

Introduction to this Course

In this booklet, we are going to be looking at what the Bible teaches about the Lord Jesus Christ. The Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ is at the heart of the Christian faith. Without Christ there is no Christianity, it is like removing the heart from someone's body. The body remains but its very life has been taken out of it. In the same way Christ is at the heart of Christianity and He is the life of the Christian faith. It is therefore of the greatest importance that you study the lessons in this course carefully. Do not say to yourself, "I know all that there is to know about Christ." We all need to learn more and more of Christ because it is God's will that we should be transformed into His image. Make sure, therefore, that you study these lessons with a humble and teachable heart.

In this course, we will be studying three passages from the New Testament: John 1:1-18 Hebrews 1:1-3 and Philippians 2:3-11. Each lesson is designed to teach a certain passage from the Bible. Before you study each lesson, please make sure that you read the passage in the Bible which that lesson teaches.

Studies in John 1:1-18

Lesson One, Please Read John 1:1-3.

In these three verses we learn the following things about the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is God.

This is the central message of the gospel of John. Throughout this gospel John bring to our attention again and again that the Lord Jesus Christ is God. In these first three verses John tells us that Jesus Christ is God in three ways:

(i) He says, "In the beginning was the Word." John refers to the Lord Jesus as "the Word" and begins his gospel by telling us that the Lord Jesus was there in the beginning. This very clearly means that He is God because, as we know, only God was there in the beginning. Until God created the heavens and the earth there was nothing and nobody except God Himself. God has always existed and He will always exist; He is eternal. So when John tells us that the Lord Jesus was there in the beginning, He is telling us that He is God.

(ii) He tells us directly that the Lord Jesus is God. He says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God and the word was God." We sometimes come across people in our country who deny that the Lord Jesus Christ is God. They are called the Jehovah's Witnesses and they visit people in their homes with their literature. The Jehovah's Witnesses have done their own translation of the Bible in which they translate this verse, "In the beginning was the word, the word was with God and the word was a

god." Why do the Jehovah's Witnesses translate this verse in this way? It is because they have started with the belief that Jesus is not God. So basically, what the Jehovah's Witnesses have done is that they start with a certain belief that is not found in the Bible. Then, when they come across a verse in the Bible that goes against what they want to believe, they change that verse to suit their belief. The Bible, however, is very clear and in many places makes it very clear that the Lord Jesus Christ is God.

(iii) John tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ is the creator of all things. He says, "Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made." John tells us very clearly that the whole of creation was made by the Lord Jesus Christ. And then to emphasise the point, he says that there is nothing in the whole of creation that was made without Him. This is so that people do not say, "There are some few things that He did not make." John makes it very clear that everything that we see around us was made by Christ. This, of course, is a very clear statement that He is God. The Bible makes it clear that it is God who created everything (Gen. 1:1). Only God could create this universe. No man or angel could ever create the earth, the sun, the moon and the stars. Only God could create all these things.

2. The Lord Jesus is the message of God to us.

It is very interesting that John calls the Lord Jesus "the word." We communicate with words and God communicates with words. The Bible is called the word of God because it is communication from God. John describes the Lord Jesus in this way to tell us that God is not silent. He has not left man without knowledge of Himself, He has spoken to us through His Son.

This is an act of God's grace. We are mere human beings who are very limited in our knowledge and understanding. It is certainly true that human beings are very clever and are capable of achieving great things. But that does not mean that we have all knowledge and can know everything. The fact is that despite our abilities, we are only human beings and there are certain things we simply cannot know. Furthermore, we are human beings who have fallen into sin and sin has had a very big effect upon our minds. This is how the Bible describes the state of fallen man: "They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts" (Eph. 4:18).

This means that left to ourselves, we cannot know God. All human beings have ideas in their minds about what God is like, but their minds have been ruined by sin and so those ideas are wrong. A person may say something like, "I know that if I am devoted to God in prayer and in attending church each week then God will give me a good job and will protect me from sickness." But these are his own ideas of what God is like, it is not something that God Himself has said anywhere. One of the greatest problems we have in our country is that people have their own ideas of what God is like and what God does and

then they preach these things as if they come from God. They do not read and study the Bible diligently but believe and preach their own thoughts. This is a great mistake because they are rejecting the word of God and preaching falsehood in the name of God. God has revealed Himself to us in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus Christ could say, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn. 14:9). Our greatest duty should be to study the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ since He is the word.

3. The Lord Jesus Christ is not God the Father.

John writes in this passage, “The Word was with God.” This teaches very clearly that there is God the Father and there is the Lord Jesus Christ and the two are distinct Persons. It is not the case that there is one Person in the Godhead who appears in different forms. It is a very common belief in our country that God appears as the Father in the Old Testament and as the Son in the gospels. But this is not the case. The Bible teaches us that there is One God who exists eternally as three Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each Person is distinct: the Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Holy Spirit. And so here John reminds us that the Lord Jesus Christ is fully and eternally God but He is a distinct Person from God the Father.

4. The Lord Jesus Christ is in close fellowship with God the Father.

The phrase, “The Word was with God,” is an indication that there exists a close fellowship between the Father and the Son. This phrase could be translated, “The Word was face to face with the Father.” In fact there is very clear teaching in the Bible that the three Persons in the Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are in complete unity, harmony and close fellowship with each other. Although each Person is a distinct Person and each Person is God, yet they do not operate independently of each other.

This great truth is seen most clearly in the plan of salvation. The Bible teaches us that the plan of salvation was worked out very carefully by the Triune God. The Bible says we have been “chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood” (1 Pet. 1:2). We see in this verse that our salvation is something that the Triune God planned very carefully. Each person in the Trinity agreed to do a certain work in saving us: God the Father chose us for salvation, God the Son shed His blood to cleanse us and God the Holy Spirit works in us to set us apart from the world and to purify us. The three Persons of the Trinity work in perfect harmony to save us.

Lesson Two, Please read John 1:4-5.

In these verses we learn the following things about the Lord Jesus.

1. The Lord Jesus has life in Him.

John says in v. 4, “In Him was life.” Of course when John speaks about life he is not talking about ordinary biological life. The Lord Jesus, as we know, lived here on earth for over 30 years so it is obvious that He had biological life in Him. John is not going to say something that is so obvious. When John speaks about life, he means spiritual life, which means salvation. This is clear from a passage later in this gospel:

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself” (John 5:24-26)

The Bible teaches us that those who are unsaved are spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1) and those who are saved in Christ are spiritually alive: they have life. This is why the Bible says, “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12).

What John is saying to us here is that there is only one who can give salvation to us, the Lord Jesus Christ. In the world today, there are many who claim that they can give salvation to sinners, but the Bible makes it clear that only Christ can give salvation.

(i) There are people today who say that salvation is to be found in all religions of the world. And so they tell us that those who practice other religions are all worshipping the same God and that because they are sincere in what they believe and they are sincere in the way they practice their religion they will enter heaven. But the Bible tells us that only those who come to Christ in repentance and faith can be saved.

(ii) There are people today who say that they can be saved by their own efforts. They believe that if you do your best to obey the Ten Commandments and go to church and believe in God then you will enter heaven because of your own efforts. Again the Bible is against such teaching. We are saved by Christ and not our own good works.

(iii) There are people today who believe that the priest or the pastor can save them. They believe that the priest has the power to listen to confession and to give forgiveness for their sins. Others believe that if they repeat a prayer after a pastor and if the pastor lays hands on them and prays for them then they are saved. This is trusting in men to save us and it will never benefit us, only Christ can save us.

We are not saved by our own efforts or our own decision or the work of any man. Salvation is in none of these, it is in Christ alone: “In Him was life.” He it is who brings salvation to sinners and He it is who saves them according to His plan.

2. The life of Jesus Christ is the light of men.

John says in v. 4-5, “In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” There are two things that John teaches us here.

(i) The Lord Jesus Christ is the light of men. Later in this gospel John explains what he means by this. He says, “Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God” (Jn. 3:19-21). What John is saying, therefore, is that the Lord Jesus Christ as the light of the world exposes the sins of the world. Just as light exposes areas of a house which are dirty, so the Lord Jesus Christ exposes the sinful deeds of the world. That is why those who are unsaved will not come to Him unless the Holy Spirit brings them. They do not want their deeds to be exposed.

(ii) John says that the darkness does not overcome the light. Although the world in its sins hates Christ and will not come to Him, they cannot put out the light. The light of Christ exposes their sins and speaks to their conscience. They cannot overcome Him and silence Him. He will continue to expose their deeds and at the end will judge them for their sinful works.

Lesson Three, Please Read John 1:10-13

In these verses, John continues to give us teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The Lord Jesus was here in the world.

John says, “He was in the world.” This, of course, is not the only time that God our creator has come to the world. In Gen. 3:8 we read of God walking in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the day. In Gen. 18:17 we read that God visited Abraham and Sarah. In Exodus 12:12 we read that God walked through the land of Egypt. The fact that God has repeatedly visited the world shows us two very important things.

(i) It shows us in the first place that God is intensely interested in the things of this world. When Adam and Eve fell into sin God could have removed Himself completely from the things of the world and not taken any interest in it at all. But God did not do that. He continued to visit the world, thus showing that He had not lost interest in His creation but, on the contrary, is very interested in it.

(ii) It shows us in the second place, that God has great plans for the earth. The Bible tells us that God is not just interested in His creation but that one day He will remove the curse of sin from creation and make it new again. The fact that He visits His creation is proof that He has a great plan for it.

2. The world did not recognise Him.

This, in many ways, is one of the most remarkable verses in the Bible. God Himself visited the world and the people of the world did not recognise Him. It is remarkable because the people of the world to whom He came should have recognised Him straightaway. He came to the nation of Israel, the people to whom the Old Testament had been given. It is because they were given the Old Testament that they should have recognised Him immediately.

(i) In the Old Testament God reveals His character, personality and ways of working very clearly. In fact when we read the Old Testament we see that it is God revealing Himself.

(ii) God had told them in the Old Testament that He was coming one day into the world. The Old Testament is full of prophecies about the coming of Christ into the world. It is so specific that when Herod wanted to know where He was to be born, the Jewish leaders were able to tell Him (Matt. 2:4-5).

(iii) God had told them the purpose for which He was coming; not to set up a worldly kingdom but a spiritual kingdom, a kingdom that would stretch out to every corner of the

earth (Daniel 2:44).

Yet, despite all these things, the Jewish people did not recognise God when He came into the world. Why? It is because our sin is such that we create our own ideas of what God is like. The Jewish people had decided in their minds that when the Saviour comes, He will drive the Romans out of their country and build a palace for Himself in Jerusalem and set up His throne there. They were looking for a political Saviour. The mind of sinful man thinks only of worldly things and not of spiritual things; it thinks only of the pleasures and possessions of this world, it is not concerned with eternal salvation and the kingdom of God. These things are far from his thinking.

It is very similar today in our country. People today do not read the Bible to find out what God is like and what work He is doing in the world. They come to the Bible with their minds already made up, they are convinced that God is there for their benefit and that if they are moral and decent and devoted to Him then He will bless them with material things. Churches in the world today are not concerned about the spiritual kingdom of God but with earthly wealth and possessions. Just as the Jewish people in the days of Jesus did not recognise Him, so today many people, including many who claim to be saved, do not really know what God is like.

3. The world did not receive Him.

John first says that the world did not recognise Him and then he goes on to say that the world did not receive Him. We sometimes receive a person whom we do not recognise. If a person knocks on the door of a house, the owner of the house may not recognise who that person is, but he may still welcome the person into his house and give him hospitality. The world, however, would not even welcome the Lord Jesus into their midst. They did not know who He was and they did not want to welcome Him or receive Him.

This shows us the effect of Adam's sin upon mankind. When Adam and Eve fell into sin, they hid behind a tree because they no longer wanted fellowship with God. They wanted independence from God and did not want God to interfere with their affairs. It is like the parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-31). The younger son was living in his father's house but he did not want to remain there. He felt restricted by his father's rules and did not feel free to do what he wanted to do. He did not want his father interfering with him, he wanted the freedom to do as he wished. This has been the condition of man ever since the fall of Adam and Eve. People find God's laws demanding upon them and restrictive. They want to live a life of sin in the world and do not want His laws and His ways to interfere with them.

Imagine a group of men sitting in a house with some crates of beer intending to drink and have a party. A stranger comes and knocks at the door. If the stranger is happy to join in with their party and has brought some bottles of beer himself then although they do not

recognise him, they will receive him. But if the stranger is the pastor of a local church then they will not welcome him. They will sit in an uncomfortable silence while he is there, and then when he has gone, they will laugh and start their party. Or they may not even welcome him into the house but may say something like, "We are busy with some things at the moment, perhaps you can come back another time." The reason the world does not receive Christ is because the world is in sin: "This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed" (Jn. 3:19-20).

4. To those who did receive Him, Jesus gave the right to become children of God.

John says that the world did not receive Him. However, there are some who did recognise Him and received Him. In vs. 12-13 John gives some very important teaching on this matter.

(i) What it means to receive Christ. John says, "Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name." To receive Christ means to believe in Him, it means to trust Him and to put our faith in Him. There are millions in the world today who trust in themselves and in their works to get them into heaven. They think to themselves that when they are standing at the gates of heaven, they will show that here on earth they lived a good, moral, decent life and that they went to church each week. They are convinced that their good works and their religious works will get them into heaven. They do not realise that by trusting in their good works they are actually rejecting Christ. Christ invites them to come to Him for a full and a free forgiveness of their sins through His blood, but they prefer to trust in themselves. But there are people who receive Christ and trust in Him for their salvation. Their hope of entering heaven is not in their own good works or in their religious works, it is in Christ alone. They believe that by His death and resurrection the Lord Jesus has done all that is necessary to take them to heaven.

(ii) What happens to those who receive Christ. John says that to those who received Him, "He gave the right to become children of God." Those who come to Christ by faith and trust in Him alone for the salvation of their souls become the children of God. This is a wonderful reminder to us of how great our salvation is. When we come to Christ for salvation, He does not merely forgive us and cleanse us, He adopts us into the family of God and makes us children of God.

(iii) How we become the children of God. In v. 13 John says those who are saved are "Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will but born of God." John says:

- A person is not born into God's family by natural descent. This means that if a couple

that is saved have a child then that child is not a child of God because he was born to saved parents. He is as much a sinner as a child born to parents who are unsaved and live a completely wicked life. The fact that his parents are saved does not mean that he is a child of God. The only way he can become a child of God is by being born again himself.

- A person is not born into God's family by human decision. It is God who makes the decision to save someone, He is sovereign in salvation.
- A person is not born into God's family by a husband's will. In some cultures, the wife is expected to take up her husband's religion. So when a woman who was born to Protestant parents marries a man who is a Roman Catholic, she is expected to become a Roman Catholic herself. Now this happens in the things of the world but it does not happen in the kingdom of God. A man who is saved cannot say, "I will marry a woman who is not saved and then she will be saved because in my culture she has to take up my faith." A woman does not get saved simply by marrying a saved man. In fact it is unbiblical for a saved man to marry an unsaved woman and vice versa.

A person is born into God's family when God gives him the new birth. John says, "Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will but born of God." A person is born again when God by His Spirit makes him born again.

Lesson Four, Please Read John 1:14

This is one of the most important verses in the whole Bible. It says, "The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." In this lesson, we shall see three things that are found in this verse.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man.

John says, "The word became flesh." As we have seen in our study of v.1, the Lord Jesus is fully God. In this verse, John tells us that He who is fully God also became fully man. He is both God and man in the same person and at the same time. In other words, the Bible tells us that when people saw the Lord Jesus Christ here on earth, they were looking at God Himself and at the same time they were looking at One who was in every sense a man. The Lord Jesus Christ did not just appear to be a man, nor was He partly man. He was fully human, just as we are fully human. He had all the emotions of a man and all the physical limitations of a man. He was at all times fully God and fully man. He did not cease to be God when He came to earth as a man, and it is not the case that He was only partly God when He was here on earth. There are three reasons why the Lord Jesus had to be fully man.

(i) Christ had to be fully man in order to save us from our sins. The Bible says, "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is the devil" (Heb. 2:14). The writer to the Hebrews is saying here that since we are fully human, the Lord Jesus became fully human so that by His death on the cross He might destroy the devil and free us from slavery to sin. This is the reason why the Lord Jesus had to be fully man, it is because He came to save human beings from their sin, and the only way He could be an acceptable sacrifice for human beings was to be fully human Himself.

(ii) Christ had to be fully man in order to be our effective High Priest. The writer to the Hebrews says, "For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb. 4:15-16). The Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven and began His High Priestly ministry. He now represents us to God, prays for us and makes our prayers and our service to God acceptable. The only way He can do this perfectly is to be fully man Himself. He has to understand the weaknesses and difficulties of those whom He is representing. This is why the Bible says we have a High Priest who was tempted in every way, just as we are.

(iii) Christ had to be fully man in order to be a pattern for our resurrection. Paul writes, "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first-fruits of those who have fallen

asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first-fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him” (1 Cor. 15:20-23). The Bible teaches us that when the Lord Jesus returns, we will have resurrection bodies. The reason why the Lord Jesus had to be fully human is so that His resurrection would be a pattern for ours: what happened to Him will happen to us, He was the first-fruits and the pattern for our resurrection.

2. The Lord Jesus made His dwelling among us.

John says in this verse, “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.” To make a dwelling means to come and live in a certain place. The Lord Jesus came to live with His people here on earth and is now ever-present with His people. He came and made His dwelling among us and He still dwells among us by His Spirit. In many ways we are no different from the people of God in the days when the Lord Jesus was here on earth. He came to call His people out of darkness into His marvellous light and then to purify and perfect them so that they are ready for their eternal dwelling with Him. That is the work He is still doing by His Spirit here on earth today: He calls sinners out of darkness into His marvellous light and then by His Spirit He purifies and perfects them so that they are ready for His return.

3. The Lord Jesus reveals to us the glory of God.

John says, “We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” The book of Exodus tells us what the Bible means when it speaks about the glory of God. In Ex. 33:18-19 we read this: “Then Moses said, 'Now show me your glory.' And the Lord said, 'I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.’” When we look carefully at these verses in Exodus 33, we see that Moses asks God to show him His glory. In His answer to Moses, God says three things:

- (i) “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you.”
- (ii) “I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence.”
- (iii) “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.”

The glory of God therefore consists primarily in three things.

(i) In the first place, the glory of God is seen in all the goodness of God: “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you.” Now we have to understand that when the Bible uses the word good, its meaning is not quite what we understand today. Today, if we see a person helping someone else, we usually say, “He is a good man.” If we hear of a man

who lived for many years in Africa and set up schools and hospitals for the poor, we usually say, “He was a good man, he lived a good life.” Our idea of a good person is based on a person's works; if he has done good works like helping the poor then we say he is a good man. We are not too concerned about his actual character, we are looking only at his works. The man who built schools and hospitals for the poor may have been cruel to his wife or a drunkard or a person who did not believe in the existence of God. But often we do not think about such things and look only at his deeds.

When the Bible uses the word good, however, it means holy. It means to be pure and perfect and completely sinless. It means to hate sin and to flee from sin. This is why Jesus said, “No one is good except God alone” (Mark 10:18). God is good. This means God is holy; He is completely pure and sinless and He hates sin with a pure and a holy hatred. The holiness of God was displayed on Mount Sinai when He gave His law to the people of Israel: “There was thunder and lightening, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled” (Ex. 19:16). John tells us in Jn. 1:14 that the Lord Jesus declared the holiness of God. In the person and work of the Lord Jesus we see God's hatred of sin. This is seen in the way the Lord Jesus preached against sin, especially in Matthew chapter 23 where He denounces the sins of the Pharisees and Saducees. But it is seen most clearly on the cross of Calvary. The Lord Jesus died on the cross of Calvary because God is holy and pure and He must punish sin. He came to earth with a mission: to save the chosen people of God from their sins: “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15). The only way He could do this was to pay the penalty for their sins upon the cross. That is the only way a holy and just God could be satisfied and it is the only way He could forgive us our sins. The death of the Lord Jesus was a declaration of the glory of God: it declared that God is good and holy and pure and sinless and that He hates sin and must punish sin.

(ii) Secondly, the glory of God is seen in the saving grace and mercy of God: “I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence.” In the book of Exodus, we read that the people of Israel were in slavery in Egypt and cried out to God for deliverance. In response, God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and called Himself, “The Lord.” This name, which we call Yahweh or Jehovah, is the name which is associated with the covenant God who in grace and mercy rescued the people of Israel from Egypt. It is the name by which the Israelites knew Him in Egypt, He was the one who in grace and mercy heard their prayers and delivered them with a mighty hand. The Lord Jesus, therefore, declares to us the grace and mercy of God as seen primarily in His saving work. His name, Jesus, means “The God who saves.” The fact that He came to earth to rescue us from the power and penalty of sin is a declaration of the grace and mercy of God. The fact that He taught about the kingdom of God and died on the cross and was raised again all show the grace and mercy of God in salvation. This is why John says in Jn. 1:14 that He was full of grace and truth.

(iii) Thirdly, the glory of God is seen in the sovereignty of God: “I will have mercy on

whom I will have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” The glory of any leader is seen in the amount of power that he actually has. In world politics we respect those who are leaders of those countries which have great power on the world stage. If a person says he is the president of some tiny island state in the Pacific Ocean that no one has ever heard of and that has no influence in world matters we would not be too impressed. But the person who is the leader of a powerful nation that has a huge amount of influence on the world stage is impressive. The glory of God is seen in the fact that He has all power. Nebuchadnezzar, who was himself a very powerful monarch, said about God,

*“His dominion is an eternal dominion;
His kingdom endures from generation to generation.
All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing.
He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth.
No-one can hold back His hand or say to Him, ‘What have you done?’”
(Daniel 4:34-35).*

The words that God spoke to Moses and the words that Nebuchadnezzar wrote both show one glorious truth about God: He is completely sovereign in His dealings with men and is accountable to no-one: “No-one can say to Him, ‘What have you done?’” This glorious sovereignty of God is seen especially in salvation. The Bible tells us that “Salvation is of the Lord” (Jonah 2:9). It tells us that there are some who have been designated since eternity as objects of mercy whom He prepared in advance for glory; and there are those who have been designated since eternity as objects of wrath prepared in advance for destruction (Rom. 9:22-23). It tells us that those who receive salvation and the forgiveness of their sins do so because they have been chosen before the foundation of the world to be saved (Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13-14); and that those who perish in their sins do so because they were objects of wrath (Rom.9:22; Jude 4). This, however, does not mean that those who remain unsaved can blame God. The fact is that they loved their sin and remained in their sin until they died.

John 1:14, therefore, teaches us three very important things about Christ. It teaches us that He was fully God and fully man at the same time; that He made His dwelling among us, and that He reveals to us the glory of God.

Lesson Five, Please read John 1:15-18

In this passage we learn the following things about Christ.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of all the prophets.

We read in v. 15, “John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, ‘This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’” John the Baptist was the last prophet in the line of the Old Testament prophets. In this verse, we read him saying that the Lord Jesus has surpassed him because He (Jesus) was before him. In other words John the Baptist is saying here that he, like all the prophets of the Bible, was pointing to the Lord Jesus Christ. When the prophets of the Old Testament preached to the people of Judah and Israel, their message was the Lord Jesus Christ. This may not be very obvious when we first read the prophetic books of the Old Testament. However, if we study these books carefully, we will see that the prophets are showing that we as sinners cannot keep the Law of Moses and that the only way we can be saved is through the mercies of God as displayed in Christ. The apostle Peter says,

“Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and the circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit” (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

Peter is saying in these verses that the prophets' main preaching was about the grace of God that was to come to the people of God through the sufferings of Christ and the glory that would follow. This was the purpose for which the prophets of the Old Testament were sent. And so John the Baptist could say, “The one who comes after me has surpassed me.”

2. The Lord Jesus Christ brings blessings to His people.

John says, “From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another.” The fullness of His grace means that the Lord Jesus is full of grace and out of this grace He gives blessings to His people. There are two important things that we are taught here.

(i) The Lord Jesus is the treasury of God for the blessings of His people. A treasury is the place where all the tax payers money goes, and then the treasury decides how much to spend on education, how much on health, and so on. If any government ministry, like education, needs money then they do not ask the public directly, they ask the treasury. In the same way, the Lord Jesus is the one who has been entrusted with all the blessings that God wants to give to His people. He alone can give us blessings.

(ii) These blessings are not earned but given freely and graciously. We do not decide which blessings we want and then buy them, the Lord Jesus Himself decides which blessings we

need for our eternal good and gives us those blessings. We must always remember He is working on a plan to perfect us. Some things which we desire may not be good for us, they would not aid us in the great work of becoming perfect and Christ-like. And so He decides what we need and when we need it and He grants to us the blessings of God.

3. The Lord Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of all the promises made in the Law of Moses.

John says, “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” As we can see in this verse, John refers to the Law of Moses and links it to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; “The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” In saying this, John is reminding us that the Law of Moses was given for a certain purpose. There is a great deal of confusion in the world today with regard to the Law of Moses, particularly with regard to the Ten Commandments. People believe that God gave us these laws so that we may do our best to obey them, and then at the end of our lives if we have made a really good effort at keeping these laws then our reward will be a place in heaven. This is how people think of the Law of Moses, especially the Ten Commandments.

It is interesting to see, however, that the Bible does not teach this. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that if you do your best to keep the Ten Commandments and to live a decent, moral, religious life then your reward for all this effort will be a place in heaven. The Bible never teaches any such thing. On the contrary, the Bible teaches us that it has always been the plan of God that people should be saved by faith and not by works. This is how Abraham was saved: “Abraham believed and it was credited to him as righteousness” (Gen. 15:6). Paul says in the letter to the Galatians that if God established a certain way by which sinners should be saved, then He is not later on going to change His mind and establish a completely different way. In Gal. 3:8-18, Paul's basic teaching is this: “Abraham was saved not by good works and by keeping the law, but by faith. When God saved Abraham by faith, He was saying that this was the way of salvation for everyone: not by works but by faith. He established permanently the way by which sinners would be saved. Four hundred years later, He gave the law to Moses. The law cannot possibly be the means by which we are to be saved, since the means of salvation had already been established during the time of Abraham. In giving the law to Moses, God was not saying 'this is the means by which you are to be saved,' since He has already said, 'the means by which you are to be saved is faith alone in the promises of God alone.'”

Why, then, did God give the law to Moses? In Gal. 3:19-25, Paul tells us that the law was given as a teacher to lead us to Christ. Perhaps an illustration will help us to see this. Imagine that a man living in a village has some stomach pains. People tell him about a certain specialist in a hospital in a large city and encourage him to see that specialist, but the man stubbornly refuses. Instead he tries to cure himself using traditional medicines. One day, a school teacher comes to the village and explains carefully to the man how the

human body works and the nature of the illness the man has. The man realises that he has a serious illness and so he goes to see the specialist. This is how the law works. It shows us that we have a very serious illness called sin and that the only answer is to go to Christ for salvation, nothing else we do can save us from sin.

So we see that there is a strong relationship between Moses and the the Lord Jesus in that Moses prepared the way for Christ by bringing the law. The law shows us our sin and shows us that it is completely impossible for us to save ourselves by our own works; and so the law leads us to Christ: “The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

4. The Lord Jesus Christ makes God the Father known to us.

John writes, “No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.” We have here a reminder that one of the main reasons why the Lord Jesus came to earth was to reveal the Father to us. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, we have lost fellowship with God. We are born into this world sinners by nature and the enemies of God. We do not know what God is like. There are many in this world who are deceived by sin and they think they know what God is like. There are many preachers today who say things about God which are completely untrue. The truth of the matter is that because we are born in sin we are enemies of God and do not know God.

The Lord Jesus, therefore, came to make God known to us. He came to show us that God is holy and pure and that He hates sin with a holy and just hatred. He came to show us that God is full of love and grace and mercy. He came to show us that God cares for the people of this earth, that He is moved to pity when He sees suffering and is filled with joy when He sees faith in His people. He came to show us that God is all powerful and is able to provide for and protect His people. And He came to show us that God is a God of salvation who does not leave His people in their sins but rescues them with His mighty hand. All these things are seen clearly in the works of Christ and they are all designed to show us the nature and character of God the Father.

A study in Hebrews 1:1-3

This passage, like John 1:1-18 is full of very rich teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson Six, Please read Hebrews 1:1-3

In this passage, the writer tells us that God has spoken to us, His people by His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Then from v. 2, he tells us several things about the Lord Jesus.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ is the heir of all things.

He says, “Whom He has appointed heir of all things.” This means that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one who has been appointed by God to restore the whole of creation to its former glory. In the book of Genesis we are told that God created everything, and that it was very good. But then, when Adam and Eve fell into sin, God pronounced a curse upon creation. Before the fall of Adam and Eve, creation was in perfect harmony with man. The garden did not produce thorns and thistles, there was no flooding or drought. Everything in creation worked perfectly and man's work in the garden was a joy to him. But then, after the fall, creation was no longer perfect, it came under a curse. Thorns and thistles appeared, and man had to eat by the sweat of his brow. This, however, does not mean that God decided to destroy creation forever. There are people today who believe that when the Lord Jesus returns, this world will be destroyed completely and those who are saved will go to some place somewhere called heaven. It might come as a shock to you to realise that this, in fact, is not true. It is not true that when the Lord Jesus returns this world will be destroyed for eternity and we who are saved will go some place somewhere else called heaven.

On the contrary, the Bible teaches us that God is at work restoring creation to its former glory. He is at work removing the curse of sin from this earth so that when the Lord Jesus returns, He will restore this earth fully and completely to the state it was in when it was created. The Bible says, “Creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom. 8:18-21). This work of restoring creation to its former glory has been entrusted to Christ. This is why the Bible says that it is God's will to “bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (Eph. 1:10). So when the Bible says that He is the heir of all things, it means that He is the one who has been given control of all things in heaven and on earth so that He may bring to completion the great plan of God in saving His elect people and in restoring creation to its former glory.

3. The Lord Jesus is God.

This, of course, is something we have already seen in our studies in John chapter 1.

However, it is worth noting that the New Testament makes this point clear in several places. It is not John alone who tells us that the Lord Jesus is God. The writer to the Hebrews says it in this passage. He does so in two ways.

(i) In the first place the writer to the Hebrews tells us that the Lord Jesus is the creator of the universe. He says, “through whom he made the universe.” This, of course, is exactly what John says: “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (Jn. 1:3).

(ii) Secondly, the writer to the Hebrews says, “The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being.” This phrase means that the Lord Jesus reveals to us the glory and being of God. He is the radiance of God's glory so that in Him we see fully what God is like. And He is the exact representation of His being, meaning that He represents God in every way. The only way He can do this, of course, is by being God Himself.

4. The Lord Jesus Christ sustains all things by His powerful word.

The word sustains means to keep things going. The writer to the Hebrews is telling us here that the Lord Jesus Christ is not only the one who made the universe, but He is also the one who runs it. The means by which He does this is His powerful word. So the universe was created by the powerful word of God and it is sustained by His powerful word. There are two major things we are being taught here.

(i) In the first place we are being taught that our lives are in His hands. The reason why we have air to breathe and rain and sunshine and food is because the Lord Jesus provides all these things to us each day. These things do not come to us automatically. He commands the sun to shine and the rain to fall. He commands the plants to grow and give food to us. All these things are in His hands because He sustains the whole of creation by His powerful word.

(ii) In the second place we are being taught that all things that happen here on earth are under the control of Christ. He is the one who created the universe and He is the one who sustains it. There are people in our country today who believe that the devil is as powerful as God and that the devil can do things that God does not want to happen. They believe that the devil can cause sickness and accidents even though God did not want those things to happen. The Bible does not teach such things anywhere. It teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ sustains the universe by His word. He is the one who issues commands, not the devil. It is He who has all power and authority, not the devil.

Lesson Seven, Please read Hebrews 1:3

In this lesson, we will look at the second half of this verse which says, “After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.” There are two very important lessons we learn from this text.

1. The Lord Jesus has completed His work of providing purification for the sins of His people.

The writer to the Hebrews says, “After He had provided purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.” The language in this verse makes it very clear that the Lord Jesus has finished His work of making purification for the sins of His people. It says, “After He had provided purification,” meaning the work was completed, and it says, “He sat down.” A person usually sits down after he has completed his work. Until then he is still active. The Lord Jesus has completed His work of providing cleansing for the sins of His people. This means that the only way a person can be cleansed from their sins is through the blood of Jesus. This is something the Bible teaches very clearly. It says, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 Jn. 1:7). There are people in our country today who believe very strongly that we are washed from our sins by the waters of baptism. They believe very strongly that if a person wants to be cleansed of his sins and be saved then he must be baptised in water. The Bible, however, nowhere teaches any such thing. It makes it very clear that it is the blood of Jesus alone that can cleanse us from our sins and nothing else. A person can be baptised in water a hundred times, but if he has never repented and believed in Christ for the forgiveness of his sins then all that baptism has profited him nothing, he is still in his sins and is still unclean before God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the one who has provided purification, not the waters of baptism.

2. The Lord Jesus Christ is our great High Priest.

The Lord Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father as the great High Priest of His people. There are two things that the Lord Jesus does in His capacity as our great High Priest.

(i) He prays for us. It is a thing of great comfort for us to know that everyday the Lord Jesus Christ prays for all His people. He prays particularly for our spiritual well-being, that we would grow in our Christian lives and make progress in our holiness so that we become more and more like Him each day.

(ii) He makes our prayers and our service acceptable to God. Our whole Christian life is lived by faith rather than by works. We cannot ever say that God will accept our prayers and our service because we have been such good people. It is only by faith that our prayers

are acceptable to God because it is Christ our High Priest who makes them acceptable to Him.

3. The Lord Jesus alone is the head of the church.

The writer to the Hebrews says, “He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.” The phrase “Majesty in heaven” means the king who is in heaven. The writer of this letter is telling us that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one with complete authority in heaven and on earth and in His church. This is why Paul says, “And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead so that in all things He might have the supremacy” (Col. 1:18).

There is a lot of confusion in our country on this matter. If you ask a person, “Who is the head of your church?” they will usually say, “The pastor or the bishop.” This is because they do not understand what the Bible teaches and have been given wrong teaching. There are many pastors and bishops saying, “I am the head of this church and you must follow me and obey what I say.” They are completely wrong in saying this. There is no where in the Bible where we are told that a pastor or a bishop is the head of the church. We are told very clearly that the Lord Jesus Christ alone is the head of the church. He alone is the one we must listen to and He alone is the one we must obey. If a pastor or a bishop says things which are against the word of God or asks people to do things which are contrary to the word of God then the people must not obey that pastor or bishop. To do so is sin since by obeying that man they are saying that he and not Christ is the head of the church. The pastors are there to serve the church and to guide and direct the affairs of the church. They will one day give an account of how they did their work.

A study in Philippians 2:3-11.

This passage, like the other two we have looked at, is rich in teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson Eight, Please read Philippians 2:3-8.

In this passage, we find the following teaching.

1. We are to do nothing out of self interest.

Paul says in v. 3, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.” We human beings, as a result of Adam’s sin are by nature selfish people. We look after our own interests only and we do not think about the interests of other people. We think only of how we can make money and have a nice comfortable life, even if it means lying to others, cheating others and stealing from others. As long as we have the pleasures of this world, we do not care about other people. But once we are saved all that has to change. Those who are saved do not live like the people of the world live. They do not pursue the pleasures and possessions of this world. Those who are saved do not do things out of self-interest, rather they consider others better than themselves. This means that they put the interests of others before their own interests: “Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (v. 4).

This, of course, is something we find very difficult. We were born in sin and trespasses and we have lived lives of sin for many years. This means that for many years we have been very selfish and thought only about ourselves and our needs. We have not thought about other people and what their needs are. Whatever we have done in life, it has been for our own profit and gain and comfort. So it is very difficult for us to suddenly change and no longer be selfish and think only of our own interests. It is not an easy matter to think of other people and their needs. But this is what the Bible commands us to do.

2. Christ is our great example in this matter.

Paul goes on to say in this passage, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” In other words, Paul says to us that we should look at the great example of the Lord Jesus when we seek to obey the command to consider the needs of others rather than our own needs. We should remember that this is exactly what the Lord Jesus did. He came to earth not for His own benefit but ours. He came because we were deep in sin and unable to save ourselves. He did not consider His own interests or His own comfort. Coming to earth cost Him a lot of pain and anguish. The people of the world rejected Him, tortured Him and finally killed Him. He knew this is what would happen before He came. He knew that coming to earth would be a very difficult matter. But he considered the needs of

others first, and so He came. He came to save His people from their sins. Christ is, therefore, the best example of how we are not to seek our own selfish interests but to seek the interests of others.

3. The Lord Jesus made Himself nothing for the sake of His people.

Paul goes on to say in this passage about the Lord Jesus Christ, “Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!” What Paul is saying here is that the Lord Jesus Christ is fully God, but He did not exercise the rights, privileges and power that He possessed as God. Rather, He “made Himself nothing.” Paul is not saying that Christ ceased to be God when He came to earth, He is saying that He did not insist on His rights when He was on earth. He was fully God all the time that He was here on earth, but chose not to exercise His rights for the sake of His people.

Perhaps an illustration will help us to understand this. Imagine that a very powerful king hears of a village in his kingdom where the people are suffering greatly because of hunger and disease. He decides to go to the village to find out for himself exactly what the problem is and how he can help the people. But he knows that if he makes an official visit to the village then he will not be able to find out much. Once the people of the village hear the king is making an official visit, they will wear nice clothes and welcome him officially. He will be able to speak only to the chief and the dignitaries, he will not have the chance to speak to the ordinary people and hear from them the problems they are facing. So he decides not to make an official visit but to go in disguise. He wears the clothes of a poor man and visits the village. Now he is able to go into people’s houses and to talk to them about the difficulties they are facing and how the government can help them. In doing all this, the king has not resigned from his position as king. He has simply decided not to use the privileges that are his as king. He has chosen not to come to that village in his car with his armed escort. But he is still the king of that nation.

In the same way, the Lord Jesus did not cease to be God when He came to earth. He has always been God and will always be God eternally. But He decided not to use the privileges that were His. Instead, He “made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant”. This is the example that we, the servants of God, are to follow. In a local church, if certain people insist on their rights and think that they are big and important people then there will be division in that church. But if everyone in the church, including the pastors of the church, are willing to follow the example of Christ and be humble servants, then there will be unity in the church.

Lesson Nine, Please read Philippians 2:9-11.

In Philippians 2:3-8 we were told about how Christ came to earth and made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant. In other words in vs. 3-8 we read about how Christ humbled Himself. In this passage, Paul says that because Christ humbled Himself, God has highly exalted Him. There are two main things we find in this passage.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ has the highest place and has been given the name that is above every name.

Paul says in v. 9, “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.” When the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven after His death and resurrection, He took His place at the right hand of God the Father. This is because all authority in heaven and on earth had been given to Him (Matt. 28:18). What the Bible is teaching us here is that the Lord Jesus Christ has all power and all authority. It is teaching us that He alone has all power. There is no human being or angel or demon who is equal to Him in power and authority. The devil is not in anyway equal to Christ. He has been given the highest place and has been given the name that is above every name. Specifically this means:

(i) Christ has all power and all authority in all matters here on earth. There is nothing that happens here on earth that is beyond His control. We live in a world where all sorts of things like earthquakes and famines and accidents are happening all the time. We read about these events in our own country and in the other countries of the world, and sometimes we are tempted to think that the devil is so powerful that he is doing things that are beyond the control of God. We are tempted to think that he is making things happen that God did not want to happen. But such thoughts are completely unbiblical. God is in control of all things and God holds all things in His hands. It is Christ who has been exalted to the highest place and not the devil. It is Christ who has been given the name that is above every name not the devil. In the Old Testament we read that when the devil wanted to bring suffering upon Job, he first had to get permission from God. He could not touch Job unless God allowed him to do so. And then he could only do what God allowed him to do, he could not kill Job because he had not been given permission to do so. God is the one who controls everything. It is Christ who is at the highest place. We may not always understand His ways but we must accept that He is the king eternal, immortal and invisible who rules the whole universe. We may not understand why accidents happen and why earthquakes and famines take place, and we may not understand why sickness comes upon certain people. These are mysterious things to us, we cannot understand them. But we must never start believing that the devil is doing all sorts of things that God does not want. God is the one who is in control of the universe.

(ii) Christ has all power in all the affairs of all the countries of the world. He is the one

who has been exalted to the highest place and He is the one who has been given the name that is above every name. The Bible makes it very clear that it is God who is running the political affairs of each nation, that it is He who appoints the leaders of each nation. This is what the Bible says:

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgement on themselves” (Rom. 13:1-2).

Notice very carefully what the Bible is saying here. It is saying that there is no governing authority which God has not established: it is He who has established every authority here on earth. Now once again this may make us wonder. How can it be that the Lord Jesus Christ appoints Islamic governments in countries like Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan? How can it be that He appoints rulers in those countries when those rulers are enemies of His church? These are matters we cannot understand, but we must not therefore believe that there are things happening in world politics that are beyond the control of God. Nothing is beyond His control. In the Old Testament, it was He who raised up Nebuchadnezzar to rule over Jerusalem and take the people of Judah into exile. Nothing is beyond His power.

(iii) Christ alone has all authority in His church. When we look at a church we see that there are some people who seem to be in positions of power and authority. A church will usually have elders and some churches will have one person whom they call the pastor. The church may also have a bishop and so on. To many people it may look like these elders and pastors and bishops have all power and all control. In fact sometimes the person himself will think that he is all powerful because he is a pastor or a bishop. But actually that is not the case. The Lord Jesus Christ is the chief shepherd, He is the head of the church, He is the Lord of the church, He is the one who is in control of all affairs in the church.

This truth is of great comfort to all believers. Our spiritual lives are not in the hands of other people. It is not the case that our spiritual lives are in the hands of pastors and bishops. These men are servants of God and they have been raised up to serve the people of God. And so each person who is saved can rejoice in the fact that it is Christ who is our head.

This truth also presents a great challenge to those who are leaders in churches. It is very easy for a person who is a pastor or a bishop to think that he is the one who is in control. It is also very tempting for a person in such a position to begin to abuse their position. Such a person can have control of money in the church for example, and they can begin to take some of the money for themselves. It is very easy for them to think that no one knows what they are doing and no one knows if they have taken money. This, of course, is not

true. The Lord Jesus is the head of the church, He takes notice of everything that we do. We cannot do anything without His knowledge. When He was here on earth, one of His disciples, Judas stole money. The Lord Jesus knew all the time what Judas was doing, but He did not confront Judas straightaway. This is how Christ does things. He is all wise and all His ways are wise ways. A person who is in a position of power and authority in the church may be abusing his position for personal gain. The Lord Jesus may not say anything to him, but that does not mean He is ignorant of what is going on. When the time was right, Judas was judged and cast into hell.

2. Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Paul says in vs. 10-11, “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” When we first read these words we are tempted to think that this is something that will happen in the future. We are tempted to think that when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth then every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord, but until then, most people on earth will not accept that He is Lord. This is how we are tempted to think about these verses. This, however, is not true. Paul is not writing about some future event that is going to happen, he is writing about what is happening in the world now. The Bible teaches us that there are two types of people in the world:

(i) There are those who are the servants of Christ and willingly bow the knee and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God. This group consists of all saved people. If a person is saved through the blood of Jesus Christ then he is a servant of Christ. Even if he works in an office in town or in a farm in a village, he is a servant of Christ. His first desire is to serve Christ and to bring glory to Him. These are the people who willingly bow the knee and confess with their mouths that Jesus Christ is Lord.

(ii) There are those who are not willing servants of Christ but who end up doing the will of God without knowing it. This group consists of all unsaved people. They are not interested in Christ or in serving Christ. Their desire is to have the possessions of this world and to enjoy the pleasures of this world. They do not care for the things of Christ. But God is still directing their lives, even though they do not know it and do not acknowledge it. It is God who decides where they are born, where they attend school, what educational qualifications they get, what work they do, whom they marry, and so on. God directs the life of every human being on the face of this earth. Moreover, God uses every human being on the face of this earth for His purposes. The unsaved do not know it but they are being used by God for His own purposes. There are two examples in the Bible where this is seen most clearly.

Firstly, in Isaiah 45:1 God speaks about a Persian king called Cyrus and says, “This is what the Lord says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations

before him and to strip kings of their armour.” Now Cyrus was not an Israelite, he was a Persian. Moreover, he was not a saved man, he was an idolater. It is very likely that he knew very little about the one true living God. But God used him to fulfil his purposes in letting the people of Israel return to their homeland. This is why he is called the Lord's anointed. He was someone who did the will of God but did not know that he was doing the will of God. As far as he was concerned, he was doing that which benefitted his own nation. It is in speaking about Cyrus that God says, “Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear” (Isaiah 45:23).

Secondly, in the book of Acts, we read of how the early church prayed after they had faced persecution. They said, “Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen” (Acts 4:27-28). The Christians in the book of Acts realised that the whole world is under God's control and that even the unsaved end up doing the will of God without realising what they are doing. This is why they said in this prayer that when Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and the people of Jerusalem conspired together to put to death the Lord Jesus, they were, in fact, only doing that which God had planned should happen. Without realising it or without wanting to do it, they had bowed the knee and by their actions confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord and that He directs the lives of everyone and uses them for His glory and His purposes.