



18 LESSON CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

Lesson 1

If we ever think seriously about life in general — about world problems, and about what the future holds for us personally — two questions which often arise are:

- (1) Is permanent world peace possible?
- (2) What will happen to us in the future, and after our death?

In this first lesson we want to show how the Bible can help us to answer these questions.

Peace on earth

With regard to the first, many people are not aware that the Bible has much to say about the future of our world. For instance, Psalm 72 describes an earth in which peace and plenty will abound:

“Give the king your justice, O God, your righteousness to the royal son with. He will judge your people in righteousness, the poor with justice . . . In his days the righteous will flourish and peace, till the moon is no more!” (Psalm 72:1-2,7)

Mankind has often dreamed of such a golden age, but there has been constant failure because of the weakness and selfishness of human nature. In spite of good intentions, there have always been those who try to dominate their fellows; those, who through selfish deeds, through greed and ambition, bring to nothing all plans for human happiness.

Many attempts have been made to deal with this problem in the last 100 years. When the League of Nations was formed it adopted as its motto some words from the Bible: *“Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more”* (Isaiah 2:4). Hopes were high, but after only a few years, with the rise of totalitarian regimes in Europe and the outbreak of a terrible Second World War, the dream perished. After the war the need for some kind of world authority to keep the peace led to the creation of the United Nations, but this also has failed to prevent the many wars which have broken out during the last fifty years.

Finding a solution

It seems very unlikely that mankind will be able to solve the world’s problems. To create peace, either (a) there must be a miraculous change in human nature, so that people will begin to act with kindness towards all their fellow men, or (b) we must have a world leader who will have the authority to make this happen.

The first possibility seems most unlikely, so we turn to the second. It will need a leader who is all-powerful and supremely capable. Though powerful, this person must also be wise and able to resist corruption. Yet the person must also be sympathetic towards human weakness.

Where could such a leader be found? Even if he or she did exist, and was willing to accept such responsibility, after a time the leader would die and a suitable replacement would be required.

The return of Jesus Christ

The Bible, however, assures us that God *will* provide a solution to the problem of world peace. There will indeed come a world leader, who will be perfectly fitted for the task; a man who has already proved himself worthy because of his supreme wisdom, and his boundless love and concern for all. That man is the Lord Jesus Christ. Only he who loves his fellow men is fit to rule over them, and Jesus Christ certainly did so. The solution to the problem of world peace is the promise that the Lord Jesus will return.

In Bible we can read in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles - the history of the beginning of Christianity - how Jesus went to heaven, some weeks after his resurrection. After his disciples saw him go, angels appeared, who said:

“Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts 1:11)

Jesus Christ will set up the Kingdom of God upon this earth. All existing governments will be removed, and he himself will reign as king. He will have complete power to achieve peace among the nations. As we read in the book of Daniel:

“The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure for ever.”
(Daniel 2:44)

Does this seem impossible to you? It would indeed be impossible but for one historical fact — the fact that after Jesus was crucified he came back to life. After spending some weeks with his disciples he went to his Father in heaven.

From there, when the time comes, he will return to take away from the earth all injustice, oppression and violence. Later on in the course we will provide evidence that the time is near, that the earth will soon experience the greatest events of its history.

Our part

But how will all this affect us as individuals? What part will we play while these great changes are taking place? So we come to another question: “What will happen to us in the future, and after our death?”

This depends entirely upon decisions which we ourselves must make, decisions which no one can make for us. First of all, by our own reading of the Bible we must become convinced (a) that God exists, and that the Bible is indeed his word for us; and (b) that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and that he will return to this earth. These form a foundation upon which hopes for world peace, and for our own future, must rest. During this course we shall give you sound reasons for believing these things.

When we come to think about our own personal future, it is the resurrection of Jesus which is the key to everything. Throughout the New Testament you will find that the true hope of a Christian is resurrection from the dead. In fact, the very first thing that Jesus will do when he returns will be to bring many people back to life. For those who really believe that God did raise His Son from the dead, who believe all that He has promised, that new life will not be like the life we now experience. Jesus called it “eternal life”. He said:

“My Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.” (John 6:40)

The main purpose of this course will be to show you, from the Bible, how you can receive the gift of eternal life, in the Kingdom of God on earth. We read in John 3:16:

“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.”

But it is not sufficient to say, “I believe in Jesus”. We must first understand why he came, and how his coming is related to promises made by God, many centuries before. Then we must learn what he wants us to do, for belief in Jesus counts for nothing unless we try to follow his commandments.

We cannot learn about all these things unless we read the Bible. For

“Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of God.” (Romans 10:17)

The purpose of this course is to explain the message of the Bible, to point the way to eternal life, and to show that the only hope for the world is the return of Jesus Christ.

Summary

In the Bible is a promise that there will come a time of permanent peace, when Jesus returns as king. If we believe in Jesus Christ and try to obey his commandments, we have hope of being saved from death, and being given eternal life.

Questions

With each lesson there are some questions, which will help your tutor to see whether you have understood the lesson. Please read the lessons carefully, looking up, if possible, all the Bible quotations. Then answer the questions.

If you would like to continue with this course, all you have to do is to answer the following questions and send them back to the person who sent this to you.

A1 Why is it important to read the Bible?

A2 According to the Bible, what is the only basis for permanent peace in the world?

If you have questions you would like to ask, please ask them!

May God bless you in your search for understanding of His word.