



"The Beginnings of Faith"

(#1)

- 1—The Importance of Faith
- 2—One God versus Many gods
- 3—Reasons for Believing in One God
- 4—The Nature of God
- 5—Awe in the Presence of God
- 6—One Lord versus Many lords
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Lesson One

"OH You of Little Faith"

(Mark 9:14-29)

In the above passage, Jesus is speaking to people who claim to believe in God. They had been the special chosen people of God for some 1500 years. They had all the evidences needed to have a strong faith in the "One True God" of Heaven. And yet, He called them a "***faithless and perverse generation***" (Mark 9:19). Jesus was continually outspoken about Israel's lack of faith and the greatness of the faith of some Gentiles among them (Matt. 8:5-10).

How Strong is your faith in God?
Is your faith, or your parent's faith?
How do you really determine the strength
Of your faith?
Would He say to you, "**Oh you of little
Faith.**"
Would He call us a "**faithless and
Perverse generation?**"

BIBLICAL EMPHASIS UPON FAITH

The importance of faith is obvious in the Scriptures—even to a casual reader. It is vital to our acceptance before God and to our eternal destiny.

John 3:16 _____
Hab. 2:4 _____
Heb. 11:6 _____
1 John 5:4 _____

If we ever make it to Heaven, it will be because of our faith in God. The 11th chapter of Hebrews gives a strong emphasis upon man's faith in order to be right and acceptable to God.

WHAT IS THE CORRECT SOURCE OF FAITH?

People all over the world believe in many things, and in the words of Scripture, they believe in "***many so-called gods or lords.***"

(1 Cor. 8:5). From whence does a faith in the "One True God of Heaven" come?
The following will show the source:

- Psalm 19:1 _____
- Rom. 1:19-20 _____
- Rom. 10:17 _____
- James 1:21-25 _____
- John 20:24-31 _____
- 1 Cor. 2:5 _____

The Bible would seem to be critical in this whole issue of faith in God.

THE KIND OF FAITH GOD WANTS

- James 2:17, 19-20, 24 _____
- Matt. 7:21-23 _____
- Luke 6:46 _____

What does obedience do concerning our faith? (James 2:21-22) _____

For a person to continue in the faith, what must he do?

- Acts 14:22 _____
- 1 Cor. 16:13-14 _____

GOD CALLS FOR A GROWING AND STRONG FAITH!

- 2 Cor. 10:15 _____
- Jude 20 _____
- Jas. 2:5 _____
- Acts 6:5 _____
- Titus 2:2 _____
- 1 Pet. 5:9 _____
- 1 Thess. 3:10 _____
- Heb. 10:22 _____
- 1 Tim. 3:13 _____

Why is God so concerned about our faith being strong?

- Is it possible that our faith can fail us? (Lk. 22:32) _____
- Can a person be deceived into "doubting" God? (James 2:5-8) _____
- Can a Christian go into unbelief? (Heb. 3:12, 18-19) _____

Can a Christian depart from the faith? (1 Tim. 4:1; 5:8; 6:10)_____

THREE BASIC CHALLENGES TO FAITH

1. To believe and obey when others do not!

Who had left all to follow Jesus? (Matt. 16:24; 19:27-29)_____

Was this easy for them to do?_____

Do we face the same choice?_____

Matt. 10:37_____

2. To believe and obey when I know persecution will come!

Are there any indication of this in Scripture?_____

2 Tim. 3:12_____

Matt. 5:10-12_____

Who serves as a good example of this? (Acts 5:27-29)_____

3. To believe and obey when I don't fully understand!

We have some outstanding examples of this in Scripture.

Job. He was a very good man, things went well; but, all of a sudden he lost his wealth, his children, and his health. This was not supposed to happen to those who love and serve God! His friends summed it up very well...*"Job, you must be a terrible sinner with such terrible things happening to you!"*

What was Job's reaction?

Job 1:22_____

Job 23:10_____

Job was never told why these things happened to him!

Peter. He saw Jesus walking on water and asked Him if he could do the same. At first, he walked on water, but then doubted and fell into the water. Peter was rebuked by Jesus!

Matt. 14:25-31_____

Would you have attempted to walk on water?_____

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Have you asked like Job, *"Lord, why did you let this happen to me?"* and He gives you no answer or explanation? Can your faith stand the challenge? Some times we over-simplify faith and prayer. They are both far more complicated than many of us have grasped. We need to deepen our faith in God and have a full assurance of faith! Could Jesus say to us as He did to Peter: ***"O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"*** Doubt comes because our faith in God isn't strong enough to deal with the challenges of life that often face us.

QUESTIONS IN REVIEW

True or False

- ___ 1. It is okay to have our parents' faith.
- ___ 2. Jesus called people who claimed to believe in God a "faithless generation!"
- ___ 3. "Faith" is said to be the Christian's means of Victory!
- ___ 4. All men can know that there is a Divine Being that has created all things.
- ___ 5. Man's worship of idols shows that we can come to a belief in God because of the evidences all around us.
- ___ 6. The Bible is man's only way of knowing there is a God.
- ___ 7. The Bible is needed so that man can fully know what God expects of him.
- ___ 8. A perfected faith is one that has works!
- ___ 9. Disobedience to Jesus is not a matter of a lack of faith.
- ___ 10. To be "sound in the faith" is to have a "healthy" faith.
- ___ 11. Paul said that the Thessalonian Christians were lacking in their faith.
- ___ 12. The Scriptures commends those who are "bold" in the faith.
- ___ 13. A saved person cannot go back into disbelief and be lost.
- ___ 14. The Scripture state that a Christian cannot depart from the faith.
- ___ 15. Faith in God is based on valid evidences.

Lesson Two

"One God versus Many gods"

The Bible begins with the assumption of God: ***"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."*** (Gen. 1:1). The Apostle Paul in his preaching at Athens to the great philosophers of that day began his sermon with this same assumption (Acts 17:22-29). The Scriptures do not attempt to prove the existence of God but just declare that God is. Mankind in general has believed in some kind of Superior being(s), but has been greatly confused over the nature of God. A great purpose of Scripture teaching is to help us to see the true nature of Deity. Most of these lessons in this series are designed to emphasize the true identity of God.

One God versus many gods

At the time Jesus lived on earth "idolatry" or a belief in many gods was prevalent among all nations but one—Judah still had those who believed in the one true God as well as many of the Jews who had been scattered among the nations. The Bible and secular history both show this to be true. Israel, as they came out of Egyptian Bondage were called upon to make a choice between one or many gods (Joshua 24:14-15). Paul's preaching at Athens shows this clearly (Acts 17:16, 22-29). The world that we live in now still has idol worship or a belief in many gods. The books of prophecy in the Old Testament continually contrast the choice between one or many gods that men invent (Isa. 37:14-20; 44:12-17, etc.).

The inspired Apostle Paul stated that man is without excuse for changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like corruptible man, birds, and animals (Rom. 1:18-23). In the preaching that was done among the Gentile Nations, they were called upon to turn from "dumb idols to the living God" (1 Thess. 1:8-9). Our danger today is the same "in principle"—we may not make images and worship them, but we can still dethrone God and make Him into something different from what He is (Mal. 1:6-8; 1 Tim. 2:5). Also, we can put things or people before Him rather than allowing Him first place in our hearts and lives (Matt. 22:37-38; Luke 14:26; Matt. 6:33; Col. 3:5).

The real issue seems to be as follows:

1. Men can know there is a God, but refuse to accept such;
2. So, the problem is not knowing, but a rebellious spirit on man's part;
3. Men can choose, and often do, to give up the true knowledge of God.
4. The Psalmists warns: "*The fool has said in his heart there is no God!*" (14:1).

Three-in-One Concept of God

The Bible clearly emphasizes the triune nature of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit); yet, there is also a strong emphasis upon His "oneness." (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 44:6; Exo. 20:1-3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:6). In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for "one" is "Echod." (Deut. 6:4). But this same word is used in reference to the joining together of a man and woman in the marital state (Gen. 2:24). It is possible that this word is used in what could be called a "composite unity or oneness." There is strong evidence of this composite unity in the first three chapters of Genesis:

Gen. 1:1—The Hebrew word for God is plural with a singular verb (Elohim).

Gen. 1:1—It is stated that God created....but Heb.11:3 indicates that Jesus in His pre-existent state did the creating.

Gen. 1:2—The Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

Gen. 1:26—Plural pronouns are used with reference to God "us" and "our."

Gen. 3:22—Similar usage as 1:26—"us."

It is possible that the universe about us helps to illustrate this oneness of God. We can see a tri-unity all around us, such as:

- 1) **Time** is made up of Past, Present, and Future. It takes all three to make up time. Without any one, there is no time. Yet, each one is time.
- 2) **Space** is made up of Length, Height, and Depth. It takes all three to make up space. Without any one, there is no space. Yet, each one is space.
- 3) **Man** is made up of Body, Soul, and Spirit (1 Thess. 5:23). It takes all three to make up what God calls "man." Without any one of these, man would not be "man." Yet, in a sense each one is man.

God is pictured to us as: **Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**. All three are required to make up God....and yet, each one is God or Deity. God is One—a composite unity—but He is presented to us as three personalities: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is complete in Himself. He is never lonesome and has full resource within Himself. And so, as His people, we are One Body but many members (Rom. 12:5).

The "Father" image of God

Both the Old and New Testaments use this term "Father" in reference to God. (Isa. 1:1-3; 9:6; 63:16) (Matt. 5:16, 48; 6:6), etc. The emphasis is upon God being like a Father to us as His adopted children. What a blessing to have such a Father (1 Jn. 3:1).

1. He blesses us (Rom. 8:28)
2. He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7)
3. He protects us (2 Pet. 2:9)
4. He provides for us (Matt. 6:33)
5. He hears the cries of His children (1 Jn. 3:22)
6. He is preparing a place for us eternally (Jn. 14:1-3)

He Planned for our Redemption

In our efforts to conceive of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we rank them in categories such as the following:

1. The Father is the Planner;
2. The Son is the Creator—brings the plans to fruition;
3. The Holy Spirit gives life to all.

When we look at man's redemption, we do somewhat the same thing: The Father planned for our Redemption from the beginning; The Son came and put the Plan into action in order to make Salvation or redemption possible; and the Holy Spirit gives life to all who obey the Gospel of Christ. Whether this is absolutely correct, I cannot say, but it does seem to fit the picture.

Concluding Thoughts

The "One God and Father" gives us a family image that we can easily identify with and see the value of. Sometimes our earthly fathers are not what they ought to be; so, we need a spiritual Father that can give us the perfect example of Fatherhood. God is a God of peace, not division and strife. He challenges us to oneness and unity for our own good. God redeems us and places us in the "One Body of Christ," but we have to maintain that oneness or unity by the way we conduct ourselves with others in the body of Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. The Bible assumes the existence of God and does not try to prove He exists.
- 2. Man's problem concerning God is to understand His nature, rather than His existence.
- 3. In Jesus' time on earth, all nations were idolatrous but one.
- 4. Men can know there is a God, but refuses to accept such.
- 5. The Bible states that men are without excuse for not believing in the one true God of heaven.
- 6. "Idolatry" can be defined as putting anything before God.
- 7. Man's greater problem is rebellion rather than a lack of knowledge.
- 8. "Deity" is revealed to us in the Bible as a "tri-une" being.
- 9. There is strong evidence for this "tri-une" nature of God in the first three chapters of the Old Testament.
- 10. Our universe is filled with "triunities."
- 11. God is complete in Himself and does not need any thing or any one.
- 12. Both the Old and New Testaments use the term "Father" with reference to God.
- 13. God is pictured in Scripture as the "perfect" Father for mankind.
- 14. God, the Son, created all things—not God, the Father.
- 15. It is the Spirit that gives life—not God, the Father.

Lesson Three

"Reasons for Believing in One God"

"The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" (Psalm 53:1). More and more people in the so-called "Christian Nations" have not only come to no longer believe in the God of the Bible, but are openly speaking out about such. Many college professors openly try to undermine a belief in God among their students. We are seeing militancy on the part of "unbelievers" in our societies more and more advocating "There is no God!" Why does the Bible call such people foolish? In many places in the world another question can be easily raised: "Which God are you talking about?" John Clayton suggests that the Religious battle of the next 100 years will not be over doctrinal issues such as the meaning of baptism, the second coming of Christ, or the method by which the Spirit of God operates. These vital issues will be superseded by issues far more basic: "Is there a God in Heaven?" "Is Jesus really the Son of God?" "Is the Bible really THE Word of God to mankind?"

It would seem obvious that man's most profound question is concerning the existence of God! Have you noticed that the Bible begins with the assumption of God? No real attempt is made to prove His existence. Why is this question so important? May we suggest at least four basic reasons:

- 1) Such a belief determines man's responsibility.
- 2) His Salvation (Relationship to God) and eternal destiny is involved.
- 3) His moral and social behavior is involved.
- 4) His happiness here and now, as well as eternally is involved.

How can man know that God exists? If such a Being exists it is certain that he cannot be ascertained with certainty by our five senses? He cannot be detected and tested like physical things. God must be detected by the perceiving mind. It is by the process of the formulation and compiling of knowledge, evaluating the evidences, and drawing reasonable conclusions that we come up with a rational belief in God or not.

Reasons for Believing in God

1) Because it is reasonable to believe in the existence of God and not matter being eternal. Atheism is forced into believing that matter is eternal. If it had a beginning, then there has to be a God who created it. Both Romans 1:20-21 and Psalm 19:1-3 says that man is without excuse for not believing in Him.

2) Because Atheism cannot be proved. For an atheists to disprove the existence of God would mean that he would have to be a “god.” He would have to be omniscient or the one thing he did not know might be that God exists! But look at the insuperable difficulties that Atheists have:

- a) They assume that matter is eternal.
- b) They assume that the universe exists as a result of chance, not orderly creation.
- c) They assume matter produced living organisms.
 - That non-living created the living;
 - That non-conscious created the conscious;
 - That non-religious created the religious;
 - That non-rational created the rational;
 - That non-moral created the moral;
 - That non-hearing created the hearing;
 - That non-speaking created the speaking;
 - That non-feeling created the feeling.....etc.
- d) The Atheists actually believes in a “miracle-working creator,” but refuses to call him God!
 - His creator is dead matter, which created in the past, but not now—which concept cannot be explained in terms of present day laws and it cannot be proven with evidences.
- e) He must assume that our orderly and beautiful Universe came into being:
 - By chance, not design.
 - That the human body with all its detailed and unexplainable workings came into existence by chance.
 - That the small things of nature exist by chance.
 - That the make-up of the atom, etc., all happened by chance.
 - That the cycles of nature in all her glory all happened by chance.

But a belief in God’s great creative power makes all of this very reasonable. But without belief in God, these are just a few of the great assumptions that Atheists call upon us to believe and accept because he said so!

3) Because our orderly Universe demands an explanation. Our Universe exhibits marks of intelligent causation. The works of man are examples of causation. Someone had to design and build the house we live in, etc. And the same can be said of the Universe, it had to be designed and built by a great Power!

Benjamin Franklin was visiting in Paris and was displaying his model of our planetary system showing the earth and planets nearest to it. A person asked

him, “*Who made this?*” Mr. Franklin replied: “*No one, it just happened!*” “*What,*” cried the man, “*you must be joking!*” And Mr. Franklin’s reply to him was: “*And so is the man who says the Universe just happened.*” The existence of our Universe by chance is a mathematical impossibility. Look at the following observations:

- 1) If the Universe exhibits Design, there must be a great Designer.
- 2) If it exhibits or show Thought, there must be a great Thinker.
- 3) If it runs by Laws, there must be a great Lawgiver.
- 4) If it operates with Mathematical Precision, there must be a great Mathematician.
- 5) If it gives us important Chemical Combinations, there must be a great Chemist.
- 6) If such is a great Engineering Feat, there must be a great Engineer.

4. Because concepts of right and wrong require an explanation. We are faced with two choices:

- 1) Man has evolved and his moral standards have evolved with him.
No one man can set the standards. Each is a law unto himself.
- 2) Or, God created man and gave him the ability to understand right from wrong.

Let’s notice some things about morality. If a moral realm exists, then certain things must follow:

- 1) Man has the power to choose between good and bad.
- 2) There is no final moral justice in this life in many situations.
- 3) There must be a just Judge that someday will render perfect justice.
- 4) If not, what is the point of being moral????

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Many other reasons could be given for believing:

- 1) It is obviously the safer course to pursue. If there is a God:
 - a) We must come to know Him and obey Him.
 - b) There will be a Judgment and reward & punishment.
 - c) If there is no God, I haven’t really lost anything worthwhile

by believing.

- 2) Atheists have nothing to offer to answer all the perplexing questions of life—he can only offer greater doubt.
- 3) The Christian life is by far the greater way of living over what Atheists have to offer.
 - a) It is greater and better.
 - b) It produces happiness, peace, and contentment for this life.

c) It motivates man to accomplish the good for all mankind.

d) It offers hope after this life is over—Atheists offer nothing.

Do you believe that God exists—what have you done about it? Can you give good reasons for your belief in God?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- ___ 1. Man's disbelief in God is emotionally based, not logically based.
- ___ 2. An Agnostic is one who says that he knows there is no God.
- ___ 3. God must be detected by the perceiving mind based on evidences.
- ___ 4. There is no evidence that points to our universe being created.
- ___ 5. Without belief in God, there is no point nor purpose to morality.
- ___ 6. Atheists have to believe logically that non-living matter created living organisms.
- ___ 7. Belief that morality comes from God is a shallow form of escapism.
- ___ 8. Atheism does not have answers to life's greatest questions.
- ___ 9. Atheists have to believe in a "miracle working creator," but won't call Him God.
- ___ 10. Many people in this country have stopped believe in God because the evidence for his existence is diminishing.

Lesson Four

"The Nature of God"

In our previous lesson (#3), we looked briefly at evidences that help a person to have faith in God. These evidences are what we normally refer to as “Natural Revelation” of God. We also took note of passages from the Bible like Romans 1:20-21; Psalm 19:1-3; and Acts 17 that states that man is without excuse for not knowing and believing in the true God of Heaven. However, in spite of all of the evidences for God’s existence, mankind turned to making God in their own image or denying His existence altogether. Most of the world drifted into idolatry for hundreds of years. During this time, God chose a special people (Israel) and gave them a divine revelation of Himself and His Law to govern and guide them—hoping to keep them free of idolatry. But even the larger portion of the Jewish nation went into idolatry and God punished them severely for such. By the time of Jesus, there was only a small number of Jews and smaller number of Gentiles who believed and worship the true God of Heaven.

God's Greatness

The Bible begins by assuming the existence of God before anything was created. And the very first thing pointed out about the God of the Bible is His ability to bring things and people into existence that did not exist before....***"In the Beginning God created the heavens and earth."*** (Genesis 1:1). And then, man was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). And very quickly we can begin to see the greatness of God.

God is all-powerful (Omnipotent). He is unlimited in what He can do. He exists in a totally different realm of existence than we do. What appears to be supernatural to us is only natural with Him. He spoke, and it was done (Genesis 1:3; Psalm 33:9).

God is all-knowing (Omniscience). He knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 45:10). Time is not a factor with God—a thousand years is as a day; and a day is as a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8). In Him is all knowledge and wisdom (Colossians 2:2-3). In order to create this Universe and to keep it under control, He has to be all-knowing. He knows all things, but he also knows all of our hearts (Acts 15:18, 8). All of the foretelling of future events in the Bible (and there are hundreds), shows His great knowledge of the past, present, and future (Hebrews 4:13). His understanding is infinite (unlimited) (Psalm 147:5). All beings and things are under His continual watchful care (Proverbs 15:3, 11).

God is every-where present (Omnipresent). There is no where that man can go that God is not there. The Psalmist describes it this way: *“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell (Sheol), behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall hold me...”* (Psalm 139:7-10). In fact, it is stated by the Apostle Paul that we live and move and have our being in Him (Acts 17:28). God knows all things and is in control of all things.

God is without-change (Immutable). The heavens will grow old and perish, but God will remain the same—He will not change (Hebrews 1:12; Malachi 3:6; James 1:17). If God would change: (1) Eternity would become time; (2) Perfection would become imperfection; and (3) God would become not-God! He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). God has no reason to change because He is perfection (Numbers 23:19).

God is unlimited (Infinite). If He were limited, He would not be God! There is nothing that can limit His Power, Wisdom, Justice, etc. (Psalm 147:5).

God is not flesh & blood like man (Spirit-Being). God is not a man (Numbers 23:19; Matthew 16:17). He does not have the limitations that man has. But God is often spoken of as being like humans for our benefit. But he is not like man, but rather is a Spirit-Being (John 4:24; 1 John 4:12).

God is without beginning or end (Eternal). It is said of Him that He is from everlasting to everlasting. He described Himself to Moses as the *“I am that I am”* (Exodus 3:14-15). Nothing else exist without a beginning—God alone is the Eternal One (Nehemiah 9:6).

TERMS THAT DESCRIBE GOD

Quite a few descriptive terms have been added to the terms for God that are an effort to make known not only God’s great attributes, but his very nature (morally). The following can help to illustrate:

1. Genesis 14:20—Most high God
2. Genesis 21:33—The Eternal God
3. Genesis 16:13—The God who sees
4. Exodus 34:6—Jehovah (The Eternal One) God
5. Deuteronomy 4:31—Merciful God
6. Deuteronomy 7:9—The Faithful God
7. Joshua 3:10—The Living God

8. Psalm 68:19—The God of Salvation
9. Isaiah 9:6—The Mighty God
10. Daniel 9:4—The Great and Awesome God
11. Daniel 11:36—The God of gods
12. Leviticus 11:44—The Holy One
13. Isaiah 41:10—The Lord Our Righteousness
14. Jeremiah 11:20—The Lord of Hosts

In addition to the above, there are three terms in particular that help to show the moral attributes or the nature of God.

1. Just. God is a God of Justice (Deuteronomy 32:4; Romans 3:26). He is fair and just in all His dealings with mankind. His Word is truth (John 17:17). He is ever faithful to His Word (Deuteronomy 7:9). He is just in His punishment of sinful and rebellious mankind, as well as the Angels that rebelled against Him (Acts 17:31).

2. Holiness. God is set apart from mankind as totally righteous—no sin, no fault, no need for repentance (Numbers 23:19), He is perfect (Matthew 5:48). His very nature is light (1 John 1:5).

3. Goodness. Only God is good in the ultimate (Luke 18:19). He shows His goodness to both the evil and the good (Matthew 5:45; James 1:17). He shows His goodness by being patient and long-suffering to all men not wanting them to perish (2 Peter 3:9), as well as forgiving those who do repent (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38). But this forgiveness has to be done on the basis of justice (Jesus dying in our stead to satisfy the demands of God's Law—Romans 3:23-26). God is the epitome of Kindness, Mercy, Grace, and Love (1 John 4:8, 16).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

From the above thoughts, who in the world could not easily believe in such a God? The Bible's description of Him (Supernatural Revelation) is excellent, understandable, and believable. The Evidences for God (Natural Revelation) and the evidences for the Bible are rational, logical, and sufficient for any honest mind to draw a clear-cut conclusion that God is!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- ___ 1. Justness is one of the terms that describes God's moral nature.
- ___ 2. God is loving and forgiving of both the evil and the good.
- ___ 3. Descriptive terms of God help to show His nature or attributes.
- ___ 4. God is the only one that has had no beginning or end.
- ___ 5. To say that God is infinite is to say He is unlimited.
- ___ 6. The Bible has contradictory statements about God's unchangeableness.
- ___ 7. God can't be everywhere or else He would be in Hell.
- ___ 8. If God knows everything, then man does not have a choice of what he will do.
- ___ 9. Man's turning to idolatry is excusable since they did not have a revelation of God.
- ___ 10. By the time of Jesus, there was only a small number of people who believed in the true God of Heaven.

Lesson Five

"Awe in the Presence of God"

We had a very good friend in Kansas City, Mo., when we lived there that was a converted Jew who came from Russia. We named our son, Stephen, after him-- Stephen Eckstein. His father was an orthodox scribe in Russia. He told me that when his father would be making copies of the Word of God and come to the name of God—he would try to show great respect.

- They would put new pens into their writing instruments.
- They would take a bath and changed clothes.

To us—this seems like misguided zeal. But at the same time, it was trying to show special awe for the name of God. The Psalmist is calling upon the world to tremble at the greatness of what God has done:

- a) When He delivered Jacob out of Egypt—the sea walled up and let them thru.
- b) The mountains and hills became subservient to them—giving needed water.
- c) The River Jordan opened up for them.

Man is called upon many times to keep silence before the great & mighty God of heaven.

- a) Hab. 2:20—***"The Lord is in His holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before Him."***
- b) Zech. 2:13—***"Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for He is raised up out of His holy habitation."***
- c) Ps. 89:7—***"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him."***
- d) Ps. 111:9—***"...holy and reverend is His name."***
- e) **Silence** in God's presence shows a **sense of Awe, Reverence, and Respectfulness.**

We do not expect the world to have such a respect for God—though they should. But it should be expected of the **people of God.**

LOSING RESPECT FOR GOD

Judah drifted far from God. They had turned their hearts and lives from Him and His Word. They went deeper and deeper into sin that brought their destruction. However—not all were slain—but carried captive to Babylon. God later allowed them to return to their homeland. Hopefully, with a return to their former reverence & respect for God.

Nehemiah illustrates this attitude. (Neh. 8:1-3. 5-6) The people wept when they heard the words of the Lord. (v. 9). When they showed reverence for God's Law,

they show reverence to Him who gave the Law. They had learned well the need for proper reverence.

We need to illustrate the difference between respect & terror. Israel rejoiced to hear the Word of the Lord. Felix, Governor of Judea, had a sense of terror at hearing the Word of the Lord. (Acts 24:24-25).

WAYS WE SHOW REVERENCE FOR GOD

By our attitude toward His Word. An unwillingness to listen to God shows a lack of respect. Acts 17:11—"***These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.***" They showed a respectful listening to a message supposedly from God. But even some at Thessalonica revered God. 1 Thess. 2:13—"***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, which also effectively works in you who believe.***"

By our attitude toward the name of God. Exo. 20:7—"***You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.***" Rev. 11:18—"***The nations were angry, and your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should reward your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.***" God's name must not be used lightly—without proper respect. When His name is upon our lips—it is to be with reverence. We need to honor & respect His name.

By our worshipful adoration & praise of God! (Rev. 15:3-4; Rev. 5:13). John 4:24—"***Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God in spirit and in truth.***" Sincere worship & praise of God shows reverence for God. It needs to come from a heart full of gratitude. From a humble heart, realizing our smallness before God. That comes from an overwhelmed heart at the greatness of God.

By our obedient spirit. It is not enough to be in silent respect in the presence of God. But God needs to be heard, believed and obeyed, as well! Matt. 7:21—"***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.***" It is a spirit of desiring to do the Will of God to show our respect for Him. A desire to do exactly what He commands—not what I like.

CONCLUSION THOUGHTS

We laugh at a commercial that was used some time ago about—about E. F. Hutton. *"When E. F. Hutton speaks, people listen..."* They had respect

for what he had to say about investments. But what we are talking about now is not a laughing matter. Jehovah God of heaven has spoken. Let all the earth keep silence and listen to what He has to say. Let all the earth tremble before Him and Reverence His Name. Let all flesh become obedient unto Him who has made all things. What is your attitude towards God? No greater respect can be shown to God than to accept His Son as Lord & Master of our lives.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- _____ 1. Some of men's efforts to show respect for God are misguided.
- _____ 2. God wants men to keep silent before Him at all times.
- _____ 3. God is only to be respected (feared) in the assembly of His people.
- _____ 4. Silence is a way of showing Awe to God.
- _____ 5. Lack of respect for God led to the Jews being taken into Babylon as captives.
- _____ 6. Weeping can be a way of showing respect for God's Law.
- _____ 7. There is a difference between respect and fear of God.
- _____ 8. To use God's name loosely is a way of showing disrespect for God.
- _____ 9. Correct worship is a way of showing respect for God.
- _____ 10. The person who respects God will be obedient to His Word.

Lesson Six

"One Lord versus Many lords"

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:18-20); born of the virgin Mary (Matt. 1:23); grew up as a human being (Luke 2:52); lived a sinless life (1 Pet. 2:22); and then offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins (Phil. 2:8). As a result, God raised Him up from the grave and set Him on His Own Right Hand:

- 1) **Exalting Him highly;**
- 2) **Given a name which is above all other names;**
- 3) **So that all should bow before Him;**
- 4) **And that all should confess that Jesus is Christ and Lord to the glory of God (Phil. 2:9-11).**

The Apostle Peter stated by inspiration that this was foretold by David (Acts 22:32-33). Daniel also indicated this in his vision about One like a Son of Man ascending to the Ancient of Days....and He was given: ***"dominion, glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve Him."*** (Dan. 7:13-14). Jesus is KING over His kingdom!

KING OVER HIS KINGDOM

The Prophet Daniel foretold of Jesus being given a kingdom, but David was told by God that one of his descendants would sit on the throne of this kingdom (2 Samuel 7:13-14). Peter indicated that this kingdom was set up with Jesus sitting on David's throne in about AD 29-30 (Acts 2:33-35; 8:12; Col. 1:13-14). Jesus did not come to set up an earthly kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom! (John 18:36-37). The Jewish people were expecting an earthly kingdom because they had already pre-judged what kind of a kingdom it would be. Jesus made it clear that His kingdom is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, joy, and peace (Rom. 14:17). It is called the "kingdom of heaven" because it is of heaven, not of this earth. Jesus is reigning on His Throne in heaven, not on the earth. He came so that God could reign in the hearts and lives of men—not in a political or material manner. The kingdom of Christ is His church (Matt. 16:18-19; Luke 22:29-30). When Christ returns for His own, then He will give up His reign and deliver the kingdom up to the Father (1 Cor. 15:23-27). John, the baptizer, came preaching: ***"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"*** (Matt. 3:2). About three years later, Jesus is sitting (figuratively speaking) on the throne of David (in heaven!). Paul stated clearly that ***"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God"*** (1 Cor. 15:50). Those who make up this kingdom must be "born again" of the water and the Spirit! (John 3:3-5). It is a spiritual birth into a spiritual kingdom! But, it is also an "everlasting kingdom" (2 Pet. 1:11).

JESUS IS LORD

Jesus is to be confessed as "Lord" to our salvation (Rom. 10:9). To confess Him as Lord is to confess Him as "Deity!" But, it is also giving recognition to his authority over us. In Jesus' time on earth the word (κύριος) was used with reference to idolatrous gods, Roman Emperors, and high ranking officials in the empire (1 Cor. 8:5). Among the Jews, it was used with reference to God—denoting His Sovereign authority over mankind (or over heaven and earth) (Matt. 11:25; 9:38; Acts 17:24; Rev. 4:11). Two of the words in the Old Testament that were used of Deity were (Adonai and Yahveh). When the New Testament quotes passages with these two names, they are used to identify Jesus (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1—Mark 1:3), etc. The 12 disciples used the term to refer to Jesus. He stated: ***"You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."*** (Jn. 13:13-14). Jesus taught the people as ***"One having authority!"*** and He did! (Matt. 7:29). While on earth Jesus was Lord, but it was after his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension that He was so highly exalted by God, the Father (Phil. 2:9-11). He has been seated at the right hand of the Father, been given a name that is above every name, and at the name of Jesus every knee should bow (in heaven, on earth, and under the earth), and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the Father!

But, it is one thing to recognize and confess that Jesus is Lord and quite another to truly let Him be the Lord of my life! Confessing Jesus as Lord is required, but so is obedience as well. Confessing without obedience is hypocrisy (James 2:22-27). Jesus openly rebuked the people in one of His audiences with these words: ***"But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?"*** (Luke 6:46). He went on to point out the blessings that come to the person that not only hears Jesus' words, but does them! (Luke 6:47-49). The Apostle John stated it this way: ***"He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous."*** (1 John 3:7). He warns his readers not to deceive themselves in thinking otherwise. If Jesus is truly Lord of our lives, we will be obedient to His Will—without questioning! Love for the Lord will cause us to be obedient servants of Jesus (1 John 5:3).

THE DEMANDING "LORD"

Towards the end of Jesus' public ministry, many of His disciples turned and walked no more with Him. Why? Why would anyone in their right mind turn from the only One who could give them eternal life? (John 6:59-69).

The answer given was brief and to the point: *"This is a hard saying who can understand?"* Jesus wanted followers who trusted in Him so His demands would be followed. Discipleship to Jesus is not determined by our wishes or our convenience, but by His Will or His commands. He sets the standards to be met for those who want to answer His call. The very concept of being a disciple is one who is willing to be taught and willing then to put those things into practice in one's life.

Several different expressions are used to communicate Jesus' demands for being His follower. Some of the more obvious are found in Matthew and Luke's Gospels. The following will give a general idea of what would be involved.

- 1) **Take up one's cross (Matt. 16:24).** Whatever burdens or hardships that may be placed on us because we are a disciple of Jesus, we must willingly bear it!
- 2) **Deny one's self (Matt. 16:24).** A person will either do his own will, or the will of someone else, or the Will of God. He makes the choice! Jesus is calling for us to do the Will of the Father in heaven if we want to follow Him.
- 3) **Lose one's life (Matt. 16:25).** To try to keep one's life for himself is to lose it, but to give up one's life for righteousness, he will gain it.
- 4) **Hate parents and family (Luke 14:25-26).** The concept of hate in this place carries with it the idea of loving them less than God. If we love them more than God, then when a choice has to be made between listening to them or God, we will choose our family over God!

Concluding Thoughts

Jesus' demands are not arbitrary, but practical. A choice has to be made as to which will be first in our lives—God or other things, or other people! (Matt. 6:24). It just isn't possible to serve two masters! If we are not willing to renounce all, we cannot be a true follower of Jesus. Jesus wants to be the Lord of our lives, the King over His subjects—for our own good!

Many want the blessings that Jesus offers, but are not willing for Him to be the Lord of their lives. Many voices are calling out and making their appeal for people to follow them. They make an appeal to our selfish interest to get a following. The appeal that Jesus makes is to let Him be the Lord of our life and He will give us "eternal life" with the Father (Rev. 2:10). It is up to us to make the choice of who we will follow. Why not follow Jesus—for only He can give us eternal life (John 6:68; 14:6).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. When was Jesus to be given the position of King over His domain? (Dan. 7:13-14)
2. Was Jesus "Lord" and "King" while He was on earth?
3. What is the difference between being "Lord" and "King?"
4. How does Jesus identify His kingdom? (John 18:36-37; Rom. 14:17)
5. How does one come under Jesus' kingship? (John 3:3-5)
6. Why must one confess Jesus to be Lord? (Rom. 10:"9)
7. Did Jesus acknowledge His Lordship? (John 13:13-14)
8. Why did some of Jesus' followers leave Him? (John 6:66-69)
9. What are some of the demands of Jesus if we are to let Him be the Lord of our life? (Matt. 16:24-25; Luke 14:26-27)
10. How do we show our hypocrisy to Jesus as Lord?

Lesson Seven

"Jesus is God in the Flesh"

Jesus of Nazareth is certainly the central person in "Christianity!" The Apostle Paul stated that God has raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named. And he added that all things have been put under His feet and He has been made head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:20-22). Belief in Jesus' Messiahship and His Deity is critical to the existence and spread of Christianity. There was a time when critics questioned whether Jesus actually lived, but no longer. The evidence for a real person named Jesus is too overwhelming for an honest person to doubt that He lived and evidently had a great influence on people then and now. The two areas that are critical are the two that must be confessed by one wanting to become a follower of Jesus—that He is the Christ, the Son of God (Acts 8:37 NKJV; Romans 10:9; Matthew 16:16). This lesson will primarily deal with these two issues, but before that it may be worthwhile to notice some general things said about Jesus by the writers of the New Testament.

GENERAL STATEMENTS ABOUT JESUS

The writers of the New Testament books were either the brothers of Jesus (James and Jude) or close disciples or Apostles of Jesus (Matthew, Mark, John, Peter). Only two writers did not have the privilege of being associated with Jesus (Luke & Paul), but their conversions to Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, give us reasons for believing what they believed. These writers portray Jesus in the following way:

He was Sinless (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:21-22, etc.). No man could lay claim to such with honesty or integrity—but Jesus could and did (John 8:46)! His life has undergone great scrutiny and He has come away without fault. The necessity of His sinlessness was that He had to be without sin in order to die and take the place of sinners.

The people were astonished at His teachings (Matthew 7:28). He is recorded as having said that what He taught came from His Father in Heaven (John 8:28). There are no greater teachings found anywhere in the world.

His ultimate influence upon his close disciples and others (Matthew 19:27-29). After Jesus' resurrection, their lives were changed drastically. They gave up all to follow Him and even gave their lives to preach the Gospel of Christ around the world.

He performed supernatural acts (Miracles) (Matthew 4:23-25). Jesus' close disciples witnessed these miraculous events over and over for some three and one-half years. But, they also were given the power by Jesus to do the same (Matthew 10:1).

He manifested the Love of God to all men (John 15:9-13; 1 John 3:16). Jesus showed in word and deed the pure and unselfish love of God for mankind (John 3:16). He exemplified unconditional love even in His sacrificial death toward his persecutors (Luke 23:34).

JESUS, THE CHRIST (MESSIAH)

One of the strong evidences for Jesus is the prophecies of a coming Messiah that He fulfilled. The Jews were in expectation of the coming of the Messiah as well as the Samaritan people (John 1:41; 4:24). Daniel had used this term to identify the person that was to come to be the deliverer (Daniel 9:25-26). This Messiah is described in various ways in the Old Testament:

- 1) He was to be the seed of the woman that would bruise the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15).
- 2) He was to be the seed of Abraham to bless all nations (Genesis 12:3; 22:18).
- 3) He was to come from the tribe of Judah to be ruler (Genesis 49:10).
- 4) He was to be a king over the new kingdom (2 Samuel 7:12-14; Daniel 2:44).
- 5) He was to be a suffering servant to die for the sins of the people (Isaiah 53).

Additional things could be added to the above. Not only did Jesus fulfill every one of these many Old Testament prophecies, but He Himself said He came for that purpose (Luke 24:44).

JESUS, THE SON OF GOD (DEITY)

The material that we have already briefly looked at should indicate that Jesus was not a mere man among other men, but someone greater. The confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God certainly indicates that we should believe Him to be Deity! There are four different approaches that can be taken to show evidences for Jesus' Divinity.

1) His claims to be equally Deity with the Father. To claim to be the Son of God was enough to cause the Religious Leaders of the Jews to say that Jesus blasphemed (John 10:30-38). Mark's Gospel records Jesus forgiving sins and the Religious Leaders again said that He blasphemed because only God could forgive sins. Jesus' reply to their criticism was,

2) His immediate disciples' belief in Him as the Son of God. They not only confessed their belief in Him as being the Messiah, but as well as that He was the Son of God (Matthew 16:16). Upon one occasion, when many disciples were turning from following Jesus, He asked the disciples would they also leave Him. Their reply was: ***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that Yu are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*** They had to have some basis for believing this astounding concept! The final clincher to the Apostles' believing in Jesus was after His resurrection from the dead. Which is easier: to forgive a person or heal him of his deformity? He healed the man before their very eyes (Mark 2:5-12). For Jesus to make the claim of being Deity shows one of three things: (1) He was a fool and self-deceived; (2) He was a deranged person—did not know what He was doing; or (3) He was who He claimed to be—the Son of God. Jesus made the statement to His close Apostles that whoever had seen Him had seen the Father also (John 14:9).

3) His immediate disciples' belief in Him as the Son of God. They not only confessed their belief in Him as being the Messiah, but as well as that He was the Son of God (Matthew 16:16). Upon one occasion, when many disciples were turning from following Jesus, He asked the disciples would they also leave Him. Their reply was: ***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that Yu are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*** They had to have some basis for believing this astounding concept! The final clincher to the Apostles' believing in Jesus was after His resurrection from the dead. Thomas had not had the benefit of seeing the resurrected Jesus with the other Apostles, but later was able to see Him and be convinced that He was ***“my Lord and my God!”*** (John 20:26-31). The writers of the New Testament constantly make reference to the Deity of Jesus (Romans 1:4; 5:10; 8:3; 8:32; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:19; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:14; Hebrews 1:2; 2 Peter 1:17; 1 John 1:3; Revelations 2:18, etc.).

4) Old Testament prophecies that indicate His Deity. Isaiah foretold of One to come that would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23) which would indicate that his conception would not be by man, but God Himself. And then, it was added, that his name would be called “Emanuel” which means God with us. Also Isaiah's prophecy in 9:6 certainly indicates Deity as well. Micah's prophecy of the one to come that his decendency is from eternity (5:2). Even the Old Testament indications that God is multi-personal would lend evidence to Jesus' Divinity: Elohim—plural word for God used; ***“Let us make man after our image...”*** (Genesis 1:26), etc. In a sense, these usages are all foretelling about the one to come to be Deity. Jesus, Himself, makes reference to such in a prophetic statement by David: ***“The Lord said unto my Lord...”*** (Matthew 22:43-46).

5) The Resurrection of Jesus. Nothing is more critical to Christianity than the question of Jesus' Divinity—can He fulfill His promises of life after death. And nothing is more critical in proving His Deity than the question of His resurrection. The Old Testament foretold, not only of His sacrificial death for the saving of mankind (Isaiah 53), but as well of His resurrection from the dead (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:29-32).

Jesus also foretold of His own death and resurrection (John 2:19-22; Luke 9:22). He even uses the experience of Jonah to foretell of His coming death and resurrection (Matthew 12:39-40). His disciples had a hard time accepting His death, but they rejoiced greatly over His resurrection (John 16:22). The Apostles were changed and became Apostles to the world of a Savior that can give them eternal life (Matthew 16:21; 20:18-19). The resurrection of Jesus was given a primary place in their preaching because without it there was no hope for life after death.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The chosen Apostles were so thoroughly convinced of Jesus' Messiahship and Deity that they gave their lives preaching it to the world. They had nothing to gain in this world from doing so, but they were promised life with God after this life was over. Our belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior is just as critical if we want to see Him someday.

It should be quite obvious that we have only touched on all the various forms of evidences for believing in Jesus. But this does give sufficient information that may need to be used in helping others come to a belief in Him. Spend the time looking over and studying about these things. Find other writings that go more in detail on these matters. Strengthen your faith in the "One Lord" (Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God). There is no other "Lord" to whom we can turn that can fulfill such promises that Jesus made.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

True or False

- 1. Jesus is the central personality of the New Testament.
- 2. There is no real evidence from secular writers that Jesus ever lived.
- 3. If a person wants to be saved, he must be willing to confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.
- 4. Jesus had to be sinless to accomplish His purpose for coming.
- 5. One of the greatest things that Jesus did was to show us the Love of God.
- 6. The New Testament states that there is "One Lord."
- 7. One of the minor forms of evidence for Jesus is the fulfilling of Old Testament prophecies.
- 8. Isaiah and Micah actually indicated that Jesus would be Deity.
- 9. Jesus made the claim of His Deity several times that have been recorded.
- 10. The disciples no longer believed in his Deity after the resurrection, but they did believe that He was raised.

