

Gleaners Bible Studies B 5

THINGS CHRISTIANS MUST BELIEVE (PART 2)

Study 1

About Man



**Genesis 1: 26-31; 2: 18-25;
Psalm 8**

To find out the truth about God we must read the Bible. We have already noticed that it is God's revelation of Himself to men. If we want to know the truth about man, we must also turn to the Bible, for we have already affirmed in our last study that the Bible is God's Word. It has been rightly said that 'TRUTH is what God says about a thing.' So we must believe that what the Bible says about man is TRUE. It is therefore a book about God and man together.

We must say here that the Bible never professes to be a scientific text book. Many people run into difficulties of belief because they approach the Bible scientifically. They are looking for scientific details of the 'How?' and 'When?' The Bible is not primarily a book of the 'How?' and 'When?' It is a book of 'Who?' and 'Why?' which is quite different! It is a book which deals primarily with the interaction between God and man. God's dealings with man down through the course of history – think about this carefully. Yet the Bible and scientific facts have never disagreed. The account that the Scripture gives of the beginnings of human life on earth is logical and clear. It is presented without argument and Christians, in believing the Scriptures, must accept what they say as the truth. To me, it is far more reasonable to believe that we were made by God, the great Creator! than to think we just came into being by chance or a series of accidents. Think about this carefully as we study the subject of this lesson.

Let us first of all look at the ORIGIN of Man.

How did he begin his life on earth? Man has always been curious about his origins. It is only natural that he should be, and it is this that has given rise to the various theories put forward at different times by philosophers. But remember 'theories' are not FACTS. The Bible, in **Genesis 1**, goes through the creation of the earth and its occupants, stage by stage. At the end of each day of creation, God looked at what He had made and pronounced it was good. Indeed we can be sure it was perfect. On the sixth day, God crowned His creative work with His masterpiece. **"Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness,"** He said, (**Genesis 1: 26**) **"So God created man"**. (**Genesis 1: 27**) We can say therefore, that 'man came from God, for God was his Maker'. Notice **Genesis 2: 7** – it was out of the dust of the ground that God formed Adam, and the very life given to him was breathed into his nostrils by God. So we must believe that man came from God. The plan for his creation was in the mind of God. The very life that he possessed was given to him by God. (**Acts 17: 28**) This then is the 'Who?' of Creation.

Now look at the character or NATURE of man.

God had already created animals, birds and insects. All of them in their own way reflected what God wanted them to be. We can see just how wonderful the Creator was, because all these things showed His beauty and perfection. But when man was created, **"God created man in His Own image"**. (**Genesis 1: 27**) What does this mean? Of all the creatures

that were made, man was most like God. This does not mean that he was like God to look at, for God is Spirit. It means that he was like God in personality and character. Just as God has a mind to plan, to propose, to think, so we have minds for the same purpose. God has the capability to love and feel for others – for us His people. So we too, can feel love and affection for others. God has a will to do and to act, and in all these things He is absolutely perfect. We also, as people, have wills to choose and to do, although in all these things we are now so imperfect. This is possibly an over simplification of this truth, nevertheless you will appreciate that man was different from all the other creatures made.

The Bible teaches us that man exists as a three-fold being, body, soul and spirit. (**1 Thessalonians 5: 23**) While it is hard for us to distinguish between soul and spirit, since both are in contrast with the physical body, the Bible shows that there is a difference. Animals have a body and soul, but no spirit. Man has a body, soul AND spirit. Anyone who has witnessed a deathbed scene will understand vividly how that at one moment a person is alive, the next he is gone. Yet his physical body is still there. It is the 'life principle' that has departed; only the body remains.

The soul distinguishes a living body from a dead one, but the spirit distinguishes a man from an animal. The spirit of man makes it possible for him to have communion, or fellowship, with God. Also, the soul is the seat of the emotions or passions, while the term 'spirit' includes our ability to know and reason. As you read through your Bible, you will find that this is how the Bible speaks of man, and it is something, which we must believe. We must realise too, that man has a responsibility towards God, his Maker, and it is his greatest duty to find out what God wants him to do, and then do it. The old question, 'What is the chief end of man?' is answered for us through the prophet Isaiah, where God says concerning man, **"Whom I have created for My glory, I have formed him, yes, I have made him"**. (**Isaiah 43: 7**) Thus the chief end of man is to glorify God. This is the 'Why?' of creation!

What was the position of man in creation?

It is true to say that Adam's place in the creation of God was both unique and wonderful. Notice **Genesis 1: 26**, Adam was given dominion over all the created beings on the earth. Eden must have been a breathtakingly beautiful place, and in it, Adam was master – what a privilege! In **Genesis 2** he was given the task of naming the animals. The woman, Eve, was then given to him as a companion and they reigned over creation together, as one. Remember it was God's intention that man should rule over His creation, and it is a great pity that we cannot end our study here – at a point where everything is perfect!

However, we must close by thinking briefly of the FALL of man.

In **Genesis 3**, we see Satan setting out to attack God's work at its very zenith – the creation of Man. Made in God's image and likeness; created to enjoy God as a companion and friend; given authority over all creation; yet man falls and is forced to leave God's presence. In our next study we shall see the real meaning of sin. Meanwhile, make sure you are clear on what we MUST believe about man and his place in creation.

Study 2

About Sin

Read

Genesis 3: 1-15;
Romans 3: 9-23; 5: 12-21

No one can read the Bible without realising that much attention is given to the subject of SIN, its cause and its cure. When we think of sin, we often think of it relative to crime and murder. But sin in the Bible refers to anything short of God's standard of absolute perfection. Sin is therefore falling short of this mark, and ALL men are guilty. Perhaps you sometimes try to imagine what the world would have been like had Adam not sinned. We view the world with all its crime and vice, immorality and corruption, anarchy and insurgence, and we are faced with the unpleasant reality of man's sin. Could all this have been avoided? Yes! For the evidence shows that, by his own foolish choice, man entered upon a course of sin. The greatest tragedy of the story lies in the fact that by sinning, Adam dragged down with him the whole human race that followed.

1. The Origin of Sin

The first recorded instance of sin took place in Heaven. The angel Lucifer became uplifted with pride so that his ambition was to be equal with God. (*Isaiah 14: 12-14*) For this sin of pride, he was cast out of Heaven, and became the one of whom the Bible elsewhere describes as the devil or Satan. (See for example *Revelation 20: 2*)

The first instance of sin on earth is described in the passage you have read in *Genesis 3*. It took place in the Garden of Eden where God had put Adam and Eve. They were in an absolutely perfect environment where the One who had created them had also supplied everything they could possibly need. There was only one restriction placed upon them. God said, "**But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat**" (*Genesis 2: 16-17*) God even warned them explicitly of what would happen if they disobeyed. "**In the day that you eat the fruit, of it you shall surely die**". (*Genesis 2: 17*) So the issues were made very clear.

We can see, in the intrusion of the serpent into the Garden, Satan's subtle plan to try and thwart God's purposes by ruining His handiwork. Notice the serpent did not attack from the bottom, but from the top, - the peak of God's creation. Eve was unaware of the serpent's cunning and subtlety. And for his opening gambit Satan used a method which was successful then and has been repeatedly so, down through the course of history. He started his attack by casting doubt on the truth of God's Word. "**Has God indeed said?**" he queried. Then step-by-step he gained ground, implying that God was being other than benevolent, and appealing to Eve's pride. (*Genesis 3: 5*) Eve eventually succumbs; disobedience takes place and both she and Adam are soon hiding from God because of their sin. Thus they became sinners. The New Testament puts it so clearly in *Romans 5: 12*. "**Just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin; and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned**".

2. The Nature of Sin

It is important to have a clear understanding of what sin is, for so many people today try to overlook its seriousness. Many excuse the wrong they do on the ground of it being a commonly accepted practice. 'But everybody does it!' is their frequent reply. This should never be the Christian's attitude. It is hard sometimes to maintain standards of honesty, sincerity and purity when others around you view these as being 'positively Victorian' or old-fashioned inhibitions. Yet the Bible is very definite in its teaching on sin and its meaning. Men's standards may decline, but God's do not. The laws of our land may even legalise such things as divorce, abortion and homosexuality, but God's attitude to these things has not changed.

We have already stated that sin is 'falling short of the mark of

God's absolute perfection'. Sin is also spoken of in the Bible in the following ways:

- Breaking the law of God. (*Romans 5: 13*)
- Rebellion against God, or lawlessness. (*1 John 3: 4*)
- Moral impurity (*Psalms 32: 5*) In this connection evil thoughts are sinful, as well as evil deeds. (*Matthew 5: 28*)

So then, we can say that sin is not only disobedience to the Word of God, but also rebellion against the authority of God. Eve knew what God had said, she could quote it by heart, but she still disobeyed. Both she and Adam were fully conscious of the nature of their action - yet they still disobeyed. Psychologists and psychiatrists today try to tell us that young criminals are not really responsible for their actions. Their rebellion against the norms of society is due to the deprivations of their environment. While this might have an element of truth in it, yet *Genesis 3* shows us clearly that even given an environment which was perfect in every way, man still rebelled against authority. It is in his very nature to do so! God had given them everything that the heart could wish for. And who was in a better position to know what those needs and desires were, than the God who had made them! Yet when the first test came, they sold out to the enemy! Sin is breaking the law of God. It is disobedience to His Word, and rebellion against His authority.

3. The Results of Sin

As soon as Adam and Eve sinned they became conscious of the fact that they were naked. Then fear came upon them and they tried to hide from God. (*Genesis 3: 8-10*) The Lord quickly gets to the root of the problem in *Genesis 3: 13* and the serpent is cursed and transformed from a beautiful creature into its present loathsome, writhing form. (*verse 14*) The ground is cursed because of man's sin (*verses 17-18*), and indeed the whole of creation is brought under the effects of the curse. "**The wages of sin is death**". (*Romans 6: 23*) At the moment he sinned, Adam became spiritually dead. By this we mean that he became separated from God, and banished from God's presence. (*Genesis 3: 23-24*) But he also became subject to physical death, for although he did not die immediately, his body was doomed to die eventually. The existence of sin needs no proof as long as we have prisons, hospitals, and cemeteries. Tears, sickness, sorrow, pain and death, are just some of the results of sin.

Adam's sinful nature was passed on to the entire human race. Every child born to sinful parents is a sinner by birth. Sin is universal; "**All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God**". (*Romans 3: 23*) Because all men are sinners, they are all dead spiritually. "**...dead in trespasses and sins**". (*Ephesians 2: 1*) This is the effect of sin in our lives. During his lifetime man is the "**slave of sin**" (*John 8: 34*) which is just the way Satan wants it to be. And all men are doomed to die physically some day. (Read *Romans 5: 12-18* carefully at this point)

4. The Penalty of Sin.

"**The wages of sin is death**". (*Romans 6: 23*) God has pronounced death as the penalty for sin. We have already seen that this means spiritual death and physical death. This penalty must be paid, for God must punish sin.

As long as a man (or woman) lives in their sins, they are dead spiritually and are facing physical death. If they are still in their sins when they die, they are subject to eternal death. This means that they will be forever banished from God and will suffer for their sins in the lake of fire. This is the second death spoken of in *Revelation 20: 14*. How serious this is!

We have looked at four basic facts which the Bible teaches about sin, and which we MUST believe. Although we close our study here, we can say, 'Thank God it is not the end of the story!' **There is a 'Remedy for Sin'**, which God has provided so that men do not need to suffer everlasting punishment for their sins. We often refer to this remedy as 'God's Plan of Salvation' and in our next study we will be looking at this glorious subject. Meanwhile, as you think of sin and its serious effects in our lives, perhaps you will realise more fully why God commands repentance before we can find His blessing.

Study 3

About Salvation

Read

**John 3: 14-20; Acts 4: 1-12;
Romans 10: 8-15**

In studying what the Bible has to say about Salvation, we enter into the sphere of God's remedy for man's need. Of one thing we can be sure. The entrance of sin into the world did not take God by surprise, nor did He have to take any emergency measures to deal with the situation. God is all knowing. His plans are made well in advance of the event. The Bible makes this very clear. Nevertheless, when Adam sinned, God was very sorry. It grieved Him that man could so lightly and quickly disobey Him. But God had the remedy already prepared, as **Genesis 3: 15** clearly indicates. This promise beams out as a ray of hope in an otherwise dark scene. It is the earliest promise that God would provide a Redeemer that is recorded in the Bible. Notice that it is the woman's "**SEED**" or offspring that would bruise the "**Serpent's**" head. Satan's fate was sealed – although centuries would elapse before it was all fulfilled. Keep this truth in mind as you study, that God was prepared, with the remedy, even before man had sinned.

1. Salvation and its Necessity

The word 'salvation' simply means 'deliverance'. It is commonly used to describe the act by which a person is delivered from a danger that threatens him. We speak of a person being 'saved' from drowning, or from a burning building. The words "save", "Saviour" and "salvation" occur many times in the Bible and have exactly the same meaning, but in a spiritual sense. The necessity for God's salvation is due to two facts, which each person must face – the fact of man's sin and the fact of God's holiness.

From our study of the Scriptures in our last lesson, we learned that man is a sinner needing forgiveness, but is utterly helpless to save himself. We also know that God is absolutely holy and must punish sin. He will "**by no means clearing the guilty**". (**Exodus 34: 6 & 7**) He has revealed His hatred of sin, and His sentence against it is, "**The soul who sins shall die**". (**Ezekiel 18: 20**) He has said that all who die in their sins will be eternally banished from His presence. (**See John 8: 21, 24; Luke 16: 22-31; Revelation 20: 11-15**) The obvious conclusion is that since man is a sinner and God is holy, the sinner needs to be saved from the penalty of his sins. His cry should be that of the hardened Philippian jailer, "**What must I do to be saved?**" (**Acts 16: 30-31**) The message given to the jailer on that occasion, by Paul and Silas, is the same message to each person today, "**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved**". There is a wealth of truth in these words, but what do they mean?

2. Salvation and Faith

"**Believe...**" said Paul and Silas. But what must we believe? Belief in this sense is strongly linked with faith. **Ephesians 2: 8** tells us, "**By grace you have been saved, through faith ... not of works, lest anyone should boast**". Here is a truth that you will find runs consistently through the New Testament. It is that I can never, of myself, merit God's salvation. The good news of salvation is that in His wondrous grace, God has abundantly provided for our salvation through the person and work of His beloved Son. **John 3: 16-17** clearly teaches that Christ came into the world to be the Saviour of sinners. And it is through His death and resurrection that this salvation has been provided, to God's complete satisfaction.

As Christ willingly hung on the cross, He took upon Himself the full liability of our guilt and sin. He bore our sins in His own body, and died as a substitutionary sacrifice on behalf of sinners. All God's judgment against sin fell on Him, and all God's holy and righteous claims against the sinner were fully satisfied by Christ's death on our behalf. God showed His complete acceptance of this sacrifice by raising Christ from the dead and seating him at His own right hand. (**Read 1 Corinthians 15: 1-4; 2 Corinthians**

5: 21; 1 Peter 2: 24; Isaiah 53: 5; Romans 5: 6-9; Acts 17: 31)

This sacrifice CAN NEVER BE REPEATED. It is effective for all time and eternity, and nothing we can do, can add to what has already been done. It was a perfect sacrifice and with it God is perfectly satisfied.

3. Salvation and the Saviour

Paul and Silas presented the jailer with the PERSON in whom his belief (or faith) should be centred – the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter was also very clear on this point, in **Acts 4: 12**, "**nor is there salvation in any other**", he says. **Matthew 1: 21** also shows us that the very name Jesus means Saviour. May I just say here that we should be very careful how we use His Name, for it is very precious. Many folk in the world today use it lightly, despidngly, and in blasphemy. Make sure that as a Christian you show that you love His Name.

So why is it that "**there is no other name... by which we must be saved**"? It is because the Lord Jesus Christ is unique. When God provided a remedy so that man need not suffer everlasting punishment for his sins, He sent His own Son into the world. The Lord Jesus Christ was born of a virgin – Mary. He did not inherit Adam's sinful nature, for He was conceived of the Holy Spirit. He was the only sinless Man who ever lived, so that when He died on the cross of Calvary, He was not suffering the penalty for His own sins – for He had none! He was willingly suffering the penalty for the sins of the world, and thereby satisfied all God's holy demands. Since He has met the penalty for sin, God can now give eternal life to every person who confesses the fact that he or she is a sinner, and puts his faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as his own Lord and Saviour.

4. Salvation and Assurance

The testimony of Paul and Silas to the jailer was, "**Believe... and you will be saved**." How could they be so sure? How can any one know, for certain, that he or she is saved? We answer without hesitation; by the Word of God. God declares plainly that every soul who repents of his sin, believes His testimony concerning the person and work of Christ, and by a definite act of will accepts Jesus Christ as his own Saviour and Lord; is forgiven, saved, the possessor of eternal life and secure for ever. (**Read Acts 13: 38 & 39; 1 John 2: 12; Ephesians 2: 8; 1 John 5: 13; Romans 5: 1; Romans 8: 1; John 5: 24; John 10: 27-30**)

We have studied four great facts about Salvation. Think carefully about them and look up the relevant Scriptures. Our prayer is that each reader will know definitely, on the authority of the Word of God, that he or she is eternally saved! If you still do not have this assurance, share your difficulty with your Class leader, who will be glad to help.

Study 4

About Eternity

Read

**John 5: 19-24; 1 John 5: 11-21;
Revelation 1: 12-18**

For our last study we are going to look at one of the great Bible words. It is the concept of the eternal – 'that which lasts for ever'. It is difficult for us, who are so governed by the things of time, to understand or grasp that which is endless. We look at ourselves and immediately we think of that which had its beginnings at our birth, and will most probably terminate at our death. This is a common experience, where our boundaries are the cradle and the grave. Humanly speaking, everything that we do and have is bound up with time. Therefore, to imagine those things found within the 'Circle of Eternity' is quite difficult. But even though we cannot explain these concepts, there are certain facts about eternity and eternal things that we MUST believe.

God is Eternal. It is necessary to begin here. (**Psalms 90: 2**) says, "**From everlasting to everlasting You are God**" We can look back into eternity past; as far as our minds will allow us to go, and we find that God is there. Then we project our minds into the

future, as far as it is possible to reach, and He is still there. There is no break in His existence. The essential meaning of eternity is bound up in God and all that He is. I want you to keep this in mind, because it is important in understanding the true worth of those things that God has for us. It is because God is Who and What He is, that He can have such an influence upon our lives.

You will no doubt remember what we said in an earlier study about the Persons of the Trinity, that what we say of one is true of all. This means that **the Lord Jesus Christ is also eternal**. **John 1: 1** confirms this for us. We also know that **the Holy Spirit is eternal** and we looked at **Hebrews 9: 14** where it speaks of **“the eternal Spirit”** But this cannot be said about the existence of man. When we think about our lives in a physical sense, we realise only too well that they are limited. We are brought face to face with death – the end of earthly life – every day! Yet it is true to say that when God made man, He made him to live forever. **Genesis 2: 7** says that man became a living soul or being. It was the entrance of sin that brought death. Yet it is obvious that Adam did not end his earthly life at the point when he first sinned. He lived to be a great age before he died. We have already said in the first lesson that man is a tri-partite being. He is body, soul and spirit. Even though the body dies, the soul and spirit continue to exist. They will exist forever, for this earthly life is primarily a preparation for the next. We must therefore see what the Bible says about **ETERNAL LIFE**. For it is obvious that this is something we need to have, if our existence is going to be happy and satisfying. Let us look then, at some Scriptures, which speak of Eternal Life, and study them carefully.

John 3: 16 -This is one of the best-known verses in the Bible. It tells us of the love of God, in giving His Son to the world. More than this, it gives the reason for God's giving. It was in order that men should not perish, but have everlasting life. Without the love of God and the great gift of the Lord Jesus, everyone must perish. The word perish is a dark word, meaning God's judgment. The fact of death is so common that everyone understands it as the inevitable end of every man, woman and child. But the Bible adds **“After this the judgment”**. (**Hebrews 9: 27**) God has created every man and revealed to him His will. God will therefore hold every person, who does not have eternal life absolutely responsible for everything they have done, and they will be judged and sentenced to eternal banishment from His presence – a sobering thought!

John 5: 24 - What a wonderful verse this is! It tells us that eternal life becomes ours through hearing and believing the WORD of the Lord Jesus. Notice it is HAS everlasting life – not SHALL HAVE! Faith in the Lord Jesus makes it possible for us to enjoy eternal life NOW, although we shall enjoy it in all its fullness when we meet the Lord Jesus. So, Eternal Life is the result of God's love, and becomes ours through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

John 10: 27-30 - Look now at the security of this Eternal life. **“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish”** Adam forfeited the right to live, when he sinned. He lived on physically, but spiritually, he died. If we know this wonderful eternal life of which the Lord Jesus spoke, we can never lose it. We are doubly secure – in the hand of the Lord Jesus and in His Father's hand. What greater security could there be?

John 17: 3 - **“This is eternal LIFE”** Do you get the force of this? In comparison, no other life is life at all! When God gives us Eternal Life in the Lord Jesus, we begin to LIVE in the only true sense of the word. God brings His very nature into our lives. We learn what Eternity really means! We cannot close our study without looking at the meaning of Eternity, for those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. If, as the Bible teaches, man will exist forever, where will he be? Eternal life means Heaven for the Christian. It means the enjoyment of the presence of the Lord Jesus forever. Yet the same Bible that speaks about

Heaven, also speaks of HELL. Eternity for the unbeliever, means nothing less than Hell! It is spoken of as the “Lake of fire” in **Revelation 20: 14-15**. It is the outpouring of God's judgment upon all those who refuse the Lord Jesus as Saviour. A very sad reflection! So we end our lesson with this great thought – Heaven and Hell, both are for ETERNITY! – Which will it be for you?

Questions

Study 1 About Man

1. Why must we not approach the Bible as if it were a science textbook?
2. What do you understand by the statement, “Man was created in the image of God”?
3. How does man differ in essence from the animal kingdom?
4. What is man's responsibility toward God?
5. What was man's original position in creation?

Study 2 About Sin

1. a) What was the first instance of sin recorded in the Bible, and who was the originator of it?
b) Under what names does this originator of sin appear here and elsewhere in the Bible?
2. What method did Satan use in attacking God's creation?
3. Why should the Christian never take the ‘commonly accepted practice’ as his or her standard of living?
4. What do **Romans 6: 23** and **Romans 3: 23** tell us about the ‘Results of Sin’?
5. What do you understand by the phrase ‘Eternal Death’?

Study 3 About Salvation

1. What is the meaning of the word salvation when used in the Bible?
2. Why is salvation universally necessary?
3. Why was the Lord Jesus Christ sent into the world?
4. Why can we not add anything to what Christ has already done, to secure our salvation?
5. How can anyone know for sure that he or she is saved?

Study 4 About Eternity

1. Where do we look for the ‘essential meaning’ of Eternity?
2. What do we mean by the expression **“Eternal Life”**?
3. What do you understand by the word **“perish”** as used in **John 3: 16**?
4. How can we be sure that eternal life, once gained, can never be lost?
5. What is the main lesson you have learned from this series on ‘Things Christians Must Believe’?