



## 18 LESSON CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

### Lesson 7

#### SIN AND SALVATION

##### **Our part in the Kingdom of God**

We have learned that the Kingdom of God about which Jesus preached will be a real kingdom upon this earth. It will begin when he returns to reign as king. We have seen that this Christian hope is firmly based on God's dealings with the Jewish people. In fact, it is the 'hope of Israel'. The coming Kingdom will mean the removal of all existing governments and the start of a golden age, when peace and plenty will abound. But what will all this mean to us personally? What must we do to make sure that we shall have a part in these great events?

First of all we must first learn about repentance and forgiveness. When Jesus first preached the Kingdom of God he commanded that men should repent:

*"The time has come . . . the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"* (Mark 1:15)

When the apostles preached the gospel in Jerusalem, the people said to them, "What shall we do?" They were told by Peter, "**Repent, and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven**" (Acts 2:37, 38). We must turn to God and repent (= be sorry) about those things we do that are against His laws. To repent we must first of all confess our failings, and then make a decision to turn away from them and try to obey the commandments of Christ. *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9)

##### **The nature of sin**

Sin is disobedience to any of the commandments of God. But the Bible often uses the word 'sin' to mean something more general than individual 'sins'. 'Sin' is in fact a kind of disease which afflicts us all. Right from birth, we want to do our own will, to put our own needs first. This is in contrast to the commandments of Christ, who tells us we must put the needs of others first.

In one place the apostle Paul describes his condition:

*"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have a desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing."* (Romans 7:18,19)

These are astonishing words; one of the greatest Christians who ever lived admits that he cannot control the desires of his human nature. In spite of all his efforts he goes on sinning—he continues to do wrong. He explains his problem:

*"When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"* (Romans 7:21-24).

##### **Human nature**

It is clear from these words that we cannot by our own efforts become clean in God's sight. Only He can save us. Human nature is not naturally good, as many well-intentioned people imagine. To have faith in human nature is to deny the Scriptures: *"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"* (Jeremiah 17:9) **"From within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly."** (Mark 7:21,22)

When the Bible speaks of our nature, it uses the expression 'the flesh'. This is our natural state, the nature with which we are born:

*“ . . . the sinful mind (or ‘mind of the flesh’) is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”* (Romans 8:7,8)

Human beings are naturally self-centred. God wants us to turn away from self, to seek the good of others, and to put their needs before our own. A Christian must endeavour to do this, but even when he strives hard to achieve it, he realises that he can never completely overcome his tendency to sin. Only the Lord Jesus Christ succeeded in being perfectly sinless, though he was tempted in the same way as we are.

### **Temptation**

The Apostle James tells us that **temptation comes from within**:

*“Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”* (James 1:14,15)

Of all men, only Jesus did not allow sin to take control over his actions and thoughts. Because of this God raised him from the dead and gave him eternal life -

*“ . . . he humbled himself and became obedient to death . . . Therefore God exalted him to the highest place . . . ”* (Phil. 2:8,9)

From the time that the first man Adam sinned, all men, including even Jesus Christ himself, have inherited a nature which is prone to sin, and a body which will die. God does not hold us guilty because of the nature we bear; but if we do sin and disobey God, we will be judged by Him. We need to be forgiven if we are to be saved from death.

Having heard the truth about Jesus Christ, we shall be judged on the Last Day, when “all the nations will be gathered before him (Jesus), and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats” (Matthew 25:32).

### **Forgiveness**

The good news of the gospel is that God is willing to forgive us our sins, if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. When Paul cried, “Who shall rescue me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24), he added, “Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” We can be saved through our faith:

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.”* (Ephesians 2:8)

We have explained that repentance is necessary. Unless we repent we cannot be forgiven. There is another step which we must take if we are to become acceptable to God. We have already given Peter’s reply to the question, “What shall we do?” He said:

*“Repent, and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven”* (Acts 2:38).

When we are baptised, in symbol we share the death of Jesus. In our next lesson we shall have more to say about his death, and later on we shall talk about what baptism is, and what it means.

### **Summary**

We inherit from Adam a nature that is incurably sinful, but the good news of the gospel is that God will forgive our sins if we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, repent and are baptised. We are then ready to take part in the coming Kingdom of God upon the earth.

### **Questions**

G1 *What do we learn from the Bible about human nature?*

G2 *What must we do to be saved from sin and its consequence - death?*