



God so loved the world

READING FOR THIS LESSON – Isaiah 53.

What is wrong with the world?

Something is wrong with the world we live in - on this we must all agree. In the news on any day, there are stories of murders, corruption, crime, fighting and the threat of war. We are so used to these things, that we think this is normal. But if we stop to think about them, we are bound to ask, "Why?"



Surely, when God first made the world - and made it such a very good dwelling place for men and women - He intended something better than the world of trouble and uncertainty that we live in today.

The beginning of the trouble

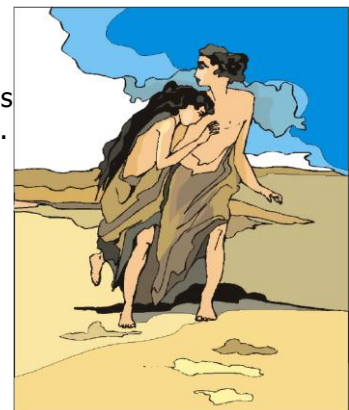
In the beginning, when God made the very first man, called Adam, He taught him His ways. He also gave Adam a simple law, and, just as a father expects obedience from his children, so God expected obedience from Adam.

God said,

"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."
(Genesis 2:16-17).



Adam disobeyed God. His disobedience led eventually to death, as God had said it would. It also made it easier for Adam to sin next time, and more than that - all his descendants were born with this same nature, finding it very hard not to keep



In Romans 5:12, we read,

"..as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned."

So we see that Adam sinned, and, because he was a sinner he eventually died.

We also sin and die. When you read Isaiah 53, did you notice the words of verse 6?

"All we like sheep have gone astray: We have turned, every one, to his own way;"

The prophet Jeremiah tells us the same thing, in different words, when he says,

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jeremiah 17:9).

We read these things in the Bible, and we know from our own feelings that they are true, just as the apostle Paul did when he said,

"I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature." (Romans 7:18).

We all have to agree with Paul - somehow, we never manage to be as good as we want to be.

What is the cure?

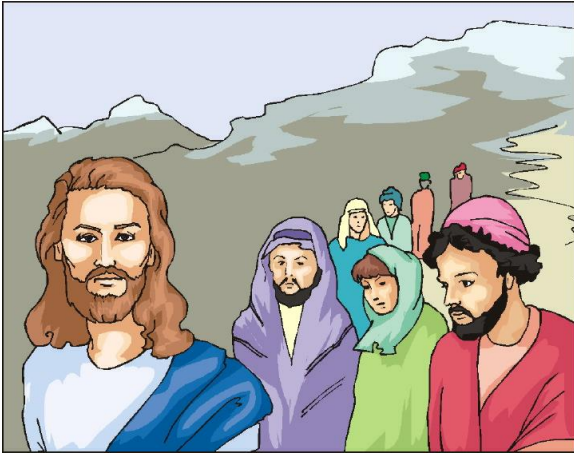
Before he sinned, Adam walked in friendship with God. Now that friendship was broken. Adam was a sinner, and could no longer have fellowship with his Maker.

Adam probably did not know what a lot of trouble he was starting. Ever since then, for thousands of years, every one of his descendants (including you and me!) has followed in his ways and sinned (every one except Jesus, of course). Because we are all sinful, we are all separated from God. What a hopeless state! Men could do nothing to save themselves.

But God, in His love and His mercy, did not leave men to die in their sins. He provided a way in which they could come to Him, and have life. We read in John 3:16,

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."





Now it is always easier to make something if you have a good pattern to follow.

A child learns to speak by imitating its parents. And so we can learn to be better men and women, by taking Jesus as our pattern or example, and learning all we can about him, and trying to be like him.

When we look at Jesus, we see what God wants *us* to be.

Jesus and the cross

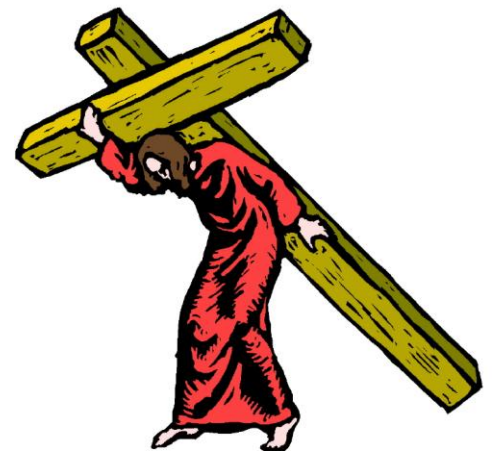
Jesus never sinned. He always did those things that pleased God. And yet the Jews and Romans crucified him!

God did not save him from this terrible death. The verse we have already quoted from Isaiah 53, verse 6, goes on to say,

"..and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all."

The Bible teaches us plainly that through the death of Jesus on the cross, in obedience to his Father's will, we may have our sins forgiven, and may have a hope of everlasting life.

There is something very wonderful about this - the love of God in giving His only Son, and the loving obedience of the Son to His Father's will. By believing in him, we may have life. We shall come back to it again and again in all our searching of the Bible, because it is at the heart of the believer's hope.



Believing in Him

In John 3:16, we read,

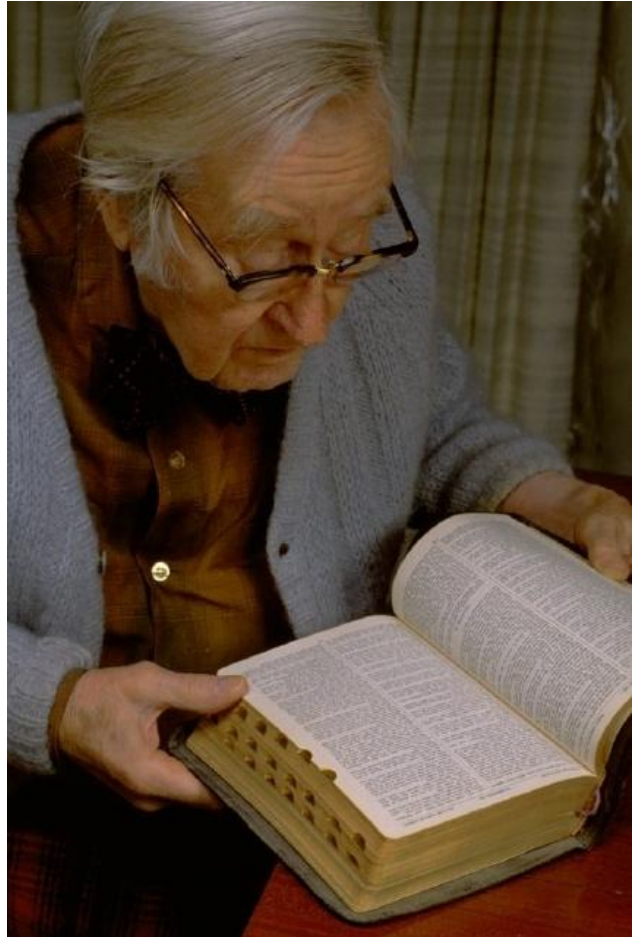
"..that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Does that mean that we have only to say, "I believe in Jesus", and we shall be saved from sin and death?

It may seem so at first, but let us stop and think for a while. If we really believe anything, we act upon it, don't we? If our child is sick, and we believe the doctor can save him or her, we don't just say, "I believe in the doctor", and let the child go on suffering. Of course not! We send for the doctor, and, because we believe in him, we do whatever he says.

Now it is just the same with believing in Jesus. If we **really** believe, we will find out what he wants us to do, and do it to the best of our ability.

Only if we do this, can we hope to be among those who *"should not perish, but have everlasting life."*



Summary

1. Adam, the father of the human race, sinned, and so God punished him with death.
2. We are like Adam; we also sin, and therefore we die.
3. God will forgive us our sins, and give us eternal life, if we believe in Jesus.
4. If we really believe in Jesus, we shall want to do what he tells us.