

B1 - God

Study 1 - Basic Facts

BIBLE READING:

Acts 17: 16-34

KEY VERSE:

“You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.”

1 Thessalonians 1: 9

In the early days of Christianity, God chose a man called Paul for an important task. He was God’s messenger to all kinds of people from different countries and varied cultures. In his travels, he often met people who knew very little about God, and people who had all sorts of wrong ideas about Him. At times like that, Paul had to start right at the beginning. He had to tell them the basic facts about God.

Paul had arrived in Athens, which at one time had been a great centre of much learning. Philosophers still gathered in the marketplace to discuss the latest beliefs and ideas. Paul, who was always ready for a discussion about spiritual matters, spent time with these men. They were trying, in their own way, to make sense of life, death, good and evil. Some of these were called Epicureans; they looked for a way of life which would give them the feeling of peace and happiness. Others were called Stoics; they believed that accepting whatever fate directed for your life, was the answer. Neither could offer any hope for eternity (that is, the life to come) and Paul was genuinely distressed by what he saw. These people, like so many others, are described as **“having no hope and without God in this world.”** (*Ephesians 2: 12*)

Paul began to get a reputation. Some folks said, “He talks a lot but, what is he actually saying?” whereas others said, “He’s telling us to believe in some foreign gods.” But another group who heard him had a genuine interest and brought him to a special meeting-place. There, he could tell them clearly and without interruption, just what this new belief was all about.

Like all good teachers and preachers, Paul began by referring to something with which his listeners were familiar and could see at any time in their city - an altar with the inscription **‘TO THE UNKNOWN GOD’ (verse 23)** - He used this as the starting point in his declaration of the one true God.

Paul’s great argument included the following facts:-

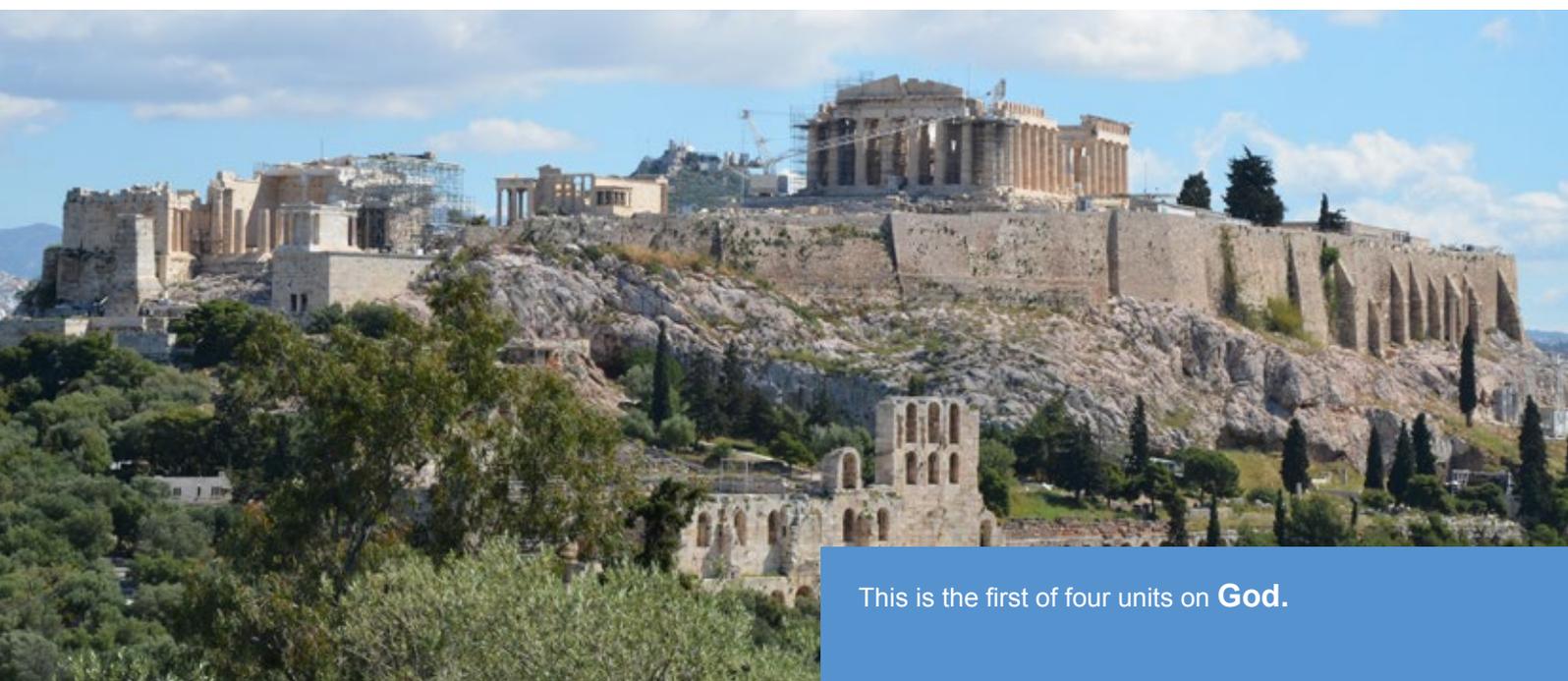
- a. **He is the God of the universe**, the One who made the world and everything that is known to us. (*verse 24*)
- b. **He is the God of all mankind**, the One who gives life and sustains it. (*verse 25*)
- c. **He is the God of all nations**, the One who decides when and where the nations on earth live. (*verse 26*)
- d. **He is the Judge of all men**, the One who has chosen the day when the whole world will be judged in righteousness. Therefore He is the One who now has the right to command everyone to repent. (*verses. 30, 31*)

In Athens, Paul had been deeply troubled to see the large number of idols - lifeless gods of gold, silver and stone. He appealed to the Athenians’ intelligence and urged them to turn away from these worthless man-made things in light of the fact that God has appointed a man to judge the world. He added that God had raised Him from the dead as proof of His divine appointment.

We are told about their responses to Paul’s preaching in **verses 32-34**, including the fact that some believed.

In conclusion to our study, we should note that Paul explains that God’s intention for all people is that they should seek Him and find Him. (*verse 27*) That includes us! Paul also says that God is not far from us. The challenge comes to each of us personally - have you found Him and are you getting to know Him?

Below: The Acropolis in Athens today. (Source: Wikipedia)



B1 - God

Study 2 - God of the Universe

BIBLE READING:

Genesis 1: 1-31

KEY VERSE:

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

Genesis 1: 1

In recent times, scientists have discovered an immense amount about our universe. Nothing has been too big or too small for their research and investigation. In doing so, they have discovered many of the principles and laws which govern how the universe works.

But how did it all begin? When did it all begin? Astronomers put forward the ‘the big bang theory’ which states that the universe started with a vast explosion of matter. However, take a moment to think about what you see on the earth. Observe the order, the variety, the detail, the beauty and how it is sustained each day and through the seasons. How does it come to be like that? We need to examine the truth as presented in the first chapters of the Bible.

1. “IN THE BEGINNING GOD...”

The book of Genesis makes it quite clear that there was a beginning and also who was there! In fact, the word ‘Genesis’ means ‘the beginning’ and it tells us about the beginning of everything - except God! Why? Because He had no beginning! God is without beginning, eternal in His being. (**Psalm 90: 2**)

2. “IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED...”

Scientists can investigate, speculate and produce theories, but only the Bible tells us with absolute certainty how the earth came into being. From the first chapter of Genesis we learn that it was God who created everything - by His Word. (**Psalm 33: 6, 9**) It is the work of six days. From start to finish we read simply, “**God said... God made... God created ... God blessed...**” The Bible does not discourage an interest in science. It teaches us that the source of all things is God, which is exactly what Paul told the Athenians, “**God who made the world and everything in it...**” (**Acts 17: 24**)

3. “IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH.”

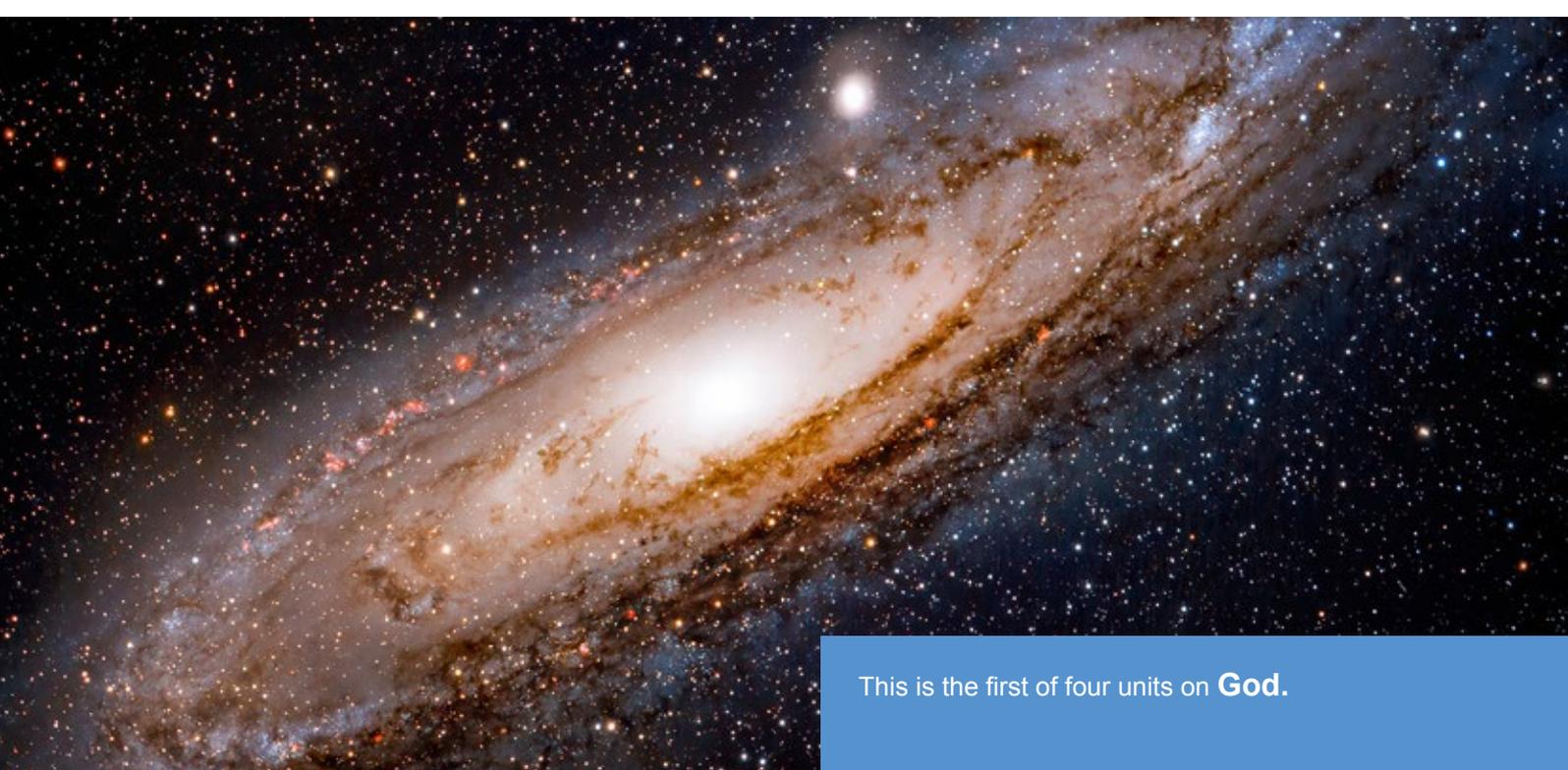
Although God created everything, **Genesis 1** concentrates on our world - Planet Earth. The sun, moon and stars are mentioned but only in connection with their effect on the earth. Our world is one of the planets going around a smallish sun in an incredibly vast universe. God was responsible for creating it and all who live in it and, more than that, God cares for His creation. (**Isaiah 40: 28-31**)

The first thing God made was light - the opposite of darkness. Then He separated His creation into distinct regions - land, sea, air; for God is a God of revelation and order, not ignorance and confusion. What else can we learn about Him? He is the giver of life - plant, animal and human - as Paul explained, “**He Himself gives to all mankind, life and breath and everything**”. (**Acts 17: 25**)

4. “GOD SAW EVERYTHING THAT HE HAD MADE, AND BEHOLD, IT WAS VERY GOOD.” (GENESIS 1: 31)

At each stage of His work and when He had finished, God declared His satisfaction with what He had made. He never had to say, ‘I made a mistake there. Perhaps I had better try that again.’ The Lord of Heaven and earth is the God of absolute power and wisdom. (**Revelation 4: 11**)

Below: The Andromeda Galaxy. (Source: Wikipedia)



Answer Sheet

B1 - God

Study 1 - Basic Facts

Name: _____ Return address on back of answer sheet

Address: _____

1. Answer these questions:

a) Describe how Paul felt when he arrived in Athens. _____

b) Why were the people who lived there without hope? _____

c) What was the name of the special meeting-place where Paul put the case for Christianity? _____

/3

2. Fill in the missing word from each sentence:

A woman who believed was called _____ . (verse 34)

God does not live in _____ .

God is the Lord of Heaven and _____ .

At first the Athenians thought that Paul's ideas were _____ . (verses 19, 20)

"God commands all people everywhere to _____"

Epicureans and Stoics were known as _____ .

A man who believed was called _____ . (verse 34)

/7

3. In what ways does the God about whom Paul spoke, differ from the gods which the Athenians worshipped?

/6

4. An idol is a person or thing in your life that takes the place of God.

a) Suggest three things which may be viewed as idols in the world today.

b) Why is it important to turn from these worthless things to the Living God?

/6

5. What were the three different responses to Paul's preaching at Athens?

/3

THINK: Think about what it says in the Key Verse. Have you turned to God as the Thessalonians did, putting Him first in your life? Have you responded to God as some of the people in Athens did by believing in Him?

TOTAL = /25

Answer Sheet

B1 - God

Study 2 - God of the Universe

1. **Genesis 1** is full of descriptions of God's activity. Beside each action below put the number of one verse where it is mentioned.

"God created" - Verse _____

"God said" - Verse _____

"God saw" - Verse _____

"God made" - Verse _____

"God blessed" - Verse _____

□ /5

2. **Read Psalm 33: 6-9.**

a) How did God make the heavens? _____

b) As we see God's immense power in creation, what attitude should we show towards our Creator?

□ /3

3. **Isaiah 40: 28-31** tells us that God cares for His creation.

a) How is God described in these verses? _____

b) In comparison with God we are weak. How can God's strength become real to us, in our lives today?

□ /5

4. **Revelation 4: 11** describes God being praised in Heaven.

a) What will He be praised for? _____

b) What will He receive? _____

□ /2

5. **Summarise what God made on each of the six days of Creation.**

DAY 1 _____ DAY 4 _____

DAY 2 _____ DAY 5 _____

DAY 3 _____ DAY 6 _____

□ /6

6. **How do we know that God was satisfied with all He had made?**

□ /2

7. **Genesis chapter 1, like every other part of the Bible, calls for our faith in what God has said.**

Read **Hebrews 11: 3** and complete two aspects of our faith in relation to creation.

a) The _____ was created by the _____.

b) What is _____ was made out of things that are not _____.

□ /2

THINK: Think about what the account of Creation in **Genesis chapter 1** teaches us about God. Spend some time praising Him for who He is.

TOTAL = □ /25

Answer Sheet

B1 - God

Study 3 - Lord of Heaven and Earth

1. Answer the following questions:

a) Give two examples from **Genesis 8: 22** of the recurring order of events which God, as Creator, has established in the earth.

b) According to God's promise, how long will this regularity last?

 /3

2. Read *Psalm 104: 10-34* again.

a) List two ways in which God provides for His creation. (**verses 10-18**)

b) Explain briefly how God regulates the days and seasons. (**verses 19-23**)

c) According to **verses 27 and 28**, how does God sustain life?

d) According to **verse 29**, what would happen if God did not sustain life?

e) What is the Psalmist's response to God, the Creator and Sustainer of Life? (**verses 31-34**)

 /10

3. Using your own words, briefly explain *Acts 17: 28*.

 /3

4. According to *Genesis 3: 17-19*, what effects did Adam's sin have on the earth?

 /3

5. Give two examples of how our greediness and carelessness may add to mankind's problems on the earth today.

 /2

6. What examples are given in the following verses of nature being brought into harmony when the Lord Jesus returns to earth to reign in:

a) *Isaiah 35: 1-2* _____

b) *Isaiah 65 :25* _____

 /4

THINK: God's majesty and handiwork are displayed in many ways. For you personally, what aspects of creation prompt you to worship the **Lord of Heaven and Earth**?

 TOTAL = /25

Answer Sheet

B1 - God

Study 4 - God, to whom we are accountable

1. **Nebuchadnezzar was a 'despot' or an 'autocrat'. This means that he assumed total and absolute authority over people's lives.**

a) Use **Daniel 5: 18-19** to show four ways in which he used his power. _____

b) What did Nebuchadnezzar say about his own power? (**Daniel 4: 30**) _____

c) What did Nebuchadnezzar say about God's power after he learned his lesson? (**Daniel 4: 37**) _____

/6

2. **Read Daniel 4: 19-27 again.**

a) Write a sentence to describe what Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. _____

b) What did the cutting down of the tree represent? _____

c) In what ways did God's judgment come upon Nebuchadnezzar? _____

d) What could he have done to avoid God's punishment overtaking him? _____

e) What has God done in order that we may not suffer the penalty of our disobedience? _____

/10

3. **Read Proverbs 16: 18. In what way does the experience of Nebuchadnezzar illustrate this verse?**

/2

4. **Draw lines to match the Bible references to the statements about accountability.**

Hebrews 4: 13

Matthew 12: 36

1 Samuel 16: 7

Romans 14: 10, 11

Everyone will bow before the Lord Jesus.

God looks at our hearts.

We are accountable for what we say.

God sees everything.

/4

5. **Explain as clearly as possible, what it means to be accountable to God.**

/3

THINK: Have I lived my life today as one who is accountable to God? Are there sins that I need to confess before Him?

Return your completed answer sheet to:

TOTAL = /25 UNIT TOTAL = /100

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B1 - God

Study 3 - Lord of Heaven and Earth

BIBLE READING:

Psalm 104: 1-35

KEY VERSE:

“He sends out His command to the earth.”

Psalm 147: 15

“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease.” According to **Genesis 8: 22**, this is what God, the Lord of Heaven and earth, has determined. He has made our world a place of order and regularity - day and night, summer and winter - all so necessary for the continuance of the human race. When night comes, no one doubts that the sun will rise next morning. When the sun’s rays begin to warm the earth in spring, we know that the trees and animals will respond with fresh life and energy.

The man who wrote **Psalm 104** was certainly in touch with nature and its Creator. He describes God in a graphic and vivid way. He pictures the Lord, clothed in the light He has created, riding on the clouds; wind and fire are His servants and the heavens are His home. No wonder he speaks of the splendour and majesty of his God and in the following verses he expands on the Lord’s creative powers. God, in His wisdom, has created a rich and varied world, (**verse 24**), a world of order and purpose, a world which He sustains by His power.

Consider the following verses from **Psalm 104** about our Creator, **“the Lord of heaven and earth”**.

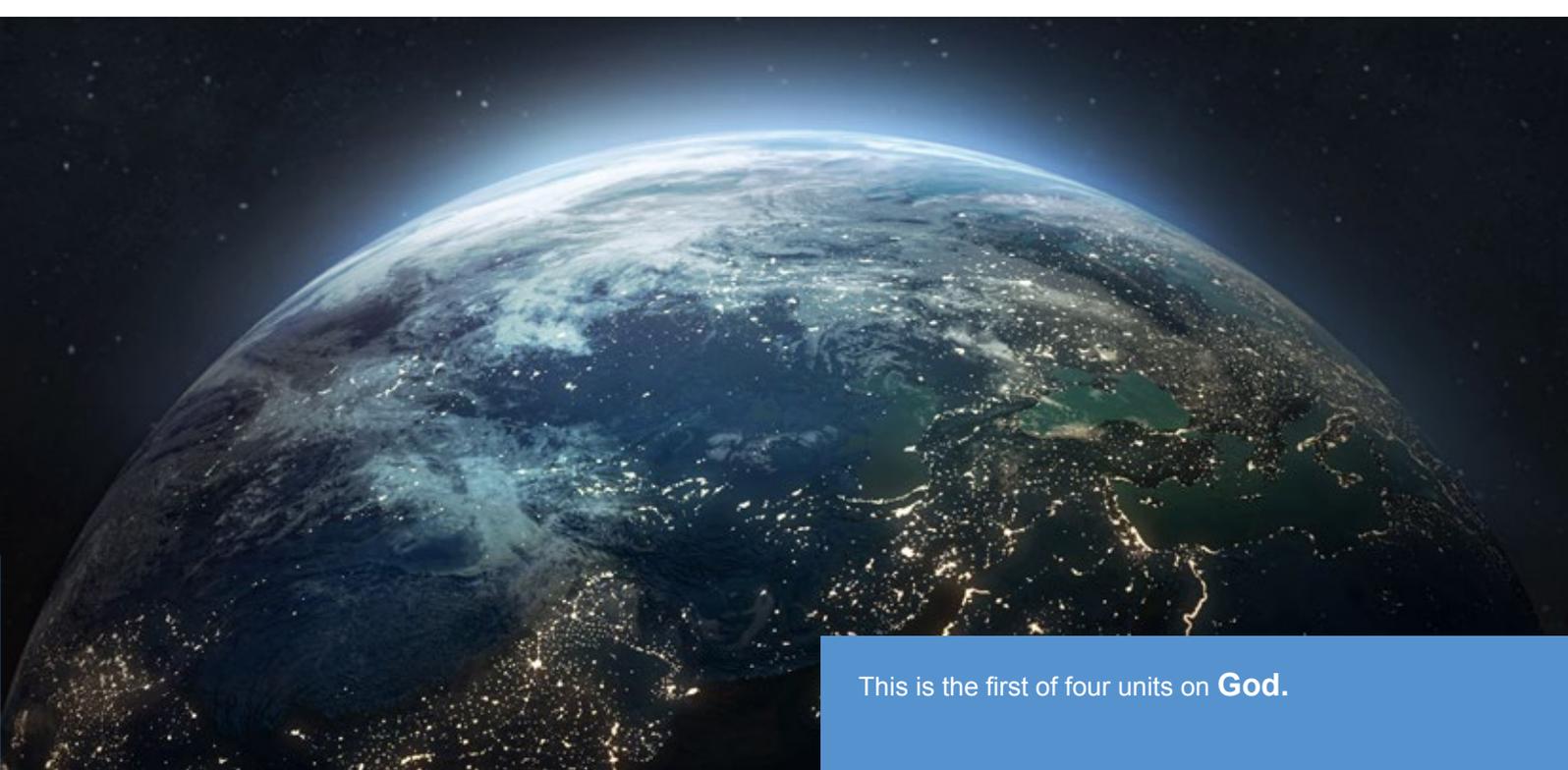
- a) He gave it a firm foundation. (**verse 5**)
- b) He sets limits for the seas. (**verses 6-9**)
- c) He provides for all His creation. (**verses 10-18**)
- d) He regulates days and the seasons. (**verses 19-23**)
- e) He supplies abundantly for all. (**verses 24-28**)
- f) He is in control of life and death. (**verses 29-30**)

You may recall from Study 1 what Paul said to the men of Athens. Speaking to them about God, he said, **“In Him we live and move and have our being.”** (**Acts 17: 28**) Note carefully that Paul speaks in the present tense (**“live”, “move”, “have”**) to emphasise that we are completely dependent on Him for everything. Since this is the case with us, we can be sure that ALL of God’s creation must be supported and upheld by Him, today and every day, as **Psalm 104** teaches us.

We must remember, however, that God is able to alter the course of nature, when He has special reasons for doing so. Here are two examples:-

1. **“The sun stood still...”** to allow Joshua’s army to defeat the Amorites. (**Joshua 10: 13**)
2. The sun stopped shining and **“there was darkness over the whole land...”** for three hours when the Lord Jesus was dying for our sins. (**Luke 23: 44-46**)

Lastly, it would be important to mention natural disasters such as earthquakes and droughts. People are often perplexed by these things. If God is in control, why, they ask, does He allow these things to happen? Natural disasters remind us that because of Adam’s sin and our own turning away from a loving God, the perfect creation is spoiled. It is now under the curse of God. (**Genesis 3: 17**) Human greed and carelessness may also be partly responsible for many of the world’s problems today. We know, however, that when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to the earth to reign, God’s wonderful creation will be brought into perfect harmony with its Creator’s will. (**Isaiah 35: 1-2 and 65: 25**)



B1 - God

Study 4 - God, to whom we are accountable

BIBLE READING:

Daniel 4: 4-5, 10-37

KEY VERSE:

“So then each of us will give account of himself to God.”

Romans 14: 12

God created everything and God still controls everything! This is not too hard to believe, if we think only of nature. For example, if we use powerful telescopes, we can track the movements of stars and planets in their set orbits, just as God has determined. Indeed, without scientific instruments, we can observe how seedtime and harvest recur, without fail, as God has promised! Sun and moon obey their Maker, but with the human race, it is a different story! We all have disobeyed Him, time and time again. Some people may wonder if, perhaps, God has lost control as far as mankind is concerned. Does He stand by, helplessly, while we spoil His world?

A PROUD KING (VERSES 22, 27)

The story of Nebuchadnezzar sheds some light on this problem. He was a very powerful king who had been successful in war and had established himself as the most despotic ruler on earth. (See **Daniel 5: 18-19**) He reckoned that he could do whatever he wished - even with people's lives - and was answerable to no one! Thus, he became a very arrogant and boastful man, full of His own importance.

A BAD DREAM (VERSES 10-17)

God did not allow him to go unchecked! The remarkable dream, about a magnificent tree being cut down in its prime, was God's way of warning him of the consequences of his

pride. The tree represented him! If he did not alter his self-centred way of life, God's judgment would overtake him!

GOOD ADVICE (VERSES 19-27)

In interpreting the dream, Daniel (or Belteshazzar, as Nebuchadnezzar called him) did not miss the opportunity to tell the king that he needed to change his ways. (verse 27) The right course for Nebuchadnezzar, and, indeed, for us all is to humble ourselves before God, repent of our sins, and seek His forgiveness. (**Acts 17: 30 and James 4: 10**)

A GREAT FALL (VERSES 28-33)

For a whole year, God's warning went unheeded. Nebuchadnezzar remained as conceited and as self-important as ever! (verse 29) But **“those who walk in pride He (God) is able to humble”** (verse 37), and so it happened that God struck him down. The great, boastful Nebuchadnezzar became mentally deranged, was rejected by society, and was reduced to living like an animal in a field! It was a most unusual stroke of God's judgment, and it is recorded in the Bible to teach us that even the most powerful people on earth are answerable to God for how they live.

A HARD LESSON (VERSES 28-33)

Nebuchadnezzar learned the hard way that God is supreme. It is only by Him that **“kings reign and rulers decree what is just”**. (**Proverbs 8: 15**) All are accountable to Him, and we disregard His laws only at tremendous cost to ourselves! Whatever our situation in life, we do well to regulate our lives by the clear teachings of God's Word, the Bible.

A HAPPY ENDING (VERSES 34-37)

Nebuchadnezzar was eventually restored, mentally and physically, and was able to resume his position as king. (verse 36) He was a changed man, in that he now glorified God and gave Him His rightful place in his life. As a result of what had happened to him, he acknowledged that God, NOT Nebuchadnezzar, is supreme! The once proud and arrogant king at the last gave praise and honour to **“the King of Heaven”!** (verse 37)

God has many ways of confronting us with the fact that we are accountable to Him for what we say and do. The best course in life is to be humble before Him, and to put our personal faith in the Saviour whom He has provided for us.

Below: Restored ruins of the South Palace of Nebuchadnezzar in ancient Babylon, Iraq.



This is the first of four units on **God**.

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