They are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails within me."

9. **Living a New Life of Hope and Acceptance.** The Bible says in the OT in Psalms 142:4: "Look to my right and see; no one is concerned for me. I have no refuge, no one cares for my life." In the NT in Ephesians 2:11-13 it says: "Therefore, remember that you who are Gentiles by birth . . . remember that at that time you were separate...foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ."

GOD'S GREATEST DESIRES ARE . . .

1. To have a personal relationship with all people.

2. To meet the deepest of our human needs completely and fully.

Question: "Who is this God that is being spoken of?" He is best known through his love letter called the Bible. Let us take a look at what it says:

a. He is the creator of the universe. At the very beginning of the Bible in Genesis 1:1, it says: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

b. He is a concerned God who is personally involved with us, his creation. Psalms 34:18 says: "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."

c. He is God, the only one, who has unconditional love for all of people, ... whoever! John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

d. He gives us a choice. In Isaiah 1:18, God says through the prophet Isaiah, "Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."

GOD DESIRES AND IS ABLE TO MEET AND FILL ALL HUMAN NEEDS

But he wants us to be more concerned about the spiritual and eternal than our present, physical cares.

1. **Food And Clothing** - Matthew 6:25, 26 says: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

2. **Real Happiness** - Psalms 144:15; Psalms 16:11: "Blessed are the people of whom this is true; blessed are the people whose God is the Lord." "You (God) have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand."

3. **Acceptance** - God accepts all people but does not approve of the conduct of all people. Acts 10:34: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right." 1 Corinthians 6:9-11: "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

4. **Being Loved and Cared For** -- Romans 5:8; 1 John 3:1 ("1 John" is a small book at the end of the NT.) "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"

5. **Having a Purpose For Living** -- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "You are not your own; you were bought with a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

6. **Having Security** - Romans 8:35-39: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long: we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered!' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

7. **Having Deliverance** -- 2 Timothy 4:18: "The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

8. **Overcoming Failures** -- Philippians 3:13-14: "But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

9. **Hope** -- Romans 5:5: "And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." Ephesians 2:13: "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ."

IT'S YOUR CHOICE

Isn't it great that God himself would give you the opportunity to make your own choice about which way of life you prefer to live and experience. The world's way of life never completely fulfills nor offers a personal relationship with God our Creator and Father. If your choice is accepting and living for God, God explains through his Bible how you can come into this great relationship with him.

1. The way to live in unending fellowship with God has already been provided for you. You can't buy your way into it. You can not do enough good deeds to receive it. It is a **GIFT**, a gift from God he lovingly wants you to receive. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For it is by **GRACE** you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast."

2. Receiving this wonderful new life of fellowship with God is simple but involves a **FAITH** in God that trusts him to save you from the penalty of your sins and to restore you to fellowship with him. Hebrews 11:6 says, "And without faith is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him."

It involves an inner change of mind called **REPENTANCE**--a change about God, ourselves, and our life on earth. The idea is to give up your will to do as you please and rebuild your life around doing what pleases God. Jesus said in Luke 13:3 and 5, "But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

It involves a change that must come from the center of our being and result in a changed way of life. Your publicly spoken **CONFESSION** of your faith in God and trust in Jesus Christ is a beginning part of making this total change. Romans 10:10 puts it this way: "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

This wonderful change process comes to its climax with what God calls **BAPTISM** in the Bible. Here our old life under sin's consequences ends and our new life that is eternal and everlasting begins. Here we demonstrate our faith, totally depending on God's offer of his FREE GIFT. We bury the past by being baptized (immersed in water) into Christ. We are now his and God's free gift of salvation from sin and God's personal fellowship with us begins. "Repent and be baptized, (immersed) every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Romans 6:4). Now a life of personal Christian living in fellowship with God begins.

3. **TODAY**, you have studied a small portion of God's wonderful love letter, the Bible. God's desire is that you choose him as Lord of your life. Then he will come one day to take us home to heaven to be with him. We pray your choice today will be for the one true God and his son, Jesus Christ. Do not be left out of heaven when God through Christ returns to take his children home.

Isn't it great! But, God has left the choice up to you! Please let your teacher know if you would need further assistance in accepting and receiving God's free gift of salvation to you. When you have finished studying this Introductory Lesson, go on to the IBS Website - www.internationalbibleschool.org. Now you can do all the lessons from the website or continue here. You will find the questions at the end of the Introductory Lesson at the above website.

So now you can go on to the Lesson Questions at the IBS Website. The questions are not included here.

LESSON ONE: THE PROBLEM? WHY AM I UNHAPPY?

God wants us to be happy, but we can not achieve this goal until God is happy with us. Sin makes God unhappy. Are all your sins forgiven? Nothing is more important than this assurance. Food, water, clothing and shelter are important. But all of these have no eternal value. Forgiveness of sins gives us hope of eternal life.

The Bible tells us we can be forgiven. Of course, before we will seek forgiveness we must be convinced we have sinned and are in need of forgiveness.

The gospel (or good news) was first preached on a Jewish feast day called Pentecost about A.D. 30 on the Roman calendar. This is recorded in the second chapter of Acts (2:14-40). In this sermon the persons hearing it were told they had committed a terrible sin: they had crucified the Son of God - Jesus. Here is their response:

"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37)

Why did they ask such a question? Because they saw themselves as very much in need of forgiveness. Their life had no hope - no peace. They needed to be saved from the penalty of their sin.

We need to ask the same question ourselves. We have all sinned. When we admit our guilt and are willing to follow God's way to forgiveness, we can surely find it. The very worst thing in life is sin. It separates us from God.

THE MEANING OF SIN

1 John 3:4 defines sin as lawlessness. The person who sins has no respect for God's law. Whatever is done in opposition to God's law is sin. John further said, "all wrongdoing (all that is not right as defined by God) is sin . . ." (1 John 5:17).

There are three ways we can sin:

1. We sin when we disobey God by doing things such as committing fornication (sexual intercourse outside of marriage), adultery, getting drunk, worshipping idols, lying, stealing, murder, hatred, and covetousness. Here are references that tell us about this kind of sin. Read them carefully. Matthew 15:18; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Galatians 5:19, 21; Ephesians 4:25-31; 5:3, 4; 2 Timothy 3:2-4; 1 John 3:15.

2. Not only do we sin by doing the things listed above, but also when we fail to do what we know we should do we sin. God wants us to avoid evil - and also to do good! James said: "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins." (James 4:17)

3. We also sin when we have wrong attitudes. God's Word goes right to the heart of sin. Sins in motives, intentions and desires are very serious. Read these references: Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28; Mark 7:21.

THE ORIGIN OF SIN

Satan was the first sinner. "He who does what is sinful is of the devil (Satan), because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work" (1 John 3:8).

Those who practice sin are called sons of Satan or sons of the devil. Read John 8:44; 1 John 3:10.

Satan is always trying to lead us into disobedience to God's will. (Read John 13:2; Acts 5:3.) He does this through temptation. Read 1 Corinthians 7:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:5. Temptation appeals to our natural desires such as the desires of the flesh for sex and food. The desire for the things we see or the lust of the eyes - and the pride of life or being like those about us who are sinners (1 John 2:15-17 and James 1:14).

It is not a sin to be tempted. It is only when we disobey God that we sin. Read James 1:12, 15. Even our Lord Jesus was tempted, but he did not sin. Read Hebrews 4:15; Matthew 4:1-11.

The fact that Adam and Eve were tempted by what the devil told them was not sin. (Read Hebrews 4:15 and Matthew 4:1-11 again.) Sin only comes when one yields to Satan's suggestions and disobeys God.

WHO HAS SINNED?

Sad to say, the record of mankind is "all have sinned." None of us can say we are not guilty. As the scriptures say: "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10). Read Romans 3:23.

Since all have sinned and the penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23), we truly need to be forgiven.

If the only quality in the character of God was justice, we would truly all be lost. But *God is love* (1 John 4:8); therefore he extends grace (unearned favor) to us. Paul tells us we are justified (declared not guilty) freely by his grace through the redemption (purchase with a great price) that is in Christ Jesus. (Read Romans 3:24).

We cannot expect to be forgiven because we are worth it - or for our perfect obedience. It makes no difference how many times we have sinned - the wages of one sin is hell (Romans 6:23). We need to admit our sin and seek his forgiveness. The good news is that God loves us and wants to forgive us.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS AND RESULTS OF SIN?

The effects of sin can be seen everywhere: families are divided; there are prisons, war, and unhappy people all about us. Without Christ and forgiveness people are miserable. The Bible describes such persons as sick spiritually; read Matthew 9:12. They are lost; read Luke 19:10. They are children of the devil; read John 8:44. They are slaves to sin; read Romans

6:16. They live in darkness; read Colossians 1:13; 1 Peter 2:9; 1 John 2:11.

The final result of sin is eternal death. There are two deaths: physical death (Hebrews 9:27) and the second death, the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

Physical death is the result of Adam's sin - not our own personal sins. All people face physical death. All people will ultimately be delivered from a physical death. - "For since death came through a man (Adam), the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man (Christ). For as in Adam all die (physically), so in Christ all will be made alive" (at the resurrection). 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22

We do not have to answer for the sins of Adam. God does not hold us responsible for the sins of others, but only for our own personal sins. Read 2 Corinthians 5:10. "So then each of us will give an account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

This horrible death is an eternal separation from God and Christ. Jesus said to those who refused to turn from sin, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come." (John 8:21). Such persons "will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord" (Read 2 Thessalonians 1:9.) This is the final result of sin. (Read Romans 6:23 and James 1:15).

Hell is a very real place, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Read Matthew 13:42). Other scriptures that should be studied are Matthew 23:33; 25:46; Mark 9:43-48; Luke 12:5; 13:25-28; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Galatians 5:21; Ephesians 5:5; Hebrews 10:27, 31; and Revelation 20:10; 21:27; 22:14, 15.

God does not want anyone to go hell. Hell was "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). It is only when a person steadfastly refuses to obey God and obeys Satan that he thus sends himself to hell. It is not God's will that anyone should perish. (Read 2 Peter 3:9). This is why he has provided a way for us to escape guilt and be forgiven. We will study in detail this way of escape in the next lesson.

We are free to choose. We can choose the way that leads to hell - or the way that leads to heaven.

God does not force any of us to follow the way to forgiveness and salvation. (Read John 5:40). But he invites us and gives us the opportunity to come to him if we will. (Read Revelation 22:17).

Are you forgiven? Are you a sinner? We hope this lesson has shown you the terrible results of sin. We do hope and pray you decide to seek God's help. The next lesson will consider the way of escape and freedom.

Now, go to the questions for Lesson One at the IBS Website

LESSON TWO: FORGIVENESS FROM GOD THROUGH CHRIST

Christian writer C.S. Lewis defined hope as "a continual looking forward to the eternal world." (*Mere Christianity* p. 104)

Our terrible condition in sin would be hopeless were it not for the great love God has for us. The *good* news is that God overcame all our guilt and sin. This is called "the gospel." Paul said of it:

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." (Romans 1:16)

The things God has given for man's escape and his forgiveness are all found in this good news. It is expressed in these beautiful words:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we now have been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!" (Romans 5:8,9)

Read also Matthew 27:29-50; Mark 15:15-38; Luke 23:27-46; John 1:29, 12:32-33; 19:13-37; 1 Peter 2:24.

The animal sacrifices offered by the Jews under the Old Covenant were the promise of something better. The blood of those animal sacrifices could not take away sins (Read Hebrews 10:4). However, the only blood having power to deliver man from sins is that of His own Son. His life was sinless and therefore His death - His sacrifice of Himself became the means of our forgiveness. Read carefully the following references: Hebrews 4:15; 5:8, 9; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 2:21, 22.

Jesus Christ is the center of the New Covenant and His death is the theme of the gospel. Therefore, it is easy to understand why Paul (the apostle) summed up his work of preaching by declaring, "For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). His death on the cross would have been in vain if He had not won over death by His resurrection. (Read 1 Corinthians 15:14, 20; Romans 4:25). The power of the gospel involves his resurrection - as well as his crucifixion. Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

We shall now consider different pictures of the escape Jesus offers us from our sins.

1. Salvation: Man is lost in sin and needs to be rescued. Jesus has done this for us.

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21)

"For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost." (Luke 19:10)

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering." (Hebrews 2:9, 10)

Read Hebrews 7:25; I Peter 2:25; I Timothy 1:15; Romans 8:1.

2. Redemption (to ransom or buy back): We have sold ourselves to sin and Satan. Jesus came to buy us back. There is nothing we can do to effect this redemption. Jesus did it for us. The price was his precious blood. "In whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins" (Colossians 1:14). Read also Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 1:30; 6:20; Hebrews 9:12). In doing this for us Jesus broke the power and work of the devil.

3. Justification: We appear before God "just-as-if" we had never sinned. We are justified or declared "not guilty" because of the redemption we have in God's Son Jesus. Please read Acts 13:38, 39; Romans 5:1, 9; Titus 3:5-7.

4. Reconciliation: This word means "to restore friendship after separation." When we first sin we separate ourselves from God. But when we are saved, redeemed and justified, we are brought back into fellowship with God.

"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation." (Colossians 1:21, 22)

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation." (II Corinthians 5:18, 19)

Read Ephesians 2:16, 17.

5. Forgiveness: In order to stand before God without sin our sins must be forgiven. This happens when we accept His Son's death in our place. It is through the blood of Christ that God forgives and forgets all our sins. Read this powerful verse: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace." (Ephesians 1:7)

Read Acts 5:31; 13:38; 26:18; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 1:14; 3:13; I John 1:9; 2:12.

Having the same meaning as "forgiveness" is the word remission." Read Matthew 26:28; Luke 1:77; Hebrews 9:22.

6. Cleansing: Our sin makes our hearts dirty - even as dirt and grime do to our bodies. We use soap and water to cleanse our bodies. Just so, when we are immersed into His death (Romans 6:4), we reach the blood of Jesus that cleanses our hearts from all the filth of sin.

What a meaningful verse this is! ". . . and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (I John 1:7). Read also I Corinthians 6:11; Revelation 7:14; Romans 6:1-6.

To consider the wonderful fact that we are saved, redeemed, justified, reconciled, forgiven, and clean makes us aware of God's love, and grace. How meaningful is this passage of scripture:

"But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:4-7)

The word "grace" means that God has given us His kindness and mercy, which we did not deserve. This is unmerited favor from our Father. Not one of us deserves to be forgiven or saved. Indeed, we all deserve to be sent to hell (Romans 1:32). There is nothing we can do to merit the removal of guilt and sin. Our Father in heaven is rich in mercy and loves us - so He sent His Son to do what we could never do for ourselves. This is the unspeakable gift from God to each of us. Read Romans 6:23 and Philippians 2:5-8 as well as II Corinthians 8:9.

We do indeed believe that we shall be saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus (Acts 15:11).

JESUS CHRIST IS THE HOPE OF THE WORLD! If we desire escape from our sins and a place in the everlasting kingdom of God, we must be certain that we have come to God by way of Jesus Christ and His blood. Read John 14:6. But if we neglect so great a salvation, we will lose ourselves in everlasting hell.

"We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him." (Hebrews 2:1-3)

Now go to the questions for Lesson Two at the IBS Website

LESSON THREE: THE ANSWER: JESUS CHRIST IS LORD

The study of Christianity must include the meaning of authority. Who is the source of authority? How is this authority revealed to man?

God, in the person of His Son Jesus Christ, the creator of the universe (please read John 1:1-3) is the supreme authority. The epistle of Hebrews tells us:

"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe." (Hebrews 1:1, 2)

Many years before God sent His Son the people of the earth hallowed God by accepting the authority of Moses and the prophets. Today God reveals His will to us through His Son.

The apostle Matthew tells us about a time when God showed His approval of His Son. Please read Matthew 17:1-8. Moses, the Old Testament lawgiver, and Elijah, representative of the Old Testament prophets, were present. Read this fifth verse:

"While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, `This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!'" (Matthew 17:5)

We are to let Jesus tell us how to live. Our Lord gave such a command during His lifetime. After His death and resurrection, His authority took the place of Moses and the prophets. Please read Galatians 3:19; 24-25; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:9, 10.

The Old Testament commands were delivered to the Jewish nation and carry examples for our learning. Read I Corinthians 10:1-6.

The instruction of our Lord are contained in the 27 documents we call the New Testament scriptures. It is essential that we give heed to these inspired words. Luke 10:16 says: "He who listens to you (the apostles of Christ) listens to me, and he who rejects you rejects me; and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." We who accept Jesus as Lord accept the will of His Father.

Read carefully John 7:16; 17:4, 8.

God is the source of all religious authority. He gave this authority to His Son. Jesus said:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Matthew 28:18)

Since all authority is given to our Lord, we must not accept anyone or anything that does not agree with Him. The 27 New Testament books contain what Jesus wants us to do to be saved and live the Christian life. Please read John 6:68, 69; 17:3; II Peter 1:3.

The supreme authority of Jesus Christ is revealed in the superior place given Him by our Heavenly Father. The apostle Paul writes, "Which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way." (Ephesians 1:20-23)

Read Philippians 2:8-11; Colossians 2:9, 10; I Peter 3:22. The New Testament scriptures present Jesus Christ as Divine (John 1:1); Prophet (Acts 7:37); King (I Timothy 6:14, 15); High Priest (Hebrews 7:23-28; 8:1-5); Savior and Redeemer (Titus 2:13-14). These scriptures emphasize the superiority and authority of Jesus Christ.

As we have read in Luke 10:16, to accept Jesus' authority is to also accept the authority of His twelve apostles. These apostles were our Lord's personal messengers, or witnesses, on earth.

To these men Jesus said:

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

The apostle Paul wrote,

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." (II Corinthians 5:20)

John, speaking of himself, and all the other apostles, declared,

"We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood." (I John 4:6)

Read I John 1:1-4.

The person who accepts the authority of Jesus Christ will also accept the New Testament teachings, which came through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Before He left the earth to return to His Father in heaven, the Lord promised to send to His apostles the Holy Spirit. Why? To bear witness of Jesus Christ and instruct them in His teachings and authority so that they could proclaim Him and His teachings to men (John 14:26; 15:26, 27; 16:13). Through New Testament teachings the Holy Spirit convicts people "in regard to sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:7-11).

The Holy Spirit, in guiding the apostles in all truth, always expressed the authority and glory of Jesus Christ. Jesus promised His apostles: "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you." (John 16:13, 14)

Men who claim a special revelation from the Holy Spirit, but whose teachings are contrary to the gospel of Christ, are fakes. All the revelation given by inspiration through the Holy Spirit is included in the New Testament scriptures. In the New Testament Jesus reveals His authority to us. Those persons who teach and do that which the Bible does not authorize or approve are without Christ. John explains,

"Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son." (II John 9)

Because Jesus Christ is the supreme authority in religion and the Savior of men, we must go to His teachings to learn what we must do to be saved. Before Jesus returned to heaven after His death and resurrection He gave to His apostles the "great commission," which reveals the terms of salvation through Christ. Three records are given of this commission:

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19, 20)

"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15, 16)

"This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things." (Luke 24:46-48)

These words indicate that one must believe in Christ, repent of sins, and be baptized in order to receive salvation in the Lord. The following lessons will explain these steps. Men have salvation in Christ only when they submit to His will. To reject any part of His teaching is to reject the authority of Christ.

Jesus Christ, first authority in life, will also be the first authority in the day of judgment.

"For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man." (John 5:26, 27)

Each person's life will be judged by the teachings of Christ. Jesus said,

"There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day." (John 12:48)

Therefore, we must be certain that we fully submit ourselves to His authority. Jesus the Son of God and supreme authority in Christianity gives a loving and tender invitation for all people to come to Him for salvation:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

Now go to the questions for Lesson Three at the IBS Website

LESSON FOUR: STEP ONE: FAITH IN GOD AND JESUS CHRIST

John Bunyan, author of *Pilgrim's Progress* said, "Hope is never ill when faith is well."

The Bible clearly teaches that a person must have faith or trust in God and Jesus Christ in order to be saved from sin.

"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." (Hebrews 11:6)

"I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins." (John 8:24).

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

"Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything . . ." (Acts 13:38, 39)

Other Bible scriptures teaching the necessity of faith include Mark 16:15, 16; John 6:29; 11:25-27; 12:36; 20:31; Acts 10:43; 15:9; Romans 1:16; 3:25; Ephesians 2:8.

Because Jesus Christ is God's gift that makes salvation possible, this lesson will emphasize the importance of faith in him. We must first learn what it really means to have faith in Christ in order to obtain the salvation we desire.

1. We must accept the fact that Jesus is God's Son and our only Savior. We have not seen Jesus in person, but we believe that he really exists. We believe that he is God's Son and our only Savior.

Why do we believe? Because of the eyewitness testimony or evidence given in the Bible. Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as being "certain of what we do not see." We have never seen the famous people who lived and died many years ago, but we believe they lived because the evidence is so clear. We have never seen Jesus in person, but we have the evidence concerning him in the Bible (1Corinthians 15:1-4). This evidence found in the Holy Scriptures produces our faith in Jesus.

"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17)

Peter declared that those who believed did so because they heard the gospel. "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the Gospel and believe." (Acts 15:7)

Other scriptures producing belief in Jesus as our Savior include John 17:20; 20:30, 31; Acts 17:11, 12.

2. We must do more than accept the fact that Jesus is God's Son and our only Savior. **Believing** that Jesus is the Son of God and the Savior of man is necessary, but it is not all that is required. John tells about some people who did believe but were not acceptable to God.

"Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God." (John 12:42, 43)

Jesus will not confess us before God unless we have enough faith to confess him before others, (Matthew 10:32, 33).

If faith requires nothing more than accepting Jesus as God's Son and mankind's Savior, the demons would be saved, because "the demons also believe, and shudder" (James 2:19).

While just believing is not enough, it is essential for our salvation. No one would desire the salvation provided by Jesus until he was convinced of the gospel facts concerning Christ. When Hebrews 11:1 says, "Faith is being sure of what we hope for," it means that our hope is supported by our faith. If a person does not believe in Jesus Christ, then he has no reason to hope for salvation in him. The believer has a reason for his hope, and he obtains the salvation hoped for when he accepts God's terms of pardon for his sins.

3. We must have trust in Christ. The true believer accepts the fact that Jesus is God's Son and mankind's Savior, and he obeys God's commandments. We are able to do this because we learn to trust completely in Christ. A person must learn to trust Christ for the salvation that cannot be obtained from any other source. We have not yet seen God; we have not gone

to see the glory of Heaven; we do not know what it is like to die. Jesus has done all these things, and we trust Him when he says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father, except through me" (John 14:6). One who will not obey Jesus has no reason to call Him "Lord."

4. We must obey the commands of our Lord. Obedience truly follows mental acceptance of Jesus as God's Son and mankind's Savior, and trusting him for salvation. There is no real answer to Jesus' question, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46) One who will not obey Jesus has no reason to call Him "Lord."

Near the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5-7), Jesus stressed the necessity of doing the things commanded. "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21)

Peter and James also wrote about the importance of obedience.

"Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth . . ." (1 Peter 1:22) "You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone." (James 2:24)

In Romans chapter six, verses seventeen and eighteen, Paul said that when the people in Rome "became obedient from the heart" they were "made free from sin." Obedience from the heart was that which changed them from servants of sin to servants of righteousness.

The Scriptures which teach that salvation is received by obedience are not in conflict with those that teach that salvation is received by faith. Saving faith always produces obedience, for the faith, which saves, is the faith, which obeys. In Hebrews 11:4-38 we have an impressive list of faithful people, and in each case, as evidence of his faith, the faithful person is described as doing something his faith led him to do.

The second chapter of James points to the importance of faith being expressed in obedience. After noting that the demons believe so strongly that they shudder in knowing their condition, James concludes, "faith without deeds is dead" (James 2:26).

We should clearly point out that there is no conflict between James' teaching of salvation shown by works or deeds and Paul's teaching that salvation is by grace and faith. Paul taught: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9)

By such teachings he simply said that works of credit, which people may do, does not earn salvation. At the same time he recognized that saving faith calls for an obedient answer by the faithful person. Paul's own life as a Christian was his most powerful teaching that the real man of faith is the man who obeys God. One who has so little faith that he refuses to obey God is the one who rejects God's saving grace by his refusal to obey.

"Peter replied, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 2:38)

Again we ask, "Is there a conflict between the teaching that remission of sins results from repentance and baptism and the teaching that remission of sins is the result of faith or belief?" It is easy to see that there is no conflict if one realizes that faith is a general term including everything involved in believing and obeying God.

The people who heard Peter's sermon and accepted it were baptized (immersed) that same day, according to Acts 2:41. Verse 44 describes the same people as those who believed. Obviously the word "believed" in verse 44 includes the act of baptism (immersion) mentioned in verse 41. In similar fashion, Crispus is described as one who believed (Acts 18:8) and one who was baptized (immersed) (1 Corinthians 1:14).

In Acts 16:31 the jailer in Philippi was told, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved - you and your household." Continuing the reading of the story makes clear what he understood belief to include. Verse 32 says that Paul and Silas preached the word of the Lord. Verse 33 says that he and his household were baptized (immersed) the same hour of the night. There is no question that they understood the command to believe to include baptism (immersion) as well as repentance and other evidences of a willingness to obey. In every other example of one converting to Christianity described in the book of Acts, faith was always expressed by obedience to the Lord's will. There is no exception.

We have learned in this lesson that faith in Christ is essential to salvation. The faith that saves is the faith of complete trust, and the faith which causes us to obey every commandment given by God for our salvation. May God bless you in believing, trusting, and obeying him.

Now go to the Questions for Lesson Four at the IBS Website

LESSON FIVE: STEP TWO: REPENTANCE

What is repentance? The word "repentance" in the NT comes from a Greek word that means, "to get a new mind." The word simply means a change of mind. From the very beginning of the gospel, the need for people to repent was taught with great force by every teacher sent by God

Read the following parable: "There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.' 'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go. Which of the two repented? The one who did what his father wanted?" (Matthew 21:28-31)

The first son, after refusing to do as the father requested, later "repented, and went." That is, he changed his mind and did what his father told him to do. We can plainly see that repentance is a change of mind.

John the Baptist (or Immerser, baptist means immerser), who came to make things ready for Jesus, was the first of a long line of preachers to tell people that they had to repent in order to be pleasing to God. Matthew wrote: "In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.'" (Matthew 3:1,2)

Later, when John had done his work and had been put in prison, we are told: "After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said, 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'" (Mark 1:14,15)

After this, Jesus went about his work, preaching the gospel to the poor and doing good to all. He called twelve men to be his apostles. These twelve men were sent by Jesus to preach to others. "They went out, and preached that people should repent." (Mark 6:12)

Jesus harmed no one, but did only good for all with whom he came in contact. He tried to get all people to repent so they would be pleasing to God and God would be able to rule their lives. Wicked men, because of envy, misunderstood and refused Jesus. They demanded that he be put to death on a cross. The grave could not hold Jesus and on the third day after his burial, God released him from the tomb and he lived as a man again. He kept showing himself to many different people so that all would know and be sure that he was risen from the dead. Then he went back to heaven to take his place at the right hand of God and have the glory and the honor that was due him.

His followers who were still upon the earth were commanded to go into every land and tell every person to repent. Jesus said to these disciples, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." (Luke 24:46,47)

The book of Acts tells how believers in the first century obeyed Jesus and went everywhere preaching the word of God. Here are a few examples of how they preached and what they said:

- Peter: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." (Acts 2:38)
- Peter: "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." (Acts 3:19)
- Paul: "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30)
- Paul said that he had done this, "First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds." (Acts 26:20)

You can see from this how important it is for people to repent. If we do not repent, we cannot be with Jesus and God. If we do not repent, we shall die a spiritual death and will not be able to go into heaven. Jesus said, "I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish" (Luke 13:3). This is very clear and easy to understand. Jesus taught that we will either repent or we shall perish!

We must know what repentance is or we will not be able to repent. There are many wrong ideas about what repentance is. Some think that when a person knows he is a sinner and feels guilty, he has repented. In chapter twenty-six of the book of Acts we are told how Paul preached to a certain king whose name was Agrippa. This king was a very sinful man. The apostle made him realize how evil he was, but he did not repent. King Agrippa, as far as we know, never did obey the gospel and receive forgiveness of sins.

Repentance is not fear. On still another occasion Paul preached to a governor named Felix. This man, too, was a bad man who did not fear God and who did many wrong things. He was guilty of murder, stealing, lying and adultery. When Paul preached to Felix, he ". . . discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, 'That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you.'" (Acts 24:25) Felix was afraid, but Felix did not repent. No, fear is not repentance.

Repentance is not sorrow for sins. This cannot be true either. Paul wrote, "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10). Godly sorrow comes before repentance. If godly sorrow causes us to repent, then they are two different things. Godly sorrow is one thing but repentance is yet another thing, another step toward forgiveness.

It may help us to understand what repentance is and what we are to do when we repent if we know what causes repentance. The NT tells us that two things cause or help us to repent. They are:

1. The goodness or kindness of God - "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?" (Romans 2:4)

2. Godly sorrow - "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." (2 Corinthians 7:10)

Here is how it happens. We are all sinners. You are a sinner. I am a sinner. Paul wrote, "What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin" (Romans 3:9). He also wrote, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Every person sins. Just think of your own life and of the things you have done. Stop and remember. Can you think of things you have done that you know are wrong - things you should not have done? Have you hurt a friend? Have you told a lie? Have you been drunk? Have you been guilty of fornication? Have you failed to do things that are right and that you should have done? We can all think of things in our past life that we are ashamed of and we ought not to have done.

On the other hand, think of the fact that God loves you and wants the very best for you. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

Think of that! God loved you so much that he sent his Son to die for you. God wants you to be happy. God wants you to be saved. God is good. He sends us the sunshine and the rain and causes the golden harvest to bless us with food and clothes and houses. Everything good we have we owe to God.

We see that God is good and has done many wonderful things for us and that we are sinful and unworthy of his gifts. God's goodness - his rich gifts to us - should make us sad that we have failed him and that we ought to be full of sorrow. The godly sorrow we feel should cause us to change our minds about the way we have acted and lived in the past. Our sorrow should make us decide to quit doing what is wrong and start doing what is right. That decision to change is repentance.

Repentance makes us better people. It makes us live in a way that will please God. John the Baptist (Immerser) told the people to "produce fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matthew 3:8). It is not enough for us to know that we are sinful and that God is good. Such knowledge should cause us to make such a strong decision to live righteous lives that we cannot fail to make whatever change is right. Godly living follows true repentance. A change in mind brings a change in life.

Repentance has to do with the human will. We are stubborn and it is hard for us to admit that we have been wrong. But once we think about our own sins and consider the goodness and patience of God, we will decide to change our ways and be the kind of person God wants us to be. The person who has done this will not hesitate to obey the command of the NT to be baptized (immersed) in order to have one's sins removed. If our mind, our heart, has changed, God promises to wash away our sins in the act of baptism (immersion). (Acts 22:16)

That is God's plan for us. That is what God wants you to do. We ought to obey God because one day the Lord Jesus will be revealed . . .

" . . . from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you." (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)

"Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?"

But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." (Romans 2:2-9)

The call of God is to repent, to repent or else . . .

Now go to the Questions for Lesson Five at the IBS Website

LESSON SIX: THE COMMITMENT: BAPTISM BY IMMERSION

Baptism (immersion) is more than just a part of our response to the gospel, or good news, about Christ. Without baptism, your response to the gospel message is not complete. (Read Mark 16:15, 16 and Acts 8:35, 36). If we believe the whole message of the NT, we will believe what it teaches about baptism (immersion).

In the Bible there are three distinct baptisms: the baptism of John the Baptist (Luke 3:3), Holy Spirit baptism (Matthew 3:11), and the baptism, which Jesus commissioned all his followers to practice (Matthew 28:19 and 20). Today there is only one baptism in effect (Ephesians 4:5).

1. The baptism (immersion) of John the Baptist (Immerser) was given before Jesus worked and died. It was given to make people ready for him. It was not given in Jesus' name. When the New Testament or New Covenant period began, the baptism of John ended. It had prepared people for Christ's coming as it was given to do. (Read Acts 19:3-5).

2. Holy Spirit baptism was promised by Jesus in Matthew 3:11 and was given by him to the apostles, all of whom were Jews (Acts 2), and then to a non-Jew named Cornelius (Acts 10) as proof that salvation is for all mankind.

3. The one baptism for all the rest of time on earth is the baptism of Jesus' great commission. This baptism (immersion) is commanded by Christ and is to be obeyed by everyone until the end of time. (Read Matthew 28:18-20). Let us study what the NT says about this one baptism.

What? The baptism (immersion) of the great commission is the one baptism to be carried out by every person. Therefore, the one baptism for all people for all the rest of time is water baptism (immersion). (Read Acts 8:38).

How? Baptism is doing something. The Bible says that we are buried when we are baptized In Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12, baptism is called a burial. Normally, when something is buried, it is put under the ground. When we are buried in baptism we are put under the water. We are not buried by having water sprinkled or poured on us. That would not be a burial.

We are then raised with Christ to a new life. (Read Romans 6:4 and Colossians 2:12). As Christ was buried in the tomb - and then was raised from it to live again, so we are buried in baptism - with water all around us - and raised from the water to live a new life. We cannot be raised from a few drops or even a bowl full of water.

The baptism that Christ commands for every person is always immersion, for that was the original Meaning of the word "baptize." To baptize is to immerse.

Why? We must be baptized into Christ to be saved. The NT teaches this. The reason we are saved when we are baptized is not because we are good enough to be saved. We are saved because Jesus Christ was good, not because we are. He lived without sinning and then gave his life on the cross so that his blood could cleanse us from our sins. God chose to let his blood, his death be a sacrifice for us, to cleanse us when we believe and obey him. But it is not our obeying or any magical power in the water that cleanses us. It is Christ's sacrifice, his blood that cleanses and saves.

In Acts 2:38, Peter, speaking for all the apostles, says, "Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." He is saying this to thousands of Jews gathered in Jerusalem who are now convinced they are guilty of approving of the crucifixion of Jesus. They are recognizing their guilt, their need for the forgiveness of their sins.

Romans 6:3, 4 says that people are "baptized into his (Christ's) death" and now "may live a new life." When we come into Christ's death, we are cleansed by the blood, which he gave for us when he died. (Read John 19:33, 34; Hebrews 9:22; and Ephesians 1:7). Romans 6:3 clearly and simply says that baptism is the way we come into the death of Christ. Those who have not been baptized (immersed) have not come into his death, have not had their sins forgiven, and do not have the new life he promised. Neither is a person who has been baptized but had not really believed or repented of his sins.

"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (Galatians 3:27) How does this verse say we come into Christ? By baptism (immersion in water). Where is salvation? In Christ (Romans 8:1). We must be baptized to be in Christ, and we must be in Christ to be saved. (Read 2 Corinthians 5:17). Those who are not baptized into Christ do not put him on, and therefore are not saved. "Jesus answered, `I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.'" (John 3:5)

We come into the kingdom, where Christ saves us from sin, when we are "born of water and the Spirit." (John 3:3). We know that two things happen when a baby is born: first the baby must be conceived and later born or delivered. The new birth happens the same way. We are conceived by the Holy Spirit through the word of God. (Read John 16:7,8, 13; 1 Peter 1:23). Then we are delivered into Christ's family through baptism (immersion). When a baby is born, he passes from his mother's womb, where he has had water all around him (see John 3:4), into the open world. When we are baptized we have water all around us, and then we are "born of water" into a new life where we are saved in Christ. This is what Romans 6:4 teaches.

"Those who accepted his message were baptized . . ." (Acts 2:41) This verse says that the people were baptized (immersed) when they received the divinely given word. Those who were not baptized rejected that word.

So, baptism is very important even though it is neither less nor more important than believing and repenting. Is one saved without being baptized? Is one saved if this person rejects the word of Christ? The two questions stand or fall together. Other verses which teach that we must be baptized (immersed) to be saved are Mark 16:1`6; Acts 10:48 and 22:16; and 1 Peter 3:20, 21.

Jesus said, "There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day." (John 12:48)

Who? The NT teaches that believers who repent, or turn from their sins, are to obey the command to be baptized (immersed). There is not a single command or example for baptizing babies in the NT. Babies have no sin, because "sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). "Where there is no law, neither is there transgression" (Romans 4:15). Laws are not given to babies, and no one expects them to obey. Christ said that they are innocent and pure (Matthew 18:3 and 19:14). They do not need to be saved, because they are not unsaved - they are safe!

The only commission Jesus gave about baptism is often called the great commission. The great commission is Jesus' instructions to his apostles before he went back to heaven. In it, he said that those who are taught the gospel and believe it are to be baptized (Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15, 16). Babies should not be baptized (immersed) because they cannot be taught the gospel, and they cannot believe it. Those who baptize (immerse or sprinkle) babies do so without the authority of Christ.

"Repent and be baptized" Acts 2:38). Babies cannot repent. Therefore, they cannot be baptized (immersed). When we compare Acts 2:38 and Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15-16, we see that believers who turn from their sins are the people who are to be baptized (immersed).

There are other parts of the Bible that teach that only adults who believe and repent of their sins should be baptized (immersed). Some of these are: "they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12), "he commanded them to be baptized" (Acts 10:48), "many of the Corinthians who heard believed, and were baptized" (Acts 18:8), and 1 Peter 3:21, which says that the baptism which saves us is an appeal to God for "a good conscience."

Have you been baptized (immersed, buried) in water "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" so that your sins can be forgiven? Now is the time to act.

Now go to the Questions for Lesson Six at the IBS Website

