

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

PART ONE

STUDIES 1-4

Bible Light and Truth



“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” Psalm 119:105

**“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”
John 17:17**

SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Find time to read through the lesson carefully without rushing. Settle down comfortably and quietly for study.
2. When a passage from the Bible is quoted, look it up in your Bible and read the passage. Check for yourself that the verses are not taken out of their context. Look at the verses before and after those quoted and be certain that you understand what the passage teaches.
3. Try and set aside a little time each day for reading. Read the passages from the Bible that are suggested at the end of the studies.
4. Go through each Bible study more than once looking up the references for yourself.
5. Answer the questionnaire that is at the end of each study. Complete answering the questions then make a copy of your answers. Send one copy to your tutor and keep one copy with the study for future reference.
6. If you have any questions about anything contained in the Bible study, ask your tutor by writing your questions on one of the question sheets provided and enclosing it with your questionnaire.
7. We are told in the Book of Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament about Cornelius who was a good man and who lived uprightly. He wanted to learn more of God and of His will. He prayed to God for help and his prayers were heard and answered (Acts 10). We recommend that you begin your studies by first praying to God that He will guide your studies. Pray about any problems you may have in life and try to see how He is guiding you, through His word, seeking to bring you closer to Him.

Bible Reading Hints

DO:

- Look first to the Bible for answers to questions
- Read all of the Bible to find answers to your questions
- Use clear passages to explain more difficult ones
- Write down any questions that you have from reading the Bible. It will help you to remember them for future study. Often answers to questions are discovered whilst following a plan of daily Bible reading.

Don't:

- Expect quick answers
- Look at isolated passages and draw conclusions

May God bless you in your studies of His Word.

Bible Study 1: The Bible

The Bible makes great claims. It clearly states that its author is God - the Creator of all things and the source of all life. The Bible speaks with authority, claiming to be the sole source of revealing God and His purpose. If this claim cannot be upheld, then the Bible is the greatest and the cruelest hoax which has ever deceived mankind. However, if the claims of the Bible can be validated and supported, then we are in possession of the world's greatest treasure.

The Bible as the true Word of God contains the key to finding true peace and happiness. It answers the most perplexing questions concerning the meaning and purpose of our existence and predicts the final outcome of the struggle between right and wrong.

So let us look more closely at its claims. Paul, writing of the Old Testament, says *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God"* (2 Timothy 3v16).

Every word of the original manuscripts was written under direct Divine guidance. The Apostle Peter stressed the same fact,

"For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1v21)

These two apostles claim Divine authority for the writings of the Old Testament recorded centuries before their own days, just as indeed their own work was divinely inspired. This Divine authority is responsible for the complete harmony of teaching revealed in the Bible. The writers were separated by time, education, occupation, experience and social position, yet their writings all combine to form one united Book.

Why the Bible Was Written

The Bible tells us how the human race began and how God's plan of salvation will lead to the final victory of right over wrong and the extermination of every trace of sin and evil. The chief purpose of the Bible is to make known to the condemned human race the way of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Old and New Testaments combine to portray Jesus as the only Saviour of mankind. Thus we read:

"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." (John 20v31).

In the pages of the Bible we find all the teaching necessary for man's enlightenment; The Divine definitions of right and wrong, and of man's duty to God and to his fellow-men (2 Timothy 3v15-17). Finally, the Bible has been given to tell us, in broad outline, what the future holds, that we might be prepared for the return of Christ (2 Peter 1v19).

The contents of the bible

The Bible is a collection of 66 books divided into two main sections. The books of the Old Testament were written before the time of Christ and the books of the New Testament after the time of Christ. You will find a list of them at the front of your Bible. They were written by about forty different writers over a period of 1,500 years. They were written in a number of different countries - such as Israel, Egypt, Italy and Babylon. Yet all the books combine to teach one consistent theme, the theme of the working out of God's purpose with man, from the very beginning recorded in Genesis to the time when *"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever"* (Revelation 11v15).

The Old Testament

The books of the Old Testament fall into four main sections:

(a) THE BOOKS OF MOSES

The first book is called Genesis, which means the beginning. It tells us about God's dealings with the first men on the earth. Then follow Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. They record how God called Abraham, made a covenant with him and with his descendants, brought them out of Egypt and gave them the land known today as Israel.

(b) THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

These, from the Book of Joshua to the Book of Esther, are a record of the history of the Israelites (or Jews) and of God's dealings with them.

(c) THE POETIC BOOKS

The books of Job, the Psalms, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs were written a poetic form. They contain a lot of important teachings about the ways of God and the feelings and duties of man.

(d) THE BOOKS OF THE PROPHETS

The word prophet means seer - one who has insight or visions, not only of future events, but also about God's requirements of man. The longer prophetic books of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are followed by a number of shorter ones.

The New Testament

(a) THE GOSPEL RECORDS

These are four separate accounts of the life of Christ, written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; each book presents a different aspect of the gospel record. By reading and comparing the four records we get a clearer picture of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(b) THE BOOK CALLED 'THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES'

This was written by Luke and tells what happened after Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. We are told how the first churches were formed as the apostles taught the Gospel message throughout the Roman Empire.

(c) THE LETTERS

These were written by some of the apostles to teach and guide the early believers in the small, scattered young churches. But the message in them is as relevant in our day as it was to them.

(d) THE BOOK OF REVELATION

This was the last message of Jesus, given in vision to the Apostle John.

Jesus Christ believed every word of the Old Testament

Jesus Christ is the central figure of God's purpose and the Scriptures which he used and studied were what we know today as the Old Testament. Jesus believed these Scriptures, basing all his teaching upon them and accepted them as having indisputable authority. For example read these passages:

John 5v 6-47
Luke 24v27
Luke 24v44-48
Matthew 22v29
Mark 7v6-13

Jesus speaks about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and Solomon, and of many other people about whom we read in the Old Testament and bases his teaching on the fact that these people were real, that they were part of God's purpose and that all of the Old Testament is the Word of God.

The Bible cannot be proved false

All the developments of modern thought and technology have combined to establish that the Bible records are true. Many enemies of the Bible, including some very clever men, have tried to prove it wrong but they have all failed. Since truth cannot contradict itself, we should naturally expect the Word of God to be in harmony with observable scientific knowledge.

A further evidence of the authority of the Bible is the way in which it has been preserved over the centuries. The Bible has triumphantly withstood every effort of man to overthrow it. It has been suppressed and withheld from the common people; whole editions of it have been burned and many books have been written in attempts to disprove it. No other book has been subjected to such continuous and determined opposition: the Bible still stands, immovable and unconquerable.

The great antiquity of the Bible, its preservation and influence upon the human race are factors which cannot be ignored. The evidences of archaeological discoveries particularly over the past hundred years or so by various archaeologists working in Egypt, Nineveh, Assyria, Babylon, Ur and Israel are all striking confirmations of the truth of Bible history. Exhibits in museums all over the world clearly demonstrate this fact. The inscriptions of Nations which fought against Israel confirm the Bible accounts both of events and of ancient customs and local habits. Present day archaeology continues to add material supporting our reasons for believing the truth of the whole Bible. (For more information about the various discoveries, send for a free copy of the magazine 'Light on Archaeology'.)

Even the criticisms relating to the care taken by the Jewish copyists of the original writings are discounted with the discovery of ancient manuscripts. The remarkable discovery in 1947 of the Dead Sea Scrolls has provided yet more valuable evidence of the accuracy of the Bible. These manuscripts are some of the earliest available, dating back to the second century B.C. Despite their age, the slight variations that do occur are only in respect of spelling and do not affect the doctrine, prophecy or historical facts found in our present day Bible.

So the work of the archaeologist confirms in a remarkable way the truth and reliability of the Bible and thus, indirectly, that it is the production of Divine inspiration.

Prophecy proves the Bible true

God himself has chosen to use prophecy as one great proof of His infinite wisdom, authority and supremacy (Isaiah 46 v 9-10; Isaiah 42 v 9).

The Bible speaks from time to time of events that would come to pass hundreds of years later. In Matthew 2 it is recorded that the wise men came to Jerusalem and asked, "*Where is he that is born King of the Jews?*" When Herod asked the chief priests this question, they at once were able to reply, "*In Bethlehem of Judea*" because hundreds of years before it had been prophesied in one of the books of the Old Testament (Micah 5v2).

In addition to prophecies about Jesus Christ, there are many relating to ancient nations and, in particular, to the Jews. Many of the ancient nations have disappeared from world affairs but the Bible said that the Jews would survive. The Jewish people still survive today in spite of many efforts to destroy them (Jeremiah 30v10-11). If the Bible had been of mere human origin, at any time in history such a declaration could have been found false. The Jews are still with us today

with their own state, Israel, and its capital city Jerusalem now in their complete control.

The Bible gives us the reasons for these facts. This is a powerful proof that the Bible is Divinely inspired and therefore infallible. It is a collection of books that we can completely trust to teach us about God and His purpose with His creation. Only from its pages can we find the true path to salvation.

SUMMARY

Some reasons for believing the bible is inspired:

1. The unity of its message in spite of the number of writers who worked over a great period of time.
2. Its miraculous preservation.
3. The evidence of the discoveries of the archaeologist
4. The fulfilment of Bible prophecies - (further examples will be given in later studies).

Some conditions required for salvation:

- If we are to understand the Bible, Jesus said we must become teachable as little children Matthew 11v25.
- We must want to find out for ourselves the truth and wisdom of God's Word (Proverbs 2v3-6).
- We must believe that God will reward us in our search (Hebrews 11v6).
- We must be willing to bring our lives into harmony with God's commandments, for as Jesus said:

"If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." (John 13v17).

And

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven". (Matthew 7v21).

The Apostle Paul wrote,

"Work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2v12).

The whole purpose of this course of studies is to help you to understand the Bible for yourself, so that you may accept it as it is, the Word of God, offering the hope of everlasting life to all who will hear and obey it.

PASSAGES TO READ FROM YOUR BIBLE

2 Timothy 3

2 Peter 1

Luke 24

Look up these verses

Isaiah 8v20

Acts 28v23-31

Ephesians 4v21-32

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

STUDY 1 QUESTIONS

Underline the correct answer to each question and send the loose copy to your tutor or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to your tutor.

1. Who is the author of the Bible?
(a) Paul (b) Moses
(c) God (d) Daniel
2. What part of the Old Testament did Jesus use to begin explaining to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus about himself?
(a) The writings of the prophets
(b) The writings of Moses
(c) The Psalms
(d) The Proverbs
3. The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in:-
(a) 1749 (b) 1794
(c) 1947 (d) 1914
4. Where did Micah prophesy that Jesus would be born?
(a) Jerusalem (b) Bethel
(c) Bethlehem (d) Babylon
5. The books of the Bible were written over a period of:-
(a) 50 years (b) 15 years
(c) 1,500 years (d) 150 years
6. Jesus said, 'If you know these things, happy are you....'
(a) If you tell others' (b) If you do them'
(c) If you remember them' (d) If you are sure of them'
7. How many separate books does the Bible contain?
(a) 66 (b) 27 (c) 39 (d) 23
8. What was the sure 'word' that Peter referred to in his second epistle?
(a) Of good conduct (b) Of singing
(c) Of prophecy (d) Of talking
9. In which city was Paul living at the time recorded in Acts 28v23-31?
10. From where can we obtain a full understanding of God's plan and purpose with the earth?
(a) The Dead Sea Scrolls (b) The Jewish Law
(c) The writings of archaeologists
(d) The Holy Bible

Bible Study 2: Daily Bible Reading

Reading: Psalm 119v89-112

The Bible is like a deep well of clear water - a well so deep that you can never reach the bottom of it. You will never come to the time when you feel that you know it all, and there is no more need to read the word of God.

The attitude of those mentioned in the quotes below is an example of how we all should receive the Word of God. The Bereans in Greece:

"Received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so, therefore many of them believed" (Acts 17v11, 12)

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians:

"For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God." (1 Thessalonians 2v13)

The Bible is indeed the word of God and should be the most precious thing in our lives, a great treasure. So this is the book that we should carefully read and learn from! God is speaking directly to us from the Bible! His word brings us a wonderful hope of life through the gospel message.

The Bible and Jesus

Jesus, of course, had only the Old Testament, but knew it thoroughly! In every problem and difficulty, Jesus went straight to the Word of God for the answer. Just consider these examples:

When the Pharisees asked him whether it was right for a man to divorce his wife, Jesus went straight back to the account of Adam and Eve in Genesis. He said to them: "From the beginning of the creation God made them male and female." You can read his full answer in Mark 10v5-12.

When Jesus was alone in the wilderness facing temptation, to choose the easy way, instead obeying God's way. Jesus overcame these temptations by answering them with words from the Book of Deuteronomy each time saying: "It is written"

When soldiers came to arrest him, Jesus knew that his death would soon follow. He did not resist his arrest, for as he said, "the scriptures must be fulfilled" (Mark 14v49). It was these Scriptures that foretold his death. Indeed throughout his life, Jesus was fulfilling all that was written about him in the Old Testament.

Growing in the knowledge of Jesus

Peter exhorts us to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3v18). The only way that we can gain knowledge about the Lord Jesus is by reading the Bible. Each of the four gospel records give an account of what Jesus said and did. They record his life, the words he spoke, the miracles he performed, his death and his resurrection.

Other books in the New Testament help us to understand and appreciate all that Jesus accomplished for us by dying upon the cross. We learn how because of his sacrifice for us we can

have hope of life in the Kingdom of God and how we should strive to live a new life in Christ. However it is not possible to understand all these things without reading the Old Testament as well. The very first verse of the New Testament (Matthew 1v1) states:

"Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham".

Thus we have to go back to the Old Testament in order to find out who these men were, and why Jesus is called their son. Jesus read the Old Testament; we also must read it. Indeed we need to read the Bible every day. The apostle Paul tells us how vital the reading of the Scriptures is to our lives:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3v16-17)

Now God provides us with the food that our bodies need day by day. Jesus reminded his disciples about this when he said to them:

"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6v26)

In the same way that we need the right balance of protein, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals for healthy physical growth, our new life in Christ will only grow if it is fed. The only 'food' required for healthy spiritual growth is the Word of God.

It would be disastrous if we were to go without food for a week, and then try to make up by eating a whole week's food at once. In the same way, we need to feed our minds with God's Word every day, not in 'binges' and then having periods of going without. If we read the Bible every day, it will build up our understanding of the ways of God, and our knowledge about our Creator. If we do this we will grow in grace and knowledge.

Reading the whole of Scripture

Just as we need a balanced diet for our physical; well being, so we also need to have a balance in our reading of scripture. Most Bible students have favourite passages from the Bible that they read, for example the Psalms and the gospel records. But in order to gain an understanding about God's purpose with creation and how he works we need to read also the parts of the Bible that are maybe we can feel harder to understand. For example the historical accounts, the chapters that record long lists of people and places, the accounts of how the Israelites so often turned away from God. Many Bible students wonder sometimes why these accounts are there, but, as we have read in 2Timothy 3v16, all Scripture is profitable. These records in scripture are there for us to learn from and as a consequence make changes in our own lives. Other scriptures teach us about how we should live our lives in a way that pleases God - our Creator. It is pointless reading the scriptures, if we do not put the word of God into action in our lives, day by day, just as Jesus did.

From the first verse of Genesis to the last verse of Revelation, the Bible is the inspired Word of God. If we were only to read a few chapters here and there, we would never come to understand some of the most important teachings of the Bible: the wickedness that is in man; the great holiness of God and the reverence and obedience He demands from us; the way by which we can be forgiven and reconciled to God; the great hope of salvation revealed in Jesus Christ. Indeed Jesus said of God's word:

"It is written: `Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that

comes from the mouth of God." Matt 4v4

The Bible Companion

Many Bible students do their daily readings from a booklet known as The Bible Companion, This reading plan will take you through the Old Testament once, and the New Testament twice each year. It has stood the test of time and helped many people all over the world to grow in their knowledge and understanding of the Word of God. It is also helpful and encouraging to know that you are not alone in what you are reading.

Useful Ideas for Bible Reading

How to Read

It is a good idea when you sit down to do your daily Bible reading, to read the day's chapter straight through first and find out what it is all about. After you have read it, shut your eyes and say to yourself, "What have I just read?" Sometimes you will remember quite clearly; sometimes you will find it more difficult. Then you need to read the chapter through again.

Remember - every word of Scripture is important!

Other helps to Bible Reading

If your Bible does not have marginal references or maps, or is set out in a different way, it does not matter - you still have the Word of God. However, for those who do have these extra helps in their Bibles, the following notes will help you to use them:

(a) Margin References

Some Bibles have margin references, and these can be a help. You will find a small letter or number by a word: and that letter or number can be found in the margin. Here it will give you a chapter and verse which is connected with what you have just read. If you look it up, it may help you to understand the chapter you are reading.

(b) Chapters and Verses

Unlike most other books, the Bible is divided into verses as well as chapters. The chapters and verses were put in many hundreds of years after the Bible was completed, and are very helpful in finding passages you want to read or remember.

However they are not always helpful. Sometimes these artificial divisions cut a record in half, as in the record of the transfiguration in Matthew 16 and 17. The last verse of Chapter 16 reads:

"Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

Jesus is referring to the vision of the kingdom which was given to his disciples, Peter, James and John. Chapter 17 begins:

"Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves"

So when you begin to read Matthew 17, you need first to look back to the last verse of Chapter 16, to understand the context. It is always a good idea to look at the "context" of the chapter you

are reading, to see what went before and what comes afterwards.

(c) Use of Maps

Some Bibles have maps at the back. When you read about an event happening at a certain place, find that place on your map. If you do this each time a town, river, mountain or lake is mentioned, you will come to know the land of Israel a little better. It will also be an aid to understanding the event or account that you are reading.

For example, when you read Luke 2 you will find the towns of Nazareth, Bethlehem and Jerusalem all mentioned. If you then look at the map at the back of your Bible, you will see that it is quite a long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, but Bethlehem and Jerusalem are near to each other.

(D) Read your Bible Prayerfully

Whenever you sit down to read your Bible, ask God for His help in understanding His Word. What we read in Psalm 119v18 is a prayer:

"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." [NIV]

We need God's help in understanding, and He is always willing to hear our prayers.

(E) Hearing and Doing

God will teach us through His Word. But reading it is not enough. James tells us we must be "doers of the Word, and not hearers only" (James 1v22).

Jesus spoke of some who called him "Lord, Lord", but they did not obey his commands and thus would not be acceptable to Jesus:

"Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" [NIV]

Jesus also told a parable about two classes of people styled sheep and goats. The 'sheep' had put the words of Jesus into practice in their lives and were accepted by him. The 'goats' had not and were rejected. Please read Matthew 25v31-46 and discover for yourself what this parable is about.

Matthew 7v24-29 tells a parable about two men who both built a house. One built his house on a foundation of sand, the other on a foundation of rock. When the storms came, the house on sand was destroyed, the other survived. Thus Jesus said:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock."

(F) Come to the Bible with a Humble and Open Mind

God has said:

"But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word." (Isaiah 66v2)

God will teach the man who comes to Him with a lowly mind, ready to learn: He will have nothing

to do with the man who thinks he knows it all!

Summary

Read the Bible:

- Every day.
- Make sure your reading covers all the books of the Bible.
- With an open mind, letting it teach you.
- Carefully. Think over each verse and make sure you understand it.
- Prayerfully. Ask God to help you to understand what you need.
- With a humble mind, trying to find out how God wants you to live.

Psalm 19; Psalm 119v1-40; Mark 8v34-38

Good verses to memorise:

"Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea I shall observe it with my whole heart" Psalm 119: 33- 34

PASSAGES TO READ FROM YOUR BIBLE

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

STUDY 2 QUESTIONS

Underline the correct answer to each question and send the loose copy to your tutor or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to your tutor.

1. What was the attitude of the Berean's to what Paul said:
 - a) Did not believe him
 - b) Accepted what Paul said without question
 - c) Read the scriptures to see if what Paul said was true.

2. What things does Peter in his second epistle ch3 say we must do:
 - a) Read the Bible
 - b) Grow in grace and knowledge
 - c) Attend church d) trust Jesus

3. Is the entire Bible the word of God?
 - a) Some of it is
 - b) All of it
 - c) Only the New Testament
 - d) Only the Old Testament

4. Were the chapter and verse divisions in the scriptures when they were first written
 - a) yes b) no

5. What did David ask of God in Psalm 119:
 - a) Long life
 - b) To be rich
 - c) To open his eyes to understand God's word

6. What does James say we must do:
 - a) Read the scriptures
 - b) Understand God's word
 - c) Be doers of the Word
 - d) Learn from other people

7. What characteristic does God expect of us when we read his word:
 - a) Be clever
 - b) Be good students
 - c) Be humble
 - d) Have an open mind

8. How often should we read the Bible?
 - a) Occasionally
 - b) When we are in need
 - c) When we feel like it
 - d) On a regular basis

9. What does David pray for God to teach him in Psalm 119:
 - a) How to live his life
 - b) How to be good
 - c) To have wisdom
 - d) To follow your decrees

10. Would you like a **FREE** copy of the Bible companion to help you read the Bible constructively every day?
 - a) Yes b) No

Bible Study 3: God the Creator

There are a number of arguments for the existence of God.

The watch argument

If we found a watch on the ground, having never seen a watch before, we might pick it up and examine it. We might open the back and look at the complicated mechanism. We would notice how the tiny wheels worked against each other and turned the hands on the face.

We would know that such an intricate piece of mechanism must have been made. The watch must have been designed; it must have been planned. The watch could not have made itself. The parts could not have come together by accident. The fact that the watch exists is evidence that there must be a designer - there must be a watchmaker.

The universe is made up of millions of stars and galaxies; the solar system is but one small part of this vast system. Within the solar system the planets revolve in precise orbits around the sun and the moon revolves around the earth with such precision that their movements can be timed with complete accuracy. The sun and the planets are part of a marvellously intricate system of which every part is moving exactly along its appointed path. This system is far more complicated than any watch and could not occur by mere random chance or by accident. There must be a designer, thus we read:

'The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork' (Psalm 19v1).

Bible evidence

One of the most powerful arguments for the existence of God is contained in the Bible. The Bible contains many prophecies about the rise and fall of kingdoms and nations; about individuals and about events. In many cases these prophecies were recorded hundreds of years in advance. This is something that man could not do. Only God, who controls all things, could have caused these prophecies to be written. Look at Isaiah 46v9-10.

Some of these prophecies will be dealt with in future lessons. The purpose of this study is to explain what God has revealed about Himself in the Bible.

What the Bible tells us

God has revealed Himself as the Creator.

'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth' (Genesis 1v1).

'I have made the earth,, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded' (Isaiah 45v12).

God has revealed Himself as eternal. He has always been and always will exist.

'Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God' (Psalm 90v2).

'Your throne is established of old: You are from everlasting' (Psalm 93v2).

There is only one God, there is no other. The Israelites were reminded that the various gods the Egyptians worshipped had no power and were no more than man-made images.

'For all the gods of the peoples are idols: but the Lord made the heavens'
(1Chronicles 16v26).

God is all powerful, He is aware of all that occurs, being present everywhere by the power of His spirit. David writes:

'You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O LORD, You know it altogether' (Psalm 139v2-4).

David in this Psalm shows that our minds are too limited to understand the greatness of God (verse 6). But if we know that God sees and knows all things it can be a great comfort and a source of strength: *'If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me'* (Psalm 139v9-10).

The Bible tells us that God's ear is always open to hear the prayer of His children and God has also declared that *'I will never leave you nor forsake you'* (Hebrews 13v5).

The unity of God

The Bible teaching that there is but one God is very important and fundamental to our understanding of Him and ultimately our salvation. The unity of our Creator is the clear teaching of both Old Testament and New Testament. For example look up these verses: Isaiah 45v5; 1Corinthians 8v6 and Ephesians 4v6.

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, *'For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus'* (1 Timothy 2v5). Jesus himself emphasised the importance of this basic Bible doctrine when he said,

'This is life eternal, that they may know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent' (John 17v3).

The love of God

If there is an attribute of the Almighty which shows that His character is much different from the gods which have been invented by men, it lies in the mercy and love that He shows.

Think of the love that a parent shows to his children, God shows all that love, and more, to those who seek Him. We read:

'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' (John 3v16).

The work of the Lord Jesus Christ forms the subject of another study and man's need for salvation is also dealt with thoroughly later. But the purpose that God has with the earth and with man needs to be outlined briefly here. It is the clear teaching of the Bible that God intends in the future to change the world; to remove the evils which at present afflict the world.

God's plan for the earth

Very early in the history of Israel, God declared, *'As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord'* (Numbers 14v21). The earth is certainly not filled with the glory of God now, but it will be. This is God's purpose with His creation.

The Apostle Paul spoke to the people of Athens and told them that the day would come when world would be ruled in righteousness by a king appointed by God and that this was guaranteed by His raising the one appointed from the dead.

The world is certainly not ruled in righteousness now, but it will be. When this time comes it will be called the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ will be the king. God's purpose with the earth is the subject of another study. One of the sure ways in which God has shown His love for man is that He has made known His purpose in the Bible. His love is also shown in the provision of His own son as the centre of that purpose and who is the means of our salvation.

The Spirit

This brief study about God would not be complete without mentioning two words which are associated with the Almighty and His work.

The word 'spirit' is often used in the Bible to mean the power of God, which is universally present. David has this to say:

'Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?'
(Psalm 139v7)

'Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit' (Psalm 51v12).

Holy Spirit

The word 'holy' means special, set apart, sacred and consecrated. When we read of the Holy Spirit, the Bible is speaking of the Power of God, His Spirit, when used for a particular, special purpose. The Authorised King James translation of the Bible sometimes has the word for spirit translated as 'ghost' but the New King James translation uses the word Spirit and if we look at some of the places where the words appear the meaning will be clear.

When Mary, the mother of Jesus, was told that she was to have a son who was to be called Jesus, she was told that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and Luke emphasises the meaning by repeating 'the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee' (Luke 1 v 35). Look at the verse. The angel is explaining that the birth of Jesus would be a miracle brought about by God's special power operating upon Mary. Because of this, Jesus would be the Son of God.

Writing the Bible

We have already looked at a verse in the second letter of Peter which says that *'the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit'*. It was the power of God applied in this particular way that caused the prophets to speak and the writers of the scriptures to set down God's Word. They were moved by the power of God.

The word 'spirit' is often a translation of a word in Hebrew (in the Old Testament) or a word in

Greek (in the New Testament) that means breath. So when the Spirit of God moved a man, it could be said that 'God breathed into him'. This meaning behind the word makes some of the passages which speak of the power of God particularly beautiful. This also is the reason that Paul when writing to Timothy, says that the scriptures are God-breathed - '*all scripture is given by INSPIRATION of God*' (2Timothy 3v16).

The power of the Holy Spirit was given to Jesus as we read in the New Testament. The apostles later were also given this power that enabled them to perform miracles. The reason for this is explained in Mark 16v20 where we can read that the purpose of being able to perform miracles was to enable the apostles to confirm that the words they spoke were indeed from God.

Paul speaks of the way in which the gifts of the Holy Spirit were used in the first century. The greatest attribute above all gifts which we should try to cultivate is Love. Read 1Corinthians 12v28-31 then 1 Corinthians 13v1-13).

God has shown His love for us in many ways. We can demonstrate our love for Him by trying to live our lives in a way that follows His Word and thus is pleasing to Him.

SUMMARY OF SOME IMPORTANT POINTS

1. There is one God.
2. He is the Creator. He is immortal - from everlasting to everlasting.
3. God sees and knows all things.
4. God is righteous. God is merciful and loving.
5. God has revealed His purpose in the Bible.
6. The power of God is described as His Spirit.
7. The scriptures were written by the power of the Holy Spirit.
8. Jesus was born as a result of the action of the Holy Spirit upon Mary.
9. It is important to our salvation that we should understand the nature of God.

Genesis 1	Isaiah 45
Acts 17 (Notice what those at Berea did)	
Psalms 139	1 Timothy 6

PASSAGES TO READ FROM YOUR BIBLE

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

STUDY 3 QUESTIONS

Underline the correct answer to each question and send the loose copy to your tutor or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to your tutor.

1. How was the universe formed:
(a) By chance (b) By accident
(c) By the power of God (d) By evolution
2. The true God is:-
(a) The God of the Bible (b) An Egyptian idol
(c) We do not know (d) The image of Baal
3. Which of the following are evidence that God exists?
(a) National hymns
(b) Bible prophecies
(c) Traditional legends
4. In Psalm 139 v 6 the writer says:
(a) 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me'
(b) 'God sees and knows all things'
(c) 'God is all powerful'
(d) 'You know my sitting down and my rising up'
5. The Bible teaches that:
(a) God is a Trinity (b) God is a Unity
(c) God is many gods in one (d) There is no God
6. By giving His son (John 3 v 16) God showed:
(a) His hope (b) His love
(c) His faith (d) His justice
7. What does God intend to do with this earth?
(a) Destroy it
(b) Leave it as it is
(c) Fill it with His glory
8. What is the Spirit of God?
(a) The power of God
(b) The love of God
(c) The freewill of God
(d) The offering of God's son
9. By what means did God cause the Bible to be written?
(a) His majesty (b) His Holy Spirit
(c) His truth (d) His graciousness
10. In Acts 17v11 we read that those at Berea:
(a) Sang praise to God
(b) Searched the scriptures daily
(c) Stirred up the people
(d) Set the city in an uproar

Bible Study 4: God's Plan and Purpose

The love and mercy of God has been stressed in the previous study. His love for the world has been shown in giving His only begotten Son and this is something that will be explored in more detail in a later study. This love which God shows and which we are asked to show in return must not be confused with sentiment or 'softness'.

The Bible emphasises the righteousness of God and His justice. It was the absolute justice of God as well as His love for man that was the reason that Jesus rose from the dead. Because Jesus did no wrong, but was perfect in every way, it was not possible that he should remain dead (Acts 2v24). It would not have been right for Jesus to remain in the grave. God could justly raise him from the dead.

In the same way, it is not right that the world should continue to be a place where wickedness flourishes and where so much that is wrong takes place. The world is full of injustice, war, crime, famine, disease and so many other ills that beset mankind. God does not intend this state of affairs to continue, but a time will come when He will intervene. Now the Book of Proverbs tells us that *'a false balance is an abomination to the Lord'* (Proverbs 11 v 1).

Also in these verses we read:

'God is angry with the wicked every day' (Psalm 7v11).

'The Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ' (2 Thessalonians 1v7-8).

This is the side of God's character that is often overlooked. The righteousness of God will not allow wickedness to continue. God is not going to permit the world to be ruled by mankind who has not set right standards but gone far away from the justice and righteousness of God's Law. It is God's purpose that one day the world will be ruled in righteousness by the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 17v31). When he is king, many of the problems that man faces today will be solved. This wonderful time to come is called in scripture the Kingdom of God.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray for the Kingdom to come so that His will would be done on earth even as the angels now obey Him in heaven (Matthew 6v10)

The vision which Nebuchadnezzar saw

In the days of the great Babylonian Empire, which existed long before the Roman Empire and before the Greek Empire, one of the greatest kings of Babylon was Nebuchadnezzar. He was a great builder and a great soldier; it was under his rule that the Empire reached its zenith. Nebuchadnezzar wondered what was to happen to his kingdom after his time. Daniel records a wonderful vision that God gave to Nebuchadnezzar which provided an opportunity for Daniel the prophet to answer Nebuchadnezzar's question.

Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream, a great statue made of differing metals. The head, chest, thighs and legs were each of different metals and the feet were made of a mixture of iron and clay (the vision is recorded in Daniel 2). In his dream the king saw a little stone strike the statue on the feet to bring it toppling to the ground. The statue was broken and ground to dust as the little stone grew in size until it became a great mountain which filled the whole earth.

Daniel explained to the king what this dream meant. The head of the image, which was gold, represented Babylon. The next metal silver, of which the breast and arms were made,

represented the Empire which followed, identified as the Kingdom of the Medes and the Persians. The belly and thighs were of brass and this represented the Greek Empire which followed in turn with Alexander the Great as its greatest ruler.

Rome followed Greece, this empire being represented by the legs of iron. After the break-up of the Roman Empire, there has been no fifth Empire to equal any of the preceding four. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome each ruled the entire civilized world that included the Land of Israel. There has been no fifth Empire like them in extent and global power over the civilised world.

Men have tried to establish Empires which would hold sway over the entire world but since Rome there has been no universal Empire. Some kingdoms have been weak and some strong. They have not been united any more than iron and clay could be united. The state of the world today corresponds to the stage in the vision represented by the feet of the image.

Daniel's explanation

First of all it needs to be noted that this explanation is not the idea put forward by the publishers of this course of studies but is soundly based upon scripture. It is a good idea at this point to read Daniel 2.

Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar:

'Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.' (Daniel 2v45)

The Kingdom of God

Just as Medo-Persia followed Babylon; just as Rome followed Greece; just as certainly as there has been no fifth universal Empire, so the last part of the prophecy will also be fulfilled.

'In the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand' (Daniel 2v44)

The little stone destroyed the image which represented the various aspects of human rule throughout the centuries and it grew into a great mountain which filled the earth. The little stone represented the Kingdom of God. Now Daniel concluded the prophecy by saying, *'the dream is certain and the interpretation is sure'*. What God has decided, man is utterly powerless to stop. God may well work in a different time frame to us for He is eternal and what appears to be a long time for us, is but a small time period for the eternal God. But He will fulfil all of this prophesy and this is only one of many prophecies which give us confidence that God's purpose with the earth will be completely fulfilled and His eternal Kingdom established in peace and righteousness.

The teaching of the Old Testament and the New Testament

Please find and read in your Bible these two passages that you looked at in the last studies:

Numbers 14v21 Acts 17v31

When the Kingdom of God is established, there will be divine justice in the way the kingdom is ruled. There will be no oppression and no persecution.

'His (Jesus) delight is in the fear of the LORD, And he shall not judge by the sight of his eyes, nor decide by the hearing of his ears; But with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of His lips he shall slay the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt of his loins, and faithfulness the belt of his waist.' (Isaiah 11v3-5)

Then the words of Numbers 14v21 will be fulfilled just as the angels sang at the birth of Jesus. When Jesus is king over all the earth, there will be '*Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men*' (Luke 2v14).

In a very figurative language the last book of the Bible describes the state of affairs which will exist when God's purpose is fulfilled.

'And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God." And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.' (Revelation 21v3-4)

A real Kingdom

Peter was the spokesman for the other disciples when he asked Jesus a question, '*We have left all and followed you. Therefore what shall we have?*' (Matthew 19v27).

The reply of Jesus is important. He emphasised that the kingdom he taught was a real kingdom in which his disciples would share.

'Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.' (Matthew 19v28-29)

Jesus will come again

In order to establish a real kingdom on the earth, Jesus will come again. When he ascended to heaven at the end of his ministry, angels told the disciples,

'This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven' (Acts 1v11).

The return of Jesus to bring about the last stages of God's purpose with the earth is dealt with more fully in later studies. The teaching of many of the parables of Jesus shows that it is at his return that the righteous will be rewarded. **It is, therefore, very important that we are ready for his return and the coming Kingdom of God.**

SUMMARY

- The Bible emphasises the righteousness and justice of God as well as his love.
- God does not intend to allow the world to continue in its present state.
- God will interfere in world affairs and divine rule will be established with Jesus as King.
- The outline of world events given in Daniel 2 gives us confidence that the final stages of God's plan will certainly come to pass.
- When Jesus returns to rule over the Kingdom of God, his followers will be rewarded with places in his kingdom, but they need to be ready for his coming.

PASSAGES TO READ FROM YOUR BIBLE

Isaiah 11

Isaiah 35

Matthew 19

Daniel 2

Matthew 25

BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

STUDY 4 QUESTIONS

Underline the correct answer to each question and send the loose copy to your tutor or copy the correct answer in a letter and post to your tutor.

1. God so loved the world that He ...
(a) Sent the seasons (b) Gave His only begotten son
(c) Provided the angels (d) Gave the Law
2. Which was the second world empire represented in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream?
(a) Babylon (b) Greece (c) Rome (d) Medo-Persia
3. What did Nebuchadnezzar see strike the statue in his dream?
(a) An idol (b) A stone (c) A hand (d) A sword
4. What did the angels sing about the conditions on the earth when Jesus is king?
(a) Everybody will do as they please
(b) Everybody will be kind to each other
(c) No one will need to work
(d) There will be peace on earth
5. Who is to rule the world in righteousness?
(a) The son of God (b) The apostle Paul
(c) The apostle Peter (d) The prophet Elijah
6. In the second chapter of Daniel we read, 'In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom ... and it shall stand:
(a) For 6,000 years' (b) For a lifetime'
(c) For ever' (d) For 100,000 years'
7. Jesus promised his disciples that they would:
(a) Have wealth and prosperity
(b) Sit on thrones to judge the tribes of Israel
(c) Have success and happiness
8. Does the Bible tell us that God intends the world to continue in its present state?
(a) Yes (b) No
(c) I do not know (d) The Bible does not say
9. Where is Jesus at the present time?
(a) On the earth (b) In heaven
(c) In the grave (d) In the land of Israel
10. Paul told the people of Athens (Acts 17) that God had given a guarantee that the world would be ruled in righteousness by the man that God had chosen. What was that guarantee?
(a) The birth of Jesus
(b) The crucifixion of Jesus
(c) The resurrection of Jesus
(d) The ascension of Jesus

BIBLE STUDY 4 SUPPLEMENT

THE AGE TO COME

A great change is to take place in the earth, a change described simply but dramatically in the last book of the Bible: *"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."* (Revelation 11v15)

600 years before Christ was born the prophet Daniel spoke about a time when the God of heaven should set up a kingdom which should break in pieces and consume all human kingdoms and which should last forever (Daniel 2v44). When the angel spoke to Mary, the mother of Jesus, he told her that her son would be great and that: *"the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever: and of his kingdom there shall be no end."* (Luke 1v32-33)

None of these prophecies have yet been fulfilled. They refer to the age to come and tell us one of the essential characteristics of that age. The nations of the world will be united under one ruler. But this will be no ordinary human king. This King will be the Lord Jesus Christ who upon his return will reign by divine right and having divine authority and power. The outstanding feature of his reign will be the honouring of God his Father.

When the angels announced the birth of Jesus to the shepherds in the fields about Bethlehem they proclaimed:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men". Luke 2v14

Again these words as yet have not been fulfilled but will be in the future. They can only refer to the time when Christ having returned to the earth and overthrown the kingdoms of men, will establish his throne in Jerusalem, *"the city of the Great King"*. That is the time when the wicked will have been destroyed from the earth. At this time as the prophet Isaiah proclaimed:

"Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." (Isaiah 2v3)

This is a characteristic of the age to come which will distinguish it from all the preceding ages of mankind. Here at last will be the realisation of God's plan from the beginning. God stated that His purpose was that *"all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord"* (Numbers 14v21)

Truly at this time in earths history *"the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."* (Isaiah 40v5) All peoples and nations will unite under this one King in honouring God and obeying His will. The prophet Ezekiel describes in great detail a magnificent temple to be built in Jerusalem where men and women will gather together in pure and united worship of their Creator. Thus we read God promises:

"For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord." (Zephaniah 3:9)

This honouring of God will result in unprecedented blessings for the human race. Harmony with their Creator will lead men to live in harmony with each other:

"The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever." (Isaiah 32:17)

No longer will the world be divided into huge armed camps. No longer will the resources of the earth be squandered on expensive weapons, fruitless research and lives wasted in wonton destruction. Isaiah describes a wonderful time of true and lasting peace:

“He (Jesus) shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore.” (Isaiah 2v4)

Economic and social problems, poverty and injustice, will be things of the past. We are told that this Great King will *“judge Your (God’s) people with righteousness, and Your poor with justice”*... *..“He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor.” (Psalm 72v2-4)*

The whole of creation will be affected by this transformation of the relationship between God and man. The curse which came upon the earth because of disobedience will be greatly eased. Sickness will be healed with the same power that Jesus used in the past. Life will be prolonged so that at 100years old a man will be but as a child, much as it was before the flood in Noah’s day (Isaiah 65v20-22). The earth will be fruitful and famine a thing of the past. The prophet Isaiah describes this time with sublime words of great comfort and promise saying:

“The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice”... ..“ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water; In the habitation of jackals, where each lay, There shall be grass with reeds and rushes.” (Isaiah 35v1, 5-7)

Even amongst the animal creation there will exist a peace and harmony such as has never been since the days of Eden:

*“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. **They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.” Isaiah 11v6-9***

We can have complete confidence in the coming of this new age. Paul confidently declared: *“Because He (God) has appointed a day on which He will Judge the world in righteousness by the man whom he has ordained, He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead”.* (Acts 17v31) The resurrection of Jesus Christ also assures us that if we willing seek the ways of God and put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus we will be with him and enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom age. Jesus has promised:

“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with me on my throne, as I also overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne” (Revelation 3v21)

We have the opportunity of sharing with Christ this great work of establishing God’s kingdom on earth, when *“the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” Psalm 37v11*

Will you listen and respond to God’s gracious mercy and love?

