

NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

CHRIST THE ANSWER

LESSON TWO

CHRISTIANITY

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LESSON 2

THE DIVINE RESPONSE

In Lesson One we noted that guilt is a universal human condition. The Bible proclaims that men are guilty because they are separated from God; that they are sinners. Is there any means of overcoming guilt, of being reconciled to the Lord of this universe? There is an answer, but it is not a human answer.

In the sixth century B.C., Jerusalem was destroyed by the armies of Babylon (II Chronicles 36).^{*} The prophets declared that Judah had broken her relationship with God by disloyalty to His covenant; she was alienated from Him and in despair. The fall of Jerusalem was the ultimate punishment of Judah's disobedience. Man was continually in conflict with God and could not resolve this conflict through his own efforts. But what man could not do, God

* Read the text of all scriptural references. All quotations in this lesson are taken from the King James Version. For those using other versions, the words may differ but the meanings are the same.

could. The hope held out by the prophets was that God would act in a decisive way so that man would be freed from guilt. God would create in man a new heart (Ezekiel 36:16-38) so man could live in God's love. The creating of the new heart was to be accompanied by a new kingdom with a newly anointed king, or the Christ (Isaiah 9:1-9). God's kingdom was to break into human life in a new way, and in this manner the old human dilemma of guilt before God was to be broken.

Today, also, man can find no way of his own to remove guilt. The person who tries to overcome guilt by immersing himself in good works never seems to be able to do enough. Man may rationalize by telling himself that he is not so bad — that his sins are no worse than the sins of others. But even then, guilt is always showing up in new places, since the fundamental cause of his guilt — separation from God — has not been removed. Guilt continues with him to the grave.

SALVATION THROUGH GOD'S SON

It should be one of man's deepest concerns that he does not die without the meaning, direction, and purpose that God can bring to his life. *The Old Testament conviction that man on his own plunges deeper and deeper into despair is supported by the experience of those in our time who attempt to live without God.*

Israel could not reconcile herself to God and neither can we. Man has offended God by turning to other gods, and only He can restore us to His love in forgiveness. God indeed, in His Son, in His death and resurrection, has done for us what we can not do for ourselves.

In the death of His own Son, who died on our behalf, God has made possible our reconciliation to Him. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). We cannot reconcile ourselves to God by our good deeds. Christ alone can do this. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (II Corinthians 5:16-20). We are alienated from God and cannot through our own ingenuity find the way back. But what we cannot do, God has done. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Corinthians 5:21).

Christ, therefore, is the answer to human guilt. Christ is the hope of the world.

THE NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

God in His love and forgiveness has accepted us, the proof of which is the death and resurrection of His son. We are free from guilt if we accept His love. The responsive acceptance of God's love brings a new outlook on life, for by His amazing grace we have been accepted by the God of the universe; He has taken our guilt away. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

In Jesus Christ we have been born anew to a life of love, or of being accepted (John 3:3-5). In Jesus Christ we are freed from anxiety and sin and are now alive to the will of God who is the first and the last: the creator of this universe.

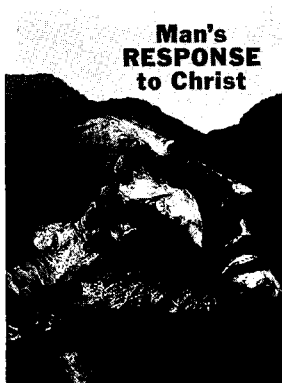
Men can expect conflicts and suffering because of their commitment to Jesus Christ (II Timothy 3:12), but even so our life is filled with a deep and abiding joy. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (James 1:2). "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (I Peter 1:8, 9). In the words of our master, the one who accepts Him has "passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

THE GLORY OF ETERNAL LIFE

The ultimate hope in Christ is that not only will we be freed from guilt, but *our life itself will extend beyond the grave*. That hope is even beyond the joy we know here. Paul states, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). We are freed to live life courageously not only because we have been freed from sin, but because Jesus Christ in His resurrection has removed the sting of death. We must face death, but because of His resurrection, and because it assures our own, what

awaits beyond the grave is to be anticipated, not feared (I Corinthians 15:54-55).

The first battle with death has been won by Jesus Christ, and His victory assures our victory. The answer to human guilt and despair is therefore an answer which comes from God: Jesus Christ the hope of glory!



YOUR NEXT LESSON . . .

Man's Response to Christ sets forth the specific acts of a responsive faith that leads one into the spiritual body of Christ.

LESSON TWO: REVIEW

The questions below are based on the following passages in the Word of God: Ezekiel 36:16-38; Isaiah 9:1-9; Romans 5:1-11; II Corinthians 5:16-21; I Peter 1:1-9; John 3:1-21; 5:19-24; Romans 8:18-25; I Corinthians 15. Read each passage carefully and thoroughly before completing the exercise. The questions are designed for brief answers — sometimes only one word, or a few words, or a sentence at the most.

1. Why did God allow Judah to be carried into Babylonian captivity?

2. Who was the only one that could restore Judah to her former glory?

3. In Isaiah's prophecy, who is promised as the one who would redeem Judah and all people?

4. Recall three names ascribed to this redeemer.

5. According to the account given in Romans, when does man have peace and cause for rejoicing?

6. For whom did Christ die?

7. Christ's blood saves us from what?

8. How does God show His love for us and reconcile us to Himself?

9. How is a person who is "in Christ" described?

10. What did Christ become for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him?

11. According to Peter, what event has given us a lively hope?

12. What does Peter say that our belief in and love for Christ should cause us to do?

13. What must man do to be reconciled to God?

14. For what reason did God send His Son into the world?

15. What happens to one who hears Christ's words and believes on Him?

16. What is the outcome of our faith if Christ was not raised from the dead?

17. What is our state "if in this life only we have hope in Christ"?

18. What will happen to our natural and corruptible bodies at the final resurrection?

19. What causes death to sting?

20. How does man gain victory over death?

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