

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #1

SUBJECT Introduction: Title and Layout

Read: Matthew 7:13-14 (theme text) *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”*

A. Introduction With each passing day it is more difficult to preach the gospel, the good news of salvation, because there are fewer and fewer that believe in God. Or, if they say they believe, they don't really have a clear knowledge or spiritual convictions. Basically, they ignore the contents of the Bible, or their comprehension is superficial. At the same time, the level of suffering, discontentment and dissatisfaction in their lives increases constantly. Humanity never was designed to exist independently of the Creator, and without God they not only self-destruct in this life, but even worse, will perish eternally. Nevertheless, the fact is that He loves us, and His purposes and Word are for our benefit, well-being, and blessing. When man turns his back on God and refuses His knowledge, the result can only be degeneration, degradation, and depravation at every level: that of the individual, the family, and society in general. If they would only return to Him, to seek His wisdom in the Scriptures, and salvation in His Son, they would experience the blessing of life in harmony with their God.

B. Matt. 7:11 GOD IS GOOD

If “ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” This is the context of the indispensable recommendation from the lips of the Savior that we read already in Matt. 7:13-14. His words serve as a road map; not one of geography, but one that is spiritual, concerning the

POSITION, TRAVEL DIRECTION, and ETERNAL DESTINY

of each and every human being. They provide answers to the great unknowns:

Where are you with respect to God? Where are you going? What will be your eternal destiny?

I invite you to honestly face these questions; they are questions that all of us have, but very few have the courage to face. But I encourage you to do so, because God loves you, and His Word, the Bible, is the grand book of revelation about these eternal truths. Together we will see the Biblical answers to these questions, and better still, discover the relevant instructions that God gives about how you can be saved and know with certainty that your destiny will be heaven with the Lord.

C. Explanation of the Chart: Look at the chart to see the divisions marked out in the upper border and also in the right-hand border.

i) Chronology (Indicated by the upper border)-

This Age: Includes our time until the promised return of Christ to receive the believers, including the resurrection of the deceased believers of this age of the Church.

Hereafter: From the return of Christ for the Church until Eternity.

ii) Spheres (Indicated by the right border)

Heavenly events in heaven

Earthly events on the earth

Infernal events in the infernal places

D. Returning to the theme text, Matt. 7:13-14, we notice that it calls our attention to four pairs. These pairs precisely define the contrasting spiritual positions and conditions, and leave no allowance for a middle ground.

NARROW GATE	--	WIDE GATE
NARROW ROAD	--	BROAD ROAD
LIFE	--	DESTRUCTION
FEW	--	MANY

A gate opens to a way or a space. The wide gate isn't drawn in the chart, but it would be at the beginning of the broad road. The narrow gate can be seen, and it opens the way to the narrow road that goes upward.

A road serves to take us to a destiny. In the chart, the narrow road takes us to heaven ("life"), and the broad road leads to hell ("destruction"). Then we compare the "few" with the "many" and we notice that there are few who are saved! We can appreciate the tremendous importance of this subject that the Lord Jesus presents. What would motivate the Lord to reveal this information to us? The answer is that He loves us, and He desires our salvation and eternal happiness. In fact, He urges us to think on these following questions. He wants to awaken us to our spiritual reality.

Have you ever taken the wrong road? Do you know where you are right now, spiritually?

What is your SPIRITUAL POSITION? On which road are you?

Do you know where you are going? If you follow your present road, what will be your ETERNAL DESTINY: heaven or hell? Are you satisfied with that destiny? Should you be doing something about it?

E. You are on this chart. You have not died yet, so you are somewhere before the column called "DEATH." Since you are traveling, either you have entered onto the narrow road through the narrow gate, or you are still on the broad road going downward. Every human being in the world is included here: "the few" go toward life, while "the many" go toward destruction. If we add up "the few" and "the many," we have "everyone." You included. Where are you?

QUESTIONS 1 (Answer in the enclosed question booklet, or on a separate sheet of paper.)

1. Write out the theme text (Matt. 7:13-14) completely. (This text is so important that we recommend that you memorize it.)
2. (Section A, Introduction) What does our good God desire for us?
3. (Section B) Why do we say that Matt. 7:13-14 are words that are like a spiritual road map for us?
4. (Section C) Looking at the divisions marked out in the borders of the chart, in what section of the chart are we all? (Combination of the upper border with the right border).
5. (Section D) Indicate the 4 pairs of contrasts that we find in Matt. 7:13-14.
6. (Sections D and E) Where are you in the chart? (If you need help in order to answer this or other questions, don't hesitate to ask help from one of the Christians.)

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #2

Subject: Why is there a Broad Road?

Review the Theme Text: Matt. 7:13-14 “Enter ye in at the strait (narrow) gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait (narrow) is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life; and few there be that find it.”

Review this text and the chart.

QUESTIONS FOR THIS LESSON:

Why is there a Broad Road?

Why is there condemnation, or judgment, and destruction?

How does one come to be on the Broad Road?

READ Romans 5:12 “Wherefore, (because) as by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon (came over) all men, for that all have sinned:”

This text, in all its bluntness, collides with humanism, the man-centred philosophy that denies moral absolutes as well as denying sin. Humanism tries to elude the necessity to give an account to God. It is humanism that promotes evolution.... “*there is no God.*”

This verse, Romans 5:12, alludes to the original state of man in creation. He was in communion, or fellowship, with God, without a barrier or distance; united to Him and made in His image and likeness. The life of man was joined spiritually with God.

With the entrance of sin, two great changes took place in mankind.

1) **A Change in his spiritual position**, or in other words, his position in relation to God.

God, the Creator, had warned man that sin, which in its essence is rebellion against His Word and His express will, would displease and offend Him, and result in their death. They would become mortal, separated from Him spiritually, as well as dying physically one day. In other words, they would die spiritually in that moment, falling from their relationship with Him, and cut off from the vital spiritual link with God. The Bible speaks of people in our day, (that have life as far as their existence in this world, but still have not believed in Christ as their Savior,) as those who are “dead in trespasses (offences) and sins.” (Ephesians 2:1, etc.) These include all who are born of Adam, those who are walking the Broad Road.

2) Secondly, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and sinned, **a radical change was produced in their nature**. A new principle, or law was introduced in them that exercised control over their minds and persons. This new evil principle that was superimposed on their innocent nature, is called SIN.

We read in Romans 7:18, “*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will (the desire) is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*” Paul, as a believer, describes the evil dwelling in him. As a creature of God, he **knew what was good**, but in his flesh, that is to say, in his innocent nature with sin added, the will or the power to **do good** didn't exist. In verse 20, he speaks of the “*sin that dwelleth in me,*” and in the following verses he speaks of the conflict between good and evil that existed in him as a believer. He speaks of the “*law of sin,*” that attempted to make him a slave to sin. The unconverted person is a slave to this law of sin:

sin lives in him, and is seen in his sins: the root producing the fruits. We as descendents of Adam have all inherited this corrupt nature, prone to vice, with the sin that dwells within, and a nature that is subject to the principle of sin. The essence and tendency of this is rebellion against God, which translates into sins committed against the will of God. Everyone born of Adam is a sinner, and needs salvation and reconciliation with God. The main point here isn't so much how many or which sins one has committed, but rather the fact of being a sinner: we are made and declared sinners because of the sinful nature we have.

God doesn't charge us with the guilt of Adam ("the original sin," as it is called), nor does He blame us for the presence of the law of sin; but we are responsible to God for the sins that we commit. Knowing what is good and right according to the Word and the will of God, man usually defies God and knowingly sins. He excuses himself with "all the world does it..." Anyone who is incapable of assuming moral responsibility through mental deficiency, or an infant that dies, cannot be considered guilty of sins and is automatically covered by the redemptive (saving) work of Christ on the cross. But all the rest of us must exercise faith in what God says in His Word, recognizing our spiritual condition as sinners, and admitting the resultant guilt of sins we have committed by our giving free rein to sin. Then, through faith in the Scriptures, we must appreciate the coming of Christ as a sacrifice for sinners, as the Savior. We must personally believe that His death was for our sins. The Scriptures promise that in this way we "*pass from death to life*" (John 5:24).

In conclusion, we see that there is pardon for the guilty and spiritual life for the "dead." Read carefully the following verses:

Romans 5:6 "*For when we were yet without strength (without ability to do right or save ourselves), in due time (at the right time), Christ died for the ungodly (those without God in their sins)."*

Romans 5:10-11 "*For if, when we were enemies (against God in our rebelliousness) we have been reconciled (brought into agreement) to God by the death of His Son (Christ), much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy (boast) in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (or reconciliation, the work that has brought us into right relationship to God)."*

"Reconciled unto God through the death of His Son." The separation and enmity has been erased, and the spiritual position restored. This can be true for you, if only you believe and receive what He offers you in salvation.

QUESTIONS 2 (Answer in the question booklet, or else on a separate page)

- 1) The focus of this lesson is about "Why is there a _____ Road?"
- 2) According to Romans 5:12, why is their death in the world?
- 3) What was the original state of mankind in relation to God?
- 4) We pointed out that there were two great changes in the relationship between God and mankind as a result of the entrance of sin. There was...
 - A. a change in _____. What do you understand by this?
 - B. A radical change in _____. What do you understand by this?
- 5) Think of Romans 5:6. What blessing is there for us according to this verse?

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #3

SUBJECT How did SIN come to dwell in a person now?

REVIEW Matt.7:13-14, the theme text, and the chart

Up to this point, we have seen the entrance of sin into the world and its consequences in Adam: he was not only found guilty and condemned to death by his offended Creator, but a radical change in his being took place, so that he was left with the presence of sin as an evil principle. This was added to his human nature, so that he obeyed the principle, or law, of sin. The result was that he became a sinner, separated from and at enmity with God.

But, one could ask.....

How did sin come to dwell in us nowadays? We weren't present when Adam sinned!

Let's read Psalm 51:1-5

PSALM 51

To the Chief Musician, a Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in unto Bathsheba

1. *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions*
2. *Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.*
3. *For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.*
4. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest and be clear when thou judgest.*
5. *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

This is a Psalm of David, in which he confesses a great sin of immorality and murder, committed when he was about 45 years old (2 Samuel 11, 12.)

In this passage, three different words are used to describe sin:

Rebellions (transgressions) This implies a revolt or uprising against the will of God in which the sinner trespasses, or goes beyond the limit that God has imposed.

Evil (iniquity) This has two implications that are significant:

- a) It implies perversity, the depravity that gives place to sin, and ...
- b) It is the resulting guilt of sin.

Sin A general word that takes into account God's Person and Word and His expressed will. It describes whatever attitude contrary to His person and Word, which missing the mark, does not fulfill what pleases God. Such an attitude displays indifference, independence, and rebellion against Him. It does not serve or honor God, but rather is contrary to Him. It is man "doing his own thing", being a law to himself, and not respecting nor complying with God's law.

In verses 1 and 2, David asks for mercy, pardon and spiritual cleansing.

Verse 3. He recognizes and admits his personal guilt, expressing his repentance.

Verse 4. David confesses his sin against God. Every sin that is committed is first of all against God, because it is a violation of His will. In addition, sins committed oftentimes damage other persons, and because of this, they also result in responsibilities and guilt towards them.

Verse 5. This is a description of sin that dwells in the person, as well as the law of sin present and active from our birth. Some, when reading this verse, would think that David is referring to some aspect of immorality in his conception. However, David was the youngest of his family of at least 8 children. His parents were godly people, exemplary and well known in Israel. Because of this, we can rule out the idea that it refers to that kind of irregular situation. Rather he states the fact that he, as a descendent of Adam (as we all are), had been born with sin dwelling within him. That is the truth for all of us. It is evidence that we were born with sin dwelling in us, thus constituting us as sinners, and separated from God.

WHAT IS THE REMEDY FOR THIS SPIRITUAL STATE?

Read Romans 6:23 “... *the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” This verse reaffirms to us what we have seen:

“*the wages of sin*” is the punishment that corresponds to this rebellion against God and is nothing less than death, judgment, and condemnation. This is what we deserve. The person who accepts the Word of God, admits that this is so, and, repentant of his previous attitudes, recognizes his guilt. But, thanks to God, the verse doesn't end there! There is good news, news of a “*gift*” or a “*present*,” that God offers us, without having to find merit in ourselves. He offers this because God is good and He desires to bless us. He has found the way by which He can pardon us instead of punishing us. He has punished His own Son (Jesus), who accepted suffering in our place. The sinner that recognizes his sin and guilt, and who believes that Jesus died for his sins, receives pardon for them. He is saved from dying under condemnation and receives instead, LIFE ETERNAL, spiritual life that is life with Christ forever.

God offers to give a new life, eternal life, spiritual life. How is it received? John 3 teaches us this same necessity to be born again, born from above. And this second birth, a spiritual birth, occurs when one believes in Christ as his Savior. From that moment, he possesses eternal life as it says in John 3:16: “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*” This beautiful text is possibly the most well known in all the Bible, but have you taken it to yourself? Do you have eternal life?

Returning to the story in Psalm 51... in view of David's sin that was so horrible, one might ask....

How could God pardon David?

He could do it justly and righteously, looking forward, toward the future cross, and focusing on His Son, crucified as a sacrifice for David's sin.

How can God pardon a sinner nowadays? He does it by looking back, toward the cross, toward the same sacrifice. God sees the sacrifice of His Son, and He pardons those who believe in Christ. Dear reader, I invite you to put yourself in the same case. It is possible that your sin isn't like that of David, but sin is always against God. Remember: "the wages of sin is death." If God paid you what was coming to you, it would have to be eternal death. That is why you need pardon and salvation, the eternal life in Christ.

QUESTIONS 3 (Answer in the question booklet attached, or on a separate page.)

- 1) Why was the sin of David so horrible? What did he deserve?
- 2) What are the three words used in Psalm 51 to describe sin?
- 3) Looking at Psalm 51, what expressions of David demonstrate his repentance?
- 4) Look at verse 4. All sin is first of all against who?
- 5) What great truth applying to everyone is in verse 5?
- 6) Romans 6:23 What wage do we all deserve? What Gift does God offer?
- 7) What is the righteous basis on which God can give us eternal life instead of eternal punishment?

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #4

Matt. 7:13-14 (review the text and the chart)

SUBJECT Characteristics of those who walk on the Broad Road and how God saves them.

READ Ephesians 2:1-9, 13

Eph 2:1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

Eph 2:2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course (practices) of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

Eph 2:3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

Eph 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

Eph 2:5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

Eph 2:6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

Eph 2:7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Eph 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Eph 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Characteristics of the life of the unconverted or unsaved ones: we will see some of the details of the description that God gives of those who are on the Broad Road.

a) *dead in trespasses and sins.* Perhaps this will surprise you, but you can have physical life, and be reading this study, but be without spiritual life as far as God is concerned. It is the case of one that is separated from God, because of unforgiven sins.

b) *walking according to the course of this world* (Where is this course, river or road leading you to?) The great majority go along with what the rest of mankind is doing. But the world doesn't seek to do what pleases God, rather that which is sinful. What do you seek?

c) *according to the prince of the power of the air.* Note that we see here the identity of the one who really imposes his will over the world, and why this is so contrary to the will of God.

d) *the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.* This unmask the presence and pernicious activity of Satan in those who refuse to pay attention to God or to His Word.

e) *living in the desires of the flesh.* Often sin is manifested in acts that are illegitimate abuses of the body; the body that should be used for the glory of God.

f) *in the will of the flesh and of the thoughts* (not the will of God). Sadly, these are thoughts that choose not to take into account the desires of God and do not consult His Word.

g) *were by nature the children of wrath.* As a result of such rebellion, the wrath, or anger of God is hanging over them. (John 3:36: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath life eternal; but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.") How sad and tragic! It is the end, their destiny unless they change their spiritual course! Which is your road, dear reader?

Many do not recognize Satan's person nor his activity against them. Let us look more closely at the topic of this work of Satan; his malignant spiritual activity that is opposed to the beneficial activity of the Spirit of God in people. It is as Paul says:

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Corinthians 4:3,4)

If you do not find value or attraction in the gospel, the message of salvation, it is because you are still among those who *"are lost!"* What a tremendous warning that is! Satan's activity against those who could become interested in their souls, is to confound, disorient, and envelop them in other pleasures and activities. Far from him being a myth, or someone that doesn't exist, Satan actively works against the person that needs to be saved.

HOW DID SATAN GAIN THIS POWER?

Using deceit in the garden of Eden, he seized power from Adam. While Adam obeyed God, the authority God had given to him as lord of the creation, was his to use and exercise; however, when he disobeyed God and chose to obey Satan, Satan claimed this authority from him and God has permitted Satan to exercise it for a time. However this authority doesn't belong to him, and it will be taken away from him, and he, Satan, will be humiliated when God so desires it. Here are some words from the Lord Jesus that demonstrate His superiority over Satan. The expression "prince of this world" is one of the titles of Satan.

"now shall the prince of this world be cast out.." (John 12:31)

"the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:11)

"the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." (John 14:30) (He didn't have any authority over Jesus, the Son of Man, the legitimate heir of the original authority of Adam.)

The Scriptures speak of the reign of Satan and the need to be liberated from his power. It is God that works with power to set free the captives of Satan who desire to be saved; *". . . who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."* (Colossians 1:13-14) However God doesn't deliver those who do not believe.

But we should see now what God desires to do for those travelers on the broad road. Let's go back to Ephesians 2:4-8, from the verses cited at the beginning of the lesson.

We note here some important truths. First of all, we see the description of God, which evidences in every way that He is a contrast with Satan. *"Rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith He loved us."* He goes on to show how God represents the sinner in the Person of His Son, suffering the condemnation in the cross. He gives life to him that believes, He joins him to Christ in His death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, and He places the believing sinner, now pardoned, in a new spiritual position, that is to say, *"in Christ,"* in the glory! This entire great blessing is through the pure grace of God toward the believer, only by his believing. It springs from

the inexhaustible fountain of the grace and goodness of God, and it is available to all those who believe, as is indicated in this passage. My dear friend, it is available to you also. Will you receive it?

QUESTIONS 4

(Answer in the question booklet, or on a separate page)

- 1) Ephesians 2:1 What does the expression mean, "*dead in trespasses and in sins*?"
- 2) Ephesians 2:2 Who is "*the prince of the power of the air*?"
- 3) Who are "*the children of disobedience*" of v. 2, and "*the children of wrath*" of v. 3?
- 4) In 2 Corinthians 4:3, what is the devil called?
What does he do to hinder people from being saved?
- 5) Ephesians 2:4-6 List the words that describe God, and what He does when a person believes in Christ.
- 6) Ephesians 2:8-9 What do these verses mean?

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #5

Review Matthew 7:13-14

SUBJECT: The Door and the Security it provides.

READ John 10:7-9 *“Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”*

Here the Lord uses an illustration of the daily life of the shepherds: *I am the door of the sheep.*” The shepherd laid himself down in the opening of the fold in order to protect the sheep from any kind of danger, from thieves or wild animals and in this way made himself “the door.”

V. 8 indicates the possibility of false shepherds, that would be “insecure doors,” whose intentions are not for the integrity and well-being of the flock, but for the abuse of the sheep and personal gain for themselves. Sadly, our experience confirms this truth. Other similar Scriptures also establish the same:

Matthew 7:21-23. *“Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”*

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”*

Now, returning to the passage in John 10, we see the following:

V. 9 All those that enter the door, become His sheep and belong to Him. They enter, and go in and out under His care, guidance and protection. They are saved from being exposed to danger, from perishing eternally.

V. 10 In contrast with the abusive religious leaders and exploiters of the sheep (there are many in our day), He came to give; so that they might have life abundantly. The life that He gives is the opposite of being “*dead in trespasses and sins,*” and the life of conflicts and contentions that characterizes the Broad Road. (*“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.”* Titus 3:3)

Let us look a little farther on in the reading from John 10, where it continues to speak of this “*good shepherd, the Lord Jesus.*”

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. v.12 But he that is the hireling and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. v. 13 The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. v. 14 I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. v. 15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. v. 16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. v. 17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. v. 18 No man taketh it

from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. “ (John 10:11-18)

Vs. 11, 15, 17 - *"The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep"* and in this way He faithfully demonstrates the love and care of His Father. In the Chart we see that there is a cross drawn on the Narrow Door. It speaks to us of what He had to do to become this door of salvation for us. He had to die as a sacrifice on the cross for our sins in order to open a way of escape from the Broad Road to the Narrow Road that leads to heaven. In these verses, His death is emphasized three times. Any other way to put away our sin is not acceptable, because the wages of sin is death. Meritorious, or good works or works of charity do not remove sins from the presence of God. The only valid Door is Christ crucified, accepted for the sinner as a suitable substitute. The person that believes in Him, is entering by the Door, and having entered, is saved from perishing forever.

Vs. 17-18. He gave His life as a voluntary sacrifice, and this is eloquent evidence of His love for His Father and for us. It is also evidence of His Deity and power over Life and Death. He exhibits a supreme authority that no human being has over his own life: He laid it down (in death) and took it again (in resurrection).

A little farther in John 10:

John 10:24-31 *"Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. v. 25 Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me. v. 26 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. v. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: v. 28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. v. 29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. v. 30 I and my Father are one. v. 31 Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him."*

Vs. 24-26 The unbelief of His hearers defined their position in respect to Christ; in other words: On which side of the door were they?

Vs. 27-30 ETERNAL LIFE. *"Eternal life"* is more than an existence without end; it is existence in relationship with God, in a life of fellowship with Him and in His presence. Really, it is His life imparted to us; placed in us. The truth is that every human being will exist forever; a) either in Life Eternal, (existence in fellowship with God and in His presence), or b) in spiritual death, which is an existence far from and excluded from the presence of God, in the conscious suffering of the Lake of Fire which the Bible calls "The Second Death." (Revelation 20:14-15).

Note the absolute security - in the hand of Jesus, the Shepherd; also in the hand of the Father. This forms a secure place or position to be in, safe from whatever intent the enemy may have to snatch away the "sheep", the believers, those who have entered by the Door.

The apostle Peter makes a beautiful commentary about this:

1 Peter 2:24-25 “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. v. 25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”

V. 31 On which side of the Door were the Jews? And, having thought on these truths, on which side of the Door are you? With the children, we sing a chorus that fits well at this point:

*One door and only one, and yet its sides are two;
Inside and outside, on which side are you?
One door and only one, and yet its sides are two;
I'm on the inside; on which side are you?*

QUESTIONS 5 (Answer in the attached question booklet, or on a separate page)

- 1) In what sense did the shepherds of Israel come to be “the door” of their sheep?
- 2) John 10:9 In a spiritual sense, “the Door” is referred to as the access to salvation. Who says that He is the Door for us? Who are those who are saved?
- 3) Matthew 7:21-23 Is it possible to profess to be of the Christian faith without really belonging to Christ?
Comment on what you see in these verses.
- 4) Look at John 10:11, 15, 17. What is the mark of Christ as the genuine, true Shepherd, who demonstrated His Father's love?
- 5) John 10:27-30 What is Eternal Life? Can the believer have the assurance that he has Eternal Life, that he is saved?
- 6) John 10:24-26 On which side of “the Door” were the Jews?
On which side of the Door are you?

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #6

Review Matthew 7:13-14, the theme text

SUBJECT The Narrow Road

READ John 14:1-6: *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. v. 2 In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. V. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. V. 4 And whither I go, ye know, and the way ye know. V. 5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? V. 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*

Before we comment on this passage, let us look at other mentions of this desirable road in the Bible. Proverbs 15:24 says *“The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath.”* The word used for “hell” in this passage, written originally in Hebrew, is what corresponds the word in the New Testament that means the place of suffering or torment of those that die without believing in Christ. In these lessons, it is our desire to help you to understand these realities that the Bible presents, so that your way will really be the “way of life.”

In Matthew 22, some of the religious enemies of the Lord Jesus tried to make him fall into a contradiction, sending to Him persons that pretended to have a sincere interest. With deceit they used the following language in vs. 16: *“Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth. . .”* But the passage shows that their intentions were false and they only sought to trap the Lord Jesus. Of course, they had to leave in shame, despite their apparent sincerity! Permit me, dear reader, to ask you: Do you sincerely seek the way of God? If you read the Bible with the desire to discover the truth, you won’t be defrauded and certainly will find the way of life, the eternal salvation of your soul that Jesus came to provide. You will find the way to heaven.

Returning to the passage read at the beginning, John 14:1-6, the Lord Jesus consoles his disciples. They were troubled because Jesus had told them that He had to return to heaven and leave them behind in the world. But what He does first is direct their attention to the destiny that awaited them, heaven, which He calls *“my Father’s house.”* What will this place be like? Certainly, much more beautiful than we could ever imagine! The believers are called *“sons of God”* and *“heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ”* (Romans 8:17). The Father’s house, and those prepared mansions for the believers will be the best that have ever been seen!

Farther on, in verses 3,4, He confirms to them that He would come back to get them. His going to heaven didn’t mean a separation forever. As certainly as He was going away, He would return to take them *“that where I am, there ye may be also.”* What comforting words to hear! Wouldn’t you like to have the assurance of going to be with Christ when it is your turn to leave this world? This is the security that everyone has that belongs to Christ. As we saw in the lesson of the Door, the sheep that are under the care of this good Shepherd are absolutely assured of being

saved for all eternity, since He himself has promised it. Here He promises to carry His own to heaven, to the Father's house, the home of Christ and the home of everyone that receives Him as their Lord and Savior. I know that I will be in His presence, in that beautiful home, not because I am better than others or because I deserve it, but only because I, being a sinner, believed that His death in the cross was to pay for my sins. Upon believing that, He Himself has saved me from the condemnation I merited for my sins. Thus, I "entered through the door," and He has put me on this Narrow Road of life, with all His guarantees and security.

The Lord then added, *"and whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."* It might be that you have doubts concerning the way of salvation. The disciple Thomas confesses his confusion about the same thing: *"Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?"* Do you have the same uncertainty? Then the Lord's answer will help you also. Did Thomas know where Jesus was going? Yes, and no. Jesus said that He was going to return to heaven, and to Thomas and to us it is vital to understand that heaven is a real place, the dwelling of God and of the believers. The Bible speaks of the "glorified bodies" that we will have when we are raised, and also that we will be there in magnificent glory with the Lord. But it is hard for us to believe that it is not just a fairy tale. Kind reader, if the Bible is true, then heaven is a real place, and I invite you to seek to arrive there. It can be your eternal destiny. Now the question remains: if it is a real place, how can you get there? This question is of utmost importance, since while it is certain that heaven can be our destiny, it is also true that it is not the only destiny! The Bible speaks with equal certainty about hell and the lake of fire. Our theme text, Matt. 7:13-14 states the solemn truth that there are many who go to perdition. Thomas asked, *"How can we know the way?"*

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father, but by me." "Way," "truth," "life" are exactly what the sincere seeker is looking for in order to be sure that he will arrive at the correct and desired destiny. The Lord has *life* in Himself, He is the Author and Giver of eternal life, the spiritual life. He blesses the believer by giving him eternal life. He also is the *truth*. He possesses it and He speaks it. One attribute or characteristic of God is that He *"cannot lie."* (Titus 1:2). Christ loved his disciples and never deceived them. He loves you and never will deceive you. He points to Himself as the *way* to come to the Father. There is no one more capable than He to know the way "home." Knowing the holiness of that place, He had to offer Himself as an expiatory sacrifice, which means a sacrifice on account of sin. Moreover, His death had to be a vicarious sacrifice, which means that a victim suffers in order to pay for the guilt or the transgression of another. So that He could open the door and the way to heaven, it was necessary for Him to offer Himself for our sins. He did in fact do so, and we only are left to exclaim, "How much He loved us!" When we receive His sacrifice for our sins, we receive Him as Savior. This is the faith that God looks for, and by which He saves us. This is entering into the Narrow Way, the way to heaven, the way to the Father's house.

Perhaps it seems too easy to you, and our reply would be; Was it easy for Christ to suffer on the cross? You never could pay for your own sins, and He, in love to you, suffered and offers to be your substitute and Savior. It may be that you imagine there is another way to gain favor with God and absolve you from the guilt of your sins. Perhaps you trust in your own good works, your

faithfulness in some religion, your devotion to the Virgin Mary or other "saints". If you insist in any of these alternatives, you detour yourself from the simple faith in the work of Christ. That would be inventing "another way." Is it true that there are many ways to heaven? Listen to what the Lord Jesus says: *"no man cometh to the Father, but by me."* God will not save you or accept you, if you try to add other elements to what He, Christ, has provided. And what happens if someone insists that faith in the death of Christ isn't sufficient for salvation? That person will continue on down the Broad Road, leading to destruction. He will not enter into the Door, nor the Narrow Road. His destiny never will be heaven, the Father's house. I leave with you the solemn words of the prophet Jeremiah, when some people of Jerusalem didn't want to listen to his words that offered their only salvation: *"And unto this people thou shalt say, 'Thus saith the Lord; behold I have set before you the way of life, and the way of death.'" Jeremiah 21:8.*

Which is your road? What will be your destiny?

QUESTIONS 6 (Answer in the question booklet or on a separate sheet)

- 1) Prov. 15:24 Who would be the "wise," and what will he have understood?
- 2) Matthew 22:15-22 Does the Lord Jesus detect insincerity?
- 3) John 14 Why were the disciples anxious and disturbed?
- 4) Jesus spoke of the "*Father's House*": what will it be like?
- 5) v. 3 What did the Lord Jesus promise to do?
- 6) v. 5 Do you have doubts or confusion like Thomas confessed? Comment on your answer.
- 7) v. 6 What did Christ do in order to provide this way to Heaven?
- 8) Can one add another faith or method of salvation to what Jesus did on the cross?

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #7**SUBJECT:** **DEATH****READ** **Hebrews 9:27-28**

“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

Introduction In Ephesians 2:1 we have already seen the expression *“dead in trespasses and sins.”* Another scripture (Ezekiel 18:4) says, *“The soul that sinneth it shall die.”*

These are references to spiritual death, which, as we saw, is separation from God, who is Life, Light and Love. Sin produced this separation first of all in Adam, and all of us are born in this separated spiritual position.

Nevertheless, the present reading, in Hebrews 9, deals with another aspect of the subject of death, and we will see various truths associated with it:

1) Hebrews 9:27-28 speaks of physical death, the death of the body, which is the separation between the person (soul/spirit) and the physical house (the body) where it lived, and through which it is expressed. The apostle Paul expresses this in different scriptures:

Philippians 1:23-24 *“. . . having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better: nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.”*

2 Corinthians 5:1 *“because we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”* Here the body is referred to as “our earthly house” and adds in 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 *“therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”*

2) Death didn't always occur. We read already in Romans 5:12 *“Wherefore, as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”*

If Adam and Eve had not sinned, they would still be in the world today. They would be “immortal.” “Mortal” and “mortality” refer to the death of the body. The day will come for the believer, when *“this mortal must put on immortality.”* (1 Corinthians 15:53) and every believer will have a new body, immortal and eternal, in order to enjoy the presence of God in heaven.

3) God has decreed death as the consequence of sin and it is a tangible and irrefutable evidence of sin and its law in us. Even when one is converted to the Lord and He gives us life, eternal life, sin as a root isn't taken away from our being until the believer dies and his soul goes to heaven, or until the Lord Jesus Christ comes to receive us to heaven, giving us our new bodies of glory in the

resurrection. Until then, the exercised and obedient believer demonstrates his love and loyalty to the Lord, by voluntarily refusing to sin.

The unconverted, he who isn't a believer, in contrast, will confront the full consequence of his sins: he will die physically, his soul will go to hell, waiting the judgment of the Great White Throne, from which he will be hurled into the Lake of Fire for all eternity. In the Bible, this is called the SECOND DEATH and it is the eternal, irremediable separation from God.

4) Let us look at Hebrews 9:27-28 in more detail:

a) The fact of the decree. *"It is appointed unto men once to die."* Who has the attribute of authority necessary to establish such a decree? Only God! Whether we like this or not, it is so. It is absolutely outside of our power to modify this fact. We must accept it and act accordingly to this truth, rather than refuse to believe or accept that it is so.

b) *"once to die"* There is no reincarnation, nor a second opportunity. John 3:36 says *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on Him."* It is only in this life that we can listen to the gospel and exercise faith, that is to say, believe in order to be saved. After death, it will not be necessary to "believe" because then all humanity will be in their spiritual reality: the believer will be in the glory with Christ, and the unbeliever will be experiencing the torments of hell. Then it will be too late for the unsaved to "believe"; rather time only to lament not having believed while in life.

c) *"and after this the judgment"* Those that die without Christ have a future, but a terrible future. Having refused to believe, the wrath of God weighs over them. All of the lower section of the chart, including Hell, the Resurrection of Condemnation, the Judgment of the Great White Throne, and finally the Lake of Fire is what awaits them. If you refuse Christ as your Lord and Savior, this will be your future. It isn't a theory or illusion. You will experience eternity; doesn't it make sense to seek to be saved?

There are thousands that die every day, an unending line of persons that pass before us. Recent statistics estimate the world death rate of unconverted persons at 1.68 per second! ("Raw Statistics" The Encourager, July-August 2005, www.gospelhall.org) It has been published that only in Chile, there is an abortion every 5 minutes (in the year 2004). The total world death rate no doubt doesn't include the abortions, since many (not us!) do not include them in the numbers of persons who have died. (See comments on this in lesson 2.)

Are the ones that die always unknown? Perhaps, in this procession of death even now faces known to you are passing. And someday others will recognize your face there in that procession also.

In view of these solemn realities, the wise Solomon says, *"It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart."* (Ecclesiastes 7:2)

d) GOD'S ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM vs.28

"so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." It isn't "so much suffering for so many sins" as if it were a mathematical equation; but rather, so much value, His infinite value, that when He offered himself, truly shedding his blood and dying on the cross, a sacrifice for sin was provided that is abundantly sufficient for all the world; a provision as extensive as the universal presence of sin. This atonement, or satisfactory sacrifice is provided for all, but becomes effective only to those that believe in Him. Have you believed in Him?

"... Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death... that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9)

e) THAT ISN'T THE END!

"and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Jesus will come the second time, but not to deal again with the problem of sin. His coming will be to take to the heavenly glory all those who have believed in Him. There is a glorious future for the saved, since they share in the glory of Christ forever.

Will you be in that number of those who are *looking for Him*?

QUESTIONS 7 (Answer in the question booklet, or on a separate page)

- 1) When physical death takes place, what separation does it produce within a person?
- 2) Heb. 9:27 Who has decreed death as the consequence of sin?
- 3) Heb. 9:27 There are religions that believe in reincarnation (that one returns to live as another person or being). What does God say here about this?
- 4) Heb. 9:27 Does death end everything?
- 5) Heb. 9:28 What was God's response to this great problem of humanity?
- 6) Why wasn't it necessary that Christ die many times in order to provide salvation for the many that we are?
- 7) What future is there for the believer?

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #8

SUBJECT "After Death" ... What happens with the Believers?

READ Job 14:10 *"But man dieth and wasteth away: Yea, man giveth up the ghost (is cut off), and where is he?"*

One of the major unknowns for mankind is "what happens after death?" In his question, Job calls our attention to this subject. It is evident that he doesn't speak of the body, because we normally know where that is. Rather, it must be that his doubt is concerning the whereabouts of the person himself, the soul-spirit that lived in this earthly house. The Bible, the eternal Word of God, is the reliable source of knowledge about this, a subject which escapes our capacity to experience, since no one returns to tell us what happens.

Let us look at this from two logical and necessary perspectives: a) What happens with the believers when they die? and b) What happens with unbelievers when they die? In this lesson we will look at only the case of the believers.

To study the case of a believer, we will look at two examples from the Bible: Stephen, the first Christian martyr; and Paul the apostle.

a) STEPHEN Acts 7:51-60; 8:2 *v. 51 Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. v. 52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: v. 53 Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it. v. 54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. v. 55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, v. 56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. v. 57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, v. 58 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. v. 59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. v. 60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*
8:2 And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

We see the story of his martyrdom, the first recorded among the Christians. We note that the reality of the glory of Christ was more real to him than the pummelling stones that would extinguish his life. His enemies couldn't make him cease from rejoicing in Christ, neither could they prevent the life of Christ from being seen in him *". . . Lord Jesus, receive my spirit . . and he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."*

What would you say about Stephen, brutally killed by stoning: was he conquered, or a conqueror? Through this Bible passage, we appreciate the reality of the experience of a believer. In this case, he suffered a violent death, with his body battered by the stones and carried to the cemetery amidst the scenes of crying and sorrow of the rest of the Christians. But, where was Stephen, the person himself, the spiritual being that lived in the body? He himself said, looking at Christ glorified, *"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."* There is absolute confidence and security in his words: he went to heaven! Do you have this assurance?

Let us look now at the second example, the apostle Paul, taken from two of his writings:

Philippians 1:21-23 *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. v. 22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot (know) not. v. 23 For I am in a strait (narrow condition, difficult to decide) betwixt (between) two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better"*

Paul is a prisoner in Rome approximately in the year 62 AD, and he mentions the possibility of his death. What does he say about it? *"With Christ. . . much better."*

2 Timothy 4:6-8 *"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. v. 7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: v. 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."*

This writing is part of the last letter of the apostle Paul, written about 4 years later, in 66 AD, just before he was decapitated. Imprisoned, and with no hope of release, he was facing martyrdom. Nevertheless, what we hear is not the language of one deeply affected by fear or terror, overcome and broken in spirit; rather it is of one who anticipates a change for the better in his circumstances, entering into his triumph, and the glory and joy of meeting Christ. He speaks as an athlete who has reached the goal, as a boxer who has won the fight, and as one that will pass on to be crowned.

I want to share with you the testimony of two people near to us, who, being Christians, faced death. The first is of an aunt stricken with terminal cancer. She was very dear to all of us; we always had a place at her table, and she encouraged us in our service as young believers. The Lord called us to His work in Chile in 1977. In 1982, on the first return to Canada, my father told us at the airport that she was not expected to live. As soon as we could, we traveled to see her. When we entered her room, all of us cried at first, but then, calming, she told us an experience. The previous night she had dreamed that the Lord had returned to seek the believers. In her dream, she rejoiced and exclaimed, "At last He has come!" and felt herself lifting from her bed . . . and at that moment she awoke, realizing that it was only a dream! She described to us the thrill of joy and later, the sensation of sorrow when she realized that it was only a dream. But she added, "But, yes, even so, I will go to be with the Lord very soon." She said it with such simplicity and evident desire, that we felt that she was the fortunate one rather than us, the healthier ones, in that we would have to stay behind in the world, while she went on before us into the presence of Christ.

The second example is of a wife of a fellow servant in the Lord, who is also my cousin. As two married couples, we enjoyed very much working together in the Lord's service. Our departure for Chile separated us geographically, but once again, on a second return trip to Canada, we were met with the news of the terminal sickness of this consecrated young woman. We accompanied them when she was seen by a team of doctors in a hospital specializing in cancer research. They wanted to evaluate the possibility of a liver transplant. We anxiously waited her exit from the consulting room. At last her wheelchair appeared, pushed by her husband. We noticed the peace in her face and a faint smile on her lips. We thought, "There is good news, a positive prognosis!" When she came near, she calmly looked at us, and said, "A beautiful door is opening ahead of me. I am sorry for you, but I am going to meet the Lord." The transplant had been the last medical recourse, but was not feasible. Her response? She looked upward and onward, to her glorious entrance to the Father's House, heaven. She was only 38 years old.

Dear reader, these are two testimonies that I have known. They manifest the reality of the Christian faith in the face of death. We know where we are going: to heaven, where our beloved Savior is now. Wouldn't you like to have this same assurance? You can have it by putting your faith in Christ as your Savior. He will cleanse you from the guilt of sin and make you ready to enter heaven.

QUESTIONS 8 (Answer in the question booklet or on a separate page)

- 1) Job 14:10 When Job questions the whereabouts of a man that dies, what is his uncertainty; the location of the body or of the soul?
- 2) Acts 7:55 Who did Stephen see in the vision?
- 3) Acts 7:51-54, 56-57 Why were the Jews so angry against Stephen?
- 4) Acts 7:59-60 Where did Stephen go when he died?
- 5) Philippians 1:21-23 How did Paul face the possibility of dying?
- 6) 2 Timothy 4:6-8 What did Paul expect after his death?
- 7) We who are believers continue with the same faith today, as we can appreciate in the two testimonies told. Do you have the same assurance?

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #9**SUBJECT "After Death" II What happens with the unbelievers?****REVIEW** Job 14:10 *"But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"* We return to look at this great unknown from a second perspective:**What happens to the unconverted that die?**

The Lord Jesus in His teaching gives us the answer. He himself draws back the curtain from the great beyond, and permits us to see what happens with the unconverted that die in their sins. The story is found in

Luke 16:19-31 *"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: v. 20 And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, v. 21 And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. v. 22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; v. 23 And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. v. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. v. 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. v. 26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. v. 27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: v. 28 For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. v. 29 Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. v. 30 And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. v. 31 And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.*

In contrast with the parables, which were hypothetical cases, this account seems to be a true story: the poor man, for example, had a proper name.

The rich man lived only for the present life, giving no importance either to spiritual things or to eternity. (The rich among the Jews generally said that they were rich because they were pleasing to God, and that as a consequence He blessed them. Without doubt, this story proves to us that it is not necessarily so, and in fact, this rich man was the opposite). The Lord Jesus pointed out the essence of God's Law in the following words in Matthew 22:37-38 *"Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.³⁹ And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."* I ask you: Did this rich man love God? Did he love his neighbour, Lazarus? Evidently, not! This man wasn't grateful to God, or even aware of the necessity of his poor neighbour. He had an excessively luxurious life, and wasn't concerned either about his soul or about pleasing God.

Let us look a little at the poor beggar. His name was Lazarus, which is equivalent in Hebrew to "Eleazer". It means "God is my helper or help" and it seems ironic, considering his circumstances. From the viewpoint of any casual observer, what an unhappy man! Poverty-stricken, full of sores

that the dogs licked, hungry and begging the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table! But when one takes into account eternity, the reality is otherwise. Despite his poverty, we conclude by his name that he was a believing man. The story tells us that when he died, his soul was carried by the angels to paradise, to *Abraham's bosom*."

But if you are not convinced of this relative good fortune of Lazarus, allow me to share another experience that I had with a person who had suffered greatly. One Sunday morning, Mary came to our Christian assembly meeting. She looked terrible, thin and weak. She suffered from lung cancer and breathed with much difficulty. A friend of hers had talked to her about the Lord, about eternity and the need to be saved. In the following weeks, I went to her house often and we talked together of the Lord and of His death on the cross to provide salvation. She came to comprehend the gospel for herself, and confessed Christ as her Savior. But her sickness got worse and the family often called me at night, when she experienced severe respiratory problems. One night it was especially distressing to see her suffering. She fought to breathe. Suddenly she called out, saying, "Lord, heal me." A silence followed, and then her voice again, "The Lord didn't listen to me." I felt a tremendous sorrow, thinking on the ravages of this terrible sickness in her person. When the crisis had passed a little, I came near and spoke with her.

"Mary, is it true that you have understood the gospel, that the death of Christ on the cross pays for your sins?"

"Yes," she answered me.

"Mary, I want you to think a little. I would like you to tell me which you would have preferred: A) a healthy life, without sufferings like this illness, with prosperity and happiness here in the world until you are 70-80 years old, but without a thought about God, eternity or the need of being saved from hell. That would mean to die without Christ, go to hell, and perish for all eternity."

"Or, the alternative B) which is what you have experienced: fall sick with lung cancer, to have to face the frailty of your existence in this world, and to ask yourself, what happens afterwards? That was what brought you to your concern about God, and so you listened with interest to the gospel. You understood the love of God in sending His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for you, and you received Him as your Savior. Now as you anticipate your death, you know that you will awake in heaven, where no ailment ever comes, nor sickness, but only glory and joy forever with the Lord. Mary, looking at these two options, which would be your preference?"

She looked at me with comprehension and peace, and said simply, "The Lord has been good to me." What a tremendous testimony, from one in the midst of the sufferings of a terminal illness! I believe that God permits afflictions and sicknesses in people in order to make them think of how fragile and short is their passage in the world. He wants them to think of the next stage, where they will be, whether in heaven with Christ or in the lake of fire according to what has been their faith with respect to Christ. The human being tends to be proud, to believe himself to be self-sufficient, and lord and master of himself. In love to that person, the Lord intervenes in order to demonstrate to him the opposite and to direct his gaze toward God and eternity. It is a mercy on God's part, even though it comes in the unwelcome form of a sickness, or such circumstance.

Returning to our story, we see that the rich man had obtained what he wanted in life; possessions and a life of pleasure in the world, as Abraham affirms in V. 25: *"But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things..."* If you aspire to riches or material goods, it is very possible that you will obtain them, but at the expense of your spiritual well being. Often riches and possessions end up taking control of a person. They tend to displace and exclude interest in what is spiritual, the salvation of the soul and the true durable riches in Christ. This world is not the total of your existence! In fact it is only a small part, fleeting and short-lived, of what is your eternal existence, as this rich man so tragically discovered.

The moment of his death arrived. What a shocking surprise! *"In hell, he lifted up his eyes, being in torments. . "* In the same moment, in which his soul left his body behind in the earth, he opens his eyes in the flames of hell. In that sphere, even without the body, we see the reality of his conscious experience. He feels the torments of the flames, he experiences a terrible thirst, he reasons, he sees the happiness of the saved afar off, he begs, and he also remembers the situation of his unbelieving brothers still alive in the world. Some say that with death, everything ends. There is nothing farther from the truth! Even without his body, by which his soul had contact with its environment in the world, he is fully conscious. He asks for a little water, but that is refused. He asks that someone go to warn his brothers, so that they wouldn't come to the same place of torments. The answer was that they already had the testimony of the Scriptures, and wouldn't believe even if someone came to them from the tomb. Dear friend, you have even more evidence than he had. You have more Scriptures, including this same story. There are many Bibles and preaching, and there is no lack of invitations to listen to Bible teaching. Give thanks to God that you are not yet in hell! In His mercy, God has permitted you this new opportunity. What have you done up to this moment? What will you do now?

In that time, before the cross, the place of the spirits of the dead was called **Sheol** in the Hebrew of the Old Testament and **Hades** from the Greek of the New Testament. It was divided in two sections; one part was the place of torment, or hell, and the other part was the place of refreshment and comfort, Paradise. We see in the story, that even though they were divided with a great gulf, it was possible to see from one side to the other. When the Lord died on the cross, His soul went to paradise (Luke 23:43), where He was until the moment of His resurrection the third day, when it returned to His body, with the new qualities of the body of glory that all the believers will have. With the entrance of Christ into heaven, those in paradise went with Him, and now there isn't any possibility of intercommunication like we see between Abraham and the rich man in hell.

Returning briefly to the story, I want to propose some questions and supply answers concerning the future of those that die without Christ and go to hell:

a) Will there be a second opportunity, or is there a way to be saved once one has arrived there? Abraham didn't extend any hope to the man. He said that there was a great gulf fixed that didn't permit one to pass from one side to the other. Neither did he offer him another opportunity to improve his life.

- b) Is there real suffering in flames there? V. 23 says, *"in hell, he lifted up his eyes, being in torments..."* v. 24 follows, *"I am tormented in this flame."*

In summary, I beseech you in the Name of the Lord, and for your eternal well being, that you think seriously about this solemn story from the mouth of the very Lord Jesus. What we see in this study is only the beginning of the eternal sufferings of those that refuse to believe in Christ and so reap eternal condemnation. Let me direct you to the beautiful words of the Lord in John 5:24, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."* See how perfectly they respond to the tremendous necessity presented in this story? For the person that now pays heed to the word of Christ, there is a full and absolute guarantee of salvation. I ask that you meditate on this text and that you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved from hell.

QUESTIONS 9 (Answer in the question booklet, or on a separate page)

- 1) Is what the Lord Jesus tells us here a true account? What indicates that it was real?
- 2) What evidence do we see that the rich man wasn't a believer?
- 3) What does the name "Lazarus" mean?
How can you justify that name for a man in such a bad situation?
- 4) What evidences are there in the story of real suffering in hell?
- 5) Many tell me that they will enjoy their time in hell with their friends.
Comment on that, thinking of the request of the rich man concerning his brothers.
- 6) Is there an opportunity to be saved for one who arrives in hell?
- 7) When and how can a person be saved? (John 5:24)

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #10

SUBJECT The Second Coming of Christ (and the Rapture of the Church)

REVIEW Already we have seen in Hebrews 9:28 "... and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation," a secret coming only for His own. 7 years later He will be revealed in glory to intervene in judgment against sin, at the end of the 7 year period of the Great Tribulation. Therefore, the Second Coming has two aspects: today's subject, when he comes in secret to seek his own, the Church, and take us to heaven. Afterwards, the second aspect, when He appears in glory, and the Word says that "every eye shall see Him." These two aspects of the future coming are described respectively as "*the Morning Star*" (Revelation 22:16), and as "*the Sun of Righteousness*" in Malachi 4:1-3. Look at the chart to see these two illustrations.

I. THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING TO TAKE HIS OWN

READ John 14:1-6 "*Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. v. 2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. v. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. v. 4 And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. v. 5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? v. 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*"

These are beautiful words, consoling to the disciples, and ending with the promise "*I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.*" In Titus 2:13, this promise is called "*that blessed hope*" of the believer, and it constitutes the absolute security of the Christian today. Days will become darker, the world goes with hurried step on to destruction, and evil increases, but the one saved through faith in Christ knows where he is going, "*and the glory shines before him*" as the hymn says. Do you have this hope? Or do you not have any such assurance?

II. DETAILS OF WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN HE COMES FOR HIS OWN

READ 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 "*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. v. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. v. 15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. v. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: v. 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. v. 18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*"

The background of this Scripture was the fear of the believers in Thessalonica concerning some of their number that had died as a result of persecution. Paul refers to these as "*them that are asleep*". This describes the believers that die, referring to their bodies as sleeping. We already saw another example of this in Stephen, who "*fell asleep*." Acts 7:60

V. 13 There is consolation for the believers, but a solemn warning for the unconverted: to die without knowing Christ as personal Savior, is to "*have no hope*". How terrible to have to go into eternity without hope!

V. 14 The apostle explains that if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, that also the bodies of those believers will be raised. Their souls are already with Christ in glory, and when Christ comes to seek us, He will bring with Him the souls of those believers that "*sleep in Jesus*." Farther down, he explains that He will raise their bodies, and their souls will reunite with their resurrected bodies.

V. 15 "*By the Word of the Lord*," is an expression clothed with all authority and certainty possible. The apostle describes the details in order:

"we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord" are the believers not deceased, but rather alive even here in the world in the moment of His return.

"shall not prevent them which are asleep" or, will not arrive in heaven before the deceased, neither will they be left behind, (which was the worry of the Thessalonians).

V. 16 Displays the sequence of the events. "*For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.*" He demonstrates His unquestionable and irresistible authority by going through the heavens to arrive at earth and take away from here the living believers and the sleeping bodies. Satan is called "the prince of the power of the air", but he will have to yield to the authority of Christ. "*The dead in Christ shall rise first*" and we see the first phase of the resurrection of life, as is indicated in the chart.

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." What a tremendous event awaits us! What will it be like to come to that meeting with our beloved Savior, who loved us so much that He gave His life for us?

The sequence ends with "*so shall we ever be with the Lord*," and it introduces us to our permanent state, eternally in His presence. Can you imagine a greater contrast between this and that which will be the end of the unconverted? That is described in 2 Thessalonians 1:9, "*Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*"

Do you realize that you will experience one or the other of these situations, depending on what you do now with the Lord Jesus?

Paul ends this passage with words to encourage the Thessalonians, and through them, all of us that share in the same Christian faith; "*and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*"

Would you like to go with Christ when He comes?

Paul mentions how the same Thessalonians had prepared to be ready for the coming of Christ. We can read 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 *“For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; V. 10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”* The Lord calls to Himself those that are truly His, leaving behind all that is only of human religion.

We have to recognize our sin, and understand that it is only Christ who died for us in order to put away once for all our guilt. The text indicates to us that this is how one will be prepared for His coming and will go with Him.

When the Lord promised His disciples that He would come back for them, there was one, Thomas, who didn't understand, as we saw in more detail earlier. I will quote the rest of the conversation in John 14:4-6: *“And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. v. 5 Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? v. 6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*

Do you understand how to get to heaven? The way is the same Lord Jesus. There isn't any other way, and no one comes, but by Him. What are you waiting for? To enter by the Door and consequently the Narrow Way is nothing more or less than believe in Christ as your Savior, whose death on the cross was to put away your sin. Whoever receives Him in their heart as Lord and Savior enters the Door, is on the way to heaven, and is prepared when He comes to seek His own.

QUESTIONS 10 (Answer in the attached question booklet, or on a separate page)

- 1) What do “the Morning Star”? and “the Sun of Righteousness” imply?
- 2) John 14:1-3 What did the Lord promise to His disciples?
- 3) 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 Who are those *“which are asleep”*?
- 4) At the moment when the Lord comes, what will happen to the bodies of the deceased believers?
- 5) Where will the believers be forever, and how will they be?
- 6) 2 Thessalonians 1:9 Where and how will the unconverted be forever?
- 7) 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, John 14:4-6 How can one be prepared when the Lord comes for His own?

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #11**SUBJECT Consequences of the Lord's Coming**

- 1) The Judgment Seat of Christ
- 2) The Door shut for those who had refused to believe before this

A) The Judgment Seat of Christ**READ I) 2 CORINTHIANS 5:1, 6-10**

v. 1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ...

v. 6 Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: v. 7 (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) v. 8 We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. v. 9 Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. v. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

In reading this passage, we realize that it is a summation of the amazing truth of the glorified body replacing the mortal, earthly body in resurrection. This is declared simply in v. 1.

Afterwards, in verses 6-10, Paul expresses the desire to be pleasing to the Lord, because there is a future event in heaven, called the Judgment Seat of Christ, when our service as believers will be reviewed, to be approved and rewarded, or disapproved, by the Lord. This isn't a general judgment of all people, but rather a review of the life of the believers; there won't be any unconverted person present. It will be a solemn moment for the Christian; an examination of his life. To be a Christian is a very responsible privilege and we should bear His Name and testimony with dignity.

It is very important to note the attitude that Paul shows facing the eventuality of death: *"and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."* The Lord Jesus had ascended to heaven, and Paul has the confidence that upon dying he would immediately be in His presence, without delay, nor having to pass through an intermediate stage such as purgatory as is taught erroneously in the Roman Catholic Church. In fact, in no part of the Bible is there any allusion to a concept such as is suggested by "purgatory." Our sins never can be purged by our own sufferings; rather the Word of God affirms in Hebrews 1:3, concerning the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, *"Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."* Clearly, it is the sufferings of Christ on the cross that are effective to take away our sin, and they are sufficient also to sanctify the sinner who believes in Him, without the sinner adding anything to His work. Listen to another testimony from the same letter to the Hebrews that states this: (Hebrews 10:10-14) *"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. v. 11 And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: v. 12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for*

sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; v. 13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. v. 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” I have cited this passage extensively to show with absolute clarity the sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ to completely take away the sin of the believer. He thus sanctifies him, and makes him suitable to enter immediately into the presence of God. Because of this, the apostle Paul speaks with such certainty about the subject of what would happen to him after his death.

II) I CORINTHIANS 3:10-15

V. 10 “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. v. 11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. v. 12 Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; v. 13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. v. 14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. v. 15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” The subject dealt with here by the apostle isn't the salvation or condemnation of the individual, but rather that of his service, whether it is pleasing to the Lord or not.

Paul speaks of himself as the one that had planted the assembly and asks how the others were contributing to its development and building up.

He asks what materials were being used and assures the believers that their works would be tested by the fire, which is the penetrating and examining eye of the Lord, the Judge of our service and works. The apostle teaches that the works would be approved or disapproved according to the criteria of the Lord, and for this reason there would be rewards given according to the level of approval. *“If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved..”* The Bible teaches the full security of eternal salvation for the believer in Christ.

III) II TIMOTHY 4:8

“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

Paul speaks of the crown that he would receive as a reward in that day. He was confident of having served the Lord well and of having pleased Him. With great desire he looks forward to that day of his meeting Christ.

Now, if you are a believer in Christ as Savior, allow me to ask you, “Brother, sister, are you interested in winning a crown?” Some, with false modesty, say that it doesn't interest them. But, the earned crown will be an indication that you have given yourself for the Lord and His cause; counting His Person and testimony worthy of your consecration and sacrifice. In contrast, he that will be there in the presence of the Lord without a crown, will show that he didn't love the Lord, nor His coming, and had lived more for his own pleasure. Is that what you want to say to the Lord?

B) The Closed Door for those who had refused to believe before.

Let us think a little now about another aspect of this subject of the Lord's Coming. Is there anything that lets us know how much time you might have left to be saved?

The answer is "Yes": in effect, the Bible indicates to us that there are two factors or events that put a limit to the period of opportunity to be saved:

- i) The Death of the Individual, and...
- ii) The Coming of the Lord Jesus for His own

Our theme passage, Matthew 7:13-14, tells us of an open Door of salvation, which all are invited to enter: *"Enter ye in at the strait gate..."* But the question is, "will this door be open indefinitely?" The answer comes from the parallel passage in Luke.

LUKE 13:22-30, especially v. 24:

v. 22 *"And he went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem. v. 23 Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, v. 24 Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. v. 25 When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: v. 26 Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. v. 27 But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. v. 28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. v. 29 And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. v. 30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."*

"are there few that be saved?" The answer of the Lord was ***"Strive to enter in at the strait gate"*** "Strive" is an intense word that implies that one should not permit anything or anyone to hinder him from entering the narrow gate. Proof of that is in Matthew 5:29-30; and 18:8-9 where the Lord says that it was preferable to take out your eye, or cut off your hand, if temptation to sin through them were impediments to being saved.

WHAT HINDERS YOU FROM BELIEVING IN CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOR?

"many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" - future, but when?
"when once the master of the house has risen up and shut to the door.."

This refers to the time of the coming of Christ, the Bridegroom, for His bride, when those that are prepared will enter (illustrated in Matthew 25:1-13).

Then the rest too will want to enter, with all sincerity and desire, but they won't be able.

"I KNOW YOU NOT WHENCE YOU ARE. ." These are unbelievers, who like many had heard the good news of the invitation and salvation, but had refused it. I hope that you are not one of this number, who will hear the following . . .

"depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you shall see . . . and you yourselves thrust out."

They are those who had been the most privileged, but having refused; they will be the worst in condemnation.

THE INVITATION But you still have time, in this day of grace and invitation, while you still have life in your body here on the earth, and before the Lord returns.

"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest . . . learn of me . . . and ye shall find rest unto your souls. . ." (Matthew 11:28-29). These are the sweet words of the Savior who did so much for you on the cross.

QUESTIONS 11 (Answer in the question booklet attached, or on a separate page.)

- 1) 2 Cor. 5:1, 6-10 What will happen to the body of the believer?
- 2) Who will be present at the "*Judgment Seat of Christ*"?
- 3) 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 What will be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ?
What matter will not be in question?
- 4) 2 Timothy 4:8 What is promised to all who love the Lord's coming?
- 5) Luke 13:22-30 What is implied in the expression, "*strive to enter in at the strait gate?*"
- 6) What are the two events that will end the possibility of being saved?
- 7) Matthew 11:28-29 What is the invitation of the Lord even now?

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #12**SUBJECT: The Consequences of the Lord's Coming (2)**

War in Heaven: Satan Cast Out

READ Revelation 12:7-12a

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, v. 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. v. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. v. 10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. v. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. v. 12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them.

A great battle is unleashed in heaven at this point because the presence of Satan is not compatible with the presence of the Church in heaven. The archangel Michael and his angels fight against the dragon and his angels. No doubt it will be a battle much greater than any version of "Star Wars"!! The dragon cannot prevail, is conquered and thrown out of heaven. Let's see some of the names that are given to him here in the passage:

"Old Serpent," from Genesis 3:1, when he tempted Adam and Eve.

"Devil," signifying "Accuser" and this activity is mentioned below in verse 10.

"Satan," which means "Adversary."

It says that he deceives the entire world. The world's fascination with him is universal; nevertheless, humanity is a voluntary accomplice in his shameful deceit and follows him eagerly. But, "who is right?" Is it the world that is right, with its insatiable appetite for sin, immorality, corruption, parties, drunkenness and shameful performance spectacles? Or is it the handful of Christians, who, fearing God and despised by the world, now fight against sin? Here in this passage we see the world's champion, Satan, expelled, hurled out of heaven. The opinion of God is very evident in this case! We come to the conclusion that THE WORLD IS WRONG!! It only waits for the moment when God in His own time will demonstrate this to them in this dramatic way.

AN EXAMPLE of this: Noah testified of the coming judgment during the more than 100 years that he took in building the ark, but no one outside of his immediate family (7 persons more), believed him. The entire world was against him; nevertheless the entire world was wrong and perished, overwhelmed by the floodwaters. Hebrews 11:7 says that "*By faith Noah. . . condemned the world.*" We have looked at Matthew 7:13-14 repeatedly already, where it affirms that "many" go to perdition, while there are "few" who are saved. Are you among "the many" or "the few"?

With Satan cast down to earth, he is no longer "*the prince of the power of the air.*" The complete authority of Christ comes into effect in heaven. "*Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.*" "*Salvation*" refers here to complete salvation, without the presence of sin or the evil adversary that constantly accused the brethren.

Verse 11 is very illuminating. "*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*" It attributes to the believers victory over Satan . . . in what sense?

"*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb.*" The work that He provided to put away our sin gave place to the elimination of the evidence which was the basis of Satan's accusations against them in the presence of God: He removed their sins!

"*and by the word of their testimony*" The gospel preached by them had reached to others, delivering them also from the lie of Satan, and bringing them to saving faith in Christ.

"*They loved not their lives unto the death.*" As faithful witnesses, they preferred to die rather than to be quiet and cease to give testimony for Christ, or to deny Him. The Lord proclaims the glory of His triumph over the enemy, the Devil. Many fear to join themselves to Christ nowadays for fear of the criticism and reproach they would receive for Christ. But we see that the future and eternal triumph and glory is for those who are Christ's. See the truth of this great reality, dear reader, and receive Christ as your Savior and Lord now.

Returning to our present time, when Satan is yet at his peak of popularity, let us look at something of his activity and evil intentions.

A. HIS ACTIVITY AGAINST THE UNBELIEVER TODAY

READ 2 Corinthians 4:3-6

"*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: v.4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. v. 5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. v. 6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*

We see that his activity as "*god of this world*" is against the purposes that God has for the blessing of mankind. Satan tries to blind them, covering their eyes so that the interested person does not see "*the light of the glorious gospel of Christ,*" which is the "*light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*"

READ Colossians 1:12-14

"*Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: v. 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: v. 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:*"

This passage shows us that salvation delivers the sinner from the power of Satan. "*Redemption,... forgiveness of sins*" Without that, we would be condemned automatically, dead because of sin. But in redemption, Christ takes the responsibility for our sins. As a result, the condemnation does not fall again upon the sinner, but upon his Redeemer. If the sinner receives Christ as his Redeemer, Christ answers for him. Condemnation now is not inevitable.

B. THE ACTIVITY OF SATAN AGAINST THE SAVED ONES

1 Peter 5:8 *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”*

Now remember Revelation 12:7-11:

Devil = Accuser, ---accuses the brethren

Satan = Adversary

What, or who guards us from his accusations now? Again the answer comes from the Scriptures themselves:

1 John 2:1-2 *“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: v. 2 And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”*

Christ is our defense lawyer. When Satan brings to view our sins and accuses us before God, Christ arises to defend us on the basis of the work to put away sin that He accomplished for those same sins on the cross.

Do you have a defense lawyer? You can have one by receiving Christ.

But, for the believer, what joy and relief, when 1) we will be called to rise to heaven, and 2) sin then will no longer be within us, and 3) the law of sin then will not operate against us, and 4) when the accuser has been cast out! Wouldn't you like to have this prospect before you? It will be yours today if you receive Christ as your Savior and Lord.

QUESTIONS 12 (Answer in the question booklet attached, or on a separate page)

- 1) Revelation 12:7-12a In this passage, why does Satan have to be cast out of heaven?
- 2) What do his names mean? DEVIL _____
SATAN _____
- 3) What historical example do we have that the great majority can be wrong?
- 4) 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 How does the devil work against the unbelievers now?
- 5) Colossians 1:12-14 What price of redemption did Christ have to pay for us?
- 6) 1 Peter 5:8 What does the devil do against the believers?
- 7) 1 John 2:1-2 Explain how Christ acts as a defense lawyer on behalf of the believer.

Is Christ your defense lawyer?

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #13

SUBJECT Events on the Earth during the 7 years of the Tribulation

READ 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 *“We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. v. 2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)”*

This passage exhorts us to take advantage of the present day of salvation. Once Christ has come to take His church, all who are not saved will be left behind and will experience the horrors of deception and carnage during the tribulation.

This topic affects those left behind when the rapture of the Church takes place at the coming of Christ. Why take up these prophetic passages in a series of studies in the gospel? Here are two reasons:

- 1) The study of future events brings out the importance of being saved now.
- 2) To show how short the time will be for those who are left behind.

READ 1) Revelation 12:12b *“Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”*

This is the beginning of the tribulation. Satan already is cast out of heaven, and with his area of action more limited, he concentrates his campaign against God on the earth.

In the year 445 BC (before Christ) in Nehemiah 2, we read the decree for the reconstruction of the city of Jerusalem. Daniel 9:24-27 gives in detail 70 weeks (of years) determined from this date. 69 weeks (483 years) are measured out until the death of the Messiah (Christ). With the death of Jesus, the prophetic calendar stopped, giving place to the present period. This is the day, or period of grace, of an indeterminate duration, that will last until the return of Christ for the Church, a subject that we have already seen in lesson 10. Only one week of years remains, in order to complete the 70 weeks until He returns in glory and judgment at the end of the Great Tribulation.

In the present lesson, the calendar of prophecy begins to run again, the calendar of 70 weeks of years (Daniel 9). This was interrupted at week 69 by the death of Christ and the long period of grace that has been prolonged until our days. Only one week is left until the coming of Christ in splendour and glory, to fight against his enemies. Satan knows... *“that he hath but a short time”* and through the information given above, we know that it is one week of years, or 7 years.

From the reading of Daniel 9:27, we note that it speaks of a covenant made between the coming evil prince and the nation of Israel for the last week, a covenant of apparent peace. However, in the middle of the week, he will break the covenant and will set up an image in the holy place of the temple in Jerusalem. In different scriptures, this image is called the *“abomination of desolation”* (Daniel 11:31; 12:11; Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:4). This event will convince the Jews that this prince is false, because one sent by God would never raise up an idol in the holy place of the temple. As a result, Israel turns against him and the second half of the Tribulation commences, called the *“Great Tribulation,”* because of its ferocity against Israel.

READ 2) Revelation 13:1-2, 11-18

“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. v. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

v. 11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. v. 12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. v. 13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, v. 14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. v. 15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. v. 16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: v. 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. v. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.”

The Beast that Rises from the Sea. In the Bible, the sea symbolizes the Gentile nations, and for this reason it is supposed that this person (human, but with fierce beastly qualities) is a gentile man (not a Jew). He has 10 crowns and 7 heads that imply his ample dominion and he is the last great gentile dictator. The description of his qualities associates him with the gentile powers described in the vision of Daniel 7. (Babylonian = lion; Medo-Persia = bear; Greek = leopard; Rome = combination. Here in the last one, that represents revived Rome, we see a dictator that is still future.) As here in Revelation 13, the beasts of Daniel 7 came from the sea; in other words, from the nations.

Returning to Revelation 13, we see various details:

- Satan will give him power, a throne, and great authority (what Christ refused when He was tempted by Satan in Matthew 4:8-9).
- He will have a monopoly of political power as a worldwide dictator.
- He will make an alliance with world religious powers for 3½ years: with the Roman Catholic and Protestant apostate Christendom still on earth after the snatching away of the true Church to heaven; the alliance also will include the Jews, as well as other religions of the world.

vs. 4-8 the worship of the beast. They will credit Satan with the divine attributes of omnipotence (total power) and invincibility. But in the middle of the week, he will remove his benevolent mask and will turn against all religion (2 Thessalonians 2:4 *“the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”*), because his real intention is to proclaim himself as God, and he will oblige all the world to worship him, or if not, to be killed.

The Beast that rises from the earth. The earth is associated with the Jews, so this man will be a Jew, a prophet, who promotes the cause of the first beast. We see that . . .

- He exercises authority, doing great signs like those done by the servants of God in other times, but now with the purpose of deceiving.

- He commands them to make an image of the first Beast; he gives it "life" and he demands that all worship it or suffer the death penalty.

- Every person will have to demonstrate their affiliation with the worship of the Beast by receiving his identifying mark, the number 666.

This image is the same "*abomination of desolation*", and as we commented earlier, it will lead to Israel realizing the falsity of the Beast. It is probable that it will be at this time that the 144,000 sealed ones will go out to preach, a number composed of 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel (Revelation 7:1-8, 14:1-5). They will be a great evangelical force during those very difficult times of the tribulation. Then commences the time of the Great Tribulation. In one sense, the religious panorama will have simplified now that there will remain only two options for the people: they will have to believe in the Beast and his false prophet, or in Christ, as announced by the 144,000 valiant preachers. The rest of the religions will be banned.

READ Revelation 14:9-11 *"And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, v. 10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: v. 11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."* This solemn passage shows that the condemnation will fall upon all those who follow the Beast. All who carry his mark, 666, in their forehead or in their hand, are destined to the Lake of Fire. What tremendous pressure and difficulty for the dwellers on the earth! Who will be the ones affected by these horrific events? Those that are left behind when the Lord comes for His people! Dear reader, don't you see the urgency of receiving Christ now, before the Lord comes and this series of nightmares takes place?

But some will say: "If I am left behind on the earth at that time, I will know not to receive the mark of the Beast." However, we see from the Scriptures, that you won't be left with that option. Let us read in . . .

READ 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 *"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; v. 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. v. 5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? v. 6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. v. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. v.8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: v.9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, v. 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. v. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: v. 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."*

Verses 4-9 identify this person as the same Beast. It is possible that he exists now, even before the coming of Christ, even in our days, but his malignant action is hindered by the presence of the Holy Spirit in and through the church (vv. 6-8). The Lord Himself will kill him in His own time, v. 8, in His coming in glory at the end of the tribulation, as we see farther on in Revelation 19. Before that, in his malignant activity against the purposes of God for the blessing of humanity, he will exercise such a power to deceive that will be impossible to resist. Even more, God will use him to punish those who had refused to believe in Christ, and thus will guarantee the perdition of those that despise His great salvation provided at so great a cost by His beloved Son. We see in verses 11, 12, *"And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."* I don't know another more solemn passage in all the Scriptures. Today, God exercises His power on behalf of the sinner that believes unto salvation: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth"* (Romans 1:16). But here, in this scene of judgment, the power of God is directed against those that had refused to believe. The same power of God that guarantees the security of the believer, now guarantees the condemnation of the unbeliever!

We must carefully consider that very little time remains before all this takes place. We already noted that it is possible that this person, the Beast, is now alive in some part of the world. The Lord can come in any moment, even today, to take home the church. Upon His coming, the 7 brief and terrible years of the last week that Daniel prophesied will begin to run. Every person that now has heard the gospel and has refused to believe it, will remain under condemnation and will have at the most 7 years more to live! Note carefully the exhortation that the Lord gives us in 2 Corinthians 6:1-2.. *"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)"*

It is significant that the very context of this passage speaks of the necessary reconciliation of man with God. I invite you to read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 carefully. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. v. 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; v. 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. v. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. v. 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."*

The sinner that has received Christ as his Savior is described as *"in Christ"* and *"a new creature,"* or *"a new creation."* He has been reconciled to God, and it is God himself who has made it possible. Even more, He has entrusted His servants, preachers of the gospel, with this message of reconciliation to those who are still unbelieving listeners, that they may continue to hear while the day of grace continues. *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."* This passage ends with the explanation of how it is possible that we unjust sinners can be reconciled with God.

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." What are you waiting for, friend? Be reconciled this very hour with God through Jesus, His Son.

QUESTIONS 13 (Answer in the question booklet attached, or on a separate page)

- 1) 2 Corinthians 6:1-2 When is it best to believe in Christ as your Savior?
- 2) After Christ comes for His church, what is the maximum time that will remain for the unsaved left on the earth?
- 3) Rev. 13:1-2, 11-18, 2 Thess. 2:4 What will be the real intention of the last great world-wide dictator, the Beast?
- 4) Rev. 13:16-18 What is the mark that will identify all the followers of the Beast?
- 5) Rev. 14:9-11 What condemnation awaits those that receive the mark of the Beast?
- 6) 2 Thess. 2:3-12 What will guarantee the perdition of all those that have refused to believe in Christ?
- 7) 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 Explain in your own words how one can be reconciled with God today and saved in this way from being on the earth during that Tribulation.

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #14

SUBJECT The Marriage of the Lamb

READ Revelation 19:1-9 *“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: v. 2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. v. 3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. v. 4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. v. 5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. v. 6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. v. 7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. v. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. v. 9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”*

Vs. 1-3 There is rejoicing in heaven because of the destruction of false and apostate Christianity, *“the great whore”* who represents the great ecumenical system. This system, headed by Rome, had caused the death of thousands of Christians in different periods of history.

The Beast, that set up himself not only as a dictator but now also as God, demands for himself the exclusive worship of the inhabitants of the earth, and will try to destroy all and every other faith. These details help us to locate the time of the marriage of the Lamb. It appears to take place in the 2nd half of the 7 years of tribulation. We can picture that the marriage of the Lamb will be a heavenly joyful gathering of 3½ years duration, followed afterwards by the “honeymoon” of 1000 years of the millennial reign of Christ over the earth, beginning with the “Marriage Supper”. (See note at end of lesson)

Vs. 6-9 The announcement of the Marriage of the Lamb

Who is the Lamb? **Jesus.** We remember the words of John the Baptist in John 1:29: *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* Thus John, who proclaimed His coming, described the saving mission of Jesus. He effectively completed His mission, and suffered death for sin on the cross. Here we see the same Christ, the crucified One, but now resurrected, and seated in triumph and glory.

Who is the Bride? **The Church.** Ephesians 5:25-27 *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ²⁶That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”*

“Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it”, and we appreciate His sacrificial love for the believers. Now He will celebrate the Marriage with His beloved, purchased at such a high cost.

“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word.” SANCTIFICATION describes the process of separating a person from his sin, and it commences before conversion. It describes the effect that is produced in a reader and hearer, when the Spirit

of God applies the Word of God, the words of the Bible, to the conscience. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 *"But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: ¹⁴Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."* This passage mentions the *"sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth"* that describe what happens in the hearer when he listens to the gospel. He learns about God's holiness, and takes account of his sin and the consequences in punishment and eternal judgment. This person begins to lose his enjoyment of sin, and to leave behind sinful practices and his old friends. The separation from sin and toward God has commenced. Romans 1:17 adds, *"For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. . ."* and this shows another facet of the truth. *"From faith to faith"* points to the same process of understanding the truths of the gospel. You read with faith, accepting the truth and submitting yourself to it, instead of rejecting it or arguing with God. This is *"by faith"*. That learning brings you to the point of comprehending that for your situation as a condemned sinner, a crucified Jesus, believed in as Lord and Savior, is the only salvation. If in this critical moment of your approach to God, you believe, and accept Him as your Savior, then you have experienced the *"to faith"*, that is the object of believing in the gospel; it is the salvation of your soul.

Returning to Ephesians 5:27, we read *"That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing"*. With this expression we understand that He desires more than only our salvation from sin; His purpose is to see us perfected, and sharing in His glory in heaven.

BUT, WHO IS THE CHURCH?

First, what it is not. It is not a denomination or religious group of a human organization on earth, neither is it the great system of Christendom (as in contrast to Islam, Buddhism, etc.)

Yes, it is the sum total of all the persons who are genuine believers in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior; all those that have entered through *"the door."* Recall the words of the theme text for this series of studies: Matt. 7:13-14. Those who enter by the door are they who form part of the Church, the bride of Christ.

Returning to Revelation 19:8-9 . . . v. 8 *"arrayed (clothed) in fine linen clean and white. . ."* (of a resplendent whiteness). The clothing of the bride is of pristine elegance, to accompany the Lord. The fine linen is *"the righteousness of saints"* examined and approved according to the previous Judgment Seat of Christ, a subject that we have already seen.

V. 9 *"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. . ."*

Bible scholars suggest that there is a difference between the "Marriage of the Lamb" and what comes afterwards, called the "Marriage Supper". The Marriage itself will take place in heaven, immediately after the Judgment Seat of Christ, (Lesson 11) just as seen in the chart. Then Christ will return to earth in glory, and destroy the Beast (Lesson 15), which will bring to an end the Tribulation. Christ then sets up the Millennial kingdom (Lesson 16), and perhaps the first event will be the celebration of the Marriage Supper, here on the earth. Those present will be the triumphant Lamb with His glorious wife, the Church, and many invited guests, the "blessed" ones, who are the believers of other ages (the Old Testament and Tribulation) who do not form part of the Church. In other words, all the believers of all the ages will be present in this grand celebration!

QUESTIONS 14 (Answer in the question booklet attached, or on a separate page)

- 1) Rev. 19:1-3 Indicate one of the motives for the rejoicing of the great multitude in heaven.
- 2) Rev. 19:7-8 Here we see two positive motives for the rejoicing: What are they?
A.____ B.____
- 3) Rev. 19:6 (John 1:29) Who is the Lamb?
- 4) Rev. 19:6 (Ephesians 5:25-27) And Who is the Bride?
- 5) Ephesians 2:25 How do we know that Christ loves the Church?
- 6) Who make up the Church, the Bride of Christ? Will you be at the Marriage of the Lamb?

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #15

**SUBJECT: The Revelation of the Lord Jesus in Glory,
His coming as "The Sun of Righteousness"**

READ Revelation 19:11-21 *"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. v. 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. v. 13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. v. 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. v. 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. v. 16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. v. 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; v. 18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. v. 19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. v. 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. v. 21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh. "*

This impressive passage presents to us the glory of Him that rides on the white horse, Christ in His glory, in His glorious manifestation to bring to an end the period of the seven years of tribulation. We note some outstanding details:

I) The heavens open and He appears in fine garments, that exhibit His experience and title as Redeemer and Universal Sovereign.

II) He is mounted on a white horse, giving evidence of His holiness and righteousness, and leading His entire army, all clothed in resplendent white.

III) His titles as Faithful, True (with righteousness He judges and makes war) THE WORD OF GOD, KING OF KINGS, LORD OF LORDS. What we see is nothing less than God, the Son, intervening in the world against all iniquity and rebellion; it is a display of His majesty, holiness and anger against sin and against all those that, having refused His offer of salvation, were caught outside, not having entered by the door. His coming for the Church has sealed the judgment of the unbelievers, and now they will feel the terror of His glory against them.

IV) He comes to judge and fight against the beast, and those armies of the world gathered against Jerusalem. This is the same scene as the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16). *"The Supper of the great God"* is God calling to the carnivorous birds to sate themselves on the many corpses from the battle. Here is some explanation of the context:

The Beast had made a covenant with the religions of the world, including Israel for the first half of the time that lasts 3½ years. At this time, he discards his mask, and manifests his true intention: He wants to be god (2 Thess. 2:3-4), and intends to destroy whatever religion or religious

entity that is opposed to the exclusive worship of himself. It is in this context that he destroys Babylon, the great harlot, apostate Christendom. He also defies the Jews, making the offerings cease in the temple by this time already constructed in Jerusalem, *"so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God."* (2 Thess. 2:4) and he will also raise up an image of himself there (Rev. 13:14-15).

When Israel comes to realize his deceit, they will rebel against him, which will provoke the commencement of the bloody persecutions against them. That will lead into the second half of the "week", the 3½ years of the Great Tribulation. When the few Jews that remain finally recognize the Crucified as their Messiah, He, the Lord Jesus Christ, intervenes from heaven to save them, and to destroy the Beast and his army. This is the battle of Armageddon, Rev. 16:12-16.

After He judges the Beast and destroys his army, the Lord Jesus calls to himself the living nations of the earth. Matthew 25:31-46 describes the scene in more detail: *"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: v. 32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: v. 33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. v. 34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: v. 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: v. 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. v. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? v. 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? v. 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? v. 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. v. 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: v. 42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: v. 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. v. 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? v. 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. v. 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."*

This judgment is called the **Judgment of the Living Nations**. We see that none will remain alive who are not believers in Christ. *"These shall go away into everlasting punishment."* Only the saved ones survive (those believers that have not suffered martyrdom from the hands of the beast during the tribulation) and will enter into the earthly Millennial Kingdom of Christ. That emphasizes the solemn truth concerning the little time that will remain for the unconverted who are left behind when Christ comes for His Church. They will have a maximum of 7 years to live.

To finish this subject, we must also see 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 *"Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; v. 7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, v. 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: v. 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; v. 10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe"*

(because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.” The future is solemn for those that refuse to believe.

Yes, the Lord Jesus will come back in a future day, not in humility as when He came to be born in Bethlehem, nor as when He comes to seek and take away to Himself the Church, His bride. He will come back, 7 years later, in glory, power and authority, to judge and fight against those that have persisted in their rebellion against Him. No rebel will remain alive in the world. Don't you see that you must repent now, in this favorable day of grace and gospel preaching, before these terrible days of the tribulation come? The Lord says *"I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured (saved) thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."* (2 Corinthians 6:2). Neither the *"day of salvation"* nor *"the time accepted"* will be forever. It is the time now to seek the Lord.

QUESTIONS 15 (Answer in the attached question booklet, or on a separate page)

- 1) Rev. 19:11-21 At what moment of the prophetic chronology will the Lord Jesus come in glory as is described in this passage?
- 2) What details of the description show His terrible majesty, and quality as Judge? (vv. 11, 12, 15)
- 3) What are the titles given to Him in this passage?
- 4) Rev.19:19 (Rev. 16:13-14) Who comes to fight against the Lord, the all-powerful God?
- 5) Rev. 19:20 What happens with the Beast and the false prophet?
- 6) Rev. 19:21 What happens to the armies gathered together against the Lord?
- 7) Matt. 25:31-46 Later Christ judges the living nations. At the end of this judgment, how many unbelievers will remain alive on the earth? (v. 46)
- 8) If a person is left behind here on the earth when Christ comes for His Church, what is the maximum time that he will have left to live?
- 9) Thanks to God, we are not in this epoch of the Tribulation: even now we are still in the day of grace. What is advisable that you do now? (2 Corinthians 6:2)

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #16**SUBJECT****The 1000 Year Reign of Christ**

READ Revelation 20:1-10 *“And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. v. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, v. 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. v. 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. v. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. v. 6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. v. 7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, v. 8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. v. 9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. v. 10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.”*

Previous Chronology: We have already seen what goes before this; the coming of Christ in glory, the defeat of the Beast and his being cast into the lake of fire.

Events mentioned here: 1) The devil is bound with chains, and imprisoned in the bottomless pit (the abyss) for 1000 years, the duration of the Millennial Reign of Christ on the earth. His work of deception won't continue until the end of this period, as we will see later.

2) The “Judgment of the Living Nations” is also described in passing in verse 4; this we saw in the previous lesson.

3) There is also mention of the martyrs, those beheaded for the cause of Christ during the difficult years of the tribulation. They experience resurrection, and will live and reign with Christ during His reign. They form a part of the resurrection of life, blessed in that they are in the company of Christ. They will never suffer any more separation from God, and much less, *“the second death”*, which is eternity in the Lake of Fire.

4) It is interesting to note the mention of events that will take place at the end of the reign of 1000 years. Verse 5 says, *“But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.”* This points out the difference between the resurrection of life and the resurrection of condemnation that John tells us about in John 5:28-29. *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, v. 29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”* They are separated by 1000 years, and they contrast with each other in their results. All those that have part in the different phases of the first resurrection, that of life, are saved, and they will be in fellowship with Christ. On the other hand, all those that

die unconverted will participate in the resurrection of condemnation and will be eternally excluded from the presence of God, in the Lake of Fire.

Another event that will take place at the end of the Millennium is that Satan will be released, to return for a short time to the earth. His liberation and renewed deceit will put to the test the very privileged inhabitants on the earth who had experienced that time of the 1000 year reign of Christ. We have not spoken much about the characteristics of that reign. It seems that it will be a time very like the conditions of paradise in Eden. Here we see a passage in Isaiah that describes the Millennium:

Isaiah 65:19 “And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. v. 20 There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. v. 21 And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. v. 22 They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. v. 23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. v. 24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. v. 25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.”

This and other passages describe the beautiful conditions of holiness and justice. The Lord himself, directly or through a prince, will govern, and the evil will be judged. There will be longevity of life; a child would die at 100 years. There will not be any uncontrolled delinquency. The animals will cease their savagery. There will be abundance and prosperity for everyone. There will be 1000 years of social justice. What reason will remain for man to rebel against God? It appears, NONE! But at the end of the 1000 years, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to once again conquer the hearts of men and will turn them to enmity against God. And he will achieve his objective! Men, despite the blessings of the millennium, will rise up in arms against the Lord. What does this teach us? That man is a sinner from his heart and the root of his rebellion is not the environment or the injustices of life. Even under the best conditions possible, he will rebel against the Lord and will choose to follow the devil.

The passage shows us in brief words the outcome: All are destroyed with fire sent from heaven, while Satan is cast into the Lake of Fire, the place where the Beast and the False Prophet already will have been for 1000 years.

You cannot escape your responsibility of giving account to God. It is common nowadays to blame the lack of education or of adequate social policy, etc., for the evils that we see in our environment. But, the root problem is sin within the human heart. We have seen that in spite of the best social conditions, man will return to rebel against God. The only solution is the new life that God gives upon believing in Christ as Savior. He gives us a new life now, and in heaven, He will take away from us forever the sinful nature that is rebellious against God. It is the salvation that you need!

QUESTIONS 16 (Answer in the attached question booklet, or on a separate page)

- 1) What effect will there be in the world as the result of the devil being bound for the duration of the Millennium?
- 2) What will happen to the martyrs, "*the beheaded*" of Rev. 20:4?
- 3) Is there one general resurrection of all who have died? What differences are there between the resurrection of life and the resurrection of condemnation?
- 4) What events will take place involving the devil at the end of the Millennium? vv. 7-9
- 5) How will this last act of rebellion against God end?
- 6) We learn of the ideal conditions of the Millennium, and the fact of the rebellion at the end. What does this teach us about the root of human evil?
- 7) What is the only remedy that is effective for this evil?

The Two Roads and The Two Destinies #17**SUBJECT The Judgment of the Great White Throne**

READ Revelation 20:11-15 *“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. v. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. v. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. v. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. v. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

In this present study we will see the solemn subject of the final judgment of the lost. Here all those from every period of time that died in their rebellion against God will be called to appear in judgment.

Verse 11 presents to us *“a great white throne”*, high, imposing, resplendent in its whiteness, and speaking of the holiness of the judgment that will emanate from that august place. Afterwards the passage focuses our attention on *“Him that sat on it”* or, the occupant of the throne, the judge. The question arises, “Who is the Judge?” I quote two verses that give us the answer:

John 5:22 *“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son”*

2 Tim. 4:1 *“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom”*

It is evident that the fearful Judge will be none less than the same Lord Jesus Christ, but now in His capacity as Judge. We could ask ourselves, why does His person cause so much terror in this scene? It says *“from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. . .”* and it makes me think of the description that is in Rev. 1:12-16 of the glory of His person; glory that He exhibits at this moment in the presence of God in heaven. *“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; v. 13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. v. 14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; v. 15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. v. 16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.”* The author of this description is the beloved apostle John, and even he continues: *“And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. . .”* The Lord comforts him and assures him that nothing will happen to him.

Nevertheless, for a rebellious person that has passed his life refusing to believe in Christ as Lord and Savior, this meeting with Him as Judge will be dreadful. John sees the tremendous glory of His face, resplendent as the sun shining in its power. No one can look at the sun. He adds that His eyes are as a flame of fire, scrutinizing, penetrating, terrible in judgment since they discover everything. His voice is as the noise of many waters, His tongue as a sharp sword, and in His right hand are seven stars symbolizing absolute sovereignty and authority to dispense judgment and justice. His existence is undeniable. Have you taken this into account?

Verses 12, 13 describe what John 5:28-29 calls "*the resurrection of condemnation*". We see "*the dead, small and great, stand before God*". "The dead" refers to all the lost that have died. They are raised to appear in judgment before God, without any difference between social classes, etc. The distinctions of education, profession, level of income, religion or nationality will no longer exist. They share one great common factor—they have refused to believe in Christ. When we read in v. 13 that the sea and death deliver their dead, it speaks of the delivery of the remains of the bodies put there. At the same time, the mention of hell giving up its dead, has to do with the souls of the dead. They will come up from hell to return to be reunited with their bodies in what constitutes resurrection. Every person that dies will experience resurrection. Either it will be "of life", to enter the glory with Christ forever, or in this solemn case of those who are unbelievers, the resurrection "of condemnation", when they will be obliged to appear before Christ to be sentenced and cast into the eternal Lake of Fire. Can you see that death doesn't end all?

Next the books are mentioned: "*the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.*" No doubt different classes of books will be present.

a) the books of your sins that make up the formal, condemning evidence.

b) the Bible. The Lord says in John 12:46-48 "*I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. v. 47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. v. 48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.*" We have the word of Christ in the Bible, and the presence of the Bible will be the evidence that God has fully informed men concerning all these things.

c) The *Book of Life* will be present. It is a register of the saved, of the "born again" ones, the believers in Christ. The names of those present in this judgment will be sought in vain. The absence of their names in this book will prove that they never believed. This is not a general judgment that includes every human being. It is a judgment only for the lost; because of this, their names are not found in the Book of Life.

"*The books were opened*", and the judgment commences. One can imagine the scene: all the dead, the lost, standing before the Judge. All eternity is ahead; there is no shortage of time. Every individual will experience the dread of listening for their name to be called to appear alone before the terrible supreme authority of the universe. One time a brother of ours, when preaching the gospel asked, "What will it be for those men that blasphemed and lifted up their hands to beat the Lord Jesus, to meet Him in this scene so different: He, now not as the Lamb of God, meek, bound and humiliated, but rather exalted on the Great White Throne and clothed in resplendent light? How mute they will be with terror!" But they won't be the only ones! Every human being that had the boldness to refuse Christ as Lord and Savior will experience this terror. What is your attitude toward Christ? If you do not receive Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you will appear among the accused in this terrible final judgment. Think about John 3:36 "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.*" It depends on you which half of this verse describes you.

I would like to clarify another point. When this passage states that "*they were judged every man according to their works*," one might think that it is the result of the balance between the good works and the bad that decides if one goes to heaven or to hell. That religious concept is very popular, but mistaken. There are many reasons why it is a mistaken concept, and I will briefly emphasize some here: 1) Salvation is not by works, because no good work is capable of erasing even one sin before God (Ephesians 2:8). In fact, even one sin is the evidence that one is a sinner, and sin is not admitted into heaven. It is only by the sacrifice of Christ that sin is put away. 2) The judgment of the Great White Throne is not a general judgment of all humanity, but is only for the lost who the Lord Jesus describes as "*condemned already*." Then, what does the judgment deal with, and why are the works judged? It is simply to demonstrate the justice of God to condemn, and to determine the intensity or seriousness of the suffering of the condemned. As we saw regarding the believers in the subject of the Judgment Seat of Christ, where there will be a difference between the rewards given to the saved according to their service and fidelity to Christ; here there will be different grades of eternal suffering for those that perish, according to their responsibility and their acts against Christ. To sum it up, all those who appear in the Judgment of the Great White Throne will be condemned, and according to their works, consigned to different grades of eternal suffering.

"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. v. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." How solemn are these words! Do you really believe them? The second death isn't the end of the existence of the condemned, since every human being will exist in the body for all eternity. They will either be with Christ in the conscious enjoyment of His presence and glory, or in the lake of fire in conscious suffering. It is called "the second death" since it is the irremediable separation of the condemned from God, never more to be able to come into His presence in grace. These passages move us profoundly. Thanks to God, at this moment we are still in the time of grace, when the offer of salvation is extended and the forgiveness of sins is the message of the good news, the gospel.. Look with me at these precious words in Romans 1:16 *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth"*. Together we have studied this solemn passage of judgment, in which we see that the supreme authority of Christ, as Judge of the living and the dead, will guarantee the eternal condemnation, that cannot be appealed, for those that refused to believe the gospel. But in Romans 1:16 we see the lovely truth that today, during the period of grace, that same power of God is active on behalf of those that believe in Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. In other words, His power guarantees your salvation if you believe in Christ as your Savior.

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Thus ends the passage. How graphic is the language! *"Cast into the lake of fire"*, as something that is not expected to be recovered. It is the act of supreme authority on God's part. At the end of all His dealings with men, God will be God, and will not allow one act of rebellion against Him to pass unpunished. Either sin is dealt with now through Christ and is pardoned, or if not, it will be charged to the offender in the eternal condemnation in the lake of fire. God has declared it so in His Word, the Bible. Other human religious opinions abound, but who will have the last word? Undoubtedly, God. What will you do now with Christ?

To finish, I would like to add another reference to the Lake of Fire, from the paragraph that follows this reading: Revelation 21:8 details who will be in the Lake of Fire. *“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, (sexual sins) and sorcerers, (dealing in drugs and witchcraft) and idolaters, (worshipping idols or anything other than God) and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”* Many scandalous sins are specified, but note closely who heads up the list: The *“fearful and unbelieving”*. The *“fearful”* hear the gospel, but fear more *“what ‘they’ will say”* than God and the solemn warnings in the Bible. The *“unbelieving”* simply refuse to believe. Those two head the list of the occupants of the Lake of Fire. In other words, it isn't necessary to be a murderer or adulterer to go to hell. Many say to me, *“I don't do wrong to anyone,”* giving to understand that they are not sinners; but the Bible states that no one is without sin; therefore we all need to receive Christ as Lord and Savior to be saved. What do you think of all this? Are you safe from this day of wrath?

QUESTIONS 17 (Answer in the question booklet attached, or on a separate page)

- 1) In the *“Judgment of the Great White Throne”*, who will be those that are to be judged? And who is the Judge?
- 2) Thinking about Rev. 1:12-16, why is so much fear produced in those who are judged?
- 3) There is a popular concept that says, *“Death ends all”*. Is this true? Comment on your answer.
- 4) Which are the three books that will be opened in this judgment? (Rev. 20:12)
- 5) What does *“were judged according to their works”*, signify? (Rev. 20:12)
- 6) What is the final destiny of the unbelievers? (Rev. 20:14-15)
- 7) Who are found first on the list of those who go to the Lake of Fire? (Rev. 21:8)

THE TWO ROADS AND THE TWO DESTINIES #18**SUBJECT****"No Middle Road"**

Read John 3:36 *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."*

This text clearly defines two spiritual attitudes, and their consequences, and...

DOES NOT ALLOW FOR ANY INTERMEDIATE POSITION.

Note the context in the verses immediately before this.

"He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. v. 32 And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony. v. 33 He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. v. 34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. v. 35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. v. 36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

v. 31 *"He that cometh from above."* With these words, John the Baptist affirms that Christ can speak with first hand knowledge about heaven, because He came from heaven! It is He Who knows the holiness that prevails there, and the conditions required to enter, the character of God, etc. It is not as though He were only from the earth, and taking the liberty to speculate or to have contrary opinions about heaven. We can appreciate the absolute superiority of this One who comes from above, as a reliable source of information. Now let us see what else these verses tell us:

v. 32 In spite of Him being an eyewitness of heaven and speaking of His own environment, *"no man receiveth his testimony."* That insults God, since He that came is *"The Word, The Faithful and True Witness, the Truth,"* titles that are descriptive of Jesus Christ.

v. 33 He that truly believes *"hath set to his seal that God is true."* In other words, that person accepts the testimony of Christ as being the word of God, true and reliable. To do this shows faith in God.

v. 34 Christ, who revealed the knowledge of God and was the faithful witness of the heavenly, possesses unlimited power and grace. Among His attributes is that of determining the eternal destiny of every human being.

v. 35 The Father loves the Son, and has given to Him all things (including the persons), and has placed everything at the disposition of the Son. Who will He take to glory with Him? Only those that believe and receive the faith and the life of God; those that credit Him with being truthful. Christ won't take to heaven any unbeliever, or rebel or indifferent person, or anyone against their will. Such persons would be completely out of place in heaven, the place of the throne of God.

Now, let us look again at v. 36.

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

We see that the text revolves around "*believeth on the Son*" and "*believeth not the Son.*" What does "believeth on Him" mean? For the answer, we can review what goes before this passage in the same gospel of John. For example, John 1:1-3 affirms to us the eternal deity of Christ. He always was truly God the Son, the Word, Creator of all created things, and not a god inferior to the Father, nor, even much less, a creature, as some mistaken religions claim. Verse 14 explains that He came to take human form, in what we call the incarnation, in order to reveal to us the invisible God, v. 18. In the same first chapter, John the Baptist teaches us what the mission of Jesus was when He came to the earth: "*Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.*" That refers directly to His sacrifice for our sin on the cross. Finally, in chapter 3, we see the reference to the forgiveness of sins and salvation that is ours upon believing in Him as our Savior: "*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*" (3:16). All this is included in "*He that believeth on the Son.*" It is not just believing that Jesus existed. It is to take Him as one's personal Savior.

It is evident that the text contains different sections. For example, I see that it distinguishes between he that believes and he that does not believe:

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;

but he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

The entire world must be divided in this way, on the basis of one's attitude to the Lord Jesus; Who He is, and What He has done in His death on the cross as a sacrifice for our sin. Every person either believes in Him and has eternal life, or does not (refuses to) believe in Him and is under the wrath of God. Any group of people can be divided into two: those that believe, and those that do not believe. This includes every congregation, or community, or population, or even the members of a family. But we should go one step farther: every individual is either in the first section or the last. Permit me to ask you; which section are you in? Do you recognize that you are a sinner before God, and therefore under condemnation? Do you believe that the Lord Jesus came to die as a sacrifice for that condemnation? Review what we saw earlier concerning what it means to "believe on the Son," and take to yourself what God promises as the consequence; "hath everlasting life." It is the same God that promises eternal life or eternal condemnation. Also look at John 3:18 for a similar exercise, dividing the verse, and seeing where you fit in.

QUESTIONS 18 (Answer in the attached question booklet, or on a separate page)

- 1) John 3:36 Write out the complete verse.
- 2) John 3:31 What qualifies Christ as a competent witness concerning heaven, God, salvation, etc.?
- 3) John 3:32, 33 Who does a person insult who does not believe the testimony of Christ?
- 4) See the lesson on verse 35. Who will Christ not take to heaven?
- 5) What does "believe on the Son" mean?
- 6) Divide the text as we suggested in the notes.

In which part are you?

- 7) Here, who is it that promises eternal life to the one that believes, and at the same time, condemnation to the one that refuses to believe?

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #19**SUBJECT The Clean Footpath**

READ Proverbs 14:12; 16:25 *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”*

We have seen already that there are only two roads, the narrow road that leads to heaven, and the broad road that leads to judgment. However, on the chart something like a sidewalk appears called THE CLEAN FOOTPATH, but it is within the boundaries of the broad road. It speaks to us of the pathway of those, that, having (or at least appearing to have) a life of higher morality and religion, don't consider that they are of the same group as those who are addicts, violent or immoral people. They believe that they don't deserve to go to hell. But the diagram shows just what the Scriptures indicate; that to their surprise, in reality they are found the farthest away from the door and the Narrow Road; the farthest from salvation. And they are the farthest away because they refuse to accept the truth of the Scriptures that declare that all are sinners in need of salvation. Their pride and self-love are endangered, and in their reaction to defend themselves, they are not willing to listen to the message that God has for them, the Gospel.

The Jews in great measure were in this condition.

In Romans 10:1-3 the apostle says: *“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. v. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. v. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”*

“that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.” “Knowledge” means a correct knowledge. They were religious, but their concept of God wasn't adequate, and in fact they didn't know Him. They were thinking that He was satisfied with their mechanical practices, routines of rituals and prayers, and didn't consider the reality of His personality and desire for fellowship.

“Ignorant of God's righteousness” This would be voluntary ignorance, or at least, error because of inadequate religious information. *“Going about to establish their own righteousness”*... Having lost sight of the height of the righteousness of God, they deceived themselves by thinking that their own righteousness was enough.

“Have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.” The fruit of their egotistic way and self-sufficiency was to end up in outright rebellion against God.

Luke 18:9-14 *“And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: v. 10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. v. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. v. 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. v. 13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. v. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”*

V. 9 The parable aims at these people on the Clean Footpath.

Note the contrast with what the Scriptures say (for example Romans. 3:10... *"there is none righteous, no not one."*) It is a matter of who one compares oneself with. The comparison of persons with persons is valid in many aspects of life; but when it comes to being considered righteous or just, so as to merit heaven, God demands that one is compared with His own person, with God! Because of this, in the preaching of the gospel, we devote a lot of time to revealing the righteousness of God and the related contrasting fact that we all are sinners and come short of His glory.

V. 10 The religiousness of the two: in what way were they different?

V. 11, 12 *"the Pharisee . . . (see also Luke 11:37-40, 12:1-3)*

"prayed thus with himself ... I am not as other men are ... unjust"

We see that his assessment was very artificial, and he lacked humility and repentance. His comparison is only with others, and not with God.

V. 13 *"The Publican . . . would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven."*

In contrast we appreciate his attitude of repentance and humility.

"God be merciful to me a sinner." "God be merciful to me" But upon what could he base his appeal for mercy? To ask for mercy implied, at the same time, implicit recognition of his guilt, and that he deserved condemnation. But the word that he uses also indicates something more: according to the practice of the worship of God in the temple, there would have always been a sacrifice upon the altar. There was a sacrifice in the morning, and another in the evening, in addition to the other sacrifices that were offered. The publican appeals for mercy upon the value, or virtue, of the sacrifice burning on the altar, whose spiritual value he claims as a covering for his sins. The sacrifice, being according to the ordinance and commandment of God himself, was his provision, and the man did what was right to appropriate for himself the value of the sacrifice to pay for his sin.

IT IS EXACTLY WHAT THE SINNER MUST DO IN OUR DAY ALSO!

In faith and without professing any kind of merit, one has to personally value the sacrifice of Christ as the manner for his sins to be put away, and as the righteous basis upon which God can show mercy to the guilty and justify the unrighteous.

V. 14 . . . *"this man went down to his house justified rather than the other . . ."* With these concise words, the Lord summarizes the result for the two. The despised publican, who recognized himself as unjust, was justified by God, and his sins were forgiven. In contrast, the pharisee, who justified himself, is seen by God as unjust still.

Dear friend, have you felt identified with these men? With which one of the two? Have you confessed that you are a sinner, and have you taken unto yourself the value of the sacrifice of Christ? Can you "go down to your house" justified?

QUESTIONS 19 (Answer in the attached question booklet, or on a separate page)

- 1) Proverbs 14:12 What "road" or manner of thinking does this verse describe?
- 2) What fundamental mistake do those make who are on the "Clean Foot Path"?
- 3) Why has the artist drawn the Clean Foot Path in the position farthest from the Door?
- 4) The Pharisee considered himself "just", but was he really "just" according to God?
- 5) If we want to be "just", and acceptable for heaven, with whom do we have to compare ourselves?
- 6) The Publican confessed that he was a sinner, and therefore, "unjust". How was he justified (made "just")?
- 7) How can a person be justified before God now?

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #20**SUBJECT How to obtain Eternal Life**

READ John 5:21-29 *“For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. v. 22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: v. 23 that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him. v. 24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. v. 25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. v. 26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; v. 27 And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. v. 28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, v. 29 And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”*

Context of this passage:

The Pharisees were offended because Jesus declared himself to be the Son of God, something that they interpreted correctly, as an affirmation that He was equal with God.

V.19-21 Jesus replied, that He was not only truly God, but that as Son, He had the attribute to give life to whomever He wanted, as an exercise of His full sovereignty. We will see what criteria govern His giving or not giving life eternal.

V. 19 His work was completely in accord with the Father.

V. 20 He says that He enjoys the love and approval of the Father in a work together with Him, and even greater works He will do.

V. 21 As the supreme proof of the approval and confidence placed in Him by the Father, He cites the ability to give life to whoever He wants.

V. 22 *“hath committed all judgment unto the Son:”* He is the judge, who in His own sovereign judgment, determines who receives eternal life and who does not.

“THAT ...”

v. 23 *“all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.”*

Why is it important and advisable to honor Him?

Because He is the one who determines to whom He will impart eternal life. From His position as Judge, He observes and evaluates the reaction and attitudes of every person regarding God and regarding the message of the gospel, in order to see those who are repentant and believers, or who continue as rebels.

V. 24 He shows what is the basis or criteria upon which He judges, or decides, the eternal destiny of everyone. Let us look at this precious text part by parts:

“Verily, verily, I say unto you...” Or as it says in other translations, “It is true, it is true”. The Lord Jesus always would tell the truth, of course, but here He emphasizes it.

"he that heareth my word," "To hear" would be more than just to listen, making use of your ears: it would mean to hear with faith and understanding, really assimilating the teaching. What does His Word include? It is the message of the gospel that you have been listening to.

"and believeth on Him that sent me" Take note of what this says. Who sent the Lord Jesus? God the Father sent Him. Does it mean the same "to believe in God" as "to believe God"? The first accepts the truth of His existence and qualities, but the second means to believe and act on what He says to us. The majority would accept that there is a God, but there are far fewer that really reverence Him and give attention to His Word in their lives. A person that believes God, according to the message of the gospel, would be a person that accepts that he is a sinner under condemnation, and that God sent His Son to the cross to pay for the guilt and the death that his sins deserve. Such a person doesn't put his hand to anything or anyone else to save him: not to his own good works or righteousness; neither to his religion, saints nor the Virgin Mary, etc.

"hath everlasting life" The faith of this hearer results in a great blessing given by God Himself, expressed in three details. Here, "hath everlasting life" is in contrast to spiritual death, the product of sin in his guilt. It indicates that the sinner that before was separated from God, now is linked with Him with spiritual life, eternal life, sharing in the life of God. Now his sin does not appear against him; he has been pardoned and justified.

"and shall not come into condemnation" Condemnation comes because of a definite reason; sin. With the putting away of sin, this cause is removed and the person freed from his guilt. At the same time, this expression reminds us of the direction toward which the individual is headed: it was leading downward, toward hell. It is evident that now he does not move in that direction, because now he *"shall not come into condemnation."* What has taken place? The answer follows. . .

"but is passed from death unto life." We can illustrate this by looking at the Narrow Door. It is the only way to escape from the Broad Road that goes to hell, and the only access to the Narrow Road that leads to heaven. To believe is the same as to enter by the door. Remember what the Lord Jesus said in John 10:9, *"I am the door, by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."*

Let us look at the rest of the passage—

V. 25 describes the present proclamation of the gospel, a message of life to those who are dead (in trespasses and sins). These are not those with dead bodies, but those who are still on the Broad Road. We see that hearing Him is optional, depending on the will of the hearer (*" . . . they that hear. . ."*)

V. 26-27 These verses speak of the attributes of the Son that entitle Him to impart spiritual life, eternal life to believers who hear. It is not a presumption, therefore, for a believer to say that he is saved. He only has to quote the words of the Lord with respect to this matter, given that the authorization is from Him.

V. 28-29 This language is very much like that of v. 25; however the word here is directed to a different audience: the future command is to those who are physically dead and buried, commanding that they rejoin their bodies and rise. We note . . .

- a) Their hearing is not optional: they will have to respond, and will go out, either to the glorified life with Christ, or to eternal condemnation through the judgment of the Great White Throne.
- b) Every person who dies will experience resurrection.

Compare "have done good" with v. 24. "Have done good" would be to hear with faith, to believe that it is the message from God and to receive salvation.

"Have done evil" would be all that is contrary: to fail to pay attention to His Word, and not to believe Him (God). Of course, the Lord Jesus would not take anyone to heaven with an attitude of rebellion against God.

QUESTIONS 20 (Answer in the attached question booklet, or on a separate page)

- 1) (Context) Why were the Pharisees so offended?
- 2) V. 21 What amazing attribute does the Lord Jesus claim to have here?
- 3) V. 22 What other attribute do we see here?
- 4) V. 23 What reasons would there be why you should honour the Son?
- 5) V. 24 How will the Lord Jesus decide who to save and who to condemn?
- 6) V. 28 How many of the dead will be raised?
- 7) V. 29 What does "have done good" mean? (Read the explanation carefully!)

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #21**SUBJECT The Repentant Thief**

READ *Luke 23:20-25* “Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them. v. 21 But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. v. 22 And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go. v. 23 And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed. v. 24 And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required. v. 25 And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.”

They accused Him of treason, of refusing to pay taxes to Caesar, and that He had proclaimed Himself as King. All these political accusations were designed to interest Pilate, but he didn't believe them, protesting the innocence of Christ (3 times in vv. 4, 14, 22) and said *"I have found no cause of death in him."*

However, Pilate though he was convinced of His innocence, gave in to their insistence, possibly fearful for his own political future. He ordered the crucifixion of Jesus.

Luke 23:32-43 “And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. v. 33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. v. 34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. v.35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. v. 36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, v. 37 And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. v. 38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.** v. 39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. v. 40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? v. 41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. v. 42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. v. 43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Thinking about our subject, we see the following concerning the thieves:

V. 32 *"And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death."* This makes me think of Isaiah 53:12: *"he was numbered with the transgressors"*. So far as any casual observer was concerned, there were three evildoers.

V. 33-38 the position of the evildoers: Jesus was in the middle, as if He was the worst of the three. We see the insensitivity of the soldiers, casting lots (gambling) for His clothes, and even worse, adding their voices to those that mocked Him.

In general, we see their ridicule of Him, adding to the mocking of the spectators, the people, the rulers, and the soldiers. All united against the Lord Jesus - and the subject of their mockery was that He said that He was King (V. 35, 37, 38).

In contrast, we appreciate the attitude of the Lord Jesus, typified in His Words *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."* His attitude was noble, quiet and dignified.

V. 39 Specifically, the evildoer *"railed on him, saying, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us."* Actually he committed blasphemy, since "blaspheme" means to speak evil of, or reproach God. From the parallel passages in Matt. 27:44 and Mark 5:32, we learn that at the beginning, both evildoers spoke evil of Jesus. This thief demanded that the Lord Jesus would attend to him, that He would free him, in order to return to his former life. We don't see any repentance; rather, we see a haughty, arrogant attitude, rebellious and disrespectful.

V. 40 highlights in an amazing manner how the repentant evildoer reproves the first one: *"dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?"* We could rephrase this as "don't you think that it is time to think about meeting God, instead of abusing another victim?"

WHAT PRODUCED THIS CHANGE IN HIM?

a) He might have seen and listened to Jesus before, and could have known that He said He was Christ.

b) Without doubt, he had observed and listened to the Lord Jesus. Perhaps it was during the accusations before Pilate, or at least during His scourging and the walk, bearing His cross, to Calvary. He had seen Him in the most demanding circumstances, without Him having broken or begun to hurl curses against those who tormented Him. On the contrary, he saw Him consoling those that lamented for Him, rather than struggling with His tormentors, or cursing those that mistreated Him and crucified Him.

c) He had heard His word, *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."*

d) He was a witness of His silence when everybody reviled Him.

e) He was convinced that in Jesus there was absolutely no falsehood and that He had to be Who He had said He was, *"The Christ, the Son of God."*

f) He confessed that they deserved to be there, crucified, but not Him.

With all this evidence, the question would come to his mind, "Why is Christ here?" As an Israelite, the passage in Isaiah 53 would be known to him. Possibly he saw Christ as the fulfillment of that prophetic passage. Here is part of it.

Isaiah 53:5-12 *"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. v. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. v. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. v. 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. v. 9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. v. 10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. v. 11 He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. v. 12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."*

Isaiah 53:12 *"he was numbered with the transgressors."* Being Son of God, why would God allow Him to suffer so unjustly. It is likely that the repentant thief had this question in his mind. I invite you also to ask yourself the same question. Why did Jesus have to die, when He was the only One that never sinned?

Isaiah 53:5,6 These verses give us the answer. *"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. v. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."*

Returning now to the story in Luke 23, in v. 42 the repentant thief shows his faith and conviction so far as who the Lord Jesus was, and also what the Lord would have in the future. What words are these to say to a dying man!

"Remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom."

V. 43 The Lord, who didn't respond to His accusers nor to His judges, doesn't delay here to respond to the repentant thief. It is an answer that would bring joy, in the midst of his suffering, to the repentant thief. He also would have a future, in the very presence of the Lord.

WE DON'T READ THAT THE OTHER THIEF REPENTED, IN SPITE OF BEING SO NEAR TO THE LORD. HE WENT FROM THE LORD'S SIDE TO HELL!

The two thieves represent all humanity. We have all sinned and deserve punishment. One recognized this truth and repented, and called out to the only One who could give him forgiveness from his sins and salvation. He died with the promise of the Lord that he would be with Him. The other continued in his rebellion and enmity against God, and now is in hell, because he refused to believe. Which of the two represents you? The cross of Christ divided these two thieves; it continues to divide the world today. On which side are you? If you were to die right now, where would your soul go?

QUESTIONS 21 (Answer in the attached question booklet, or on a separate page.)

- 1) Luke 23:22 What did Pilate think concerning the guilt of Jesus?
- 2) Luke 23:32-33 Who were also lifted up to be crucified with Jesus? Comment on the text in Isaiah 53:12 "... he was numbered with the transgressors."
- 3) Luke 23:34, 36-38 Describe the actions of the soldiers, governors and priests. What was the subject of their mockery?
- 4) Luke 23:39-41 What did the second thief say and confess that showed his repentance?
- 5) Luke 23:42-43 How did he show his faith in Christ? What answer did he receive from the Lord?
- 6) In what sense do these two thieves represent all humanity?
- 7) With which of the two thieves do you identify yourself? Give a reason for your answer.

The Two Roads and the Two Destinies #22

SUBJECT **God's Intervention**

READ John 1:29, *"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."*

Isaiah 59:1, 2 *"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: v. 2 But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."*

So many seek some kind of material benefit from God: they want Him to intervene to solve their problems, to pay their bills, to repair the conflicts in their marriage, or heal their sick. Or they go farther and want God to solve the social problems of the world, putting an end to the military conflicts and bringing to an end every kind of injustice. When He does not do this, they blame Him for not being interested in them, or even that He does not exist. "If God existed . . ." and they express their complaint. We know that the great majority of the problems come from the root of human sin - the egotism, ambition for power, greed, etc. and God does not have any blame in that. The truth is that GOD ISN'T DEAF NOR WITHOUT POWER! He is the OMNISCIENT (all knowing) and OMNIPOTENT (all powerful) Eternal God. But still the question remains...

Why doesn't He intervene, then?

If God were to intervene to correct everything so that it would correspond to His will, where would He have to begin? He would have to begin where sin and injustice is born . . . with guilty humanity! - with every one of us!

The text of Isaiah 59 says (v. 2) that *"your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear."* His presence, relief and help do not come without conditions. He is holy, and abhors sin. Sin is rebellion against Him. Is it possible that He will come near to relieve the person that asks Him when that same person wants to go on in a life of sin anyway? Many think that they can expect, and demand that God run to their aid when they need Him, and at the same time, live in disobedience the rest of their life. They want to use God as a crutch when they find themselves in some kind of difficulty, but they don't have any intention of honoring Him and serving Him for what He is.

Here in the text we see that God's sight is turned away from them, in what is really an act of mercy. If He were to look upon them, He would have to deal with them for their sins; He would have to judge and execute condemnation. Sin, and rebellion must be dealt with first, before one can presume to ask Him for favors. The sin of every individual constitutes a serious affront against God, and leaves without effect whatever commitment He has as Creator toward His creatures. *"The wages of sin is death . . ." (Rom.. 6:23);* are you really sure that you want God to make things right with you, that is, to pay you the wages you deserve?

John 1:29 *"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."*

But if His look is deflected away from us, because in mercy He doesn't wish to enter into judgment against our sin, what then is the object of His look? The answer is that He looks toward

the same place where sin was dealt with to His entire satisfaction. He looks toward the cross and invites the sinner to look also to the...

Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world . . .

We remember Matt. 1:21 “. . . thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins” , the message of the angel Gabriel to Joseph.

Jesus went to the cross to represent us; in shame, He was made sin for us, and was judged as if He were guilty. If you want to know what God thinks of your sin, look at Jesus crucified, mocked, humiliated, reviled and abandoned by God. He represented the sinner. He represents you, if you can understand it.

If you, as a sinner, recognize your sinful and guilty state and the serious offence thus caused to God, you can also, in faith, recognize that Christ represented you in the place where sin was judged, on the cross. In faith, you can claim that Christ suffered for you, to pay your condemnation. When you do this, your view coincides with God's view; in the cross, and God forgives you your sins. He makes you His spiritual son or daughter through the new birth, and you enter into a spiritual relationship with Him. Then you can pray for the other necessities that you have.

What should you ask from God? What is the first problem that you must solve? You must deal with the judicial problem; the problem of your sin against Him.

And, once again, where are you looking toward?

QUESTIONS 22 (Answer in the attached question booklet, or on a separate page)

- 1) What do the majority of people want God to do? Have you also thought the same?
- 2) If God were to intervene in the affairs of your life, what would He have to deal with first?
- 3) Isaiah 59:1,2 According to this verse, what has made God turn away His eyes and ears?
- 4) If God were to deal with us according to what our deeds deserve, what payment would He have to give us? (Romans 6:23)
- 5) John 1:29 Where is God looking toward?
- 6) Where were our sins dealt with to the entire satisfaction of God?
- 7) Why does He want us also look at the Lamb of God?

1) All the Biblical citations are from the King James Version of the Bible.

2) The chart of The Two Roads and the Two Destinies is used with permission of "Christian Material, 1702 N 466 Rd., Baldwin City, KS, 66006, USA. telephone (785) 594-6628.

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