



ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS For the use of Tutors

The numbering system for these answers is as follows. The first number in each case is the number of the chapter and the second number is the number of the question. Look up each question and then read the answer.

LESSON 1

1.1 The gospel was first preached in the Old Testament, so people who say it is only New Testament teaching that matters are likely to believe only part of the gospel. To understand the full teaching from God we need to look at all the Bible: it is all God's inspired Word. A part of what God has revealed is not enough (see Acts 20:27).

1.2 This very important teaching is that Jesus was Son of God on two counts. First, the Lord Jesus was born a Jew, descended from King David. At his baptism God declared him to be His Son (see Matthew 3:17), for he had no human father. God was His Father. Second, when God raised Jesus from the dead, he again declared him to be His Son (Romans 1:4). So Jesus was born "of the flesh" and "of the spirit". There is more about this in Chapter 7.

1.3 Paul says that the gospel is powerful to save all those men and women who believe it. As the Letter to the Romans proceeds, he shows that the gospel can change our lives and give us real hope, both now and in the age to come.

LESSON 2

2.1 Paul firmly believed the Old Testament and constantly taught from it (as the supplied references in the Book of Acts show). For example, when some of the Jews in Rome were reluctant to accept his interpretation of the Scriptures, that Jesus was their Messiah, he said to them that even in their unbelief they were fulfilling what the prophet Isaiah had foretold about them (Acts 28:25-28).

2.2 Jesus demonstrates quite superbly that he believed the Scriptures to have been given by God. He refers to the Book of Leviticus (in Mark 1:44) and tells a healed leper to go and offer those things that Moses commanded, and to the Book of Exodus and the giving of the law (in Matthew 15:4 and Mark 7:10): he clearly believes that the law given to Moses was from God. Some people say there are two accounts of creation (in Genesis chapters 1 and 2), but Jesus accepts that there is just one account, more detail about what happened being given in chapter 2. Jesus quotes from both chapters of Genesis (in Matthew 19:3-9) and thus shows clearly that the creation of Adam and Eve and the law of marriage were divine arrangements. In Luke 20:37, Jesus not only accepts the appearance of the angel in the bush as a true happening, but he accepts that the words then spoken, as recorded by Moses, are so accurately recorded that he bases his entire argument on the precise words spoken.

2.3 Jesus promised his disciples that he would give them the help of the Holy Spirit – God's supernatural power – to make sure that the gospel accounts would be absolutely accurate (John 14:26). When writing letters of instruction and encouragement, the apostles knew they were writing with God-given authority and their writings were inspired (1 Thessalonians 2:13 and 1 Corinthians 14:37). The apostle Peter even refers to the writings of the apostle Paul in such a way that it is clear that he regarded them as "Scripture", for he says of some people that: *"there are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures"* (2 Peter 3:15-16).

LESSON 3

3.1 The command to the kings of Israel shows that they were to be as much subject to God's law as were their subjects. They were not above the law, as some people now reckon themselves to be. Copying it out (as Deuteronomy 17:18-20 required) would impress God's law on the king's mind and that is what regular Bible reading should also do for us. When the family were meeting together they were to make the Word of God their daily delight (Deuteronomy 6:6-12); it was to be more than something they remembered, they were to enjoy thinking about God's revealed purpose. That's how the Word of God should be to us as well; something we come to love and enjoy as we learn more and more about God's character and His gracious ways.

3.2 Jesus might have been educated in a synagogue school where he would have learned to read, and the Scriptures would have been the reading book that was used there. He evidently knew a lot about Bible teaching and made excellent progress (Luke 2:51-52). Aged twelve he was found in the Temple at Jerusalem talking to the religious teachers and they were amazed at his understanding (Luke 2:47). Tempted to do what was wrong he rebutted those temptations by referring to what the Scriptures said (Luke 4:2-12), showing that they had a really practical application in his life. When he attended the synagogue in Nazareth he did what he usually did – he read from the Scriptures, and went on to explain their meaning in a very dramatic way (Luke 4:16-21). So, if it took Jesus time to become acquainted with the Old Testament, we need to give ourselves some learning time too. God has designed His Word in such a way that we can only take it into our lives bit by bit. There is no such thing as an overnight believer.

LESSON 4

4.1 The Flood did not come immediately to destroy mankind; God gave the people who lived then a lot of warning, but they chose not to believe that anything would happen. Peter says they were “*wilfully ignorant*” (2 Peter 3:5) and he warns that the same thing will happen again before God destroys the world order that now exists. We need to be aware of what is happening in the world and be ready for God’s rescue plan. Noah and his family made proper provision for what was coming and they were saved (Hebrews 11:6-7) and God wants to save all those people who listen to His Word and act on it (2 Peter 3:9). But most people will carry on regardless, without a thought about God, until it is too late (Matthew 24:34-42). We need to taken action now, while there is still time.

4.2 There are many warnings in Scripture that the things God revealed would be corrupted and distorted by men and women. 1 Timothy 4:1-5 gives some examples, and some of those things are now practised in some churches. The Bible says that is a warning sign that the true faith has being corrupted. Paul then catalogues a lot of things that now describe our society and says that these are dangerous times in which to live (2 Timothy 3:1-7). The root problem is that people love themselves more than they love God (3:2-4) and we must be careful not to be led astray by our own feelings and desires. We need to find out what God wants us to do and then make that our first choice.

LESSON 5

5.1 The hope of faithful men and women in all ages was that after their death they would be raised from the grave at the time of resurrection. King David recognised that this was his only hope: that he would awake from the sleep of death (Psalm 17:15) to be made immortal like God. Being a prophet, he predicted that the Lord Jesus Christ would be raised from death to sit at God’s right hand (Psalm 16:8-11, as interpreted by Acts 2:25-32). Other Psalmists shared the same hope, of being rescued from the grave (49:15) and of being raised from the dead (71:20).

5.2 A careful comparison between Psalm 49 verses 12 and 20 shows that the key difference between mankind and the animal kingdom is that we can understand the purpose of God, and animals cannot. So they die and cease to exist, and so will all those who do not understand and believe God’s purpose. After listing several of God’s people who have gone before us, in Hebrews chapter 11, the writer says this: They all died not having received what was promised to them, for they are waiting to be made perfect, together with all God’s people, at the resurrection of the dead (Hebrews 11:13,39-40). The key to their future hope is that all those listed had faith, or belief, in what God had promised, and they acted accordingly.

5.3 In the Bible the word “*soul*” has quite a wide range of meaning. As we saw in the chapter, in Genesis 2:7 it means “creature” or “person” and that meaning holds good for all the passages listed. For example, Noah and 7 other people were saved in the ark (1 Peter 3:20). Thus it should not come as a surprise that souls (or people) can both sin (Leviticus 4:2) and die (Joshua 10:28).

LESSON 6

6.1 In Psalm 90 we learn that God has always existed (verse 2). In the beginning He was already there (Genesis 1:1); and He always will be. Moses says that God is “*from everlasting to everlasting*”. It follows that God is not limited by time (verse 4), whereas we are; we only have a short time to live (verses 3,5,10). God is holy and if His righteous anger is directed at us, we have no chance of surviving it (verses 7-11). But God is merciful and loving and will save us from sin, if we turn to Him (verses 14-17).

6.2 It is a key teaching of the Bible that God is one. It follows from this (a) that we should love Him with our whole being, for no one or nothing else so deserves our love (Deuteronomy 6:4,5) and, (b) that there is no-one or nothing that could ever exist to rival God (Isaiah 45:5,6). This passage is especially interesting in that it was written about a Persian king who would be appointed by God to fulfil His will (45:1) and the Persians believed in a god of good and a separate god of evil. God’s prophet explained that the God of the Bible admits no such rivalry; there never was and there never will be any other supernatural power to rival Almighty God. He has total control of the forces of good and evil (45:7). It really matters that we understand this about God, for our eternal life depends upon it (John 17:3). So, if we want one word to sum up the nature of God as described in these three passages it would have to be that God is a “Unity”. He is complete, unique and supreme.

LESSON 7

7.1 The Bible insists (see, for example, Hebrews 2:14) that Jesus was tempted in just the same way that we are tempted. That means that he was tempted from inside – by his natural thoughts and feelings – as well as from outside, by the things he saw and by what he heard and experienced. We are tempted when thoughts naturally occur to us, then we are drawn away by those feelings (James 1:13-16). Temptations are not sins: we only sin when we give in to those feelings. Jesus never did. But all the feelings we get, he would have got too. If he had yielded to those things which come naturally from the heart of man (Jeremiah 17:9), it would have resulted in all sorts of wrong actions and characteristics – those described in Mark 7:18-23 and Galatians 5:19-21. The marvellous thing is that Jesus never once gave way to those inner feelings or to any suggestions made to him. He was tempted like us, but he never once sinned! (Hebrews 4:15).

7.2 Because he was so faithful and obedient, God his Father raised Jesus from the dead and exalted him to glory and honour (Acts 2:32-36). He gave him the power of the Holy Spirit with no limitations whatsoever (Matthew

28:18) and set him in glory at His own right hand in heaven, where he is now. It was not that Jesus had been there before coming down to earth. Jesus was exalted to glory because he had been obedient (Philippians 2:9-11). It is now appropriate for us to highly honour the exalted Lord Jesus Christ, to the glory of God his Father, for even the angels in heaven reckon him worthy of honour, glory and blessing (Revelation 5:11,12). When Jesus returns to earth he will be acclaimed by those believers who greet him as their Lord (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

LESSON 8

8.1 When Jesus said that he and his Father were one (John 10:30) he clearly did not mean that they were one and the same person, for the preceding verse says *“My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all”* (10:29). The whole passage is one in which Jesus explains to his accusers that he is God’s Son (see 10:17-18,25-39). His key point is that the works he was doing were works that God had empowered him to do: he was not working alone. In fact they were working together; that was his real point when he said that he and his Father were one. They had one purpose, one mind and one aim. In his prayer for disciples in all ages, Jesus prays that we might have the same attitude of mind and heart; that, like him, we too might want to serve the Father and love Him with all our hearts. He wants us to be one with the Father: *“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us”* (John 17:20,21). This is the unity of purpose and intent that we must all strive to achieve, with God’s help.

8.2 The very first thing we read about God is that He created the heavens and the earth by uttering words of command (Genesis 1:1-3; Psalm 33:6-9). Those words made things happen and as they were spoken they revealed something about the power and purpose of the speaker. For step-by-step God created an ordered and designed Universe, a fit dwelling place for mankind. It was all part of His plan and the result of His wisdom. King Solomon tells us this when he urges us to follow in Wisdom’s way (Proverbs 8:1-32), reminding us that God had wisdom from the very beginning and by that wisdom He created the world. Solomon pictures Wisdom as though it were a woman sitting alongside God: that is quite a typical way in which the Bible depicts things, making them easier to remember in the process. So the apostle John is telling his readers that God had a plan and purpose from the beginning (he calls it God’s “Word”) and, in course of time, that purpose took shape in the form of His only begotten Son (John 1:14,18), when Jesus was born. Because Jesus had to inherit characteristics from his mother Mary as well as from his Father, he could not have existed before he was born. If he had lived in heaven before his birth on earth, Mary would have contributed nothing to his personality and character. But, in fact, Jesus had to be the *“seed of the woman”* (Genesis 3:15; Galatians 4:4) as well as the only begotten Son of God.

LESSON 9

9.1 It is one of the wonderful things about the Lord Jesus Christ that he willingly and voluntarily laid down his life for us. There was nothing automatic about the process, as there would have been if he had lived in heaven before and had conceived the plan to come to earth. Can you imagine what failure would have meant in that case? It would have been unthinkable! But Jesus said that he was a volunteer and that God had given him the option whether to die or not (John 10:17-18), though his natural inclination was not to die. Like us, he had inbuilt instincts of self-preservation, but he set them aside, hard though it was for him to do that (Luke 22:42). Now if Jesus was willing to do all that for us, we should highly honour and love him for his kindness and love (John 5:23) and we should try to follow his example. We too should want to do the will of God (Romans 12:1-2) and will be keen to work out exactly what God’s will is for us. That means we will be keen readers of the Bible, for that is where we find out God’s will and purpose.

9.2 Paul sums up his feelings for Jesus in a wonderful verse in which he says that he realises Jesus died for him. He died for everyone else as well, of course, but Paul sees the sacrifice of Jesus as a very personal thing. He reasons (in Galatians 2:20) that as Jesus died for him, he too will die to self and live for Christ. That meant for Paul that every day he would try to love God and his neighbour, making those twin aims the law of his life and in that way he would seek to let the life of Jesus continue in him.

LESSON 10

10.1 When asked if only few would be saved, Jesus replied: *“Do your best to go in through the narrow door; because many people will surely try to go in but will not be able.”* He added that, whatever works people claimed to have done in his name, the key thing was whether or not they knew him. That explanation was made clearer in Matthew’s account where Jesus explained there are two ways we can choose, and only the narrow way leads to life. He added: *“and there are few people who find it”* (Matthew 7:14). The key thing is that there is only one way that leads to life and we have to seek it out if we want to find the things that are true. Eternal life is not something we can earn; it is a gift from God. It is impossible for any of us to gain access into God’s kingdom through our own efforts. Only He can give us that gift of life for evermore.

10.2 Cornelius is described as *“a religious man; he and his whole family worshipped God. He also did much to help the Jewish poor people and was constantly praying to God”* (Acts 10:2). If good living was enough for God, Cornelius might have been good enough, but he knew that more was required. Instructed by an angel, he sent to ask the apostle Peter to come to Caesarea, where he lived. Peter came, after receiving instructions from God, and preached the gospel to him and his household (Acts 10:34-43). This was a huge turning point for the early

believers as a Gentile had not been received as a member up to now. So God gave the Holy Spirit to this household just as He had to the apostles, and that convinced the apostle Peter that Cornelius was accepted by God. Then he *“ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (10:48)*. There is no other way into God’s family except to believe and be baptized.

LESSON 11

11.1 God chose Israel as His special nation because of the promises he made to Abraham about his descendants, who were to be as numerous as the sand on the sea shore (Genesis 13:14-17; Deuteronomy 9:5). They were to possess the land that God showed Abraham (12:7) and through them all nations would be blessed (12:1-3), for into that nation Jesus would be born. The promises about the coming blessing are only partially fulfilled, so Israel still has a part to play in God’s purpose, as Paul explains in Romans chapter 11 (see Chapter 21).

11.2 The special descendant promised both to Abraham and David will:

- a Give Abraham as many faithful descendants as there are stars in the sky or grains of sand along the seashore;
- b Conquer all their enemies;
- c Let people from all nations share in the blessing promised to Abraham (the forgiveness of sins: Acts 3:26);
- d Occupy David’s throne in Jerusalem;
- e Establish an everlasting kingdom;
- f Build God a temple;
- g Ensure that David’s dynasty will last for ever. Jesus brings real hope of eternal life in the future (see 2 Samuel 7:19).

LESSON 12

12.1 Adam was the man who brought sin and death into the world through his disobedience and it had control over mankind for a long time; but Jesus was the man who made amends for Adam’s mistakes and made a way of escape possible. He was everything that Adam was not – obedient, righteous and faithful. He can set us free from the bondage of sin and death and that really matters if we want to live forever.

12.2 To match Adam’s situation, Jesus had to be a man like us and Scripture insists that he was made like us and was tempted like us (Hebrews 2:14; 4:15). If Jesus had not inherited those tendencies from Mary, she would have contributed nothing to his character or personality. Jesus had to be the *“offspring of the woman”* (Genesis 3:15) and be *“born of woman”* (Galatians 4:4), because that is what Scripture said must happen. He was to be a willing and obedient sacrifice, because he had chosen to do God’s will – not like the animals sacrificed under the Law, who had no choice. And because Jesus knows how we feel, he is able to act as a priest (Hebrews 5:1,2) who can understand our circumstances. The marvellous thing about this is that Jesus was faithful and obedient to his Father in all things. Therefore he was able to undo all the mischief that Adam’s disobedience brought into existence.

LESSON 13

13.1 Becoming like Jesus is something we have to start doing now, beginning with the way we think, which is why it is so important to understand the Bible for yourself. The more we understand about the way Jesus thought about things, the better able we shall be to change our way of thinking (which is what Paul says in Philippians 2:1-5). He was humble and faithful to God, and so should we be. But we are not like that naturally. So we have to put to death our natural feelings and desires and replace them with better and more satisfying feelings and desires. That’s what Paul explains in Colossians 3:1-6: that we try to live life at a higher level, as Jesus did. It all starts when we are touched by the great love that God and Jesus have for us and want to do those things that we are commanded to do to show our love for them (John 15:12-15). Baptism into Christ is the first of those commands.

13.2 We will never be completely like Jesus until our present human nature has been changed to be like his. For some of us this change will not take place until we die and are raised from the dead. Those of us who are still alive at the return to earth of Jesus will be “changed” after we have been accepted by him. The end of that process of change will be that our bodies will be transformed to be like that of the risen Jesus – forever free from sin and death (1 Corinthians 15:51-58).

LESSON 14

14.1 In 1 Peter 3:18-22 the apostle Peter draws a parallel between baptism and the flood at the time of Noah. Then the whole earth was destroyed, except for those in the ark (as described in Genesis 6-8). First, he says that Jesus died for us to bring us to God and that he rose again by the power of God (His Holy Spirit power). That was the power by which Jesus had preached the gospel during his lifetime, as he often declared (e.g. John 3:34; 6:63), preaching to people who were in the prison house of sin and death. Sadly, says Peter, the same Spirit was operative in the days of Noah, when there were people imprisoned by darkness and ignorance. Noah was preaching the gospel of salvation in his days and God had provided a way of escape from destruction (just as Jesus would later provide one from sin and death). But only 8 people, out of an entire civilisation, wanted to know about God’s escape plan. All the others perished. Now it’s the same with baptism. We can either be saved by belief and baptism, or we will be destroyed like the foolish people in Noah’s day. Baptism is that important; it’s a matter of life and death!

14.2 There are no examples in the Bible of infants being baptized or of anybody of any age being christened.

When we read that entire households were baptized, as recorded in the Acts (e.g. Acts 18:7,8), they were first instructed about true Bible teaching. We should remember that in those days households would have included servants and perhaps slaves, so they were not just a family with children. Scripture does not tell us what age we should be to be baptized, but clearly we must be old enough to understand the gospel and to believe it. As baptism requires us to change the way we behave, we need to be old enough to know what we are doing so that our lifestyle really will change as we seek to keep the commandments of Christ.

LESSON 15

15.1 When the apostle talks about the “flesh” in Romans chapter 8, he is referring to that way of life which is natural to the human condition. It is how we all are by birth and how we think and act naturally because of the promptings of our human nature. In that condition we are “weak” when it comes to obeying God’s Law (8:3); we think the wrong things, we are hostile to God and will eventually die in our sins (8:5-8). Left in that condition we cannot please God. But life “*in the Spirit*” is quite different. When we fill our minds with the things taught by God’s Spirit and become spirit-minded (8:5-7), we are in the process of developing an attitude of mind and heart that will be inclined towards God. Over time we will find ourselves wanting to please God and wanting to do what is right in His sight. That will result in our being at peace with God (8:6) and the eventual outcome will be eternal life in God’s kingdom on earth.

15.2 When Jesus told Nicodemus he had to be born again (John 3:3-8) he said that rebirth had to be of water (which means baptism by immersion) and of the Spirit. That second process is the one we were just thinking about in Question 15.1. It means getting our minds right with God and seeking to live in a way which is spiritual, or Bible-based. It also means that our natures are to be transformed at the coming of Jesus, when those who please him are given the gift of eternal life and their nature is changed. When that happens they will have spiritual bodies (1 Corinthians 15:44; Philippians 3:20,21).

LESSON 16

16.1 The word “*spirit*” can mean lots of different things. In the passages referred to it means:

- ❖ The power by which God created the world, when He spoke words of command (Genesis 1:1-3) and by which, in the process of Creation, He began to reveal what He is like;
- ❖ The attitude of mind and heart that Caleb had: he was a faithful man who was said to have another spirit, for most of his fellow Israelites had a spirit of unbelief (Numbers 14:24);
- ❖ The force of life that sustains us all without which, if God was to withdraw, we would all be lifeless (Job 34:14);
- ❖ That is the same life-force which we share with animals, who are also said to be empowered by the spirit or breath of life which is in their nostrils (Ecclesiastes 3:21; Genesis 7:15; Acts 17:25);
- ❖ It was the power of God that enabled God’s prophets to convey the message that He gave them to proclaim (2 Samuel 23:2; 2 Peter 1:21). That power has now passed because God’s revelation is complete;
- ❖ There was also a special gift of Holy Spirit power in the first century (Acts 2:1-4) which enabled the apostles to preach the gospel. Among the gifts given was the ability to speak in foreign languages (Acts 2:7-11).
- ❖ Put in just one sentence: “The Holy Spirit is the power of God by which He does everything and through which God seeks to make men and women holy, like Himself.”

16.2 Holy Spirit gifts were transmitted by the laying on of hands by the apostles and in no other way. For example, when Philip the evangelist had preached in Samaria he was unable to confer those gifts himself. The apostles Peter and John had to come from Jerusalem, and it was clear that only their laying on of hands could pass the power on (see Acts 8:14-20). So, when the apostles died, the power to pass on the gift died with them. This agrees with what the early Church fathers said: that the gifts died out during the second century A.D.

LESSON 17

17.1 John chapter 11 tells us first that when Jesus spoke about death he used the language of “sleep”, for death is an unconscious state like a dreamless sleep (John 11:11-14). He also spoke of resurrection as an awakening from sleep (11:11), which was his consistent practice (Mark 5:39-42). When Jesus reached Bethany he found two grieving sisters who believed in resurrection at the last day (verses 21-24) and who believed in Jesus. He said that he was “*the resurrection and the life*” and that if a person believes in him they need not stay forever dead, but can be raised to life. Jesus then demonstrated that by raising Lazarus from the dead (11:25-44). He was raised a mortal man and would, in course of time, have died again. But, for as long as he lived, Lazarus was a testimony both to the power of Jesus to raise the dead and to our need of resurrection. It is never suggested that Lazarus was better off dead than alive! He had not gone to heaven; he was asleep in the grave and his body was undergoing the process of corruption. Resurrection was his only hope, as it is ours.

17.2 God told Adam that if he ate of the forbidden fruit he would die: “*in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die*” (Genesis 2:17). Death was going to be a punishment, not a reward, and it would mean that Adam and Eve would return to the ground from which Adam had been taken (3:14-19). They would forfeit the prospect of living forever, because of sin. But God held out some hope for them and for us, because first He made a covering

for their sin and shame, by having an animal or animals slain (Genesis 3:21). Then He made them a wonderful promise (3:16) about a special descendant who would be born – the offspring of the woman (not of the man). That descendant was to be Jesus, though he was not born to the virgin Mary for thousands of years. But his coming was already in God’s mind and formed an important part of His purpose. By his perfect obedience, Jesus undid the harm that Adam had done and although he died, as a sacrifice for sin, he was raised from the dead to a new life. He is therefore the perfect solution to all the problems Adam brought (1 Corinthians 15:21-26). If we die “*in Adam*” we can be raised “*in Christ*”: it’s all about making sure we belong to Jesus and we do that by believing in him, being baptized and learning to live with him now.

LESSON 18

18.1 In the seven letters that Jesus wrote to the believers in Asia he mentioned the following rewards for his faithful followers:

- 1 eating of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God (Revelation 2:7) – that means having eternal life in the Kingdom of God;
- 2 wearing “*the crown of life*” (2:10);
- 3 being sustained by God’s own provision (hidden manna); being found faultless (a white stone) and having a new character and personality (a new name) (2:17);
- 4 having authority over the nations, by helping Jesus with the work of administering God’s Kingdom (2:26-28);
- 5 being found to be right with God and being held in God’s everlasting remembrance (3:5);
- 6 being forever part of a body which worships and praises Almighty God and which glorifies His name (3:12);
- 7 being with the Lord Jesus Christ and working with him (3:21).

18.2 Jesus was specific about what had to be done by those Christian congregations if they were to inherit these things. Here’s another list:

- ❖ They were to remain loving and to repent of any failure or shortcoming (Revelation 2:4-5);
- ❖ They were to be faithful, if necessary unto death (2:10);
- ❖ They must believe the right things and not believe wrong things (2:14-16);
- ❖ Their behaviour must be consistent with their beliefs (2:20-25);
- ❖ They must have a living faith and must remain watchful and vigilant against evil (3:1-2);
- ❖ They had to continue to be faithful to the end (3:11);
- ❖ They should be earnest and enthusiastic about their faith, always ready to welcome Jesus into every aspect of their lives and wanting, more than anything, to have fellowship with him (3:15-20).

LESSON 19

19.1 John chapter 14 records a promise that Jesus made to his disciples shortly before his death on the cross. He was encouraging them to believe in him whatever happened, for none of them really understood that he had to die on the cross, and Jesus knew it was going to be a huge setback for them. So he told them not to be afraid, because God’s house has many rooms and he was going to prepare a place for them. The Scriptures often talk about the “*House of God*”, the Temple, and it had apartments alongside it where some of the priests lived when they were serving at the temple complex (see 1 Kings 6:5-7). That was a lovely picture of people living close to God and serving Him in the process. Now, Jesus told his disciples, he was going to make such a dwelling place possible for mankind in general (not just for priests) and when the time was right he “*will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also*” (John 14:3). So this passage does not promise that we go to heaven. It promises that when Jesus returns to earth he will make it possible for believers to dwell with God (see Revelation 21:3).

19.2 Psalm 146 explains that when we die, we are unconscious. It says of the dead: “*When his breath departs he returns to the earth; on that very day his plans perish*” (verse 4) and encourages us to worship God while we still have time. Notice that it holds out no second chance, such as limbo or purgatory might offer. There is no second chance, which is why we should use every opportunity now to learn about the things of God. But this is not a Psalm without hope for it proceeds to say that we are happy indeed if we have hope in God (verse 5). He can reverse the process of death by resurrection and He can remake the world. God will do all those things, bringing justice and righteousness in the process, and setting His king in Jerusalem (verses 7-10). That is a real hope and it is a blessing indeed.

LESSON 20

20.1 The disciples asked Jesus if he was now about to restore God’s kingdom to Israel, for they clearly understood that it was to come in due course (see, for example, Mark 11:10). Jesus had been talking to them for the past forty days about the coming Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3), so they clearly had a good understanding of what was going to happen. But they didn’t know when it would happen, so they asked Jesus. He didn’t say they were wrong to ask, or that they had got it all wrong. He said that it was not for them to know when the kingdom will come. God had fixed the time and they had work to do meanwhile (1:6-8). The two angels who appeared as Jesus was

ascending to heaven told them that: *“This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven”* (1:11). They had seen him go, so he will be visible when he returns; he had gone in bodily form (Luke 24:38-42) and he will come back in the same way: a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:44-45). He ascended from the Mount of Olives and he is due to return to that very place when he comes again to Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1-4).

20.2 This is what Micah chapter 4 tells us about God’s coming kingdom:

- 1 Jerusalem is to be physically lifted up above the surrounding hills (see also Zechariah 14:10,11);
- 2 People from many nations will come to Jerusalem to worship God there and to learn His ways (4:1-2);
- 3 God’s law will be administered from Jerusalem, when it becomes the capital city of God’s worldwide kingdom;
- 4 The result will be that peace will be established and instead of making weapons of war the nations will turn to peaceful pursuits. That will greatly benefit people who will be able to enjoy life once again;
- 5 God will gather His people together and Jesus will reign over them in Jerusalem (verses 6-7);
- 6 The Kingdom of God will be restored to Jerusalem (verse 8);
- 7 That will only come about after there is more suffering and sorrow in Jerusalem and for the Israeli people. Eventually, and only with God’s help, they will overcome that opposition and will dedicate the things they then gain to the worship of God. Israel will then be a wholly religious nation once again.

LESSON 21

21.1 Romans chapter 10 tells us the following:

- a That Israel failed to accept the way that God now devised whereby they could become right with Him because of what Jesus had achieved. Instead they were determined to stick to the old way, given in the Law of Moses, and to prove themselves righteous by their godly conduct. The irony was that they had proved themselves the opposite by rejecting their God-given Messiah.
- b The law of works could not give them righteousness, because they couldn’t keep it. It was designed to show that we cannot solve our own problems, but that we need God’s help. Moses explained that to them (in Leviticus 18:5, quoted in Romans 10:5), and urged them to live by faith (in Deuteronomy 30:12-13, quoted in Romans 10:6-8). Paul said that what Moses was looking forward to had arrived now that Christ had come.
- c To be right with God both Jews and Gentiles now need to believe in Jesus and to confess that belief before men. There is no other way of being reckoned righteous before God.
- d We can get faith in God from His Word the Bible because that tells us all we need to know; but we must understand the true message it contains and not rely on what others tell us it says (Romans 10:17).
- e The Old Testament prophets did indeed predict both that the Gentiles would believe and that the Jews would not. That was exactly as it has worked out. In Romans 10:16-21, Paul quotes from Isaiah 53:1; Psalm 19:14; Deuteronomy 32:21 and Isaiah 65:1,2, to demonstrate that truth.

21.2 It is often the case that God has worked through a remnant – a small group of people who were faithful while the majority was unfaithful. There were only 8 people saved at the time of the flood, out of an entire civilization (Genesis 6; 1 Peter 3:20); only 2 of the 12 spies said that it was possible to enter the Promised Land there and then (and the people believed the other 10, which is why the entire generation of unbelievers died in the wilderness, see Numbers 14). Only Rahab and her family were saved when the walls of Jericho fell down (Joshua 2). Jesus said that only a few people will be saved when he comes, but that most will choose to go down the broad way that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13,14).

LESSON 22

22.1 Joel chapter 3 shows us clearly that God’s purpose still has very much to do with the nation of Israel and the city Jerusalem, for the following reasons:

- a The judgement of the nations who oppose the rulership of Christ is due to take place in the “valley of Jehoshaphat” (Joel 3:2,11), a place in Israel (the precise location of which is unknown but one which is associated with the victory of King Jehoshaphat over his enemies; see 2 Chronicles 20:20-25).
- b God is angry with the nations because of the way they have treated Israel and the Jewish people (Joel 3:2-8), treatment which includes displacing them from their ancient land, scattering them among the nations and then dividing their land (3:2), as happened, for example, in 1947 when the nations partitioned the land of Israel between Jews and Palestinians.
- c This prophecy is set at a time when the dispersion of the Jews has ended and when Jerusalem is once more in Jewish hands (3:1). Once the nations have been judged, the prophet says, God’s people will once again dwell in the land and inhabit Jerusalem, for God will purify and redeem the Jewish people. He will again dwell in their midst, when Jerusalem becomes the “city of the great king” (Joel 3:20-21; Matthew 5:35).
- d The Judge who is coming to rule all nations will be resident in Jerusalem (Joel 3:16-17) and that will be the centre of his administration.
- e Jerusalem will become a holy place, God’s “holy mountain”, for a Temple will be established there and the nations of the world will come there to learn about God’s Law and to worship Him (Joel 3:17-18; Zechariah 14:16-21).

22.2 The new society that Isaiah describes in 65:17-25 brings the following special blessings:

- ❖ We shall forget any painful and hurtful things that may have happened to us (verse 17);
- ❖ Joy and rejoicing will utterly replace weeping and crying (verse 19);
- ❖ Life will be prolonged – children will not die at birth and the mortal inhabitants of God’s kingdom will live for well over 100 years (perhaps right through the Millennium) (verse 20);
- ❖ People will live safely and comfortably in their own houses without any fear of displacement, and those who are immortal (God’s chosen) will be richly blessed, they and their families (verses 21-23);
- ❖ Theirs will be a very close relationship with God (verse 24);
- ❖ God’s creatures will live in harmony, without hurt or destruction (verse 25).

LESSON 23

23.1 *Jacob* expected to go to the grave when he died, for he said: “I will go down to Sheol to my son mourning” (Genesis 37:35);

Job was distraught that he would have to die and be laid in the grave without ever having his reputation restored, but he hoped for something afterwards: “*Oh that you would hide me in Sheol, that you would conceal me until your wrath be past, that you would appoint me a set time, and remember me!*” (14:13). If there was no resurrection after death, he was going to be consigned to darkness, corruption, hopelessness, imprisonment and dust (17:13-16). But, in fact, *Job* believed in resurrection (19:25-27).

Good *King Hezekiah* expected to go to Sheol (the grave), to “*the pit of destruction*” (Isaiah 38:17), to the place where nobody can either thank or praise God (verse 18), because they are unconscious.

23.2 The Lord’s Prayer teaches us clearly that heaven is God’s dwelling place, where His name is held in reverence (Matthew 6:9). It contains no requests for us to go to be with God in heaven; quite the contrary. The Lord teaches us to pray for God’s kingdom to come from heaven to earth (verse 10), so that His will shall be done here as now it is perfectly done in heaven (verse 10). When we are praying for the kingdom to come, we are asking God to take over the rulership of the world and to send His king (the Lord Jesus Christ) to reign from Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:9).

LESSON 24

24.1 Hebrews 2:14 could just have said that when Jesus was born he shared our nature, but it really emphasizes that truth. It says that as we are flesh and blood, “*he himself likewise partook of the same things*”. So it really matters that Jesus was the same as us, for Scripture never wastes words. By his death, Jesus is said to have destroyed the devil, and that is defined as “*the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil*”. It is sin that has the power of death (Romans 6:23; James 1:15). One result of the death and resurrection of Jesus is that he can never again be tempted to sin (Hebrews 7:26). Because he died willingly, as a sacrifice for sins (Hebrews 9:26), he condemned sin, showing it up for what it really is (Romans 8:3); he made it possible for sin to be rendered powerless.

24.2 Comparing Scripture with Scripture is an excellent way to discover when picture language is being used and when it is not. That is certainly the case with the Devil and Satan, as we have seen. Here are some more parallel passages where the picture is quickly explained:

Picture Language	Explanation
“Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?” (Acts 5:3)	“Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God” (5:4)
“You once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience ...” (Ephesians 2:2)	“... among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind” (2:3)
“And they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:26)	“each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire” (James 1:14)
“Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11)	“put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires” (4:22)
“In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:4)	“Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica” (2 Timothy 4:10)

Picture language is being used in these passages, as elsewhere, to make the struggle against sin seem that much more important and vital. It is going to be a real battle to overcome the natural impulses with which we are born. But we can learn to do that with God's help.

LESSON 25

25.1 The driving force of the new life has to be love, both the love that God and the Lord Jesus Christ have for us (1 Thessalonians 4:9; Ephesians 5:2); the fact that we are commanded to love one another, just as Christ first loved us (John 13:34), and the fact that love is the thing that should bind believers together (Colossians 3:14). This is what Paul directs us to in Romans 12:10: that we should "*Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour*". We shall only be able to keep up our new life and our good intentions if we continue to reflect on these things and remember week-by-week just what God and Jesus have done for us.

25.2 Our personal prayers to God should be the private way we have of talking to Him and giving Him praise and thanksgiving (Matthew 6:6-7). Prayers can include requests for the things we need (Matthew 7:7; Philippians 4:6), but it is well that we remember that our spiritual needs are the most important things in our lives (Matthew 26:41). Prayer should be an important and continuing part of our spiritual development (Luke 18:1) and it will help us to be alert to dangers and pitfalls that might otherwise beset us (Ephesians 6:18). But we should never forget that prayer is also for praise and thanksgiving, not just for asking for things or for help (Philippians 4:6). The Lord's Prayer that Jesus taught his disciples puts God, His kingdom, and His will, before our own needs or desires.

LESSON 26

26.1 Believers in Christ are called to live separate and holy lives, free from the world and its allurements. Paul said that we are to be "*transformed*" not "*conformed*" (Romans 12:2) and that means that we must be careful about our companions, especially about people we might marry or go into business with (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). We should avoid anything or anyone who seems likely to get us into trouble or to lure us away from following Jesus (Ephesians 5:7-11). If people try to associate us with evil things we should have nothing to do with them, but should rebuke them, for our minds have been instructed by the law of Christ and we must obey him (Ephesians 4:17). We should not become involved in political parties and should not take anyone to court.

26.2 Marriage is a God-given relationship and we might already be married when we get to understand the Bible. If so, we should continue in that relationship and do all we can to help our partner come to an understanding that will also lead him or her to obtain eternal life (1 Corinthians 7:12-15). That might mean helping our husband or wife to read the Bible, or reading it with other family members. If not married, believers should marry believers where that is possible or teach someone about the gospel before they marry (1 Corinthians 7:39). Marriage is for life. Believers who are married should have a loving and sharing relationship with their partner which is governed by love. The pattern and example is the love that Jesus showed to his followers – who are likened to a bride (Ephesians 5:21-33). Both husband and wife should care for and honour one another at all times (1 Peter 3:7).

LESSON 27

27.1 When Paul met the elders of Ephesus at Miletus he made the following points, which are just as helpful to us today:

- ❖ He had lived with them in a way which gave them a good example of behaviour at all times (Acts 20:18-20,33-35);
- ❖ He had taken every opportunity to preach and teach them (v 19-21), urging them to repent and to believe the gospel, and he had proclaimed the Kingdom of God (verse 25);
- ❖ He had taught them the whole counsel of God, holding nothing back (verse 27);
- ❖ There would be false teachers who would lead many astray, as true Christianity was distorted and corrupted: that would do people grave harm (v 28-30); The key thing was to read and understand the Bible, because God's Word can confer an inheritance on those who believe its promises (verse 32).

27.2 If we now understand what Romans is all about we should use the same tools and study techniques to read the rest of the Bible, so that we can understand the "*whole counsel of God*" (Acts 20:27). We need continually to renew our minds (Romans 12:2) and think about those things that are lovely and wholesome (Philippians 4:8-9). Thinking about what Jesus said and did will be really helpful (Colossians 3:16) and we have also to put what we learn into practice (1 Timothy 4:15). For example, if we really do believe that baptism is essential for salvation then we should make arrangements to be interviewed for baptism and not delay. When we have been reborn in the waters of baptism, we should want to feed on the Word of God, much like an infant longs for its mother's milk (1 Peter 2:2).