

Standing Firm in the Faith

(1 Peter 5:9)

A Course in Basic Biblical Beliefs

INTRODUCTION

This is a course on what the Bible teaches, including what it teaches about its own “inspiration” and authority. We are not seeking particularly to defend the Bible and its teaching. That will be done elsewhere.

The course will cover the following areas:

- A. The Nature of God (including the Trinity)
- B. Revelation and Scripture
- C. The Nature of Human Beings and Sin
- D. The Person and Work of Christ
- E. The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit
- F. Salvation (including conversion, justification, sanctification etc.)
- G. The Last Things (Second Coming etc.)

It will help if you answer the questions for the next session before you come to that session. This will make the course all the more helpful.

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Why do a course on Basic Biblical Beliefs?

God's nature is to communicate to human beings. It is an aspect of his love. If you love someone you communicate with them. Primarily he communicates through the Living Word – Jesus. But we would have no easily accessible record of what he has communicated through Jesus if we did not have the written word, the Bible.

God took the trouble to inspire the Apostles and others to provide a written account of the life and teaching of Jesus and the implications of his life and teaching.

In view of all this, we surely have a moral and spiritual obligation to read the Bible and to get to know it. The Bible, however, is not a book of systematic teaching. It is therefore helpful to do a systematic study such as this one to gain further knowledge and insight into what God has revealed of himself and his word.

The Bible makes it clear that knowing and believing biblical beliefs (“sound doctrine”) is important for Christians:

1. *It is important to our salvation*

Paul tells Timothy: “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” (1 Tim 4:16).

2. *It is a source of encouragement*

Paul says the Christian leader “must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.” (Titus 1:9).

3. *It teaches us how to live*

Paul writes that evil behaviour is contrary, not to good behaviour, but to “sound doctrine. This shows that what we believe will govern how we behave. So right beliefs are essential to good living. “We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine.” (1 Tim 1:9-11)

4. *It keeps us from false beliefs*

Paul wants Christians to: “reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” He envisages them: “speaking the truth in love” so they: “will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.” Then he contrasts that with them being: “infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.” (Eph 4:13-14).

He warns that: “The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.” (1 Tim 4:1). He adds: “For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.” (2 Tim 4:3-4).

Session 1: The Nature of God

A. God is personal

Many people believe that God is an impersonal force, but the Bible teaches otherwise.

1. What is the most important evidence that God is personal (John 14:9)?

The Bible often describes God in very human words which are not meant to be taken literally, but they do stress that God is personal. These words are called “anthropomorphisms” which literally means “in the form of man.”

2. List the parts of the human body God is said to have in the following verses:

Psalm 17:2

Psalm 18:6, 8, 9

Psalm 44:3

B. God is infinite

Infinite means boundless, endless, without limitation. This is what is meant when God is described as “Spirit” (John 4:24).

1. What effect does the presence of God have, therefore, on human beings (2 Cor 3:17)?

2. What do the following verses say about God’s greatness

Psalm 145:3

1 Kings 8:27

1 Kings 8:11

Acts 17:25

(Read Job 38, 39; 1 Chron 29:11; Psalm 29:3-9)

3. Here are three important aspects of God’s greatness

a. He is unlimited in place

Where does God live according to the following passages?

Isaiah 57:15

Jer 23:23-24

Psalm 139:7-10

God is present everywhere or “omnipresent” (omni = “all”). He is fully present everywhere. He may, of course, withdraw the sense and benefits of his presence – ultimately that is Hell.

b. He is unlimited in knowledge (“omniscient”)

What do the following verses say about God’s knowledge and understanding?

Job 37:16

Psalm 147:5

1 John 3:20

Heb 4:13

Psalm 139:1-4, 15-16

(See also Rom 11:33-35) NB. Matthew 6:8 says God know what we need before we ask him. So prayer is not telling God something of which he is ignorant. Nevertheless God wants us to pray in order to deepen our fellowship with him. This pleases him and creates trust in us as we see the answer. Hence God has often decided to limit himself to working only if we pray (James 4:2).

c. He is unlimited in power (“omnipotent”)

What do the following verses say about God’s power?

Luke 1:37

Jer 32:27

Dan 4:35

Psa 33:11

Isa 14:27

(see also Gen 18:14; Psa 93:1; 115:3; Mark 10:27)

What can God not do?

1 Sam 15:29

James 1:13

God will not contradict himself. He imposes limitations on himself and, of course, often uses ordinary means to work out his purposes.

4. What other aspect of God's greatness is mentioned in the following passages?

Psa 90:2

1 Tim 1:17

5. The following verses add another aspect of God's greatness, what is it?

Psa 102:27

Mal 3:6

James 1:17

6. The fact that God does not change means what, according to these verses?

Num 23:19

Heb 10:23

(see also Deut 7:9; 1 Kings 8:56; 1 Cor 1:9; 2 Tim 2:13)

Sometimes the Bible says God changes his mind but this is because his promise to act in blessing or judgment are often conditional on man's obedience or repentance. See Gen 6:6; Ex 32:14; Jer 18:7-10. God, however, foresees such changes and the success of his ultimate plan is not affected.

C. God is holy

This is shown in:

a. Purity

How do the following verses describe God's purity?

Matt 5:48

Deut 32:4

1 John 1:5

1 Tim 6:16

Heb 12:29

Habakkuk 1:13(1st sentence)

(See also Ex 15:11; Lev 19:2; Psa 18:30; Isa 6:3; 1 Pet 1:15-16)

b. Wrath

1. Against what will God's wrath be shown, according to the following passages?

John 3:36

Rom 1:18

Rom 2:8

Eph 5:6

Heb 10:26-31

2. How is God described in Ex 34:14?

3. What causes God to be jealous?

Ex 20:5

1 Cor 10:21-22

c. Judgement

How does God judge?

Gen 18:25

Psa 96:13

Deut 11:26-28

NB. “Wrath” and “jealousy” are human (anthropomorphic) words applied to God. With him they are not selfish, irrational passions. Rather they are the reactions of God’s holiness against sin. It is a holy reaction. Our wrath and jealousy is often anything but holy.

D. God is good

- 1. To whom is God good (Psalm 145:9)?**
- 2. What do 1 John 4:8,16 say about God?**
- 3. What do the following verses say about the love of God?**

Psa 36:5, 7

Jer 31:3

John 3:16

Rom 5:8

- 4. How do these verses describe God?**

Psa 86:15

Isa 40:11

Isa 42:3 (1st sentence)

Rom 2:4

2 Peter 3:9

- 5. What characteristic of God is mentioned in Eph 2:7-9 and Titus 2:11?**

- 6. What is said of God’s mercy in the following passages?**

Eph 2:4

Micah 7:18

Isa 55:7

7. Read Exodus 34:6-7

Grace is a quality in God which gives freely; its root meaning is “giving pleasure.” Grace is always given, never earned. It is a relationship word, not a “force”. Mercy is compassion shown to someone in need or helpless distress, or in debt and without claim to favourable treatment. The two words are similar but grace is concerned for man as guilty; mercy for man as miserable.

Session 2: God as Trinity

1. **What vital truth about God is taught in Deut 6:4 and repeated by Jesus for us in Mark 12:29?**

(See also Deut 4:33; 32:39; 2 Sam 7:22; 1 Chron 17:20; Psa 86:10; Isa 43:10; 44:6; 45:18; John 5:44; 17:3; Rom 3:30; 1 Cor 8:4, 6; Gal 3:20; Eph 4:6; 1 Tim 1:17; 2:5; James 2:19; Jude 25)

2. **But there are hints in the Old Testament that this unity is rather complex, e.g. the Hebrew word for God is “Elohim” which is plural. What other hints can you find in the following passages?**

Gen 1:26

Gen 11:6-7

Isa 6:8

Why do you think some people feel that Isa 6:3 suggests God is Trinity?

Also on various occasions in the Old Testament “the angel of the Lord” seems in one verse to be distinct from the Lord and in another to be the Lord himself, e.g. Gen 16:7, 13; Ex 3:2, 4

3. **The disciples strongly held to the teaching of the Old Testament outlined above but they began to realise that Jesus was divine (i.e. he was God). What evidence that Jesus is divine is there in the following passages?**

Isa 7:14

Isa 9:6

John 1:1

John 10:30

John 20:28-29

Col 2:9

Titus 2:13

Heb 1:8

2 Peter 1:1

Some other evidences that Jesus is divine:

- a. He was worshipped (John 5:23; Php 2:10-11; 2 Pet 3:18; Rev 1:5-16)
- b. He was prayed to (Acts 7:59-60)
- c. He lived with God before time began (John 8:58; 17:5)
- d. He is exalted to the right hand of God (Mark 16:19; Luke 22:69; Eph 1:20; Php 2:9)
- e. He is appointed judge of the world (Matt 25:31-46; John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Thess 1:7-10; 2 Tim 4)
- f. He is given titles which in the Old Testament apply to God (Isa 8:13-14 compare Rom 9:33; 1 Peter 2:7-8).
- g. In John 8:58 Jesus says "...before Abraham was born, I am!" the words "I am" are used of God in the Old Testament and come from the Hebrew word "Jehovah" or "Yahweh". The Jews recognised this claim and tried to stone Jesus (v. 59).
- h. Jesus may have been hinting at the same thing in his "I am" sayings (John 6:35, 41, 48; 8:12; 9:5; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 15:1, 5).

Jesus is obviously distinct from God the Father, e.g. he prays to the Father (Matt 11:25-26; Luke 6:12; 22:41-42; John 11:41-42; John 17).

So the disciples realized there were two divine persons: a fact only hinted at in the Old Testament.

But this is not all. What evidence is there in the following verses that the Holy Spirit is a distinct divine person?

John 14:16, 17, 26

John 15:26

Rom 8:26-27

Gal 4:6

Mark 3:29

The early church recognised that there were three divine persons but, of course, only one God

What evidence is there for the doctrine of the Trinity in the following passages?

Matt 28:19

Luke 3:22

John 14:16-17

John 15:26

2 Cor 13:14

Eph 2:18

2 Thess 2:13-14

Titus 3:4-6

1 Peter 1:2

Jude 20-21

NOTE:

1. There is only one God
2. In the experience of the early Christians and the teaching of Scripture, it is clear that there are three divine persons. They are not persons in the ordinary sense. They are not three separate individuals. Rather they are three forms in which the divine being and personality exists. That does not just mean they are three “disguises.” No, they are able to enter into personal relationships with each other and each possesses the whole divine nature. All of this is clearly beyond our logic and understanding. But isn’t this to be expected? Who would want a god whose nature could easily be understood? God is far greater than we can imagine.
3. The Bible teaches that Jesus is God’s son and is “begotten” or “generated” by God the Father (the literal meaning of Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5). This is an eternal relationship and the son is eternally “begotten” or “generated” by the Father. The Spirit “proceeds” from the Father and the Son (John 15:26; 16:7; Gal 4:6). So:
 - The Father eternally “begets” or “generates” the Son (i.e. the Father depends only on himself for his divinity).
 - The Son is eternally “begotten” or “generated” by the Father.
 - The Spirit is eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.
4. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are absolutely equal, but the Son and the Spirit voluntarily take a subordinate role to the Father (see John 14:28). The clearest example of this is, of course, that Jesus became man and took the form of a servant.

If you wish to read the most famous church statement about the Trinity – the Athanasian Creed - see [Appendix 1](#). In 220 AD church history Sabellius was excommunicated by the Pope for teaching that God was one person revealing himself in three modes or disguises. A hundred years later Arius was condemned by the church Council of Nicaea for teaching that the Son and the Spirit were lesser created beings (Jehovah’s Witnesses believe this). The man who opposed him was St Athanasius.

Session 3: God as Creator and Provider

It is important to remember that the first three chapters of Genesis are theology not science. They teach important principles, some of which we shall examine in the Session on [The Nature of Human Beings and Sin](#).

A. Creator

Genesis 1:1 shows that the universe is not eternal, as God is, but was created by God. So there is a clear distinction between God and the universe. This contrasts with Pantheism which does not recognise that distinction. Pantheism claims that everything that happens in the world, evil as well as good, is a direct act of god. Everything and everyone is a part of God. The world and God are one and the same. Pantheism glorifies nature as if it is divine and some people look to nature for spiritual fulfilment. It is found in Hinduism and eastern religions which are often popularised by groups in the west.

1. What truths does Acts 17:24-25 teach us about God?

(See also Ex 20:11; Psa 102:25; Isa 40:28; 45:12; 48:13; Acts 14:15)

2. In Acts 4:24 when the disciples were facing persecution and needed encouragement, how did they refer to God?

3. Who was the one through whom God created everything according to John 1:1-3?

(See also 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2)

4. Who is also involved in creation according to Job 33:4; Psa. 104:30; Gen 1:2?

5. How did God initiate the creation of everything according to Psa. 33:6; Heb 11:3?

6. What is the climax of God's creation (Gen 1:26; Acts 17:26-27)?

7. What encouragement is there in Isa 51:12-13?

8. What follows from God being the creator of the world (Psa. 24:1-2; 95:5)?

9. What is the Earth according to Acts 7:49?

10. What is the purpose of creation according to Psa. 19:1-4?

11. For whom were all things created (Col 1:15-16)?

12. What is clear from creation (Rom 1:20)?

13. But how have human beings reacted to this (Rom 1:20-25)?

In Matt 4:8-9 Satan speaks as the god of this world to Jesus. He claims to own the world and offers it to Jesus if Jesus will worship him. This shows Satan's desire to usurp God's position and praise as Creator.

14. What is the Creator's plan?

2 Cor. 5:17

Rom 8:19-22

Re 21:1

B. Creator

“Deism” is a theory about God which was very popular in the 17th and 18th centuries. It pictured the universe as a complicated machine created and started by God, but then left to run automatically. It sees god as watching it run but not getting involved with it. So no-one meets God until after death. He is very remote. The incarnation and the cross are therefore of no significance. Miracles are rejected. However Scripture teaches that although God is the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, he is also intimately involved with creation, working out his purposes through it.

a. God preserves creation

- 1. How does God sustain all things (Heb 1:3)?**
- 2. What does Col 1:17 say about everything in creation?**
- 3. What does Acts 17:28 (1st sentence) say about human beings?**
- 4. Who does God provide for (Matt 5:45 last sentence)?**
- 5. What does God provide according to Matt 6:25-34?**

6. How do the following verses describe God's protection?

Deut. 33:27

Psa. 34:7 (Read 2 Kings 6:15-17)

Psa. 91:1

Psa. 121

Psa. 125:2

Read Isa 41:10-14; 46:4; Rom 8:31-39; 2 Tim 4:18.

b. God co-operates with creation

God has created natural forces and the human will. They are independent and are not operated by God as if they were puppets with God pulling the strings. However God works through these forces and through human decisions. He even brings good out of evil e.g. in Isa 44:28; 45:1, 13 God calls a pagan king (Cyrus) his "shepherd" and "anointed" who through his military conquests would serve God's purposes. Acts 17:28 tells us that in God "we live and move and have our being." This is true even when we do wrong. Without God we would cease to exist. God in his mercy and patience preserves our life and being even when we are sinning. Without him we could do nothing – good or bad.

In Philippians 2:12-13 Paul tells us to work out our own salvation because God is at work in us both to will and to act according to his good purpose. This shows the intimate relationship between God working in and through us and our own free decisions and actions.

How does Jesus illustrate God's intimate involvement in even the apparently irrelevant details of life (Matt. 10:29-31)?

c. God rules his creation

1. How did God overrule evil according to Gen. 50:20?

(Compare Gen 37:28; 41:57; 42:1-2; 47:11-12 and the story of the Exodus, so vital for God's plan for Israel).

2. What does Dan 4:34-35 say about God's rule?

One of the ways God provides and cares for human beings is through miracles. A miracle is "a mighty work, beyond the normal functioning of human beings (or nature) which evokes wonder and in which we hear God speaking of his personal involvement and care for people." Sometimes God uses natural causes and the miracle is one of timing. At other times there are no such natural causes. Either way it is a miracle. Some say miracles are impossible because they would break the 'laws of nature'. But these 'laws' are simply a

description of the way God has normally ordered the universe. He can change his ways if he wishes to but doesn't do it too often because he is a God of order and not confusion.

Session 4: Revelation and Scripture

1. *God's nature is to reveal himself*

1. How does God reveal himself in the following verses?

Ex 3:2

Ex 33:9

1 Kings 19:12-13

Deut 5:4

Num 12:6

Heb 1:1

2. What does God do before he works according to Amos 3:7?
3. How do we get to know God's mysteries (1 Cor 2:9-10; Eph 1:9)

2. *Christ came to reveal God*

- a. How has God spoken to us according to Heb 1:2-3?
- b. What is the significance of the name given to Jesus in John 1:1, 14?
- c. What does Jesus claim concerning himself in John 12:45, 14:7-9?
- d. What does Paul say of Jesus in Col 2:9?

3. *The Holy Spirit reveals Christ and therefore God*

See John 15:26

What other way does God reveal himself (Psalm 19:1-4; Rom 1:19-20)

Because it is the nature of God to reveal himself in many and various ways, and ultimately through his Son, we can reasonably expect an authoritative, written account of God's revelation. This is what the Bible is. We now look at what the Bible says about itself.

4. *The Bible's teaching about itself*

1. How was the Bible produced according to the following passages?

2 Tim 3:16

2 Peter 1:21

1 Peter 1:10-12 shows that the prophets did not always understand the message they were conveying concerning Christ. Note, though, that the writers were no mere "human typewriters". Sometimes they gathered material from other sources, e.g. Luke 1:1-4. Sometimes they described their own experiences, e.g. many Psalms. Also the writers clearly have different styles. The Holy Spirit, without obliterating the writer's personality, so overruled their weakness, sin and ignorance that what they wrote about "things necessary to salvation" (Article 6 of the 39 Articles of the Church of England) is reliable, true and authoritative. It is the Word of God.

2. How does Jesus regard the Old Testament in Matthew 5:17-19?

Jesus credits to God words which were spoken by men in the Old Testament, e.g. Matt 19:4-5 credits God with words spoken by the author of Genesis 2:24. Mark 12:36 says David spoke Psalm 110:1 by the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:6 says that the Holy Spirit spoke Psalm 69:25 and 109:8 through the mouth of David.

3. What does Paul claim for himself in 1 Cor 2:13 and 1 Thess 2:13?

2 Peter 3:15-16 puts Paul's writings on a level with Scripture.

4. What solemn warning is given in Revelation 22:18-19?

The church was guided by the Holy Spirit to recognise which books already had divine authority. It did not give the books their authority. So the church has no right to change or disobey scripture. The church does not preside over scripture, scripture presides over the church.

5. Attitudes to the Bible

Some Christians believe that the Bible is “infallible” and “inerrant,” in other words utterly true and without any error, even in matters of, say, historical detail. They believe that if there are any errors at all, even in matters of historical detail, that undermines the authority of the whole Bible. Some of these Christians allow that errors may have crept into the text through scribes making mistakes in copying or manuscripts being damaged. They believe that the original manuscripts were inerrant.

Other Christians believe that this is a fearful and unnecessary approach. They think it is important to remember the purpose for which the Bible was written. They believe the Bible is utterly reliable and authoritative in “things necessary to salvation” but may have relatively unimportant errors in history etc., which is not “necessary to salvation.” They point out:

- a. The Bible is a book about salvation, not about general history or science, so God overruled what it records or teaches which is necessary to salvation, to ensure it is reliable and authoritative. It doesn't matter whether Jesus met one or was it two demon possessed men “in the region of the Gadarenes” (Matt 8:28 says two, Mark 5:2 and Luke 8:27 say one). The Bible is utterly reliable for its purpose: to reveal God through Christ and convey the way of salvation to humanity.
- b. The Bible does not claim it is free from error in every matter or detail.

There are people, including some Christians who dismiss the Bible as “a lot of old myths” and as “full of contradictions.” This is an emotional position based on ignorance and prejudice. Basically, many of these people don't want the Bible to be authoritative so that they don't have to take it seriously.

The Bible is a library of 66 books written over a period of 1600 years (60 generations) by over 40 authors from every walk of life including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen and scholars. It was written in three languages: Hebrew Aramaic and Greek. It covers hundreds of controversial subjects and yet has a harmony and continuity from Genesis to Revelation.

We have 13,000 ancient manuscripts (written copies) of portions of the New Testament written shortly after the time of the original documents. This compares with a maximum of 200 manuscripts for many other ancient books – and most have less than 20 surviving ancient copies. The Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah written in 125BC was discovered fairly recently and proved our modern versions are very accurate.

There has been a fair amount of confirmation of the Bible by archaeology.

Session 5: The nature of man

1. How does Gen 1:26 speak of the dignity of human beings?

2. What does Psa. 8:5 add to this?

The image or likeness of God is primarily the human capacity to relate to God and so to be responsible to God. It includes his spiritual, rational, moral and immortal being and originally included a true knowledge of God, true righteousness and holiness.

Gen 2:7 teaches that human beings were made from the dust of the ground and God breathed into them the breath of life, making them living beings.

3. What three aspects of man are mentioned in 1 Thess 5:23

Be careful not to make too great a distinction between these various aspects of human beings. For example the dead are called 'spirits' (1 Peter 3:19, Heb 12:23) and 'souls' (Rev 6:9; 20:4); death is giving up the 'soul' (Gen 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21) or the 'spirit' (Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59).

The soul is the self of the person, i.e. the whole personality which thinks, feels and wills.

The spirit is that part of our personality which links with God's Spirit. God's Spirit re-creates man's spirit. The body, in the Bible, means all we are as human beings – physically and spiritually. It includes the flesh. The heart, in the Bible, is the centre of human nature, similar to our use of the word mind today.

4. What implication of humans being created in God's image is stated in Gen 9:6?

For further details, including the distinction between murder and manslaughter see Ex 20:13, 21:12-14; Lev 24:17; Num 35:6-34; Deut 19:11-13. Humans being made in the image of God rules out abortion, except in exceptional circumstances e.g. to save the mother's life); infanticide (allowing or encouraging viable handicapped babies to die); euthanasia ("mercy killing"); violence (ex 21:15, 18-19, 22-32); kidnapping (ex 21:16; Judges 21:21).

5. What other implication of humans being made in God's image is in James 3:9?

6. Showing respect to a person because he is in the image of God is the basis of much of the Law. How do we fulfil the Law (Rom 13:8-9)?

7. What is said about love in Rom 13:10 (1st sentence)?

It is clear that respect for human life, human welfare, human property, etc, is based on human beings having been created in the image of God. So when a society rejects or neglects God, sooner or later human life is cheapened, human welfare neglected and human property not respected.

8. What responsibility did God give to human beings (Psa. 8:6 cf. Gen 1:26, 28)?

Science, technology and economics are all part of human rule and are good in principle. However the environment belongs to God, and human beings should care for it (Gen 2:15) not ruthlessly exploit it and damage it. Human beings are God's co-workers and should be creative. Art, music, writing and other aspects of culture are all meant to be part of human rule. Art, like worship, should draw attention to what is worthy and it should draw forth praise to God (even though it may not be specifically 'religious.').

9. What does Gen 1:27 say about women (see also Gen 5:1-2)?

10. What does Gal 3:28 add about women?

The Bible teaches the essential equality of man and woman. All forms of sexual exploitation of women, e.g. by pornography, are therefore condemned

11. What else does Gal 3:28 say?

12. What did God teach Peter in Acts 10:28?

13. What is forbidden in James 2:1-9?

The New Testament is against discrimination on the basis of sex, race or social status. It is true that slavery is not condemned the seeds of its downfall are in the New Testament. The distinction between slave and free is abolished (Gal 3:28) and Paul's letter to Philemon undermines the institution of slavery. Some Christians believe in an inequality between man and women. Others do not believe the New Testament supports this. See [Women's Ministry](#).

14. What does God say about man in Gen 2:18 (1st sentence)?

Human beings are created to be in relationship with God and with other people. Personality is only complete when an individual is in a community where there is mutual love, respect and care.

15. Why did God create woman according to Gen 2:18)?

The incompleteness of man without woman is underlined by the story of woman being created out of man (Gen 2:21-23). Then Gen 2:24-25 teaches that the commitment of a man leaving his parental home (marriage) preceded his being united with a woman sexually (see [Cohabitation and Marriage](#)); that sexual union is God's usual plan for human beings and that there is no shame in sex. God does, of course, call some to a single life and gives them special grace for that (Matt 19:10-12; 1 Cor. 7:8, 26-28, 32-35).

16. What command does God give to human beings in Gen 9:1, 7 (also Gen 1:28)?

The Bible teaches that parenthood is a very high and honourable calling. This contrast with the modern tendency to devalue it (especially the role of a mother) and modern trends which undermine family life.

17. What work did God give to man (Gen 2:15; 1:29-30)?

Human beings are to care for the earth and to make right use of its food resources. There is enough food for everyone in the world but unjust distribution causes malnutrition and starvation. This injustice conflicts with the fundamental biblical teaching that all human beings are created in the image of God.

God ordained that human beings should have a regular weekly day of rest (Gen 2:20) for their health and welfare. This contrasts with the modern ceaseless, stressful activity which leaves no room for reflection and rest.

Session 6: The nature of sin

Sin is one of those words which has been devalued today. It tends to be used in a light-hearted way about, for example, eating a calorie-laden cake. It is hardly popular to say that we are sinners but that is because we have soft-pedalled the holiness and judgment of God and the seriousness of our failings and bad behaviour before him.

A. The definition of sin

What is sin according to the following passages?

1 John 3:4

Rom 14:23

James 4:17

Lev 4:27

The Bible uses different words for sin with slightly different meanings: missing the mark, departing from the correct path, wilful rebellion, unfaithfulness, perversion. *The essential point about sin is that it is always against God.* David committed adultery with Bathsheba and arranged her husband's death but, serious though his offence against these people was, he realised that it was God he had really sinned against. Read Psalm 51:4. Paul says: "The sinful mind is hostile to God." (Rom 8:7). Until a person realises that his sin is against God, offending him (as well as human beings) he cannot reach true repentance. It should be noted that sin can be committed in thought only. Temptation is not sin but gloating over temptation and enjoying it is sinful.

B. The extent of sin

1. What different aspects of sin can you see in Genesis 3?

Verse 1

Verse 4

Verse 5

Verse 6

2. What do the following verses say about the effect of Adam's sin?

Rom 5:19 (1st half)

Rom 5:12

Rom 5:18 (1st half)

1 Cor 15:22 (1st half)

The sin of Adam is called the Fall of man. The story of the Fall teaches that since Adam “fell” every human being has inherited an inclination to sin and a desire to please self rather than God. Human beings are sinful by nature.

3. What does David say about himself in Psalm 51:5?

4. What do the following passages say about mankind?

Gen 8:21

Jer 17:9

Rom 7:18

Rom 8:6-8

1 Cor 2:14

Gal 5:17

Eph 2:1-3

A theological description often used about human beings is that they are “totally depraved.” That does not mean they are as bad as they can be but it means sin has corrupted every part of their nature – mind, emotions, will, relationships, conscience, etc. A man commits *sins* because of *sin* in his heart (Mark 7:20-23).

C. The results of sin

1. What results of sin are mentioned in the following verses?

Gen 3:19 (2nd half) (see also Rom 5:12)

Gen 3:23 (1st half) (see also Isa 59:2)

Gen 3:10

Gen 3:17-18

John 8:34 (see also Gal 3:22)

1 John 5:19

1 Cor. 11:27, 30

Rom 1:18

2 Thess 1:7-9

Gen 3:16 teaches that the Fall affected the relationship between the sexes, specifying greater pain in childbirth and the husband dominating his wife. Sexual exploitation and economic oppression of women follow from this. The story of Cain killing his brother Abel in Gen 4 shows how other human relationships were spoilt through the Fall. Social, political and economic oppression, slavery and war are among the results.

The “unforgivable sin” is probably a consistent and conscious quenching of the Holy Spirit’s prompting, and speaking against his work (Matt 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-30). One thing is clear – if a person is truly repentant (sorry and turning away from his sin) he will be forgiven (John 6:37; 1 John 1:9). So if anyone is afraid that he may have committed the unforgivable sin, he has only to repent of the sin he is worried about, and in so doing it is clear it was not unforgivable. If he had committed the unforgivable sin he wouldn’t want to repent. Anyone still troubled by such fears should seek help from a mature Christian counsellor.

2. Can an unbeliever please God (Heb 11:6)?

This is really speaking about pleasing God in the sense of being accepted by God for salvation – justification by faith. This is not possible without faith.¹

Session 7: The person of Christ

Read again your notes on The Trinity (Question 3 pages 10-11) which give clear statements from Scripture that Jesus is divine, i.e. fully God. But here is further evidence:

1. What do the following verses say about the origins of Jesus?

Micah 5:2

John 8:58

John 17:5, 24

2. What names does Jesus use of himself in Rev 22:13?

3. How does Hebrews 1:3 (1st sentence) describe Jesus?

4. What titles are given to Jesus in the following passages?

Acts 2:36

Rom 10:9

Rom 14:9

1 Cor 2:8

Rev 17:14

Rev 19:16

5. What does the Holy Spirit inspire Christians to say (1 Cor. 12:13)?

6. What does Jesus claim in the following passages?

Matt 28:18

Matt 11:27

7. What do the following verses say about Christ's rule?

Isaiah 9:6-7

Dan 7:13-14

Zech 9:9-10

8. Over what does Christ rule?

Matt 8:27

Mark 1:27

Eph 1:20-22

Phil 2:9-11

Col 1:18

9. What responsibility has God committed to Christ according to the following:

John 5:22, 27

Matt 25:31-46

Acts 10:42

Acts 17:31

2 Cor 5:10

2 Thess 1:7-10

2 Tim 4:1

However, the Son of God also had a full and perfectly normal human nature.

1. What warning does 1 John 4:2-3 give?

(See also John 1:14; Gal 4:4).

2. What does the risen Jesus say to his disciples in Luke 24:39?

There was nothing at all abnormal about Jesus' birth. It was the fact that Mary was a virgin when she conceived that was a miracle. From then on Jesus' development was quiet normal.

3. What normal human experiences does Jesus have in the following passages?

Luke 2:40

Luke 4:2 (2nd sentence)

John 4:6

Luke 8:23 (1st sentence)

John 11:35

Luke 22:44

John 19:34

4. But what very important difference in Jesus is described in the following passages:

Heb 4:15 (2nd half)

1 Peter 2:22

1 John 3:5 (2nd sentence)

(See also John 8:46; 2 Cor 5:21)

It is important to note that:

- a. The Son of God had to take human nature in order to die for us.

- b. Jesus had to be divine for his death to be equivalent to all of us dying and being fully punished for our sins in Hell. He was our Substitute.
- c. Jesus had to be perfect in order to be acceptable to God as a sacrifice, otherwise the cross would not have been acceptable to God as a sufficient sacrifice for our sins. He had no sin of his own but he bore our sin and its punishment.
- d. So Jesus is two natures united in one person. The original divine person did not change into a human person. Rather he took a human nature in addition to his divine nature. He is divine-human; the God-man.
- e. People in history and today have held seriously unbalanced views of Jesus. Some deny he is divine (Unitarians and some modern scholars); others regard him as not quite God – a sort of demi-god (Jehovah's Witnesses); others deny he is fully human or claim his two natures are not united in one person or that they are, so to speak, 'blurred' together rather than distinct.

Session 8: Christ's Death, Burial and Descent in Hades

The death of Jesus is at the very heart of our faith so it is important that we understand as much as possible about it. This study attempts to give a basic outline of the New Testament teaching.

A. Christ's death

1. **What is sin according to 1 John 3:4?**

2. **What is the consequence of sin according to the following verses:**

Rom 1:18

Rom 2:8

NB. God's wrath is not bad temper but a holy reaction against sin.

3. **What does the death of Christ show according to Romans 5:8?**

4. **What is Jesus according to the following verses:**

Rom 3:25

"Blood" means the physical death of Jesus. "Atonement" refers to man being made "at one" with God or reconciled to God.

1 John 2:2

"Atoning sacrifice" is literally "propitiation" which means a sacrifice which removes God's wrath as well as cleansing man from sin.

5. **What happens to Jesus on the cross according to the following:**

Isa 53:4-6

1 Peter 2:24

There was no lack of love between God the Father and God the Son at the cross even though Jesus bore our sin and its punishment. See John 10:17.

6. What did the cross achieve according to the following:

Rom 5:10-11

Rom 5:18-19

2 Cor 5:18-19

Eph 2:12-13

Col 1:19-22

7. What is the result of sin according to the following passages?

John 8:34

Rom 6:16

8. Who claims authority over the world in Luke 4:6?

9. From what power does Christ set people free (Acts 26:18)?

10. How do the following passages describe Jesus' death?

Mark 10:45

“For many” in the Greek is “in exchange for many” i.e. Jesus is our Substitute.

Gal 3:13

Eph 1:7

See also 1 Cor 6:20; Gal 4:4-5.

11. According to Hebrews 9:15:

a. What is Christ?

b. What is promised?

c. Why did he die?

A covenant is a solemn, legal agreement. In the Old Testament times a covenant was often “sealed” by the shedding the blood of an animal sacrifice. A blood-brotherhood is a similar idea.

12. How does the New Covenant differ from the old, and why (Heb 8:6)?

13. What sort of ministry does Christ have (Heb 7:24)?

14. What sort of High Priest is he?

Heb 7:26

Heb 4:15

15. From Heb 7:27:

a. What sacrifice did Jesus offer? (See also Eph 5:2)

b. How often does he offer it?

16. What does Heb 9:22 (2nd half) say?

17. What does Jesus say during the Last Supper (Communion) Matt 26:28?

18. What purifies us according to 1 John 1:7?

Jesus died:

- To show us God’s love.
- To be our Substitute, bearing our sin and its punishment.
- To reconcile us (make us at one – atonement) with God.
- To remove God’s wrath from us (propitiation).
- To pay the ransom price of his blood so redeeming us from slavery to sin, death and Satan.
- To be our eternal, heavenly, sympathetic High Priest, who offered himself as a sufficient sacrifice, once for all on the cross.
- To bring us into a new, better, eternal covenant (solemn agreement) with God, sealed in his blood.
- To purify us from sin’s defilement.

B. Christ’s burial

Burial is part of the punishment on sin. Man returning to the ground – “dust to dust” – is part of the sentence pronounced on sinful humanity (Gen 3:17-19). But God did not allow Jesus’ body to decay as the Psalmist foretold (Psalm 16:10, cf. Acts 2:27, 31; 13:34-35).

C. Christ’s descent into Hell (Hades)

1 Peter 3:19-20 says that Jesus, through the Spirit “went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.” 1 Peter 4:6 says: “the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.” These verses have been taken to mean that Christ descended into Hell (or more accurately ‘Hades’, the place of departed spirits) and proclaimed the news of his triumphant death to them.

Acts 2:27, Rom 10:7 and Eph 4:9 have been understood in the same way but they only seem to be referring to Jesus’ earthly life and burial. John 5:25-29 speaks of the dead hearing Christ’s voice, but this seems to refer to the resurrection of the dead at the Second Coming of Christ.

It is difficult to be certain what 1 Peter 3:19-20 and 4:6 mean. There are four main views:

1. Some believe Christ simply proclaimed his victory to departed spirits and evil powers by way of confirming their condemnation.
2. Some believe Jesus proclaimed the Gospel to the dead who had not listened to Noah’s warnings before the Flood and that he gave them the opportunity to repent as they had, of course, died without hearing the message of the cross.
3. Some believe that Jesus simply proclaimed his triumphant death to the Old Testament saints and believers (Eph 4:8 is sometimes taken to be relevant here). Sometimes this view is linked with the resurrection of the Old Testament saints at the moment Jesus died (Matt 27:52-53).
4. Others interpret 1 Peter 3:19-20 in a very different way. They say it means that thousands of years before his death, Jesus preached to these people by the Holy Spirit who inspired Noah. This interpretation means that these verses are referring to an event long before the crucifixion, in fact back in the time of Noah. Similarly 1 Peter 4:6 could simply mean that Jesus preached during his lifetime to people who had since died.

It is true that Jesus went through Hell when he was forsaken by God on the cross. The interpretations of 1 Peter 3:19-20 in views 2. and 4. above do not seem very convincing. Certainly the Bible is clear there is now no second chance to repent after death. However 1 Peter 3:19-20 does seem to suggest that views 1 and 3 above may be correct. One cannot be dogmatic, though.

Session 9: The Resurrection and Ascension of Christ

A. The resurrection

Without the resurrection the cross is simply a sad and inspiring story. Jesus would have been simply a brave martyr. The resurrection is not just a happy ending to the crucifixion story: it is foundational to Christianity.

1. **What does Jesus call himself in John 11:25?**
2. **What was the message of the early church (acts 4:33; Rom 10:9)?**
3. **What would it mean for us if Jesus had not risen (1 Cor 15:14, 17)?**

1 Cor. 15:42-44 teaches that the resurrection body is imperishable, glorious, powerful and spiritual. The risen Christ could appear and disappear, and could pass through locked doors (John 20:26). However Thomas could touch his body (John 20:27). The risen Christ said he had flesh and bones (Luke 24:39) and was no ghost. He also ate a meal with his disciples (Luke 24:42-43). In Jesus human nature (body, soul, spirit) was brought to its full potential in beauty and strength.

4. **What does the resurrection prove according to the following passages?**

Rom 1:4

Rom 6:9

5. **What did the resurrection achieve according to 2 Tim 1:10?**

6. **What are the benefits of the resurrection for us?**

John 11:25

Rom 4:25

1 Peter 1:3

In raising Jesus from the dead God the Father declared that he accepted the cross as a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. The demands of God's law were fully satisfied. A

punishment equivalent to the condemnation in Hell for the whole human race had been borne by Jesus. In his resurrection:

- he brought about our justification (i.e. through the resurrection God showed he accepted the sufficiency of the cross, and therefore he accepts us penitent believing sinners because of the cross where Jesus bore our punishment.
- He brought about the assurance of our resurrection from the dead. Jesus is the “firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20), the “firstborn from among the dead” (Col 1:18; Rev 1:5). Others had been raised, e.g. Lazarus, only to die again later. Jesus was the first to be raised with a spiritual body, not subject to death any more.

B. The Ascension

The ascension of Christ is not a mere return home after all the important action. It has fundamental significance for Christians.

Read Luke 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-11.

1. Why did Jesus ascend?

Eph 4:10

He ascended in order to be present everywhere at once, i.e. omnipresent.

John 14:1-3

John 16:7-8

2. Where did Jesus ascend to (Eph 1:20-22; Heb 10:12; 1 Peter 3:22)?

3. What does Jesus do in heaven?

Heb 1:3

Eph 4:8, 11-12

Rom 8:34

Heb 9:24-25

Jesus took human nature to heaven for the first time, to the position of power and glory at the Father's right hand. There he intercedes for us by his very presence as the one who made a complete sacrifice (Heb 9:24-25), he governs the universe and rules and protects the church.

4. Where are we spiritually?

Eph 2:6

Col 3:1

Session 10: The Holy Spirit

1. What evidence is there in the following verses that the Holy Spirit is a Person?

John 14:16, 17, 26

John 15:26

John 16:7-15

Rom 8:26-27

It is clear from these verses that the Holy Spirit is a Person. It is in the light of them that we must understand the various references to the Holy Spirit which are neuter (impersonal). The Greek word for 'spirit' is neuter. The prophecies about the Baptism in the Spirit actually say "Baptism in Holy Spirit" without the definite article 'the' (Mark 1:8; Matt 3:11; Luke 3:16). Similarly John 20:22 says "receive Holy Spirit" and Heb 6:4 "shared in Holy Spirit." Also references to "pouring out the Spirit" (Acts 2:18 etc.) and being "filled with the Spirit" (Acts 2:4; Eph 5:18) seem to suggest the Holy Spirit is impersonal. These impersonal references should be understood as referring to the power of the Holy Spirit as experienced by human beings, rather than to the Holy Spirit himself as a person.

2. What evidences are there in the following verses that the Holy Spirit is divine?

Mark 3:29

Matt 12:28

1 Cor. 2:11

2 Peter 1:20-21

See also the Session on the Trinity page 11.

3. What does the Holy Spirit do according to the following verses?

Psalm 104:30

Isa 11:2

John 16:8-11

1 Cor. 2:9-14

See also John 14:26; 16:13.

2 Peter 1:20-21

Matt 1:18

John 3:5, 6, 8

Rom 8:9

Rom 8:16

1 Cor. 12:4-11

Gal 5:22-23

1 Cor. 12:13

Mark 13:11

Acts 1:8

See also Matt 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5.

Acts 8:29 (see also Acts 11:12; 16:6-7)

Rom 8:26

4. How did Jesus fulfil his ministry (Luke 4:14-21)?

The Fruit of the Spirit is:

Love: this means wanting the best for someone else and is primarily an act of the will, rather than simply an emotion.

Joy: a rejoicing in the Lord even amidst trials and persecutions (Habakkuk 3:17-18; Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 4:12-13).

- Peace:** a resting in Christ even in adverse circumstances. A peace that “transcends all understanding” (Phil 4:7). “That tranquillity of heart which derives from the all-pervading consciousness that our times are in the hands of God.” W Barclay).
- Patience:** even in trials (rev 12:12) and when provoked. It includes not being easily angered and not keeping a record of wrongs (! Cor. 13:5).
- Kindness:** a benevolent attitude.
- Goodness:** doing kind actions.
- Faithfulness:** reliable and honest.
- Gentleness:** This word has three main meanings in the New Testament: 1. Being submissive to God’s will (Matt 5:5; 11:29; 21:5); 2. Being teachable (James 1:21); 3. Being considerate (1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 10:1; Eph 4:2). It is not weakness but controlled strength.
- Self-control:** mastery of one’s desires and of love of pleasure.

The Gifts of the Spirit

There are many gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the New Testament. These are not natural gifts but supernatural. They include:

Leadership Gifts (Eph. 4:8-11): Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher.

Inspirational Gifts (*bringing God's Word or power to an individual or congregation*) 1 Cor. 12:7-11)

Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge, Gift of Faith, Gifts of Healing, Miracles, Prophecy, Distinguishing spirits, Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues,

Task gifts (*relating to roles in the church*): Helping, Administration, Serving, Teaching, Exhorting, Contributing, Leading/Presiding, Acts of mercy.

You will find definitions of these gifts in [Appendix 2](#).

Some Christians believe that some or all of these gifts are no longer available to the church. However the New Testament says they will only pass away: “when perfection comes ... [when] we shall see face to face. [and] know fully.” (1 Cor. 13:10-12). This will be when Jesus returns.

The General Work of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit works in a general way in the world, as well as in bringing people to know Christ and to serve him. This general work is sometimes called ‘common grace.’ It is shown in morality, law and order. The Holy Spirit works through conscience (Rom 2:14-15); human government (Rom 13:1-7) and public opinion. He also inspires genuine beauty and art. Such moral goodness does not make a person acceptable to God for salvation. Only faith in Christ can achieve this (Heb 11:6).

Session 11: Predestination, Election and Calling

In the Old Testament the word 'elect' means a deliberate selecting after considering alternatives. In the New Testament it means 'to choose out for oneself.' The word 'predestinate', used only of God in the New Testament, means 'appointing a situation for a person' or 'a person for a situation.'

1. What does Isaiah 45:9-12 say about God and about man's reaction to him?

2. What does Isaiah 14:27 say about God's purpose?

God is said to change his mind in e.g. Gen 6:5-6; Jer 18:8-10 but this is a very inadequate human description of God's action. God does, of course, know the end from the beginning and therefore knows ultimately what he is going to do.

3. In whom did God choose us (Eph 1:4)?

God sees us as "in Christ", i.e. 'covered' by Christ's sacrifice for us.

4. When did God choose us (Eph 1:4)?

5. For what purpose did God choose us?

Eph 1:4

Rom 8:29

2 Thess 2:13

6. What attitude did he have to us when he chose us (Eph 1:4)?

7. What did he predestine us to be (Eph 1:5)?

8. How did God predestine us according to Eph 1:11?

9. Who will come to Christ, believe and receive eternal life?

John 6:37, 44, 65

Acts 13:48

John 17:2

10. Why did God choose Israel?

Deut 7:6-8

Rom 11:5

God's choice is entirely according to grace (God's undeserved favour). Some people wrongly think that God sees we would respond in faith to him and then, because of that, he predestines or chooses us. No, the choice is entirely based on his grace. We all ultimately deserve Hell and God would be justified in rejecting all of us.

11. What sort of people does God choose (1 Cor 1:26-29)?

12. What is the first thing God does to those he has predestined (Rom 8:30)?

13. How does he do this (2 Thess 2:14)?

14. How should God's chosen people behave (Col 3:12-17)?

However, the question now arises, does God predestine some people to Hell so they don't have a chance? The answers to the following questions should help here:

1. How wide is God's love and to whom is the offer of eternal life (John 3:16; Acts 2:21)?

2. What is God's attitude to everyone and anyone?

2 Peter 3:9

1 Tim 2:4

3. Who was God aiming to save through Christ (John 3:17; 1:29; Titus 2:11)?

4. But how does God judge people

Psalm 81:11-14

Isa 65:12

Hos 9:17

Rom 1:21-26, 28

5. For whom is Hell prepared (Matt 25:41)?

The Bible teaches that God lovingly predestines, elects or chooses people to be saved and made like Christ. That does not depend on their goodness but on his grace. No-one can come to Christ unless the Father draws them to him. Nevertheless, God does not want anyone to perish but all to repent and be saved. He loves everyone and will not turn away anyone who comes to him. Whoever decides to come to Christ will be accepted. However those who persistently reject him may eventually be given over by God to that sinful attitude. So they are judged. We cannot logically work out how all these thoughts relate to each other, any more than we can logically understand God being three in one or Jesus being human and divine. We can simply accept the mystery taught by the New Testament. The co-operation of God's sovereignty and man's decision is shown in John 6:37 and Phil 2:12-13.ⁱⁱ

Session 12: Union with Christ, Regeneration and Conversion

Christianity is not simply about belief in facts, it is about relationship – relationship with Christ.

A. Union with Christ

1. **What command and what promise does Jesus give in John 15:4?**
2. **What warning does Jesus give in John 15:6?**
3. **What does Rom 6:3 teach about Baptism?**
4. **How does Rom 6:5 describe believers?**
5. **What are the benefits of being united with Christ?**

Rom 6:5-6

2 Cor 5:17

Gal 2:17

Eph 1:3

Eph 1:4

Eph 1:6

Eph 1:7

John 15:5

John 15:7

6. What is the aim of spiritual growth (Eph 4:15)?

Union with Christ is an intimate, vital, spiritual union between Christ and his people. It is through this union that we experience new life, strength, blessings and salvation. Like the soil is to the plant, so Christ is the source of all good things to us. Only as we remain in spiritual union with him do we enjoy these things. The inadequate human illustration of this union with Christ is the marriage relationship, which, at its best, is the deepest, richest and most satisfying personal human relationship which we experience. It is an experience of surrender without absorption, of service without compulsion, of love without conditions.

B. Regeneration

Regeneration is the act of God by which the principle of new life is implanted in a person and the controlling influence of his life becomes holy. It is also called the new birth, being born again, being born from above.

1. What is our natural state just before God gives us new life?

Eph 2:5

Col 2:13

2. How important is the new birth according to the following passages?

John 3:3

Gal 6:15

3. What are the benefits of the new birth?

1 John 3:9

1 John 4:7

1 John 5:4

1 Peter 1:3

4. How is the new birth brought about?

John 1:13

John 3:6, 8

James 1:18

1 Peter 1:23

5. What did God do to Lydia (Acts 16:14)?

C. Conversion

Conversion is the action of God whereby he brings a person to the point of responding in repentance and faith in Christ.

1. What does Jesus say in Matt 18:3?

2. What is Peter's message in Acts 2:38-39?

Conversion includes:

- a. Repentance (see [Repentance – a short course](#)).
- b. Faith: This faith:
 - is not just intellectual. Even the demons believe in this way (James 2:19).
 - is not just practical – trusting God for help, practical provision, even for miracles.It is saving faith – a total response to Christ.

Saving faith includes:

- the intellect: knowing the facts of the Gospel
- the emotions: being convinced and gripped by the truth
- the will: totally surrendering in love and obedience to Christ.

Session 13: Justification

The background to this study is to be found in the section [“God is Holy” pages 6-8](#) which speaks of God’s purity, wrath and judgement. How can we failing human beings be accepted by a perfectly holy God?

1. What does John 3:18-19 say about unbelievers?

2. Who has sinned according to Rom 3:23?

3. Who is under a curse according to Galatians 3:10 and why?

See also James 2:10.

4. What is true for all of us (2 Cor. 5:10)?

Justification is a legal term meaning to acquit or declare righteous. So the judge justifies (or acquits) the innocent (Deut 25:1); some people wrongly justify the wicked (Prov. 17:15); witnesses may prove a person right or justify them (Isa 43:9, 26). In all these references the word used is ‘justify.’ Justification then confers a legal status (being declared righteous or innocent) and cancels a legal liability.

5. Where does righteousness come from according to Romans 1:17 and 3:22?

6. How is righteousness described in Rom 5:17?

7. How does it come to us (Rom 3:22; Gal 3:8; Phil 3:9)?

8. What does God credit to people who have faith (Rom 4:3, 5, 9; Gal 3:6)?

9. How does God justify us according to the following passages:

Rom 3:24

Rom 5:9

Gal 3:13

2 Cor 5:19

10. What did God demonstrate on the cross (Rom 3:25-26)?

11. What place does law-keeping have in our justification before God (Rom 3:28; Gal 2:15-16; 3:11; Eph 2:8-9)?

12. Whom does God justify according to Rom 4:5?

13. What danger can people fall into according to Rom 9:30-32; 10:3?

14. What are the results of justification?

Rom 8:1 (NB. We are justified in Christ – Gal 2:17 – so Rom 8:1 is speaking about justification)

Ro 8:33-34

Titus 3:7

Note: James 2:24 says, "You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone." People have said that this directly contradicts the teaching of Paul above, and, on the face of it, this is true.

However if you read James 2:17-23 (the context of the above verse - it is always important to read the context or surrounding passage) you will begin to understand. It is stressing that good deeds are an essential evidence of real faith. You cannot have real faith without it showing in good deeds. Some people claim to believe in Christ and be justified by faith, but their lack of good deeds shows they haven't got real faith. That means they don't have real belief in Christ but a mere intellectual belief. Such a so-called faith could not justify or save anyone.

So Paul is stressing that we cannot earn salvation by good deeds. Our good deeds wouldn't be good enough or sufficient in number. We'd have to be perfect to be good enough for God. But because of His love, God sent His Divine Son into the world to die for us, bearing our curse and condemnation. At that immense, infinite cost Christ purchased forgiveness, and eternal life for us. God offers this forgiveness (justification) and eternal life as a free gift to all who really trust in Him and His Gospel.

But James is concerned with religious hypocrites. He reminds us that if we have real, saving, justifying faith it will show in good deeds. Without the evidence of good deeds, it is clear we haven't got real, saving, justifying faith. Paul hints at the same thing in Gal. 5:6.

Putting Paul and James together, we can say this. We are justified by the grace of God through faith in Christ and His Cross, not because of any good deeds of ours. However if we have such faith and so are justified it will show itself in the evidence of good works.

Session 14: Sanctification

Christianity is not just about being accepted by God, it is also about being made more like him – becoming Christ-like. How is this to be achieved?

1. **What has happened to us through the sacrifice of Christ according to the following passages:**

Heb 10:10

Heb 10:14

1 Cor 6:11

2. **What has Christ become according to 1 Cor 1:30?**

God has declared those who are in Christ to be already sanctified, holy and perfect. That is a legal (judicial) declaration. It shows how complete Christ's sacrifice is for us and how much God accepts us even though we are sinners.

3. **But what description of believers is found in the last six words of Heb 10:14?**

4. **What is Paul's prayer in 1 Thess 5:23?**

Although God legally (judicially) regards us as sanctified (holy), in practical terms the Holy Spirit is making us sanctified (holy). A new recruit is legally regarded as a soldier, but his training is making him into a soldier practically.

5. **Read again your answers to questions 1-7 on "Union with Christ" (Session 12).**

6. **List the different things Paul says have happened to us in Rom 6:1-8:**

7. **What are we to do by faith according to the following verses?**

Rom 6:11

Rom 6:12

2 Cor 7:1

Gal 5:24

Col 3:5, 8-10, 12, 14

8. What great promises are in Rom 6:14, 18?

The primary battle is the fight of faith - to believe the promises in Rom 6:14, 18 and so to experience their truth in our lives in practice.

9. What command is given in Matt 5:48?

10. But what does the following passage say (1 John 1:8)?

So the aim is nothing less than perfection, but we can never say we've reached it in this life.

Session 15: Perseverance

Can we be sure of eternal salvation? Is it possible for a Christian to fall away from Christ and be lost eternally? Some seem to fall away. Can I be sure I will not do so?

1. What does Jesus say about this subject in the following passages?

John 10:27-29

John 6:37-40

2. When do we enter eternal life?

John 3:36

John 5:24

3. Eternal life is God's gift. What encouragement is there in Rom 11:29?

4. What characteristics of God can we rely on according to Phil 1:6?

5. What promise is there in 2 Tim 4:18?

6. What does Jesus do for us according to Heb 7:25?

Look back at your notes. As believers we are already:

- United with Christ (Session 12)
- Justified through Christ (Session 13)
- Regarded as sanctified through Christ (Session 14)

BUT

7. What do the following passages say?

Matt 24:12-13 (compare Rev 3:5)

Heb 3:14

Col 1:22-23

In these and other places the Bible says only those who stand firm and keep the faith will be saved. This is true. But the other side of the coin is that those who are genuinely born again will stand firm and keep the faith, by the grace of God. (See Phil. 1:6 in your answer to question 4)

8. How do the following passages describe the partnership between God's keeping power working in us and our obedient faith?

Phil 2:12-13

1 Peter 1:5

2 Peter 1:3-11

Our standing firm and keeping the faith won't be perfect. Paul says that a believer at the Judgment Seat of Christ may find there has been quite a lot of "rubbish" in his life which is consumed by the "fire" of God's judgment, yet he himself is still saved (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

However there are people who seem to become Christians but later fall away. The Parable of the Sower shows that some people might welcome the Word with joy but the response is superficial and doesn't survive the pressures of life (Matt. 13: 20-22). Maybe 1 Tim. 1:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18; 4:10 are to be understood in this way.

9. How does John put this in 1 John 2:19?

Sometimes Christians are worried that they have committed the "unforgivable sin" or "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit". See Session 6.

There are two more difficult passages in Hebrews which require careful study;

a. Heb. 10:26-31. This passage is probably describing someone who comes to understand the Gospel but rejects it and does not come to real faith and, therefore, new birth in Christ.

b. Heb. 6:4-6 which states: "It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God, and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because, to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace."

"enlightened" need only mean "instructed"

"tasted the heavenly gift" may only be an experience of Christ such as an unbeliever may have in church but which does not convert him.

"shared in the Holy Spirit" again may be a passing experience of the Holy Spirit's work and conviction.

So it could refer to an unbeliever who has understood the Gospel and experienced the conviction of the Holy Spirit but then persistently rejects it all in such a way as to commit the unforgivable sin, and not to desire or be capable of repentance.

Alternatively the passage may describe only a theoretical possibility, rather than something which has actually happened. i.e. if it were possible for someone to fall away he would be eternally lost.

Verse 6 describes the impossibility of repentance. The comments about the unforgivable sin in Session 6 are relevant.

So the Heb 6:4-6 passage is rather obscure. It is best therefore not to base too much on it. One thing is clear - Christ never turns any sinner away who sincerely turns back to Him.

10. What is God able to do (Jude 24)?

Session 16: Signs of the End Times

We have all heard of unbalanced people who decide the world is going to end next Tuesday and others who will persist in setting dates for the return of Christ. These experiences make us wary of this subject “Signs of the End Times.” However it was Jesus himself who taught that we should look for “signs of his coming.” It seems that there may be different categories of signs and it may be helpful to draw a parallel with motorway signs:

- There are regular and repeated early signs: wars, famines, etc., and they remind us that Jesus is returning.
- There are later signs, more significant, indicating the destination (return) is quite close.
- There are final signs indicating the destination (return) is imminent.

What signs are referred to in the following passages?

1. Matt 24:10, 12

Mark 13:12

(See also Luke 21:16; 2 Tim 3:1-5)

2. Luke 21:12-14, 17-18

See also Matt 24:9; Mark 13:9-11, 13. Persecution is widespread already in many areas of the world. Increasingly in the West true Christians will contrast with non-Christians and nominal Christians. True Christians could become persecuted by nominal Christians as this divide grows. For example, in Britain equality legislation is increasingly threatening the freedom of the church. Stating that Jesus is the only Saviour could become illegal under anti-racist legislation. Evangelism also could be seen as offending against equality legislation. Many British Christians are deeply concerned.

3. Luke 21:9-10

See also Matt, 24: 6; Mark 13:7. War is now more horrifying in its potential for total destruction than at any time in history.

4. Luke 21:11

See also Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:8. Famine is growing in the world as the gap between the rich one third of the world and the poor two thirds of the world widens. With modern means of transport pestilences and disease can easily be spread worldwide.

5. Matt 24:11

Matt 24:4-5, 23-26

There are thousands of new cults which have sprung up since the middle of the twentieth century. Many of these have false prophets and false messiahs. Occult involvement has mushroomed too - being hailed by occultists as the beginning of the New Age.

6. 2 Thess 2:3-4, 9-12

1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3

2 John 7

Since the 1960s rebellion has been characteristic of the age, often being accepted as a clever, sophisticated attitude even in the Church. Lack of discipline in the home and the Church are a part of this. Rebellion (together with the widespread growth of world terrorism) however leads to the stricter exercise of authority in society, paving the way for the sort of world dictatorship foreseen in Scripture. The spirit of Anti-Christ is shown even in the Church with the denial or undermining of the Incarnation (Jesus as God made flesh) and other great truths about Christ.

7. Luke 21:24 (The first sentence refers to the Fall of Jerusalem in AD70, some 40 years after Jesus prophesied it).

Rom 11:25-27

Whilst not ignoring the controversies and the Holy Land conflict, it nevertheless is true that Jerusalem came under Jewish control for the first time in over 2000 years in 1967 shortly after the Jewish nation's most remarkable re-establishment in 1948. Although there is some extreme Christian Zionism, it is a fact that many balanced Christians have experienced a deep concern to pray for the Jews and Israel which surely shows the Holy Spirit is planning a work amongst the Jews. There has been a remarkable growth in the Messianic (Jewish Christian) movement in Israel in recent decades. Romans 11 doesn't necessarily mean every individual Israeli will be saved, but that a tremendous conversion of Jews will take place so that God can use the nation of Israel as a witness to other nations.

8. Matt 24:14

This is by no means complete but modern communications media make it quite possible.

9. Matt 24:29

Luke 21:25-26

10. Matt 24:37-39

2 Peter 3:3-9

The modern unbelief, even in the church, in God as judge and in Hell is typical of the attitudes expressed in these two passages. Consequently many people are being lulled into apathy or a false sense of security about life after death, judgement etc., and the Church is encouraging it.

Session 17: The Second Coming, the Last Judgment and the Final State

A. The Second Coming of Christ

The Second Coming of Christ is not a fringe interest for Christians who happen to like that sort of thing. It is mentioned 300 times in the New Testament, an average of once in every 15 verses.

1. What does Heb 10:25 say about “the Day” (the Second Coming)?

(See also James 5:9; 1 Peter 4:5)

From God's point of view the Second Coming is always about to happen. In His mercy he keeps delaying it (so far!). The actors in this drama are waiting in the wings, ready for their cue.

2. But what does Jesus say in Matt 24:36?

3. How will the Second Coming happen according to 1 Thess 5:2-3?

(See also Matt 24:37-44; 25:1-12).

4. What will people see on that day?

Matt 26:64 (see also Acts 1:11; Titus 2:13; Rev 1:7)

2 Thess 1:7

Zech 14:4

5. What will happen to the believers (or “elect”) on that day?

Matt 24:31, 40-41

1 Thess 4:16-17

1 Cor 15:51-52

This gathering of the believers is called the Rapture. Some claim that only the believers are raised on this day. But John 5:28-29 suggests that believers and unbelievers are raised on the same day. John 6:39-

40, 44, 54 say that believers are raised on the Last Day, not before it. It is unwise to be too dogmatic about the detailed order of events. It may be that what is being described here is based on the ancient custom of greeting the king when he visited a city. The elders and others would go out to meet him, outside the city and lead him in honour back into the city. It maybe that what these passages are describing is a “rapture” of the saints to meet the Lord in the air then all to return with him with honour into the world.

B. The Last Judgment

1. What will happen to believers according to:

1 Cor. 3:11-15

2 Cor 5:10

2. What will happen to unbelievers according to:

2 Thess 1:6-8

Jude 14-15

3. What will happen to demons (fallen angels) and the devil (Jude 6; Rev 20:10)?

4. Who is involved in judging?

John 5:22-23, 27

Matt 25:31-32

Matt 13:41-42

Some of these verses suggest that God judges by Christ, Some have said that the judgment (of believers) by Christ is separate from the Judgment (of unbelievers) by God. But Scripture does not seem to support this. See also Rom.21:16)

C. The Final State

Death is seen as the separation of body and spirit (James 2:26) and as a punishment (Gen.2:26; 3:19; Rom. 5:12, 17; 6:23). For the justified believer it is the final act of sanctification or dying to sin.

Some people speak of an intermediate state between death and resurrection. They point out that "Sheol" (in the OT) and "Hades" (in the NT) was not a place of reward or punishment but a pale, shady world. But in

fact Sheol is used as a warning to the wicked (Psalm 9:17; Prov.5:5; 7:27; 9:18; 15:24; 23:14). God's wrath is revealed there (Deut. 32:22). The rich man was in torment in Hades (Luke 16:23, 28). It seems the "Sheol" and "Hades" are used in different ways meaning "grave" or "death" (treated as a place) or as a place of punishment.

Ideas of Purgatory (where souls are perfected through suffering after death before going to heaven), Limbo (or Limbus Infantum, an in-between destination for unbaptised infants who die) are without biblical support. Some people believe in "soul sleep" i.e. that we lose consciousness for the period between death and resurrection. The Bible speaks of death as sleep (Matt. 9:24, Acts 7:60; 1 Thess 4:13) but this is probably speaking of the similarity between a dead body and a sleeping person. It seems that people are conscious after death (Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; Phil. 1:23).

1. What do the following passages say about the final state of unbelievers?

Matt 25: 41, 46

Luke 16:23, 26

2 Thess. 1:9

Jude 7, 13

Some Christians believe in eternal conscious punishment in Hell. Others believe in annihilation i.e. that the wicked or unbelievers cease to exist after judgment or at what Scripture calls "the second death." A variation of this is "conditional immortality" i.e. that humans are created mortal and only believers receive the gift of immortality. (See also Matt.7:22-23; 10:32-33). Also we are judged by what we have done in this life (2 Cor. 5:9-10; 2 Thess. 1:8).

2. What do the following say about the final state of believers?

Matt 25:34, 46

John 14:2-3

2 Peter 1:10-12

2 Peter 3:13

Rev 21:1-22:6

APPENDIX 1: The Athanasian Creed

SHORT VERSION (sometimes used in the Christmas services)

We proclaim the Church's faith in Jesus Christ:

**We believe and declare that our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Son of God, is both divine and human;**

God, of the being of the Father,
the only Son from before time began;
human from the being of his mother, born in the world.

**Fully God and fully human;
one human person with mind and body.**

As God he is equal to the Father,
as human he is less than the Father.

**Although he is both divine and human
he is not two beings but one Christ.**

One, not by turning God into flesh,
but by taking humanity into God.

**Truly one, not by mixing humanity with Godhead,
but by being one person.**

For as mind and body form one human being,
so the one Christ is both divine and human.

**The Word became flesh and lived among us;
we have seen his glory,
the glory of the only Son from the Father,
full of grace and truth.**

LONG ORIGINAL VERSION

1. Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic faith;
2. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.
3. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;
4. Neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance.
5. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Spirit.
6. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal.
7. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Spirit.
8. The Father uncreated, the Son uncreated, and the Holy Spirit uncreated.
9. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Spirit incomprehensible.
10. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Spirit eternal.
11. And yet they are not three eternal but one eternal.
12. As also there are not three uncreated nor three incomprehensible, but one uncreated and one incomprehensible.
13. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty.
14. And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty.
15. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God;
16. And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.
17. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord;
18. And yet they are not three Lords but one Lord.
19. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord;
20. So are we forbidden by the catholic religion to say; There are three Gods or three Lords.
21. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten.
22. The Son is of the Father alone; not made nor created, but begotten.
23. The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son; neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

24. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits.
25. And in this Trinity none is afore or after another; none is greater or less than another.
26. But the whole three persons are coeternal, and coequal.
27. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.
28. He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.
29. Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
30. For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man.
31. God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds; and man of substance of His mother, born in the world.
32. Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting.
33. Equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood.
34. Who, although He is God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ.
35. One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of that manhood into God.
36. One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person.
37. For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ;
38. Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead;
39. He ascended into heaven, He sits on the right hand of the Father, God, Almighty;
40. From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
41. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies;
42. and shall give account of their own works.
43. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.
44. This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved.

APPENDIX 2: The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

EPH. 4:8-11 LEADERSHIP GIFTS

Apostle	a person with a ministry of encouraging church growth or pioneering new churches over a wide area. (There are no apostles like the original Twelve today. They were inspired to write Scripture for example). (See 1 Cor. 12:28).
Prophet	a regular ministry conveying a specific vision of God's will for the present and plans for the future so that God's people are challenged, warned or comforted. (See 1 Cor. 12:28). The end result will always be encouragement if there is a right response to a prophecy.
Evangelist	a regular ministry of pointing people to a saving knowledge of Christ so that many come to personal faith in him, whether through a personal or public ministry.
Pastor	a regular ministry of caring for, guiding and protecting God's people so that they are encouraged to spiritual maturity. It is not to be confused with exercising human sympathy but rather divine compassion which can be firm as well as kind.
Teacher	a regular ministry of explaining biblical truth simply and accurately, and encouraging the hearers to understand and obey. live accordingly (See 1 Cor. 12:28).

1 Cor. 12:7-11 INSPIRATIONAL GIFTS (*bringing God's Word or power to an individual or congregation*)

Word of Wisdom	a supernatural revelation of the solution to a particular problem or crisis (Matt. 21:23-27, Luke 20:19-26; John 8:3-11).
Word of Knowledge	a supernatural revelation, concerning a difficulty or need, of facts not known naturally (John 4:16-19, Acts 10:19-20).
Gift of Faith	a supernatural ability (different from saving faith or living by faith) to believe that the "impossible" will happen in a particular situation (Acts 3:6-7).
Gifts of Healing	& supernatural ability to bring Christ's healing and deliverance to those who lack mental, emotional or physical wholeness, or are in spiritual bondage. (A person may be used more in one aspect than another). (Many examples in Scripture).
Miracles	a supernatural ability to bring God's power to bear on an "impossible" situation so that a miraculous event takes place (See 1 Cor. 12:28 and many examples in Scripture).
Prophecy	any Christian may in small ways speak prophetically to the church. The definition is the same as for the Prophet above, but the contributions will not be as deep or as regular as in the ministry of a prophet. (See Rom. 12:6 and 1 Cor. 14:1-5, 24-25, 29-32, 39-40).
Distinguishing	a supernatural ability to discern whether a particular manifestation comes from the

spirits	Holy Spirit, the human spirit or a demonic spirit. (Various examples in Scripture),
Tongues	the supernatural ability to praise God in a language never learned; an earthly or a heavenly language (1 Cor. 12:1), not understood by speaker (1 Cor. 14; 14) or normally by the hearers (1 Cor. 14:2). Its primary use is private (1 Cor 14:4,18-19).
Interpretation of Tongues	the supernatural ability to interpret a public message in tongues, (It is an interpretation not a translation and so may be a different length from the message in tongues). (1 Cor. 14:13-17,27-28),

Task gifts (relating to roles in the church)

(Any Christian may be used in some of these gifts from time to time, but gradually one may become a main ministry of that Christian. These gifts are of course, inspired by the Spirit, as much as those in list 2).

1 Cor. 12:28	
Helping	a supernatural ability to bear others' burdens, which may especially mean to assist leaders and support them in prayer,
Administration	the supernatural ministry of efficiently organising people and/or things for the achievement of a common aim. (This can be a leadership gift similar to management).
Rom 12:6-8	
Serving	a supernatural ability to serve God and others beyond natural talent and strength, especially in practical ways.
Teaching	Many Christians may be involved in teaching one or more people. But their ministry will not be so extensive and authoritative as the ministry of a teacher above.
Exhorting	a supernatural ability to encourage others to be strong in faith and serve Christ to the full: (often displayed by senior experienced Christians)
Contributing	a supernatural ability to give sacrificially and to manage money.
Presiding	(The NIV translates this "leadership") a supernatural ability to lead, exercising authority over others, making decisions and helping others fulfil those decisions. (This is clearly a leadership gift).
Acts of mercy	the supernatural ministry of showing compassion, and identifying with those in distress - giving advice, emotional comfort and practical help.

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ⁱ Article 13 of the 39 Articles of the Church of England states: "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ."

ⁱⁱ *(This is a somewhat technical endnote)* Some people have read Rom 9:11-18, 22; 11:7 and concluded that God does predestine people to Hell, and they have no chance. But:

- a. The passages say nothing about God creating people for Hell.
- b. Rom 10:9-13, 17, 21 stress faith. Rom 11:20 teaches that Jews were "broken off" (rejected) because of unbelief (see also Rom 9:31-32. That is why God "hardened" them. He hardened them because they did not believe. It does not say that they did not believe because God hardened them. On the contrary God was very patient with their unbelief and disobedience (Rom 10:21).
- c. Some of those whom God could rightly "harden" because of their unbelief may still receive God's mercy (Rom 9:18) if he so decides.
- d. Significantly there is no idea of God preparing "vessels" (people) for destruction in Rom 9:22. The Greek is deliberately vague and can mean they prepared themselves for destruction. However in verse 23 it specifically says God does prepare people for glory.