



# **The Way of Life**

## **Part 1**

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## **Dear young person,**

We hope that these notes will help you to work out what you want from life, and to take the important decisions that lie ahead of you.

Although we don't know you personally we are aware of many of the pressures you are under, at school, at home, or at work. All the people who prepared these notes, and who taught the lessons before they were printed, are friends or parents (or both!) of young people the same age as you. And although times have changed it's really not that long since we were your age ourselves.

We have enjoyed preparing the notes, and have learned a lot from doing it. We hope that, in turn, you will enjoy using them, and will learn from them. Most of all our prayer is that you will grow to love God, to know the Lord Jesus Christ, and to accept the salvation that they offer.

May God be with you,

The Sunday School Union Committee



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## The Word of God



Read Psalm 33:4-9; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21 and then summarise what you think are the main points from these passages.



## God speaks through people



Look at Exodus 17:14; Exodus 32:16; Numbers 33:2; and Joshua 24:26,27

What do these passages tell you about God's reasons for causing the Bible to be written, and how it was done?



## *The Spirit of God drove the prophets to speak the words of God*



Read Jeremiah 20:1-3, 7-13 and think how the Spirit of God and Jeremiah's own feelings are brought together.



### ***The prophets witnessed by their actions as well as their words***



Think about Ezekiel (chapters 4 and 5) and Hosea (chapters 1-3), and summarise how they demonstrated God's message by their actions.



### ***Above all, God spoke through the Lord Jesus Christ***



Look at John 12:48-50 and put into your own words what Jesus is telling us about his relationship with God.



### ***The New Testament writers were inspired in just the same way***

Notice how Paul (2 Peter 3:16), and Luke (1 Timothy 5:18) are specifically referred to.

### ***Through the Bible the Spirit of God can change us***



Look at Romans 7:18-23, Galatians 5:17 and Titus 3:3. What do these passages tell us about ourselves?





The scriptures were recorded for us as well as for those who originally received them, and are still powerful to change us. Read 1 Peter 1:10-12; Romans 4:23-24; Acts 19:17-20; Hebrews 4:12 and think about what these passages tell us



### **Discuss these verses and think about how the influence of God's Word can change us**



Psalm 119:11

Psalm 119:98

Psalm 119:165

John 12:48

John 15:3

John 17:17

Acts 20:32

Romans 10:17

1 Thessalonians 2:13

2 Timothy 3:15-17

James 1:21

1 Peter 1:23-25

This topic covers just one of dozens of examples in the Bible of prophecies that have come true - the downfall of the ancient city of Babylon. We could have thought about many other examples:

- Prophecies about the Jews and the land of Israel
- Predictions about Egypt, Tyre and Sidon, or the Philistines
- Prophecies relating to the world in general
- Prophecies about the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The prophecies covered here come from the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Isaiah prophesied from about 745 BC to 685 BC, before Babylon had become the dominant empire in the Middle East, and Jeremiah around 600 BC, when it was at its height.

The prophecies in Isaiah are so amazing that many people have tried to argue that the book is a compilation of the work of several people, some of whom lived after Isaiah; but nobody can claim that it was written after 200 BC, as the Old Testament was translated into Greek (the Septuagint) at that time. Even if this were true, the prophecies concerning Babylon must have been fulfilled long after they were spoken.

There is a particular irony in the prophecies about Babylon: it was the home of astrology and fortune-telling, but it could not foresee its own downfall! "A sword upon the diviners, that they may become fools!" (Jeremiah 50:36 RSV). King Nebuchadnezzar had engraved on a statue of himself: "Oh Marduk, lord of all countries, grant ... that my descendants may rule over men until the end of time." Yet the Word of the Lord had already (Jeremiah 51:59-64) spoken:

"I will cut off from Babylon name and remnant, offspring and posterity, says the LORD. And I will make it a possession of owls (NIV), and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the broom of destruction, says the LORD of hosts." (Isaiah 14:22;23 RSV)

Look at the scripture references and summarise what they say, then read through the information that follows and see what actually happened.

	 What was predicted, and to what extent has it been fulfilled?
Jeremiah 25:12-14 Jeremiah 50:41-42	
Jeremiah 50:9-10, 14-15, 26	
Jeremiah 51:37	

Jeremiah 51:26	
Isaiah 13:19-20 Jeremiah 50:1-3, 16, 23 Jeremiah 51:29, 43	
Isaiah 13:21-22 Jeremiah 51:37	
Isaiah 14:23	
Jeremiah 50:12, 38 Jeremiah 51:36	

While you are looking at Isaiah 14, it is worth noting v12: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!" (AV) So commonly misapplied to a fallen-angel 'Satan', 'Lucifer' is in other versions the "morning star" or Venus. It is another reference to the astrology of Babylon.

## **The fall of Babylon- documentary evidence from other sources**

### ***A summary of events***

After Belshazzar's feast, and the capture of the city by the Persians, it was not destroyed; but remained the biggest city in Asia, although not the empire's capital. It looked as if the prophecy had failed. Later, Alexander the Great planned to restore the city to its former brilliance. But after his death it entered into decline.

At the time of Christ, Babylon had shrunk considerably and was populated chiefly by Jews! However, the area was cultivated and the prophecy was still unfulfilled.

- By 412 AD, the canals had been "filled up"
- By 460 AD, no Chaldeans remained, only a few Jews
- By 917 AD, it was a small village
- By the 12th Century the ruins of the palace were inaccessible, owing to the number of scorpions and serpents.

Babylon was the prey first of the Medes and the Persians; then, about three hundred years before the time of our Lord, of the Macedonians under Alexander and his successors; then of the Parthians; and afterwards, from time to time, of the Romans. For two centuries, from 635 AD, it was held by the Arabs. In 1218 it was desolated by the Tartars under Zingis. For a time the country was in the hands of the assassins, who were overthrown and succeeded by Holagou Khan, the grandson of Zingis, in 1258. In 1380 it was conquered by Tamerlane, who erected on the ruins of Baghdad a pyramid of ninety thousand heads. Since then it has passed from the grasp of one fierce race into that of another.

John Urquhart, *The Wonders of Prophecy*, Christian Publications, Inc

### ***The appearance of the landscape***

The Reader's Digest "Book of Vanished Civilisations" published in 1983 shows a large aerial photograph of the site with the caption, "A vast field of ruins is all that remains of Nebuchadnezzar's magnificent city. The huge ... foundation ... can be distinguished among the mounds of dried mud."

The wide extent of mounds and vestiges of buildings must arrest the attention of every beholder; who, at the same time, will not fail to remark how little the shapeless heaps can suggest in any degree either the nature or object of the structures of which they are the wrecks.

Fraser, *Mesopotamia and Assyria*

I found the whole face of the country covered with vestiges of buildings, in some places consisting of brick walls surprisingly fresh, in others, merely a vast succession of mounds of rubbish of such indeterminate figures, variety, and extent ...

*The Evidence of Prophecy*

On all sides, fragments of glass, marble, pottery and inscribed brick are mingled with that peculiar nitrous and blanched soil which, bred from the remains of ancient habitations, checks or destroys vegetation, and renders the site of Babylon a naked and hideous waste

Rawlinson, *Egypt and Babylon*

"All that remains today of what was once the largest city in the world is a desolate, dun-coloured mound of dried mud."

*Vanished Civilisations*

On the actual ruins of Babylon the Arabian neither pitches his tent nor pastures his flocks - in the first place, because the nitrous soil produces no pasture to tempt him; and secondly, because an evil reputation attaches to the entire site, which is thought to be the haunt of evil spirits.

*Egypt and Babylon*

### ***The remains of the city***

In the 19th Century a British archaeologist called Sir Austen Layard excavated the mound of Babil (based upon the original tower of Babel), and found some ancient burial grounds, and coffins containing skeletons.

A foul and unbearable stench issued from these loathsome remains, and from the passages, which had become the dens of wild beasts which had worked their way in to them from above. ... Owls start from the scanty thickets, and the foul jackal skulks through the furrows. ... The mound was full of large holes; we entered some of them and found them strewn with the carcasses and skeletons of animals recently killed.

Rawlinson, *Egypt and Babylon*

In 636 AD a group of Arabs found large quantities of gold in the ruins:

The naked robbers of the desert were suddenly enriched beyond the measure of the hope or knowledge. Each chamber revealed a new treasure, secreted with art, or ostentatiously displayed; the gold and silver, the various wardrobes and precious furniture surpassed (says Abulfeda) the estimate of fancy or of numbers; and another historian defines the untold and almost infinite mass by the fabulous computation of three thousands of thousands of thousands of pieces of gold.

Gibbon, *History of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire*

The tearing down of the ruins has been continued for centuries. The bricks, even at this late date, are so excellent in quality, that the shape of the mounds is being continually altered by the excavations which are made for them. "To this day," says Layard, "there are men who have no other trade than that of gathering bricks from this vast heap, and taking them for sale to the neighbouring towns and villages, and even to Baghdad. There is scarcely a house in Hillah which is not built of them." [Hillah is a nearby village of 5,000 people].

It seems that, in digging for old materials, the Arabs used the bricks for building purposes, but always burnt the stone this discovered for lime.

*The evidence of Prophecy*

### ***The Euphrates marshes***

In spring each year the Tigris and Euphrates suddenly swell and flood the surrounding countryside. The Chaldeans harnessed these with an elaborate system of canals, but today the floods create swamps and forests of reeds, which spread fever and leave black mud.

On the other hand, the neglect of the embankments and canals which anciently controlled the waters of the Euphrates, and made them a defence and not a danger, has consigned great part of what was anciently Babylon to the continual invasion of floods, which, stagnating in the lower grounds, have converted large tracts once included within the walls of the city into lakes, pools and marshes. (*Egypt and Babylon*)

## Moslem writings

Moslems (or Muslims) call their most holy book the Koran (or Qur'an), which means 'recitation'. They believe it to be a collection of many messages received by Mohammed from Allah (the one God) through the angel Jibril (Gabriel), over a twenty year period beginning 610 AD.

Moslems believe that Mohammed (or Muhammad) was a good man, a wealthy but illiterate merchant aged 40, when he had his first revelation. He was told that he had been called to be a prophet and must warn the people around him that their lives were corrupt and full of sin. Mohammed's job would be to tell people this and record accurately Allah's messages so that the revelation would be available to all people. Each time he received a message he was made to learn it by heart and recite it and then he made others do the same. Moslems believe the Koran is the word of Allah, exactly as Mohammed received it. The revelation was learned by a hafiz (memoriser) and passed on by recitation. Later the prophet kept kuttah (writers) with him so that whenever a revelation was made it would be written on whatever material was available. Mohammed never claimed to have written the Koran. In fact his own sayings have been preserved and are known as Hadith. They are written in a completely different style.

During the last two years of his life, before he died in Madinah (Medina) in 632 AD, Mohammed made sure that all of the Koran had been properly recorded and learnt. Abu Bakr, the first Caliph (elected leader) organised the first collation of the messages. Around 650 AD the third Caliph, Uthman, had several authoritative copies made and circulated to major Moslem centres including Babylon, Damascus and Jerusalem. One of these still exists in the Topkapi museum in Istanbul and another in Tashkent. Within a few years these were accepted as the genuine record of the teaching of Allah as given to the prophet Mohammed by the angel. The text has not been changed in any way since. It is still used in the Arabic language in which it was written and Moslems are able to claim that it is the only holy book in the world to have survived in exact and unaltered form up to the present day after 1400 years.

In addition to the Koran, Moslems use the Hadith (sayings). This contains guidance and advice given by Mohammed which helps to explain and interpret the Koran. The words of Hadith do not have the same weight or force as those of the Koran. Moslems believe that Mohammed was only a man and his words and deeds were those of a man but he is regarded as a perfect example of a Moslem (one who has surrendered to Allah) so his teachings and explanations are greatly respected.

The first duty of all Moslems is the reading and study of the Koran.

## The Koran

The Koran is about the same length as the New Testament. It consists of 114 Surahs (chapters) and 6616 ayats (verses). It does not have the same kind of 'story-line' approach of parts of the Bible, nor does it have a real beginning, middle or end. It is more like a set of answers to questions that have been put. Apart from the first surah it is arranged in order from longest to shortest. The shorter surahs come from Mohammed's earlier days in Makkah (Mecca) his birthplace, while the longer ones are from later, in Madinah. Instead of numbers each surah is given a name e.g. Man, Daybreak, The Sun, Salvation, The Prophets etc.

Moslems always show great reverence for the Koran because they view it as the revealed word of Allah to guide individuals in life. They read it, recite it and meditate upon it to determine what Allah wants them to do. Moslems believe that no day can be complete without reading or reciting from the Koran. It is specially treasured and recited during festivals like Ramadan when the whole Koran is read. Before reading, Moslems need to be in wudu, a state of ritual cleanliness. "When you prepare ... wash your faces and hands up to the elbows, rub your heads with water, and your feet up to the ankles" (Surah 5:7). Next the heart is prepared by becoming aware of Allah's presence and Moslems sit in a special position so that they are aware in their bodies that the Koran is not just an ordinary book. They sit cross-legged on the floor with the Koran on a rehl, a wooden stand, in front of them. When not in use, the Koran is kept wrapped in a cloth and placed on a high shelf so that nothing is above it. It is treated with the greatest respect and never placed upon the floor. Hand written Korans are produced with beautiful calligraphy and manuscript illumination - another sign of respect for the message. Prayers and readings from the Koran are a regular part of the believers' daily life and worship. Visitors to a mosque may often find individuals standing and studying the Koran. It is obligatory for Moslem men to attend the Friday noon prayers during which the Imam will preach a sermon linked to an appropriate reading from the Koran. Moslems believe that the Koran moves people to change their lives. They also believe that those who read it but choose not to act upon its guidance, nor show actions to improve their life, are regarded as being like "a donkey carrying books" (Surah 62:5). Whatever question or problem individuals may have, Moslems believe that by looking into the Koran a believer can find the answer or the principle by which the answer can be determined.

The Koran claims that its message can only be understood by those who believe in its divine origin. Without iman (faith) man cannot see the reality of Allah. The Koran describes the purpose of creation, Adam and Eve, the destiny of humanity, the relationship between Allah and the rest of creation, the duties and responsibilities we all share, the concept of good and evil and the Last Judgement. Four divine books are mentioned in the Koran: Tawrah (Torah) revealed to Musa (Moses), Zabur (Psalms) revealed to Dawud (David), Injil (Gospel) revealed to Isa (Jesus) and Koran revealed to Mohammed.

## **Some extracts from the Koran**

(Taken from a 19th century translation by George Cole)

### ***Concerning Abraham and Ishmael.***

#### **From Surah 37:**

Abraham also was of his [Noah's] religion: when he came unto his LORD with a perfect heart. When he said unto his father and his people, What do ye worship? Do ye choose false gods preferably to the true GOD? What therefore is your opinion of the LORD of all creatures? And he looked and observed the stars, and said, Verily I shall be sick, and shall not assist at your sacrifices: and they turned their backs and departed from him. And Abraham went privately to their gods, and said scoffingly to them, Do ye not eat of the meat which is set before you? What aileth you that ye speak not? And he turned upon them, and struck them with his right hand, and demolished them. And the people came hastily unto him: and he said, Do ye worship the images which ye carve? whereas GOD hath created you, and also that which ye make. They said, Build a pile for him, and

cast him into the glowing fire. And they devised a plot against him; but we made them the inferior, and delivered him. And Abraham said, Verily I am going unto my LORD, who will direct me. O LORD, grant me a righteous issue. Wherefore we acquainted him that he should have a son, who should be a meek youth. And when he had attained to years of discretion, and could join in acts of religion with him, Abraham said unto him, O my son, verily I saw in a dream that I should offer thee in sacrifice: consider therefore what thou art of opinion I should do. He answered, O my father, do what thou art commanded: thou shalt find me, if GOD please, a patient person. And when they had submitted themselves to the divine will, and Abraham had laid his son prostrate on his face, we cried unto him, O Abraham, now hast thou verified the vision. Thus do we reward the righteous. Verily this was a manifest trial. And we ransomed him with a noble victim. And we left the following salutation to be bestowed on him by the latest posterity, namely, Peace be on Abraham! Thus do we reward the righteous: for he was one of our faithful servants. And we rejoiced him with the promise of Isaac, a righteous prophet; and we blessed him and Isaac: and of their offspring were some righteous doers, and others who manifestly injured their own souls.

### ***The Angel appears to Zechariah and to Mary***

#### **From Surah 3:**

There Zacharias called on his LORD, and said, LORD, give me from thee a good offspring, for thou art the hearer of prayer. And the angels called to him, while he stood praying in the chamber, saying Verily GOD promiseth thee a son named John, who shall bear witness to the Word which cometh from GOD; an honourable person, chaste, and one of the righteous prophets. He answered, LORD, how shall I have a son, when old age hath overtaken me, and my wife is barren? The angel said, So GOD doth that which he pleaseth. Zacharias answered, LORD, give me a sign. The angel said, Thy sign shall be, that thou shalt speak unto no man for three days, otherwise than by gesture; remember thy LORD often, and praise him evening and morning. And when the angels said, O Mary, verily GOD hath chosen thee, and hath purified thee and hath chosen thee above all the women of the world: O Mary, be devout towards thy LORD, and worship, and bow down with those who bow down. This is a secret history; we reveal it unto thee, although thou wast not present with them when they threw in their rods to cast lots which of them should have the education of Mary; neither wast thou with them, when they strove among themselves. When the angels said; O Mary, verily GOD sendeth thee good tidings, that thou shalt bear the Word proceeding from himself; his name shall be CHRIST JESUS the son of Mary, honourable in this world and in the world to come, and one of those who approach near to the presence of GOD; and he shall speak unto men in the cradle, and when he is grown up; and he shall be one of the righteous: she answered, LORD, how shall I have a son, since a man hath not touched me? the angel said, So GOD createth that which he pleaseth; when he decreeth a thing, he only saith unto it, Be, and it is: GOD shall teach him the scripture, and wisdom, and the law, and the gospel; and he shall say, Verily I come unto you with a sign from your LORD; for I will make before you, of clay, as it were the figure of a bird; then I will breathe thereon, and it shall become a bird, by the permission of GOD; and I will heal him that hath been blind from his birth; and the leper: and I will raise the dead by the permission of GOD: and I will prophesy unto you what ye eat and what ye lay up for store in your houses.

## ***Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ***

### **From Surah 43:**

And when the son of Mary was proposed for an example, behold, thy people cried out through excess of joy thereat; and they said, Are our gods better, or he? They have proposed this instance unto thee no otherwise than for an occasion of dispute: yea, they are contentious men. Jesus is no other than a servant, whom we favoured with the gift of prophecy; and we appointed him for an example unto the children of Israel: (if we pleased, verily we could from yourselves produce angels, to succeed you in the earth:) and he shall be a sign of the approach of the last hour; wherefore doubt not thereof. And follow me: this is the right way.

### **From Surah 5:**

O children of Israel, serve God, my LORD and your LORD; whoever shall give a companion unto GOD, GOD shall exclude him from paradise, and his habitation shall be hell fire; and the ungodly shall have none to help them. They are certainly infidels, who say, GOD is the third of three: for there is no GOD, besides one GOD; and if they refrain not from what they say, a painful torment shall surely be inflicted on such of them as are unbelievers. Will they not therefore be turned unto GOD, and ask pardon of him? since GOD is gracious and merciful. Christ the son of Mary is no more than an apostle; other apostles have preceded him; and his mother was a woman of veracity: they both ate food.

## ***The crucifixion, and the Old Testament***

### **From Surah 4:**

They who have received the scriptures will demand of thee, and thou cause a book to descend unto them from heaven: they formerly asked of Moses a greater thing than this; for they said, Show us GOD visibly. Wherefore a storm of fire from heaven destroyed them, because of their iniquity. Then they took the calf for their God, after that evident proofs of the divine unity had come unto them: but we forgave them that, and gave Moses a manifest power to punish them. And we lifted the mountain of Sinai over them, when we exacted from them their covenant; and said unto them, Enter the gate of the city worshipping. We also said unto them, Transgress not on the sabbath day. And we received from them a firm covenant, that they would observe these things. Therefore for that they have made void their covenant, and have not believed in the signs of GOD, and have slain the prophets unjustly, and have said, Our hearts are uncircumcised; (but GOD hath sealed them up, because of their unbelief; therefore they shall not believe, except a few of them:) and for that they have not believed in Jesus, and have spoken against Mary a grievous calumny; and have said, Verily we have slain Christ Jesus the Son of Mary, the apostle of GOD; yet they slew him not, neither crucified him, but he was represented by one in his likeness; and verily they who disagreed concerning him were in a doubt as to this matter, and had no sure knowledge thereof, but followed only an uncertain opinion. They did not really kill him; but GOD took him up unto himself: and GOD is mighty and wise. And there shall not be one of those who have received the scriptures, who shall not believe in him, before his death; and on the day of resurrection he shall be a witness against them. Because of the iniquity

of those who Judaize, we have forbidden them good things, which had been formerly allowed them; and because they shut out many from the way of GOD, and have taken usury, which was forbidden them by the law, and devoured men's substance vainly: we have prepared for such of them as are unbelievers a painful punishment. But those among them who are well grounded in knowledge, and the faithful, who believe in that which hath been sent down unto thee, and that which hath been sent down unto the prophets before thee, and who observe the stated times of prayer, and give alms, and believe in GOD and the last day: unto these will we give a great reward. Verily we have revealed our will unto thee, as we have revealed it unto Noah and the prophets who succeeded him; and as we revealed it unto Abraham, and Ismael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and unto Jesus, and Job, and Jonas, and Aaron, and Solomon; and we have given thee the Koran, as we gave the psalms unto David: some apostles have we sent, whom we have formerly mentioned unto thee; and other apostles have we sent, whom we have not mentioned unto thee; and GOD spake unto Moses, discoursing with him; apostles declaring good tidings, and denouncing threats, lest men should have an argument of excuse against GOD, after the apostles had been sent unto them; GOD is mighty and wise.

### ***Concerning Mohammed***

#### **From Surah 61:**

Jesus the son of Mary said, O children of Israel, verily I am the apostle of GOD sent unto you, confirming the law which was delivered before me, and bringing good tidings of an apostle who shall come after me, and whose name shall be Ahmed.

### ***Concerning Infidels***

#### **From Surah 47:**

When ye encounter the unbelievers, strike off their heads, until ye have made a great slaughter among them; and bind them in bonds; and either give them a free dismissal afterwards, or exact a ransom; until the war shall have laid down its arms. This shall ye do. Verily if GOD pleased he could take vengeance on them, without your assistance; but he commandeth you to fight his battles, that he may prove the one of you by the other. And as to those who fight in defence of GOD'S true religion, God will not suffer their works to perish: he will guide them, and will dispose their heart aright; and he will lead them into paradise, of which he hath told them. O true believers, if ye assist GOD, by fighting for his religion, he will assist you against your enemies; and will set your feet fast: but as for the infidels, let them perish; and their works shall God render vain.

### ***Eternal Life***

#### **From Surah 43:**

Do the unbelievers wait for any other than the hour of judgement; that it may come upon them suddenly, while they foresee it not? The intimate friends, on that day, shall be enemies unto one

another; except the pious. O my servants, there shall no fear come on you this day, neither shall ye be grieved; who had believed in our signs and have been Moslems: enter ye into paradise, ye and your wives, with great joy. Dishes of gold shall be carried round unto them, and cups without handles; and therein shall they enjoy whatever their souls shall desire, and whatever their eyes shall delight in: and ye shall remain therein for ever. This is paradise, which ye have inherited as a reward for that which ye have wrought. Therein shall ye have fruits in abundance, of which ye shall eat. But the wicked shall remain for ever in the torment of hell: it shall not be made lighter unto them; and they shall despair therein.

### ***What Moslems believe about the last days***

Moslems believe in the resurrection of the dead, and eternal life. They believe that the resurrection will be followed by the day of judgement, before these events there will be greater and lesser signs.

The following text is taken from the preliminary discourse to the Koran written by George Cole in 1857.

The greater signs are,

1 The sun's rising in the west. Which some have imagined it originally did.

2 The appearance of the beast, which shall rise out of the earth, in the temple of Mecca, or on mount Safa, or in the territory of Tayef, or some other place. This beast they say is to be sixty cubits high; though others, not satisfied with so small a size, will have her reach to the clouds and to heaven, when her head only is out; and that she will appear for three days, but show only a third part of her body. They describe this monster, as to her form, to be a compound of various species; having the head of a bull, the eyes of a hog, the ears of an elephant, the horns of a stag, the neck of an ostrich, the breast of a lion, the colour of a tiger, the back of a cat, the tail of a ram, the legs of a camel, and the voice of an ass. Some say this beast is to appear three times in several places, and that she will bring with her the rod of Moses, and the seal of Solomon; and being so swift that none can overtake or escape her, will with the first strike all the believers on the face, and mark them with the word Mumen, i.e. believer; and with the latter will mark the unbelievers on the face likewise, with the word Cafer, i.e. infidel, that every person may be known for what he really is. They add that the same beast is to demonstrate the vanity of all religions except Islam, and to speak Arabic. All this stuff seems to be the result of a confused idea of the beast in the Revelations.

3 War with the Greeks, and the taking of Constantinople by seventy thousand of the posterity of Isaac, who shall not win that city by force of arms, but the walls shall fall down while they cry out, There is no god but God: God is most great! As they are dividing the spoil, news will come to them of the appearance of Antichrist; whereupon they shall leave all, and return back.

4 The coming of Antichrist, whom the Mohammedans call al Masih al Dajjal, i.e. the false or lying Christ, and simply al Djjal. He is to be one-eyed, and marked on the forehead with the letters CFR signifying Cafer, or infidel. They say that the Jews give him the name of Messiah Ben David, and pretend he is to come in the last days, and to be lord both of land and sea, and that he will restore the kingdom to them. According to the traditions of Mohammed, he is to appear first between Irak and Syria, or according to others, in the province of Khorasan; they add that he is to ride on an ass; that he will be followed by seventy thousand Jews of Ispahan, and continue on earth forty days, of which

one will be equal in length to a year, another to a month, another to a week, and the rest will be common days; that he is to lay waste all places, but will not enter Mecca or Medina, which are to be

guarded by angels; and that at length he will be slain by Jesus; who is to encounter him at the gate of Lud. It is said that Mohammed foretold several Antichrists, to the number of about thirty; but one of greater note than the rest.

5 The descent of Jesus on earth. They pretend that he is to descend near the white tower to the east of Damascus, when the people are returned from the taking of Constantinople; that he is to embrace the Mohammedan religion, marry a wife, get children, kill Antichrist, and at length die after forty years', or according to others twenty-four years' continuance on earth. Under him they say there will be great security and plenty in the world, all hatred and malice being laid aside; when lions and camels, bears and sheep, shall live in peace, and a child shall play with serpents unhurt.

6 War with the Jews; of whom the Mohammedans are to make a prodigious slaughter, the very trees and stones discovering such of them as hide themselves, except only the tree called Gharkad, which is the tree of the Jews,

7 The eruption of Gog and Magog, or, as they are called in the east, Yajuj and Majuj; of whom many things are related in the Koran, and the traditions of Mohammed. These barbarians, they tell us, having passed the lake of Tiberias, which the vanguard of the vast army will drink dry, will come to Jerusalem, and there greatly distress Jesus and his companions; till at his request God will destroy them, and fill the earth with their carcasses, which after some time God will send birds to carry away, at the prayers of Jesus and his followers. Their bows, arrows, and quivers the Moslems will burn for seven years together; and at last God will send a rain to cleanse the earth, and to make it fertile.

8 A smoke, which shall fill the whole earth.

9 An eclipse of the moon. Mohammed is reported to have said, that there would be three eclipses before the last hour; one to be seen in the east, another in the west, and the third in Arabia.

10 The returning of the Arabs to the worship of Allat and al Uzza, and the rest of their ancient idols; after the decease of every one in whose heart there was faith equal to a grain of mustard seed, none but the very worst of men being left alive. For God, they say, will send a cold odoriferous wind, blowing from Syria Damascena, which shall sweep away the souls of all the faithful, and the Koran itself, so that men will remain in the grossest ignorance for a hundred years.

11 The discovery of a vast heap of gold and silver by the retreating of the Euphrates, which will be the destruction of many.

12 The demolition of the Caaba, or temple of Mecca, by the Ethiopians.

13 The speaking of beast and inanimate things.

14 The breaking out of fire in the province of Hejaz; or, according to others, in Yaman.

15 The appearance of a man of the descendants of Kahtan, who shall drive men before him with his staff.

16 The coming of the Mohdi, or director; concerning whom Mohammed prophesied, that the world should not have an end till one of his own family should govern the Arabians, whose name should be the same with his own name, and whose father's name should also be the same with his father's name; and who should fill the earth with righteousness. This person the shiites believe to be now

alive, and concealed in some secret place, till the time of his manifestation; for they suppose him to be no other than the last of the twelve Imams, named Mohammed Abu'lkasem, as their prophet was, and the son of Hassan al Askeri, the eleventh of that succession. He was born at Sermanrai in the two hundred and fifty-fifth year of the Hejra. From this tradition, it is to be presumed, an opinion

pretty current among the Christians took its rise, that the Mohammedans are in expectation of their prophet's return.

17 A wind which shall sweep away the souls of all who have but a grain of faith in their hearts, as has been mentioned under the tenth sign.

## Some Questions

What do the Bible and the Koran have in common?



What are the differences between them?



Some people think that all religions serve the same God, so there is no difference. What would you say to someone who thought that?



How would you justify believing the Bible rather than the Koran?



What can we learn from the way Moslems regard the Koran?



Think of what the Bible tells us about what will happen when Christ returns to the earth. Given what Moslems believe about the last days, how might they interpret these events.



**What is the point of Bible Reading?**

Deuteronomy 17:18-19

Psalms 119:9; 11; 18; 37; 41; 98; 105

John 12:48

John 15:3

John 17:17

Acts 20:32

1 Corinthians 10:11

1 Thessalonians 2:13

2 Timothy 3:16-17

James 1:21

Draw lines from the passages to the reasons you have identified, so that where a reason occurs more than once you will not need to write the reason again. Do some reasons occur more often than others?

**List your reasons here****How did the Scriptures help the Lord Jesus and others?**

Matthew 4:4-10

Matthew 12:3-7

Matthew 19:3-6

Matthew 21:12-16

Luke 10:25-29

Luke 17:26-27

Luke 19:41-42

Luke 23:46



Acts 4:11

Acts 7:42-43; 49

Acts 13:33; 35; 41; 47

### **Some passages to read**

Read these passages and think of a lesson each one teaches. You could write a short prayer about it.



Genesis 4:1-10

Exodus 3:1-8

Mark 6:45-56

3 John

### **Read these passages and write a sentence summary for each section.**



Mark 1:1-8; 9-12; 14-20; 21-28

1 Corinthians 1:1-3; 4-9; 10-17; 18-21

Philemon

Psalm 23

**What research could you do on these passages? You don't have to do it today.**



Mark 1:1-8

John 6:1-13

Amos 1

1 Thessalonians 1

Hebrews 1

**“What is the Gospel?”**

How would you expect your friends at school to answer this question?



What would you say?

***Some Key Verses***

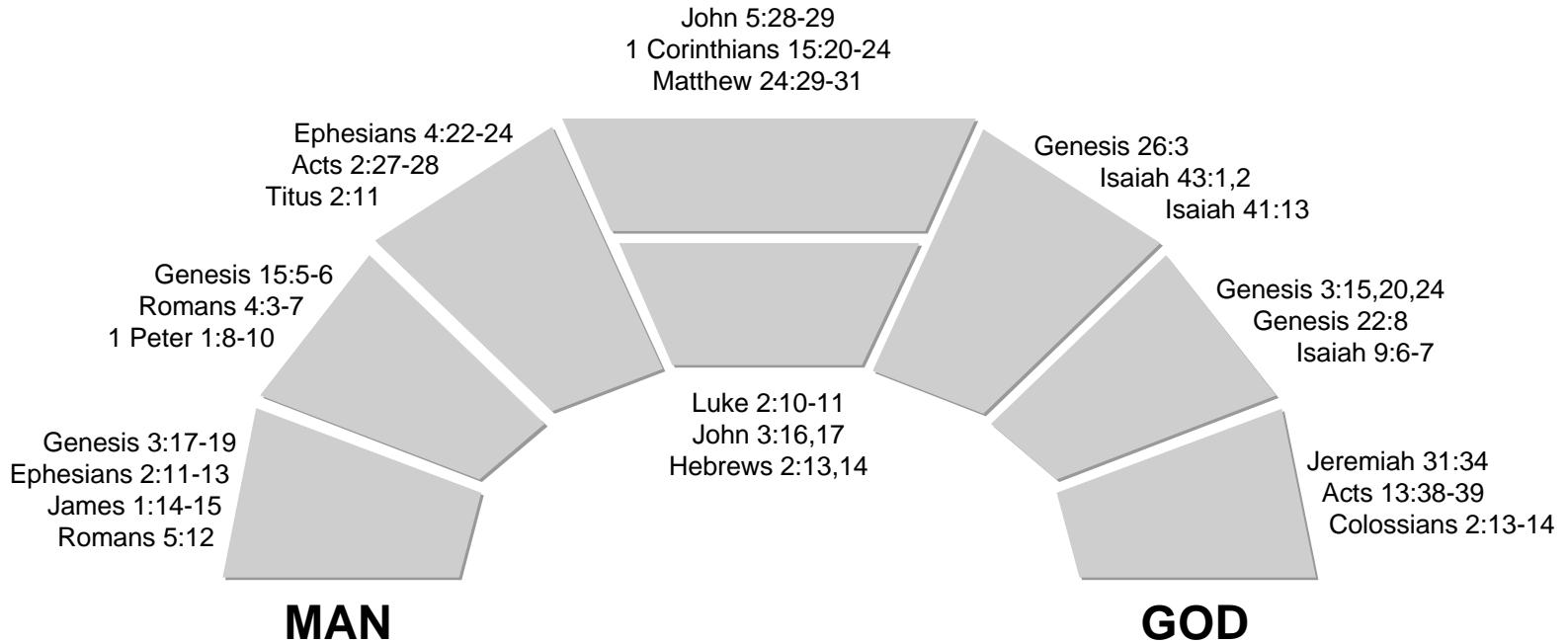
Look at these verses and summarise what they say about the gospel:

Mark 1:1, 14-15; Romans 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Galatians 1:6-12, 3:8



How do you think faithful characters from the Old Testament found salvation?





***THE BRIDGE OF SALVATION***

A simple picture of the key elements of the Gospel. Each brick represents one aspect, in which the gulf between mankind and God is bridged. Pictures like this can give a useful overview, but they have their limitations!

## Key elements of the gospel

For each of the eight 'bricks' in the diagram, write a short description of what it means:

<i>Which brick?</i>	<i>What does it mean?</i>

## Only one Testament

We usually refer to the Old Testament as meaning the books from Genesis to Malachi, and the New Testament those from Matthew to Revelation. But there is no difference in the message. When Paul refers to the old testament, or covenant, in 2 Corinthians 3:14, he is referring specifically to the Law given by Moses at Sinai.

But the gospel of salvation was preached to Abraham long before. Look at Galatians 3:13-18.

So what was the law for?

	
Romans 5:20	
Galatians 3:19-25	
Hebrews 10:1-4	
Matthew 5:17-18	

Last week you will have identified key elements of the gospel: something like this:

We can't save ourselves	We die because we are sinners, and there is nothing we can do to save ourselves.
Forgiveness	God's plan is not to ignore sin but to provide a way in which our guilt is covered.
Promises	From the beginning God has promised to provide a way of salvation through a saviour
Faith	God requires each person to accept and believe in his plan of salvation and the saviour he would send.
Response	That faith has to be shown to be genuine by our obedience and manner of life.
Guidance	God will walk with his people to bring them to his kingdom.
Saviour	Since we cannot save ourselves, God provides a saviour, who is the means of our salvation.
Restoration	Faithful people will be raised from the dead to live in God's kingdom.

### ***And in the Old Testament?***

How much of this do you think was understood by faithful men and women in the Old Testament? Think about these three situations (and any others if you want). If last week you noted other points, as well as the eight above, check to see whether people understood them in Old Testament times. If not, how important do you think they are?



Look at Genesis 3: 7-10, 15, 21, 24; 4:3-7, 16; Hebrews 11:4

<b><i>In Eden</i></b>	
We can't save ourselves	
Forgiveness	
Promises	
Faith	
Response	
Guidance	
Saviour	
Restoration	



Read Genesis 12:1-4; 15:4-7; 22:7-14; John 8:56; Romans 4:16-22; Hebrews 11:8-19.

<b>Abraham</b>	
We can't save ourselves	
Forgiveness	
Promises	
Faith	
Response	
Guidance	
Saviour	
Restoration	



Exodus 3:7-10; 12:21-23; 14:13-16; Isaiah 63:12-14; Joshua 21:43-45

<b>Exodus</b>	
We can't save ourselves	
Forgiveness	
Promises	
Faith	
Response	
Guidance	
Saviour	
Restoration	

**Key difference**

We believe that the Bible is the sole source of authority with regard to religious beliefs and that the Bible speaks for itself to each individual who will read it with a receptive mind. The Roman Catholic church teaches that the Bible is the Word of God but that the Roman Catholic church is equally authoritative. Furthermore, it is asserted that a correct interpretation of the Scriptures can only be made by the church and not by individuals. Hence the authority and doctrinal interpretation of the church supersedes all else.

The Pope, as head of the Roman Catholic church, also claims a unique and all-powerful authority in all matters of doctrine and practice. He claims to be 'Christ's representative on earth', the direct successor of the Apostle Peter and, under certain conditions, to speak and decree with divine authority (called ex-cathedra). This results in a belief in a progressive revelation of the will of God which allows the Roman Catholic church to believe and teach doctrines which are not found in Scripture at all. The following list illustrates the way in which doctrines have been added over the centuries since the Bible was completed.

AD	Doctrine
300	Prayers for the dead
320	Wax candles as effective religious offerings
375	Veneration of angels, dead saints, images
431	Beginning of the exaltation of Mary
593	Doctrine of Purgatory
998	Fasting on Fridays and on feast days as an observance
1000	Obligatory attendance at mass
1090	Introduction of the rosary
1215	Doctrine of trans-substantiation
1229	Bibles forbidden to laymen
1414	Cup (wine) forbidden for laymen at communion service
1545	Church has equal authority with Scriptures
1546	Apocryphal books added to the Bible
1864	Doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary
1879	Doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope
1890	Doctrine of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary

**Beliefs shared with others**

Roman Catholics believe many of the same things as most of Christendom. These include belief in the immortality of the human soul, hell as a place of torment, the existence of a being called 'the devil' and many others.

**Positive aspects**

It must also be recognised that Roman Catholics hold many scriptural doctrines, often more firmly than many other churches, and are less dismissive of doctrines such as the Virgin Birth and the literality of the resurrection of Jesus. They also uphold many of the scriptural teachings of morality and behaviour so often ignored or rejected by other churches.

## Distinctive differences

As well as their particular approach to the Bible and the authority of the Pope, Roman Catholics hold several doctrines shared only and in part with the Eastern Orthodox church. They are not taught in Scripture and in many cases are directly opposed to Bible teaching; this is particularly so with regard to the doctrines of salvation. You may like to make notes on the topics listed and find Bible verses to support your conclusions:

The text which follows was, apart from some minor amendments, written by Dennis Gillett, a Christadelphian who was previously a Roman Catholic, and he writes about their beliefs accurately but sympathetically. Read what he has to say and then consider the questions which follow:

### Authority

The Church of Rome claims that its authority is derived from three sources, the Bible, tradition and the pronouncements of the Popes and Church Councils. The Roman Catholic Bible is based upon the Latin Vulgate translated by Jerome. It is generally acknowledged that the translation is imperfect and not as good as the Authorised Version which is based on the Hebrew and Greek originals. However, Protestants are wrong to suppose that the Catholic Bible is in some way “different” or that it was especially altered by an astute Roman theologian to harmonise with Catholic teaching. Here and there a slightly Catholic flavour in the translation might be detected by the acute mind but the Truth could be preached from it just as truly as from the Authorised Version. There is, however, one way in which the Catholic Bible differs from the Authorised Version - it includes the Apocrypha, which is regarded by the Roman Church as being on the same level of inspiration as the Canonical books of the Old Testament. Jerome refused to acknowledge the Apocryphal books as inspired but the Church of Rome included them in the Vulgate nevertheless. It may seem strange that books are included in Jerome’s Bible which he himself rejected, but the explanation may lie in the fact that two of the Apocryphal books - Tobit and II Maccabees appear to give support to two Roman Catholic doctrines, which it would be impossible to support from the Canonical scriptures. The doctrines referred to are Salvation by Works alone and Praying for the Dead. It is worth remembering that the Apocrypha was never acknowledged as being inspired by the Jewish people nor by our Lord. Although he and his disciples quoted extensively from the Old Testament, the New Testament records no occasion when they quoted from the Apocryphal books; nor did our Lord rebuke the Jewish people for rejecting the Apocrypha, which is strange if, as the Roman Church claims, it is truly inspired. The question of the Apocrypha may be of some interest but in the matter of authority the real issue is not whether the Apocrypha is inspired or not, but the way in which the Church of Rome uses the Canonical books. This will be considered under another heading.

What would you say about the Apocrypha to someone who believed it had the same status as what we know as the scriptures? Try to find examples to support what you say.



## **Tradition**

Some Roman Catholic doctrines have no connection with the Bible whatsoever - things about which the scriptures are silent and which are outside the range of Biblical teaching. Support for these doctrines is found in what the Roman church calls Tradition. It is held that outside and in addition to the teaching of the Bible there is a section of oral teaching which came from the Lord and his Apostles and which has been handed down and preserved in the Catholic church by continual and unbroken succession. Evidence that such a body of oral tradition exists is, according to the church, to be found in such passages as John 20:30 "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book", or in 2 Thessalonians 2:15 "Therefore brethren stand fast and hold the traditions which we have been taught whether by word or our epistle." It must be remarked that although it is true that there are some things Jesus did which are not recorded in the New Testament, there is no hint that the unwritten things must be transmitted orally so that later generations may know the saving truth. In fact the next verse in John 20 infers the reverse - that what is written is all-sufficient. "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name." With regard to the reference to tradition in the Thessalonian letters, it must be remembered that there were no written New Testament scriptures to supplement, as these particular letters were written long before the New Testament Canon was formulated. It is not therefore a case of the oral tradition being supplementary to the written scriptures in order to complete the whole revelation of the truth, but rather the letters were written to confirm the oral teaching which had already been given. The Roman Church claims that it has within itself a sacred deposit of tradition - partly revealed now but partly still secret, and it is not unreasonable that non-catholics should be curious as to what are the contents of that secret part still to be revealed. Their curiosity remains unsatisfied.

It is difficult to counter an argument for which there is no evidence. What would you say on this subject to a Roman Catholic friend?



## **Popes and Councils**

The Decrees of the Councils and the Popes are the third source of Roman authority and underlying this is the doctrine of Papal infallibility. It is this doctrine which causes Catholics to adopt a superior attitude towards the poor Protestants. The latter it is said have only the "dead letter" of Scripture but Catholics have something more wonderful - a living infallible voice to guide them at every turn. If Catholics only knew it, it is not as wonderful as it sounds. The doctrine of Papal infallibility means that when the Pope is speaking ex cathedra on faith or morals to the whole church, he is preserved from error. Some people have thought that infallibility involved some degree of impeccability, but

this is not the definition. The Pope can still fall into sin like other men but when he is using his infallibility he cannot make a mistake about faith and morals. The doctrine was not declared as an article of faith until 1870. When the Catholic theologians came to define it they were faced with the problem that some popes in the past had certainly made mistakes and had stumbled into errors, some even being convicted as heretics. What were the theologians to do? We must admire their astuteness. They said the pope is infallible only when he knows he is infallible and when he makes it clear that he is using his infallible gift. But before 1870 no pope ever knew for sure that he was infallible and had the gift. Thus every mistake of the past was provided for. Since 1870 the infallible gift has been used but once - in 1950 to declare the doctrine of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven. So infallibility is not as wonderful as it seems. It has been used only once and that on a matter beyond the capacity of anybody to prove or disprove. The world has passed through many great trials and controversies since 1870 where an infallible voice would have been of untold benefit, but it is never used. Instead the pope issues what are called "Encyclical Letters." These give guidance and proclaim Catholic teaching on different subjects, but no infallibility is claimed for them and if subsequently they are proved wrong or inexpedient, they can be disavowed.

Summarise the points made in this paragraph.



### **Papal Succession - passed on from Peter?**

A reference to what is called the Papal Succession might be appropriate here. Put simply it means that the Apostle Peter was the first bishop of Rome and therefore the first pope and that since then there has been an unbroken line of pontiffs presiding over the church, in whom Peter the first pope still guides, governs and presides in the person of his successors, the Bishops of Rome. Hence the pope is said to speak from the chair of Peter. How unbroken the line has been is a matter of opinion. What you believe is regulated by what you are. Even some Catholics admit that there is a lack of historical certainty about the supposed succession. Twenty nine names on the list are described as "pretenders" and on some occasions there were two, even three popes reigning at the same time and proclaiming their authority, denouncing each other and struggling for supremacy. But what of the supposed first pope - Peter the Jewish fisherman? Was he ever bishop of Rome? When Pope Paul visited the Holy Land at the end of 1963 he was described as treading in the footsteps of the first pope, St. Peter. It is now taken for granted that Peter was the first bishop of Rome and, inferentially, the first pope. As most Catholics would say, "only a few bigoted non-conformists would doubt it". Millions of people believe it without knowing why. What is the evidence that Peter was bishop of Rome? The church quotes 1 Peter 5:13, "The Church which is at Babylon, elected together with you saluteth you," and asserts that Babylon in this passage is Pagan Rome; hence Peter must have been there when he wrote the letter. In the Bible, Babylon stands so often as a synonym for the incorporation of all that is in opposition to God's purpose issuing at last in confusion; so in the letter of Peter it could stand for some place where God's will was opposed and his church persecuted. Pagan Rome would come in that category at certain periods. On the other side there are strong

indications that Peter was never bishop of Rome. Roman Catholic tradition says that Peter went to Rome in AD 42 and was there for 25 years as bishop of the church. Yet when Paul wrote his letter to the Roman church in AD 58 he does not refer to Peter at all though he expresses a great longing to see his fellow Christians there. In Romans 16 Paul refers by name to 27 disciples in the church at Rome. If Peter were there is it likely he would have ignored him, a fellow apostle whom he loved? When Paul arrived in Rome some of the members of church met him - but is it not certain that if Peter were there as bishop he would have been among the first to meet Paul and would not the writer of Acts have recorded this historic -meeting? Furthermore if an inspired apostle of the quality of Peter had been bishop in the Roman church for 16 years is it likely that Paul would have needed to write to them in the way he did, laying the foundation of the gospel and dealing with such fundamental matters? Would not Paul's journey and his work at Rome have been contrary to his own principle "not to build on another man's foundation" if Peter were already that church's bishop? When Paul was at Rome he wrote letters from there to other churches - what are now known as the letters to the Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians and the letter to Philemon. In these epistles he refers to others who were with him at Rome and who were labouring with him in the gospel but he makes no mention of Peter. Later on Paul was a prisoner in Rome and during that period he wrote what is now called the second letter to Timothy in which he used these expressions "Only Luke is with me" and "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." Is it likely that if Peter had been the head of the Roman church he would have deserted his brother apostle, Paul, in the hour of his great need? According to Acts 12 Peter was imprisoned a short while before Herod died, which is most usually reckoned to have occurred in AD 44. In Acts 15, some nine years later he is taking part in the church Council at Jerusalem. Some while after this he is found at Antioch, where according to Galatians 2, 11-16 he is being resisted, by Paul over a matter of church behaviour. Catholics have said that Peter's activity as bishop of Rome is "among the best ascertained facts of history" but to have arrived at that conclusion demands turning a blind eye to the New Testament.

What would you say to a Roman Catholic who insisted that their faith must be correct because of the apostolic succession?



### **Purgatory and Limbo**

Today some of the churches of Christendom tend very much to push the doctrine of judgement and the future life into the background. It is reckoned that so little is known with certainty about the future life that proper definition of a doctrine is impossible. Missionaries in the nineteenth century went out to remote places to save the souls of the natives from hell. Now they go out to teach them how to live the present life in a civilised fashion. The Church of Rome holds fast to its doctrine of the future life, which remains in the forefront of its teaching. The doctrine is based squarely on a

belief in the inherent immortality of the human soul. The idea of the soul's eternal bliss in heaven or eternal torment in hell is in accordance with orthodox teaching and need not be enlarged on here. The distinctive feature of Roman eschatology is the doctrine of Purgatory.

In order to understand the need for Purgatory it is necessary to understand Catholic doctrine concerning forgiveness of sin. Absolution is gained either by auricular confession or by a sincere act of contrition, but although forgiveness is secured the temporal punishment due to the sin still has to be suffered by the soul. In other words absolution does not remit punishment. This punishment is suffered by the soul in purgatory after death, and when the purgatorial punishment is ended the soul goes in its purged condition into heaven. The suffering in Purgatory is regarded as being very intense but its duration is not defined. Some Catholic writers have suggested that to the suffering soul it will seem like an eternity. The awfulness of the doctrine, even to the Catholic mind, demands some way of alleviating the suffering, and this is provided for in Catholic theology. One way is by prayers for the dead, and some prayers like the Rosary are supposed to be particularly efficacious to secure a remission of punishment. Another way is by having Masses said for the suffering souls in general or some named soul in particular. A further means of gaining remission of punishment is by Indulgences. These are usually spiritual exercises of one sort or another which are performed by the living and the merits of which are applied in advance to the total of their own suffering due to be endured in purgatory so as to reduce it. The merits of Indulgences can also be applied to the souls already in purgatory. So you may gain an indulgence now for your suffering wife or husband or some other relative or friend, and their punishment is reduced accordingly. In Roman Catholic theology there is a place called Limbo. To this place go the souls of unbaptised persons. It might be described as a slightly inferior department of heaven. Those who go there are happy but not as happy as the souls in heaven because in Limbo they are deprived of the beatic vision - the vision of God. This deprivation is necessary because the souls, never having been baptised, still bear the stain of original sin and to that extent are defiled and cannot come into the presence of the Almighty.

To the mind tutored in the Truth this strange doctrine of purgatory is manifestly unscriptural and more in harmony with paganism than with true Christianity. It is one of the tragic fruits of the Greek doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The whole edifice of Roman Catholic eschatology is based upon this doctrine. When it is realised that the foundation is a fraud the edifice crumbles. The true believer trusts in the redeeming sacrifice of Christ, depends upon his sympathetic priesthood and draws near in full assurance of faith, remembering gratefully that by one offering the Lord hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. To the Catholic, judgement has two stages. At death the soul is judged and assigned to heaven or hell or purgatory. This is called the particular judgement. At the end of human time, called the Last Day in Catholic theology, the souls in heaven and hell and purgatory are to be rejoined to their bodies in a general resurrection and judged again - not to alter the particular judgement but to seal it. This is called the general judgement. Thereafter purgatory is ended, the earth is burned up and for all eternity there remains hell with its everlasting torment and heaven with its everlasting bliss. In sharp contrast the Bible proclaims the second coming of the Son of God in flaming advent glory, to establish an everlasting kingdom on the earth which shall never be destroyed, to raise the righteous dead to a life unsullied, unwearied and unending, and consign the wicked to everlasting death

How important, do you think, are the differences between what Roman Catholics believe and what we believe the Bible teaches. How would you think about a dead person if you believed in Purgatory and Limbo? (We will be returning to this subject later in the notes, and you may like to refer back to this then).



## **The Sacramental System**

In the Catholic faith the important thing is for the believer to secure a constant supply of what is called “sanctifying grace.” This expression describes a kind of spiritual energy and it comes to the individual through the sacraments. A sacrament is an outward sign of an inward grace - the channel through which God sends his blessing to earth. The system covers the Catholic from the cradle to the grave. There are seven sacraments: Baptism, Penance, the Eucharist, Confirmation, Holy Orders, Matrimony and Extreme Unction. The practice of christening infants which the Catholic Church calls baptism is so well known as to need no description here. To the Catholic it is very important because without it the soul is doomed to exist in that twilight land which is called Limbo. The sacrament of Penance is another name for the Confessional, that practice of confessing sins to a priest in secret and receiving absolution for the sins confessed.

## **Confession**

Catholics usually make their first confession about the age of seven, when in the Catholic view of things a child comes to the use of reason. There is an obligation, under the pain of eternal damnation, to confess once a year, but in practice Catholics usually do it once a week

The Roman Church in justifying Confession does not claim that the practice is expressly mentioned in the New Testament but asserts nevertheless that Christ commanded it and gave his Apostles the power to absolve or retain sins. The passage most usually cited is in John 20, “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain they are retained.” From John 20 it would be difficult to prove that the words were spoken to the Apostles only. From a parallel passage in Luke 24 it is clear that in addition to the Apostles there were other disciples present also. The Roman Church affirms that the words of Jesus mean that the Apostles were given power in themselves to forgive sins which had been committed after baptism and that the power residing in them was transmitted to their successors, which according to the church are its bishops and priests.

It is true that the Apostles were empowered to declare and pronounce the forgiveness of sins but the record of the infant church reveals that this was done through the gospel and was conditional upon a penitent response to it. The difference between the two interpretations is that one teaches a self-contained power to absolve from sin and the other teaches authority to declare forgiveness through the gospel to those who truly repent. The words of the Lord to the disciples after his resurrection clearly indicate what was intended: “Thus it is written and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.” In fact this is what the Apostles did. In Acts 2 is a record of Peter promising forgiveness to those who repent:

“Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins.” Before the High Priest and Council Peter said it again when he was speaking of the Lord Jesus: “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things”. Paul, when he was preaching at Antioch, declared the same thing: “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” When Peter was speaking to Simon the sorcerer, he was dealing with a case of sin after baptism, but he does not ask that Simon shall confess to him nor does Peter claim any power to forgive him, but says “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.” It is true that confession is a proper precursor of forgiveness, as John says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”. But the confession is made to God through the High Priest at God’s right hand. Under certain circumstances it is right that confession should be made to men, that is when by our sin we have injured some other person. The essential point is that in such a case confession must be made to the injured one and not to some third party. “If thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath sought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”



Read James 5:14-16, and discuss what it is saying. How does this verse contrast with what Roman Catholics believe?



## **The Eucharist**

The doctrine of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the elements of bread and wine is the central and most outstanding doctrine of the Catholic Church, and is the essential feature of the Mass. The Mass is an elaborate and ritualistic form of the breaking of bread service. The simple supper of bread and wine which Christ commanded his followers to observe in his memory has become the sacrament of the eucharist. The early church gradually changed the simple ceremony until it has come to be a repetition of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. It is called the “unbloody sacrifice of the mass.” Each time mass is said Christ’s sacrifice is repeated. It should be understood that the church teaches and Catholics believe without doubting, that when over the bread the priest pronounces the Latin words “Hoc est corpus meum” the bread becomes the literal flesh of Jesus Christ, and over the wine “Hoc est sanguis meus” the wine becomes literal blood. So that when the priest breaks the consecrated bread Christ’s body is being broken once again, and when he pours out the consecrated wine Christ’s blood is shed again. The consecrated bread to the Catholic the body of Christ is taken and eaten by the believer, bestowing spiritual energy or sanctifying grace. In the Catholic Church the laity do not take the wine. If the reader should have difficulty in accepting that modern Catholics believe that

the elements of bread and wine are really changed into literal flesh and blood, be assured that they do most certainly, without the faintest doubt in their minds. It is the very sternest dogma of the church. No true Catholic would express the slightest disbelief nor would wish to do so.

The sacraments of Confirmation, Holy Orders and Matrimony require no discussion. They represent in the Catholic faith the gift of the Holy Spirit, the ordination of priests, and marriage. Extreme Unction may not be so well understood. The words mean "last anointing" which is the final means of grace. The sacrament is administered when death seems imminent and involves the anointing of the eyes, ears, mouth, hands and feet with holy oil. The administration of Extreme Unction accompanied by Confession is the Catholic conception of a happy death.

These seven sacraments represent the glory of the Catholic belief and because they are exercised only by the priesthood have the effect of enhancing the standing and power of the clergy. The faithful Catholic is inclined to look with pitying condescension on the poor non-catholic who is deprived of this system of sanctifying grace.

The Son of God enjoined two ordinances upon his church, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. There is no magic in Baptism - the essential element is faith. The Lord's glorified body is not in the Eucharist but in heaven at the right hand of His Father. To eat the literal flesh of the Son of God would confer no spiritual benefit. What goes into the belly does not change the heart. Jesus said, in the very discourse where he spoke of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, "The flesh profiteth nothing: the words I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life."



What did Jesus mean when he said of the bread 'This is my body'

### **Aids to Catholic Living**

To the Roman' Catholic the earth is scattered with demons wandering through the world for the ruin of souls. As a protection and bulwark against these diabolical powers, besides the sacraments, there are other forces which can be enlisted. They are sometimes called sacramentals. These are holy water - that is ordinary water with a little salt added and made holy by the pronouncement of a Latin formula; holy candles - that is ordinary candles which have been blessed - lit before the image of the Virgin Mary or some saint; holy medals, bearing the image of some saintly person of the past, which can be worn as a protection; a scapular, which is a piece of material worn across the shoulders (usually as an under-garment) bearing a holy picture; Agnus Dei - a disc or discs made from the wax of candles left over after worship, imprinted with the sign of a cross and a lamb and blessed by the Pope. These latter are reserved for the elite - the ordinary laity would not possess them.

Another aid to Catholic living is fasting. This religious practice is calculated to secure merit for the fasting one in the sight of God. Fasting is prescribed by the Church of Rome for different periods of the year such as Lent and certain days immediately preceding a great feast of the church. The nature

of the fast varies according to the purpose. Sometimes it allows one full meal only at mid-day, with very small amounts morning and evening but no meat. On other occasions three meals are permitted but no meat at all. This is usually called abstinence, instead of fasting.

Prayer plays an important part in the Catholic faith and one of the most popular forms is "saying the rosary." This consists of saying the Lord's Prayer once and the Ave Maria ten times and then repeating the whole process five times which results in five Pater Nosters and fifty Ave Marias. Another important practice is praying to the saints in heaven, seeking their intercession. It is usually reckoned that certain saints are good for particular causes - St. Aloysius for students in their studies, St. Anthony for lost property, St. Blaise for sore throats. At the head of the list of saints is Mary, styled by the church Mother of God and as an advocate regarded with veneration, superior to all other saints.

Images and pictures are used as external aids to worship. In fairness to the Church of Rome, it stoutly denies that these images are worshipped but claims they are ways of worshipping those whom the image represents - the veneration of the image being transferred to the holy person or saint. In the judgement of the writer this is what most Catholics feel and believe about images. They do not have the intention to worship the image itself.

Relics are venerated in the Church of Rome. Relics are pieces of material of one kind or another which have a sacred association, such as the bones of a saint, a piece of the table at the Last Supper, the shroud of Jesus, a piece of the True Cross, one of the thorns from the crown of thorns and so on. In a certain sense relics have become something of an embarrassment to the church. If all the relics of the wood of the cross were put together it would be enormous; there was one spear which wounded the Lord's side but four are preserved in the church; Jesus possessed one seamless robe, the church has three. It is said that the church has two heads of John the Baptist - one at Rome and one at Amiens. To this the church replies that it matters little if the relic is not authentic, for the reverence is paid to the saint not to the relic itself, and in any case if an attempt was made to gather out the false relics the true ones might be rejected and dishonoured.

Whether the modern educated Catholic really believes that holy water is able to drive out demons and holy medals give protection from danger, is difficult to say. If he does believe it perhaps it is in a more cavalier fashion than his forefathers, but he still behaves as though it were true. Doubtless he would say that the powers are not resident in the things themselves but that the elements of water and such-like are external signs of an invisible power from God available to those who believe. Put simply, it is a matter of faith. What one man believes another cannot. So it must be left there.

The New Testament proclaims that there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. He is the High Priest of our profession and his intercession is all sufficient. The saints are not an aristocracy of special souls in heaven, but according to the New Testament are men and women on the earth who have been separated by belief of the gospel and washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus. Once afar off, but in Christ made nigh, the saints are exhorted to pray ceaselessly but not with vain repetitions. They are to pray intelligently and sincerely, praising God and making their requests known unto him. They are taught by the Apostle Paul, "Every creature of God is good and nothing to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." So they may eat and drink with gladness of heart and thank God. If they fast it is to be a voluntary exercise done in secret as an accompaniment of prayer. In the face of danger, seen and unseen, known and unknown, spiritual or physical, they are to rely for help upon God alone. They have the assurance of God's word through Jesus, "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need." and through Peter, "He careth for you." So they may trust and take courage.

Protestants all over the world are giving up their intransigence to the Church of Rome. The Romeward trend is increasing. The Separated Brethren are weakening. The real issues seem to be ignored in the popular cry for unity. The blinkers are on. Could this be the time of strong delusion repeating itself?

Let the exhortation of Paul be our watchword: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."

This is a discussion lesson. We all have experiences of preaching and opinions about what is and is not effective. There are many examples of preaching in the New Testament which show us the principles and practices of Jesus and his apostles.

You may like to use this worksheet to record some of the discussion and the conclusions your group reaches. There is a list on the next page of some of the many ways of preaching; you may like to add to it.

What have you learned about how you should witness for Christ at school?



What do you intend to do differently in future, to help you to stand up for your faith and to help your friends.

1.....

.

2.....

.

3.....

.

**What conclusions have you reached about more formal preaching activities, such as:**



'Lectures' - Bible talks  
Billing and canvassing  
Sunday School/Bible School  
Newspaper and magazine advertising  
Campaigning'  
Bible Line - telephone  
Radio advertising  
Posters  
'*Glad Tidings*' magazine  
Direct mail  
Car stickers  
Shop posters

***Preaching:***

Why?



When?



Where?



How?



### The Creation of man



Genesis 1:25,31 - How is God's creation described?



Genesis 2:7 - What was the formula for man?



Genesis 2:19; 7:22 - What else was this the formula for?



Genesis 1:27,28 - What was the important difference between man and animals?



### The Origin of sin



Genesis 2:16, 17 - How did God test Adam and Eve?



Why did God test them?



## The Nature of sin



1 John 3:4 - What is sin?



1 John 2:16; Mark 7:20-23 - Where does it come from?



Discuss whether you think some sins are worse than others.



Matthew 12:31 - What sin can't be forgiven?



Why?



## The Consequences



Genesis 3:7, 8 - What were the immediate consequences?



Genesis 3:19 - What were the ultimate consequences?



Romans 6:23 - What is the reward for sin?



## Implications for us



Romans 5:12 - How are we affected by Adam's sin?



Ephesians 2:1-3. What does this tell you about yourself. How does it make you feel if you imagine yourself standing in front of God?



## Hinduism

Hinduism is an ethnic religion, confined to India, or to Indians who have emigrated to other countries and taken their religion with them. Generally speaking, Hindus do not attempt to propagate their faith. For this reason, that Hinduism is an ethnic religion. It has survived a variety of influences and yet remained distinct and recognisable

Because of the variety in Hinduism, it is quite difficult for outsiders to comprehend the essential truths of this religion. Today in India age-long customs, rival philosophical systems, animistic beliefs, a luxuriant mythology derived from many sources, epic legends of ancient heroes and sages, and, in the last two hundred years, waves of influence from the West, have gone to make up that welter of beliefs and practices which we recognise as Hinduism.

Hinduism is a major world religion, not merely by virtue of its many followers (estimated at more than 700 million) but also because of its profound influence on many other religions during its long, unbroken history, beginning about 1500 BC. The corresponding influence of these various religions on Hinduism (it has an extraordinary tendency to absorb foreign elements) has greatly contributed to the religion's syncretism—the wide variety of beliefs and practices that it encompasses. Moreover, the geographic, rather than ideological, basis of the religion (the fact that it consists of whatever all the people of India have believed and done) has given Hinduism the character of a social and doctrinal system that extends to every aspect of human life.

*"Hinduism," Microsoft (R) Encarta. Copyright (c) 1994 Microsoft Corporation. Copyright (c) 1994 Funk & Wagnall's Corporation.*

Hinduism evolved during the period between 1500 and 500 BC, that is approximately from the time of the Exodus from Egypt to the return from the Babylonian exile. At about the start of this period, invaders entered the Indus valley in the north west of India (modern Punjab). Their language was Sanskrit, closely akin to Ancient Greek, and they belonged to a fair skinned Indo-European family of races. The word Hindu is derived from the Sanskrit word sindhu ("river," more specifically, the Indus).

The fact that their invasion coincided with the Exodus may be additional evidence that the upheaval of the Exodus was not localised to Egyptians, Israelites, Amalekites and Canaanites, but that other peoples were on the move in the Middle East.

The Aryans brought with them the Rig-Veda, literally "Knowledge of the Seer", a collection of hymns. They worshipped nature gods, or devas (compare Latin deus), which they invested with personal attributes, having superhuman powers, and dwelling in the heavens. They offered sacrifices to these gods, and the hymns of the Rig-Veda were addressed to them.

## Creation and the caste system

The Aryans who had invaded India kept themselves separate from the natives, whom they termed sudras or serfs, and this separation was later refined into the caste system which to many people is the distinguishing feature of Hinduism. The Aryan battles against the indigenous population was reflected in stories of the Aryan "bright gods" against the "daiytas",

dark spirits or demons. The Aryan Brahmins, or priests, wielded immense influence because they alone knew how to offer the sacrifices correctly and extract favours from the gods.

The Aryan priests, according to the ancient sacred literature of India, divided society into a basic caste system. Sometime between 200 BC and AD 100, the Manu Smriti, or Law of Manu, was written. In it the Aryan priest-lawmakers created the four great hereditary divisions of society still surviving today, placing their own priestly class at the head of this caste system with the title of earthly gods, or Brahmins. Next in order of rank were the warriors, the Kshatriyas. Then came the Vaisyas, the farmers and merchants. The fourth of the original castes was the Sudras, the laborers, born to be servants to the other three castes, especially the Brahmin. Far lower than the Sudras—in fact, entirely outside the social order and limited to doing the most menial and unappealing tasks—were those people of no caste, the Harijans or Untouchables. These were the Dravidians, the aboriginal inhabitants of India, to whose ranks from time to time were added the pariahs, or outcasts, people expelled for religious or social sins from the classes into which they had been born. Thus created by the priests, the caste system was made a part of Hindu religious law, rendered secure by the claim of divine revelation.

*"Caste," Microsoft (R) Encarta. Copyright (c) 1994 Microsoft Corporation. Copyright (c) 1994 Funk & Wagnall's Corporation.*

The doctrinal basis of the caste system is in the creation story that describes the origin of everything from a gigantic person of Purusa, which is sacrificed and divided until the various parts of it become the earth, the sun, the moon, the animals, and human beings as well. According to the Rig-Veda, (Rig-Veda x 90.11-12), the Brahmin was the mouth of Purusa, the vaisya (craftsmen, tradesmen and agriculturists) the legs, and sudra (the native serfs) the feet. Thus the sudra served the other three classes and looked after their material needs. The Sanskrit word for these classifications is 'varna' or literally 'colour', indicating that racial prejudice based on colour is not a recent phenomenon. The Brahmins made the system more complex, determining caste boundaries according to religious views, social practice and place of origin. Since the root of the system was in the Rig-Veda, it has the force of dharma ('law'), and is therefore almost impossible to change.

One of the disparities between Judaism and Christianity and Hinduism is well illustrated by the caste system. The Hindustani word for caste is zat or jat, indicating a 'kind' of thing, or species or animal. The principle can be illustrated by the example of first, a hammer and pudding: they are different kinds of things for different purposes; and secondly, a dog and a cat: it is not natural or seemly or desirable for a dog to mate with a cat. In the same way, people from different castes have different, pre-determined fixed purposes and it is not right or proper that they should mix.

## **Karma**

Another major plank in Hinduism is that of constant re-birth. This concept is not mentioned in the Rig-Veda, and it is probably a belief of the native Dravidians which was added later.

The principle that leads to the notion of rebirth is the doctrine of 'karma' which means action. In practice, to a Hindu, every activity whether in thought or deed, has consequences. Thus, as in a previous life, his actions, good or bad, bear fruit; and when he dies there is an accumulation of 'karma', merit and guilt, remaining to be worked off. His accumulated 'score' determines his status in the next life, which may be as a god, a brahmin, an outcaste, a woman, a dog or a plant. The law of karma is thus that 'selves are constantly getting the justice they deserve'.

But the fruit of the law of karma is in reality a sort of fatalism and trite explanation for all the different outcomes of life. People get what is their karma, and a person's moral and spiritual state are the result of a former life - they are almost predestined. This leads to an acceptance of poverty, sickness, and the apparently callous attitude to suffering.

## **Nirvana**

Rebirth will continue until desire for this world ceases: the goal is 'moksha' (or nirvana), or liberation and release from the endless cycle of rebirth.

There are ways in Hindu philosophy of moving towards moksha. These are:

### **a) *The way of meditation or dhyara yoga.***

This is described in the following passages from the Bhagavad Gita or 'Song of God', and extract from the Mahabharata, the worlds longest epic poem by the poet Vyasa, composed about 200 BC. It constitutes the history of ancient Indian people, but in terms of myths, legends, folklore and the religions and philosophic history of India (Herman p89).

“Closing out all external objects, focusing the eyes between the eyebrows, making equal the inhalation and exhalation of the breath through the nostrils. The yogi who meditates with his senses, mind and reason controlled, who is intent on moksha and who has cast out desire, fear and anger, he is liberated forever.

The yogi should practice ceaselessly to discipline his mind, seated in a quiet place, alone, controlled within and without, free from desires and possessions.”

The practice of dhyana or meditation has spin-offs in ordinary life: it is a psychological discipline that enables people to arrange their lives better by sorting out the mind. Its practice makes everyday tasks easier, such as household chores or taking exams.

### **b) *The way of knowledge or jnana merga.***

The endless cycle of birth-death-rebirth is a result of ignorance, and release is attained as knowledge replaces ignorance. Yoga and ascetic practices are part of the means of attaining knowledge. It appears that 'knowledge' in this context is not the amassing of information about things or how they work, as we would court knowledge, but rather the knowledge of self, or atman. Atman has been described for an individual as "not the body, nor the mind which receives them, nor even the intelligence which dominates the mind, but the very self behind and within all these." This sounds similar to the concept of the (personal) immortal soul. The immortal soul of the universe is Brahman, which is the unchanging 'something' which is contained within all things. The way of knowledge seeks to identify the atman within oneself to the atman everywhere, that is the Brahman. This is reminiscent of the concept of 'Gaia', which you may be familiar with in New Age thinking.

### **c) *The way of action: or karma marga.***

This way to release (nirvana or moksha) recognises that there are obligations to meet and duties to do in our society, and that opting out is not a way out. There is a dilemma here, since the basic Hindu philosophy is that to every action, karma, there is a consequence, and it is this principle of cause and effect which leads to the 'birth-death-rebirth' cycle.

**d) The way of devotion: bhakti marga or yoga.**

The way of devotion or adoration works in this way to obtain liberation. Bhakti marga produces actions without karmic residues because the worshipper dedicates his actions and their consequences to an adored god, so that the karma generated by the act becomes the god's and not the worshipper's. The bhakti became personalised into veneration for Krishna, a mythical figure who appeared in the Bhagavad Gita, thus (from Bhagavad Gita, XVIII 55, 65-66):

“By Bhakti he comes to know Me (Krishna), what my measure is and who I am in truth. Then having known me truly he enters into me immediately. Merge your mind with Me (Krishna), be my bhakta (worshipper, adorer), sacrifice to me, prostrate yourself before me, and you shall come to me. I promise this to you truly, for you are ever dear to me. Abandoning all duties, come the Me alone for refuge. Be not sorrowed for I shall give you moksha (release, liberation) from all sins.”

The “way of devotion” is what appeals to most Hindus, and it is this ‘way’ which forms the common impression of what being a Hindu means. It is manifested in the gaudy processions, the reverencing of statues to innumerable painted and decorated gods, Krishna worship, and ecstatic (and sometimes violent) behaviour of worshippers.

**What do you think?**

***Creation and the caste system***

In what ways are the teachings of Genesis and the rest of scripture different from the ideas behind the caste system?



***Karma***

In what way does this belief coincide with views held by the teachers of the law in New Testament times?



What vital aspect of God's dealings with men does the law of Karma omit?



***Nirvana***

What do you think the value of Christian meditating might be?



How do you understand our duties and obligations to society fitting in with faith in God?



How does what Jesus taught about devotion differ from the Hindu view?



### What is humility?

Think about these people and try to work out what it was that would cause them to be described as humble.



Jesus, Matthew 11:29; John 13:1-5

Moses, Numbers 12:3; Exodus 32:31-32; Numbers 14:11-20

Little children, Matthew 18:2-4



### How should we be humble before God?



2 Kings 5:1-16; Luke 17:7-10



James 4:3, 1 Peter 5:6-7, Matthew 5:2-5



## **How can we be humble with other people?**

Are we prepared to accept help from people we consider less competent than ourselves?  
(Naaman did accept help from the servant girl).

Do we really try to see other people's point of view?

Do we try to justify ourselves when we are in the wrong (or other people think we are)?

Do we try to get our own way, or get the most interesting part of a job?

Do you always tell people when you've done something kind?



## **What is the opposite of humility?**

Think of some examples



**What does the Bible say about death?**

Genesis 3:19; Isaiah 38:9-18

**In the grave, what state is everyone in?**

Psalm 6:5; 88:10-12; 115:17; 146:3-4; Ecclesiastes 9:5-10; Isaiah 38:18

**Who goes to hell?**

The Hebrew word for hell is 'sheol'. In the authorised version it is translated equally 'grave' and 'hell'; in the NIV it tends to be translated 'grave'. In the following passages it is always translated 'grave'. Who is referred to?



Psalm 89:48

Genesis 37:35

Isaiah 38:10

Psalm 16:10

Psalm 139:8

In the New Testament the Greek word for hell is 'hades'. In the Authorised version it is nearly always translated 'hell', but in the NIV it is always 'grave'. It means the same as 'sheol', as you can see from the passage below, where the Apostle Peter quotes from Psalm 16:10. Who is the passage talking about?



Acts 2:27,31

### **Is it possible to be raised from hell?**



Look at 1 Samuel 2:6; Psalm 49:15, and Hosea 13:14, where the word grave is 'sheol' again.



### **Do you think it is comforting to be told that someone has 'gone to be with Jesus'?**

Imagine that you had a friend who had died from an illness, or killed in a car crash, and someone told you that they weren't really dead, but that they had gone to heaven. What thoughts and doubts might arise in your mind?



## What does this mean about spirits and mediums?



Deuteronomy 18:9-12

What about the witch at Endor 1 Samuel 28?



## Summarise what the Bible teaches about Hell and the Grave



“Gehenna” in the New Testament conjures up two pictures in the minds of many:

- the place of eternal hellfire for the wicked, and
- the place of purgatory, where hellfire is endured for a time until admission to heaven.

Long before the time of Christ, particularly in India and Persia, the idea existed of suffering by fire after death. It was familiar to Egyptian and later to the Greek and Roman minds. After Alexander the Great, Greek influences spread into Palestine and the Jews began to speculate about Gehenna and the underworld. It was gradually developed by the ‘Christian’ church, and at approximately 600 AD Gregory the Great formally expressed the doctrine of purgatory, where it was thought that men and women were said to undergo penal and purifying suffering after death before going on to heaven. Unbaptised adults were said to suffer the same fires of torment without hope or release - ‘hellfire’. Through the Middle Ages the fear of purgatory took firm hold of the popular mind.

Most systems of religious belief, ancient or modern, have hope after death for sinners who, having lived badly in this life, have an opportunity to purge their sins in some future state. It can even be said to be a feature of paganism.

*Taken from “Roman Catholicism”, by Loraine Boettner. Chapter 10*

Look in Mark 9:43 (and verses 45 and 47). In each case the Greek word translated ‘hell’ is Gehenna, and clearly we need to understand what it is talking about because it sounds as though it is referring to a place of eternal torment, and many people think that it is.

Gehenna is the Greek form of the Hebrew ‘Ge Hinnom’, ‘the valley of Hinnom’. It was a valley next to Jerusalem. Look in Joshua 15:8 and 18:16, and you will see the first two places where the place is referred to in the Bible.

Find the valley of Hinnom on the map, and then look at the following references to see some of the things that happened there:



2 Chronicles 28:3, in the reign of Ahaz, around 730 BC



2 Chronicles 33:6, in the reign of Manasseh, around 660 BC





2 Kings 23:10, in the reign of Josiah, around 630 BC



(It is understood that he devoted the valley to the disposal of the city's rubbish and sewage).



Jeremiah 7:31-33; Summarise what Jeremiah said about the place. What new name did he give to the valley?



"It became the receptacle of rubbish in general, and received the carcasses of men and beasts. To consume the rubbish and prevent pestilence, fires were kept perpetually burning in it. In the days of Jesus it was the highest mark of ignominy that the council of the Jews could inflict, to order a man to be buried in Gehenna."

*Whiston's Josephus. "Wars of the Jews", Book 6*

Jeremiah calls it "the valley of the dead bodies and of the ashes", Jeremiah 31:40. His words were literally fulfilled in AD 70 when the Roman commander Titus surrounded Jerusalem, as Josephus says:

"Neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, ... every day five hundred Jews ... were crucified before the wall of the city. (i.e. where the valley of Gehenna was.) ..their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for the crosses." Later, "they had the great multitude of dead bodies cast down from the walls into the valleys beneath." Through one gate alone, "115,880 dead bodies were carried out ... and cast out of the city." "No fewer than 600,000 were thrown out at the gates."

*Quotations taken from Whiston's Josephus. "Wars of the Jews", Book 6*

This was the judgement on the Jews because they had rejected Jesus as their Messiah and "filled up the measure of their sins." A dreadful literal fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy.

Because the translators assumed that this valley of Gehenna typified "hellfire", they translated the word as "hell" without justification. The NIV is the same as the AV in this respect. They ought rather to have indicated that Jesus was referring to a specific place on earth, and let readers ponder the implied associations for themselves.

Note how Isaiah in around 700 BC had prophesied the destruction of Assyria in the days of king Hezekiah (compare Isaiah 37:33-38). The people of Israel must have had to dispose of the bodies and it seems likely that in order to avoid polluting their water supplies they will have used the valleys of Hinnom and perhaps Kidron for this purpose.



Now go back to Mark chapter 9, read verses 42-50, and make a list of all the unusual expressions that occur, like 'a millstone hanged about his neck'. Would you expect any of them to be taken absolutely literally?



Then read the passage again, and find out how differently it reads when you realise that it is referring to a real place.

The following article on 'Hell' is taken from the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

"HELL - the abode or state of being of evil spirits or souls that are damned to postmortem punishment. Derived from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning "to conceal" or "to cover," the term hell originally designated the torrid regions of the underworld, though in some religions the underworld is cold and dark.

The concept of a state of being or place that separates the good from the evil or the living from the dead is found in most religions of the world. In religions of ancient and primitive peoples, the dwelling place of the dead as the destiny of the soul might be a gloomy subterranean realm or a distant island (e.g. the Greek Hades); a deep abyss in the lower world in which the souls of persons are punished (e.g. the Greek Tartarus); a dark region in the lower world in which both good and evil souls continue to exist as shades in constant thirst (e.g. the ancient Israelite Sheol); an underworld of cold and darkness (e.g. the Norse Niflheimr, also called Hel); a celestial dwelling place in which the souls of the departed reside (as with the Pueblo Indians, who upon death become clouds and, thus, bringers of rain); or a nebulous existence in which the soul might eventually fade into non-existence (as with the North American Indian hunting tribes).

The view that hell is the final dwelling place of the damned after a Last Judgement is held by the Western prophetic religions: Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In Zoroastrianism, a religion founded by the 6th-century-BC Iranian prophet and reformer Zoroaster, the soul at death waits three nights to be judged and on the fourth day goes to the Bridge of the Requiter, where his deeds in life are weighed. If the good outweighs the evil, the soul crosses the bridge, which becomes broad, and goes to heaven; if the evil deeds are greater, the bridge becomes too narrow to cross and the soul falls into a freezing and ill-smelling hell to suffer torment and chastisement until the Resurrection. For those whose good and evil deeds are equal is reserved hamestagan ("the place of the mixed"), wherein such souls suffer from both heat and cold. Hamestagan corresponds to the Christian concept of purgatory.

Judaism, as it developed from Hellenistic times, viewed hell in terms of Gehenna, an infernal region of punishment for the wicked. The Christian view of hell, based on Jewish concepts, regarded hell as the fiery domain of the devil and his evil angels, a place of eternal damnation for those who have lived a life of sin and who thereby deny God. Some early Christian thinkers, such as Origen of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa, questioned the eternity of hell and the literalistic view that hell was a place of fiery afterlife. The majority of Christian thinkers, however, taught that hell is a state of punishment for those who die unrepentant of their sins. Some modern theologians have again questioned the literalistic view but still hold that hell is, at least, a state of separation of the wicked from the good.

Islam, basing its concepts of hell, Jahannam, on Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity, describes it as a huge crater of fire beneath a narrow bridge that all souls must pass over to go to paradise. The damned fall from the bridge and suffer torments, unless Allah (God) wills otherwise.

In Hinduism, hell is only one stage in a career of the soul. Because all actions have consequences and because of reincarnation, the time spent in one or more of the 21 hells beneath the netherworld is

not of ultimate significance. Eventually, the soul will return to the World (or Ultimate) Soul, even though it takes many life periods to do so. The Haina hell (bhumis) is a place where demons torture sinners until any evil accumulated during their lives has been exhausted.

In Buddhism, which denies the existence of both the individual and the World Soul, multiple hells correspond to karmavacara, the cosmic realm in this the five senses may be experienced in a variety of bodies and perceptions.

In China, a primarily Buddhist conception of the realm of punishment and expiation after death was accepted and modified by Taoists. Popular notions of hell are based on fictional accounts of journeys to the netherworld, such as *Travels in the West* and the *Life of Yueh Fei*, and on Buddhist scriptures describing the journeys of mercy taken there by the bodhisattva (one who is destined to be enlightened) *Ti-ts'ang*. At the moment of death, the dead are conducted by messengers to the god of walls and moats, *Ch'eng Huang*, who gives the dead a kind of preliminary hearing. The virtuous may go straight to one of the Buddhist paradises; to *K'un-lun Mountain*, the dwelling place of the Taoist immortals; or to the tenth court of hell for immediate rebirth. After 49 days the sinners descend to the realm of hell, located at the base of *Mt. Mera*. The courts of the 10 kings are in the chief town, *Feng-tu*. The sinners undergo a fixed period of punishment in one hell or in a series of hells, which can be modified by the intercessions of the merciful *Ti-ts'ang*. In preparation for their rebirth the dead drink the broth of oblivion and climb onto the wheel of transmigration, which carries them to their next existence. (According to other accounts, the dead are thrown off the bridge of pain into a river that sweeps them off to their new destiny)."

The following extract is taken from 'An Introduction to the Christian Faith', 1992, published by Lynx Communications.

**"JUDGEMENT IS FINAL** Once God has passed his judgement on an individual, that person's state is fixed for the whole of eternity. There is no retrial. The punishment is eternal. Jesus wanted to offer the clearest possible warning, and so his teaching about hell is very plain. It is the place of eternal punishment that awaits all those who die without Christ. He uses very vivid imagery to describe it: eternal fire; a fire that cannot be extinguished; a furnace where people will cry and grind their teeth; a place of continual decay where God destroys both the soul and the body; a place of deepest darkness.

None of these phrases is to be taken as a literal description. Hell is not a physical place, such as we know the earth to be. Hell is the eternal state of all those who are excluded from God's presence. The strong language emphasizes the dreadful fact of judgement and that, once pronounced, it is final and will never be altered.

Many Christians are undecided about the exact nature of this final state of judgement. Some believe eternal judgement means that those who are excluded from God's presence live eternally conscious of their banishment. Others hold that eternal punishment means complete annihilation. On this view, punishment is eternal, not in the sense that individuals experience its agony for ever, but because, once given, there is no possibility of ever going back on it. Everything is over; individual existence is forfeited for ever."

Finally, the text of a tract published by a group who are evidently rather less undecided.

Jesus Christ believed in a BURNING HELL, that is why He left the Father's bosom and came into this world of sorrow. He left the streets of gold and the rejoicing of angels, to come to this earth to be crucified, so that you and I could escape THE BURNING HELL.

In LUKE 16:23 & 24 the Bible says; "AND IN HELL HE LIFT UP HIS EYES, BEING IN TORMENTS, AND SEETH ABRAHAM AFAR OFF, AND LAZARUS IN HIS BOSOM. 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:" The Bible says in MARK 8:36, "FOR WHAT SHALL IT PROFIT A MAN, IF HE SHALL GAIN THE WHOLE WORLD, AND LOSE HIS OWN SOUL?"

One day in HELL, you will not have to be bothered by some Christian trying to give you a gospel tract. Neither will you have to worry about a soul winner knocking on your door and inviting you to go to church. No sir, but you will be remembering every gospel sermon you ever heard, every gospel tract that you turned down or tore up, each kind word from a mother, preacher or Christian friend pleading with you to be saved. You too, will one day be like the rich man you just read about in LUKE 16:23 & 24. You will be crying, and begging for one drop of water to cool your scorching tongue. But it will be too late

The Bible says in MATTHEW 23:33; "YE SERPENTS, YE GENERATION OF VIPERS, HOW CAN YE ESCAPE THE DAMNATION OF HELL?" How about it Friend, is HELL the place where you want to spend eternity?

The Bible says in PSALM 9:17; "THE WICKED SHALL BE TURNED INTO HELL, AND ALL THE NATIONS THAT FORGET GOD." In MATTHEW 25:41 the Bible says; "... DEPART FROM ME, YE CURSED, INTO EVERLASTING FIRE, PREPARED FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS ANGELS:" You see HELL was originally prepared for the Devil and his angels. But if you die wicked and cursed, by not being saved, you will be there with them!

My Friend, don't let anyone convince you that when you die it will be all over. The Bible says in HEBREWS 9:27; "AND AS IT IS APPOINTED UNTO MEN ONCE TO DIE, BUT AFTER THIS THE JUDGEMENT:" God says judgement follows your death, so NOW is the time to get ready to meet Him, because Judgement Day could be TODAY. The Bible says in REVELATION 20:15; "AND WHOSOEVER WAS NOT FOUND WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE WAS CAST INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE."

My Friend, I beg you in the name of Jesus, to turn from your sinful, wicked ways and claim a new life with Jesus Christ. One day I too was traveling down the road that led to a BURNING HELL. I thought to myself, "There must be a better way." Well I trusted my heart and soul to Jesus Christ, now I can claim this verse from the Bible for my life; II CORINTHIANS 5:17 "THEREFORE IF ANY MAN BE IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATURE: OLD THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, ALL THINGS BECOME NEW." Thank you Jesus!

HEAVEN or HELL? You do the choosing. If you are lost, and would like to get your name written in God's "Book of Life", so you can miss THE BURNING HELL, simply trust Him now, and pray "Lord Jesus forgive me of my sins, come into my heart this moment and save me. Amen."

*by Dwite Watkins, Fellowship Tract League, Lebanon, Ohio, USA*

**What is the Bible's attitude to old people?**

Leviticus 19:32

Psalm 68:5-6

Acts 6:1-6

John 19:26-27

Lamentations 5:12

Genesis 47:7-10

Proverbs 20:29

Isaiah 1:17

2 Kings 2:23-25

Exodus 20:12

1 Timothy 5:1-2

**What can we learn from old people?**

Proverbs 23:22

Proverbs 16: 31

1 Kings 12:1-17

Job 32:4



## **Problems**

What problems can you foresee in trying to put the Bible attitudes into your relationship with old people and how could you solve these?



**What can you actually do?**

*Practically*



*Spiritually*



**How can you prepare for your old age?**



## How the promises were fulfilled in the Old Testament



Look at these passages and see how they fulfilled the promises made to Abraham and David

Genesis 12:10-20

Genesis 14:17-20

Genesis 20

Genesis 21:1-2

Genesis 24:1

Genesis 25:1-4, 12-16

Genesis 25:7-8

Genesis 46:5-7

Exodus 1:6, 7

Exodus 1:8-13

Exodus 12:31-36

Exodus 14:26-28

Deuteronomy 1:8-10

Joshua 1:1-6

Joshua 21:43-45

1 Kings 2:12

1 Kings 4:20-25

1 Kings 9:3-5

1 Chronicles 29:26-28

2 Chronicles 2:1-5

Ezekiel 21:25-27

Matthew 1:1-16

Note that some promises have not yet been fulfilled, and also that some verses describe the fulfilment of more than one promise.

 <b>THE PROMISE</b>	 <b>THE FULFILMENT (suggested Scripture)</b>
<p><b>Genesis 12:1-3</b></p> <p>Blessed</p> <p>Great Nation</p> <p>Great Name</p> <p>Bless/Curse</p> <p>All peoples</p> <p><b>Genesis 12:7</b></p> <p>Land - Offspring</p>	

 <b>THE PROMISE</b>	 <b>THE FULFILMENT (suggested Scripture)</b>
<p><b>Genesis 13:14-17</b></p> <p>Land - You</p> <p>Land - Offspring</p> <p>Offspring/dust</p> <p><b>Genesis 15:4-6</b></p> <p>Son - heir</p> <p>Offspring/stars</p> <p><b>Genesis 15:13-21</b></p> <p>Strangers</p> <p>Slaves 400 years</p> <p>Enslaving nation judged</p> <p>Descendants/great possessions</p> <p>Abraham die in peace and old age</p> <p>Fourth Generation</p> <p>Descendants/land from river of Egypt to river Euphrates</p>	



**THE PROMISE**



**THE FULFILMENT (suggested Scripture)**

***Genesis 17:4-8***

Many nations

Father of Kings

Everlasting  
covenant

Canaan for  
everlasting  
possession

***Genesis 22:16-18***

Stars and sand

Gate of enemies

All nations blessed

***2 Samuel 7:8-16***

David/Great name

Israel/Peace

David/house

Offspring/kingdom

Home for God

Everlasting throne

Father/Son

Iniquity/stripes

For ever

What can you learn from the attitude that Abraham and David showed to the promises that God had made to them. What promises does God make to us?





Bible Reference



What it tells us

Matthew 22:31-32

Luke 13:28-29

John 8:56

Acts 7:5

Romans 4:13-24

Hebrews 11:11-16

Hebrews 11:17-19

Hebrews 11:39-40

Galatians 3:8-9, 16-18

Galatians 3:27-29

Acts 3:25











## Examples for today

*Abraham and Isaac Genesis 22*

	Event	 What is shown about faith?
3		
5		
6		
8		
9		
10		

*David and Goliath 1 Samuel 17*

	Event	 What is shown about faith?
32		
34-36		
37		
39		

40		
42-44		
45-47		

**Another example - Gideon - Judges 6**

 Event	 What is shown about faith?
1-6,11	
12-15	
16-24	
25-28	
29-32	
33-40	

***If you have time, draw up a list of words which describe or explain Bible faith.***

F	F
A	A
I	I
T	T
H	H
I	I
S	S

What is the big problem that Jesus came to solve?



Can you think of other ways in which God might have solved the problem? Would they have worked?



Why is it that we die?



How was it that Christ's life solved the problem?



How does this save us?



‘ONE SOLITARY LIFE’

“There was a young man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter’s shop until he was 30 and then for 3½ years he was a travelling preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held public office. He never had a family. He never travelled more than 200 miles from the place where he was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself.

While he was still a young man, the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. He was turned over to his enemies. He went through a mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying, his executioners gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth, and that was his coat. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave, through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone, and today he is the central figure of the human race and the leader of the column of progress.

I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that were ever built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as has that One Solitary Life.”

*(anonymous)*

### Jesus knew when he would die



Matthew 16:21-23

From an early age Jesus knew what his life held for him. When he tried to explain to his disciples that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life, which disciple couldn't accept this fact?



Matthew 17:1-8

With disciples who didn't seem to understand, what happened to strengthen Jesus and help explain to Peter, James and John?



Matthew 17-21

On the journey to Jerusalem, suffering with the knowledge that he was to die, and with disciples who didn't understand what was to happen to him, Jesus continued to teach and heal those in need in selfless service to others. List briefly the parables and miracles performed.



### The arrival of Jesus at Jerusalem



Matthew 21:1-5

Jesus was in control of events as he led the disciples to Jerusalem, knowing he had to fulfil prophecy. When Jesus sends two disciples ahead into the city, what prophecy was this to fulfil?





Matthew 21:13-16

After Jesus' arrival, with the crowds welcoming him as a king, the whole of the city was buzzing with excitement. With the single aim of showing the authorities up for what they were, what did Jesus do first?



What happened in the temple area that made the chief priests and teachers of the law indignant?



## **The authority of Jesus questioned**



Matthew 21:23-27

After retiring for the night to Bethany, Jesus returned the next day. The chief priests and teachers of the law were angered by the events of the previous day, and whilst Jesus was teaching in the temple courts they began to ask trick questions and to accuse him, as they felt that he was attacking their authority.

How did Jesus answer the question about what authority he had to teach?



Matthew 22:15-46

What further questions did the authorities ask of Jesus in their attempts to accuse him?



## Jesus at Bethany and the betrayal by Judas



Matthew 26:6-16; John 12:1-6

Six days before the Passover, Jesus had returned to Bethany for supper at the house of Simon the leper (perhaps Simon was another name for Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead).

Why did the anointing of Jesus' feet anger Judas so much?



## The plot against Jesus



Matthew 26:1-5

Jesus knew exactly how much time he had for preaching prior to his death. Once he had finished saying all he had time for, he told his disciples once again that he will be handed over to be crucified.

What was the name of the high priest in whose palace the chief priests and elders plotted? Why would they not arrest and kill Jesus straight away? The Passover was now two days away!



## Passover

Just as with the first Passover where the blood of a lamb was shed to avoid the angel of death, Jesus knew that at this Passover he would be the sacrifice to give mankind an escape from sin and death.



John 13:1-5.

How did Jesus show his love to his disciples in the upper room at supper?





John 13:27

What did Jesus say to Judas as he shared the bread and wine of the Passover supper with him?



## The Garden of Gethsemane

After supper Jesus took his disciples out of the city onto the Mount of Olives where they continued to talk, sing hymns and pray. Jesus was using this last night with his disciples to teach and encourage them.



John 18:1-3

Which valley did the disciples cross from the Mount of Olives to the Garden of Gethsemane? How did Judas know where to find Jesus?



Jesus retired from the disciples in the garden to pray. It was at this point that Jesus must have been both mentally and physically shattered. It was by now well into the night and the disciples fell asleep whilst Jesus prayed.



Matthew 26:36-46

What did Jesus say to his disciples that makes us think he was at a low point and needed the support of his disciples and Heavenly Father?



What did Jesus pray to his Father for?



## The arrest of Jesus



Matthew 26:47-50

Judas arrived with a large crowd of soldiers and Jewish officials carrying torches and weapons sent by the chief priests to arrest Jesus. When Judas showed which one was Jesus by kissing him, what did Jesus say to Judas?



John 18:3-11

The soldiers didn't want to arrest Jesus. When they had found him they all drew back and fell to the ground. What did Jesus say?



## Jesus gives the High Priest the evidence



Matthew 26:57-66

Jesus was brought before Caiaphas the high priest and the rest of the Sanhedrin and they looked for false evidence against him.

Jesus knew they would try to bring false witness against him and he could have, as on previous occasions, argued against them - but he kept silent.

He knew it was time for his sacrifice and gave them the evidence they needed. What evidence did Jesus give to Caiaphas?



The crowd said Jesus should be put to death for his blasphemy, and the physical abuse started with them slapping, punching and spitting at Jesus. Jesus was very much alone enduring this ordeal; no-one in the crowd was there to help him.

## Peter's denial

Not only was Jesus alone, he knew that Peter was in the courtyard. Just as Jesus had predicted at the last supper, Peter would deny him three times by the time the cock began to crow. At that time Peter would have been devastated, but Jesus knew that this signalled the last day of his endurance of the world.

What does a cock crowing normally signify? Could this have had a special relevance to Peter's situation?



## Jesus' trial before Pilate



John 18:28-40

In the early morning the Jews took Jesus to the Roman Governor. Why did they require Pilate to condemn Jesus to death?



Jesus was asked by Pilate to answer the charges of blasphemy brought by the Jews. He kept silent. Pilate took Jesus inside and asked him if he was the king of the Jews, to which Jesus replied that he was a king. Pilate could find no charge against Jesus.



Matthew 27:15-26

What was the custom of the Governor at the Passover feast?



What did Pilate say and do when the crowd demanded that he release Barabbas?



What did the Jews in the crowd say to Pilate's act?



## The fate of Judas



Matthew 27:3-10

When Judas realised that Jesus had been condemned to be crucified, what did he do?



What further piece of prophecy was fulfilled with the 30 pieces of silver?



## The Crucifixion



Matthew 27:27-44

What physical abuse did Jesus suffer?



What mental abuse did Jesus suffer?





Matthew 27:45-54

For how many hours did Jesus hang on the cross and what strange phenomenon occurred?



Jesus endured to the end in silence all the pain, suffering and the mental torture knowing that he was the rightful king that they mocked, but he had to die. With the sin of the world resting on his shoulders and just as he felt weak and could not stand all the pain any more, he cried; "My God, My God why have you forsaken me" and his Father relieved him of his suffering.

Consider some or all of the following hypothetical situations either as a group or in pairs. Some Bible references are given to help you. Can you think of others?

Some of the Bible passages may suggest that there are 'simple' black and white answers to questions like these, and we know that sometimes there are not. But we do need to recognise that the Bible is teaching us important lessons, and to work out how to apply the principles, even if our actions may vary depending on the exact situation.

You will also find that some of the situations do not directly apply to you. That doesn't mean that they are irrelevant, and you should still try to work out the principle that the Bible is teaching; you may then find that it does affect you after all!

### Some hypothetical situations

Your parents, not Christadelphians, have booked a holiday for you with them. You have booked to go on a Bible campaign. What should you do?



Matthew 19:29; 1 Timothy 5:8; Ephesians 6:1



You have just finished university and have been offered a high-powered, well paid job which would regularly take you abroad. Should you take it?



Matthew 6:33; Matthew 19:16-30.



You had intended to visit a lonely, elderly person but get an invitation to do something you really enjoy. What would you do?



Galatians 2:20.



After an ecclesial billing day when you distributed a bundle of leaflets, there are several bundles left over. You hate billing but you know you have some free time in the coming week. What would you do?



Matthew 5:40-42.



You have an opportunity at school or college to say something about your beliefs. You know you are shy, not very articulate and that you won't come over well. What would you do?



Matthew 28:19-20.



You are becoming increasingly friendly with a member of the opposite sex who is not a Christadelphian. Should you give him/her up for the sake of your faith?



Matthew 19:10-12, 29.



You are extremely good at sport or music, which makes demands on your time, particularly at weekends. Does being successful in sport or music at a high level, compromise a life in Christ?



Matthew 6:33.



A rather odd lonely person whom you met on a Bible campaign phones to ask if he or she can visit for a weekend. You wonder what your friends will make of him or her. You know you won't know what to say to this person. What do you say in reply to the phone call?



Ephesians 4:2; Hebrews 13:2.



Your bone marrow is needed to save someone's life. There is an element of risk to your own life. Would you:

1. Agree to donate it to a close relative?
2. Agree to donate it to someone you don't know?
3. Donate to a person who murdered a close relative?
4. Not take the risk?



Romans 5:6-8.



Do you:

a) Rush for the best seat?



b) Take the best cake?



c) Push into queues?



d) Watch a television programme on the only set in the house when you know someone wants to watch something else?



How often do you offer to wash up?



<b>Matthew 28</b>	<b>Mark 16</b>	<b>Luke 24</b>	<b>John 20 - 21</b>
<p><b>The women come to the tomb.</b></p> <p>1. After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 2 There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4 The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. 5 The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6 He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples: `He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee.</p>	<p><b>The women come to the tomb.</b></p> <p>1. When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. 2 Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb 3 and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?" 4 But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. 5 As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. 6 "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. 7 But go, tell his disciples and</p>	<p><b>The women come to the tomb.</b></p> <p>1. On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. 5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? 6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 7 `The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" 8 Then they remembered his words.</p> <p><b>The eleven do not believe</b></p> <p>9 When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of</p>	<p><b>The women come to the tomb.</b></p> <p>1. Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"</p> <p><b>Peter and John</b></p> <p>3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 (They still did not understand from Scripture</p>

There you will see him.' Now I have told you." 8 So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.

### **Jesus meets them**

9 Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him.

10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." 11. While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened.

### **The soldiers are paid**

12 When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, 13 telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' 14 If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of

Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'" 8 Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

### **Mary Magdalene**

9. When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had driven seven demons.

10 She went and told those who had been with him and who were mourning and weeping. 11 When they heard that Jesus was alive and that she had seen him, they did not believe it.

### **Two walking in the country**

12 Afterwards Jesus appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country.

13 These returned and reported it to the rest; but they did not believe them either.

James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. 11 But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

### **Peter goes to the tomb**

12 Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

### **Two on the road to Emmaus**

13. Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognising him. 17 He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast.

18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" 19 "What things?" he asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to

that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) 10 Then the disciples went back to their homes,

### **Mary Magdalene**

11. but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. 13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." 14 At this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realise that it was Jesus. 15 "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." 16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned towards him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

### **The disciples except Thomas**

trouble." 15 So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.

### **Eleven disciples in Galilee**

16. Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted.

...

### **Eleven disciples**

14. Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. 15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.

...

19. After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God. 20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. 22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

...

31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

19. On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. 21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." 24 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

*(Luke 24)*

*(John 20 - 21)*

### **Return to Jerusalem**

33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognised by them when he broke the bread.

### **The disciples, including Thomas**

26. A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." 30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31

### **Eleven disciples and others**

36. While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." 40 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.

...

### **The ascension**

50. When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven. 52 Then they worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. 53 And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.

But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

### **Disciples in Galilee**

John 21:1 Afterwards Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: 2 Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. 3 "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. 4 Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus

...

12 Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. 13 Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. 14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

## **1 Corinthians 15**

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

## Some hints

- The disciples may well not have all been together on the night before Jesus' resurrection. Jesus had said (John 16:32 "But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone."). After Jesus had been arrested, Mark 14:50 records that 'they all forsook him, and fled'. Later, at Jesus' trial, Peter and John had followed him into the city.
- Don't worry that the gospel writers seem to suggest that different numbers of women went to the tomb. It is part of the evidence for the truth of the gospels that they describe the same events from slightly different perspectives. Luke has already (Luke 8:3) mentioned 'Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household', so it is only natural that he should include her by name here. Mark has already referred to Salome in Mark 15:40.
- Although John seems to suggest that Mary Magdalene was alone, it is clear that she was not, from verse 2 "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and **we** don't know where they have put him!".
- Similarly, don't worry that the gospels seem to conflict with each other about the exact time of day. Presumably the women started on their journey while it was dark and arrived at the tomb just after dawn.
- It seems from Luke 24:23 that Cleopas and his companion (his wife Mary?) had left Jerusalem having heard the women say that the tomb was empty, but before they (the women) had met Jesus. So Jesus probably appeared to the women (Matthew 28:9) after they had seen the disciples.



## Postscript - the women involved

It is interesting to compare the Gospel records where they give details of the women involved in the crucifixion and resurrection; and a sobering thought for men, that when Jesus most needed help they were not around.

In the chart below each row sets out to identify a single woman. For instance, it seems reasonable to compare Matthew and Mark and conclude that 'the mother of Zebedee's children' and Salome are the same person.

<i><b>The crucifixion</b></i>			
<b>Matthew 27:56</b>	<b>Mark 15:40</b>		<b>John 19:25</b>
Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene		Mary Magdalene
Mary the mother of James & Joses	Mary the mother of James & Joses		Mary the mother of Jesus
The mother of Zebedee's children	Salome		Jesus' mother's sister
			Mary wife of Cleopas
<i><b>The Resurrection</b></i>			
<b>Matthew 28:1</b>	<b>Mark 16:1</b>	<b>Luke 24:10</b>	<b>John 20:1</b>
Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene	Mary Magdalene
The other Mary	Mary the mother of James	Mary the mother of James	
	Salome	and the others	
		Joanna	

### Notes

Jesus had brothers called James, Joseph (sometimes called Joses), Simon and Judas (Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3)

If it is correct that Salome was the sister of Jesus' mother, the wife of Zebedee, and the mother of James and John, this would mean that James and John were Jesus' cousins.

## 24 THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS - WHO MOVED THE STONE?

---

These are alternative suggestions that have been made for the resurrection. What do you think?

### **Jesus did not really die and later recovered?**



John 19:33, Mark 15:44-45



### **The disciples had hallucinations?**



### **The disciples stole the body?**



Matthew 28:11-15



**Joseph of Arimathæa moved the body to a more suitable tomb?**



**The Jews or Romans took the body?**



Matthew 27:63-66



**The disciples visited the wrong tomb?**



Mark 16:6



## The disciples

Think about the changes in the disciples after the resurrection, and list as many as you can



### ***Before***

Matthew 26:31, 56

Mark 16:14

John 20:19

John 20:25



### ***After***

Acts 2:22-36

Acts 3:13-15

Acts 4:18-21

Acts 5:28-33



**Verses****Summary and Notes**

12-19

20-28

29-34

35-49

50-57

58

## Conclusions



1.

2.

3.

4.



Acts 2:37-38

The Jews realised their guilt in crucifying Jesus and asked what they should do. What did Peter tell them?



Acts 8:32-38

What had the Ethiopian discovered before he asked if there was anything stopping him being baptised?



Acts 16:29-31

What did Paul tell the jailer he must do to be saved?



Galatians 1:13-18

Acts 9 tells us of Saul's conversion and baptism. When he wrote to the Galatians, (as Paul) he tells them the story. What did he do immediately after his baptism and before going to Jerusalem and starting preaching?





Acts 2:41-47; 4:32-34. What things did the believers do?



From what you have learnt about the life of the early believers, discuss and list what is expected of us when we decide to follow Jesus.



***Think about the Parable of the Good Samaritan***

Luke 10:29-37

Did Jesus answer the lawyer's question?



What may have been the motives of the Priest and the Levite?



What reasons might they have given for not helping?



Was the Samaritan like Jesus?



### ***So whom should we help?***



Matthew 25:31-45, Galatians 6:10, James 2:14-17



In helping others, whom are we ultimately serving?



Should our good works only be to Christadelphian causes?



Is there any point in giving to 3rd world countries knowing it will never be enough until the Lord returns?



### ***The Watchman***



Ezekiel 33:1-9

Is there anything we know that most people don't?



Should we tell them?



Will they listen?



Does it matter?



How does this compare with good works?



***Some hypothetical situations***

Bear in mind the Bible passages in sections 1-3 when discussing the following situations. Someone has collapsed in a crowded shopping centre; there are plenty of others to help.



An old lady is lonely, but if we go to see her we never know what to say.



We are driving the car in the rain and someone thumbs a lift.



We are driving at night on a deserted road and a group of men by the side of the road wave at us to stop.



A drunken beggar asks us for money.



Someone who is known to live by scrounging off others asks us for money.



We see a man attacking a girl with a knife.



### Music in the Bible

Music plays an important part in the Bible, from beginning to end. At creation (Job 38:4-7) and in the kingdom of God (Revelation 14:1-3) we find the angels and saints singing to God. In Luke 15:25 music and dancing are used to illustrate the joys of the kingdom.

#### *In everyday life*

Music also played an important part in the lives of ordinary people. Look at these examples, for instance:

	
Genesis 4:21	
Genesis 31:27	
Job 21:12	
1 Samuel 16:16-23	

#### *Some comparisons*



Look at Exodus 15:1-2, 20-21 and 32:17-19

What were the similarities in these two occasions



What were the differences?



What lessons can we learn from this?



Now look at 1 Chronicles 15:27-29 and compare it with Daniel 3:4-6

What were the similarities in these two occasions



What were the differences?



What lessons can we learn from this?



### **What can we learn about music today?**

These days there is not a direct equivalent of idols, as carved pieces of metal or wood. But what do you think could be a modern parallel? In what ways do people worship these idols? How can you tell the difference between good and bad uses of music?



## Music in Worship

Look at these passages and summarise what you have learned from them.

	
Matthew 26:30	
Acts 16:25	
1 Corinthians 14:7	
Ephesians 5:19	
Colossians 3:16	

### Music in Worship today

What lessons would you learn from these passages, and from the first part of this study, that would apply to our practise of music in worship?.



Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.  
Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.  
Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre,  
Praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute,  
Praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.  
Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.

*(Psalm 150, NIV)*

## History

Pastor Charles Taze Russell, the founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, did not claim any special revelation by dream, vision or audible voice, but he came to believe that he was God's mouthpiece. He wrote that gradually from 1870 onwards he became aware of what he believed to be the Truth.

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Russell early rejected orthodox Protestantism, studying the Bible independently. In 1872 he organized a group devoted to biblical study. In the same year he published a small book stating that Christ would return, invisibly, in 1874 and that the world would end in 1914. Russell quickly gained a wide following, and in 1878 he established an independent church in Pittsburgh, taking the title of pastor. The next year he began publishing *The Watchtower*, a journal espousing his views. In 1884 he founded the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. Soon congregations of "Russellites" began to form, establishing the core of the International Bible Students Association.

*"Russell, Charles Taze," Microsoft (R) Encarta. Copyright (c) 1994 Microsoft Corporation. Copyright (c) 1994 Funk & Wagnall's Corporation.*

## Important dates

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| 1879 | First issue of Watch Tower magazine by C T Russell  |
| 1884 | Formation of Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, which was incorporated in 1885. Eventually, the 7 directors of this corporation became the governing body of Jehovah's Witnesses. |
| 1914 | Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Christ returned to the earth.  |
| 1916 | Death of C T Russell  |
| 1917 | Judge Joseph F Rutherford elected president of the corporation, taking full control of the organisation and choosing name Jehovah's Witnesses.                                      |
| 1942 | Death of J F Rutherford, election of Nathan H Knorr. Membership 108,000.  |
| 1950 | Publication of New World Translation of Bible - mostly the work of Vice President Fred Franz, who later succeeded Knorr as President.   |
| 1970 | Membership 1,384,782.   |
| 1975 | Predicted as a special year, calculated as marking 6,000 years from creation, and the end of God's 6 'days' of work.  |
| 1976 | Membership 2,138,537.   |
| 1978 | Membership 2,086,698. (There was some disappointment that 1975 did not bring the expected end of the age, and this was reflected in a fall in membership in the following 2 years.) |

## Doctrines

The following text comes from a Jehovah's Witnesses publication 'Reasoning from the Scriptures' (note the American spelling)

- (1) **Bible:** Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the entire Bible is the inspired Word of God, and instead of adhering to a creed based on human tradition, they hold to the Bible as the standard for all their beliefs.
- (2) **God:** They worship Jehovah as the only true God and freely speak to others about his and his loving purposes toward mankind. Anyone who publicly witnesses about Jehovah is usually identified as belonging to the one group - "Jehovah's Witnesses."
- (3) **Jesus Christ:** They believe, not that Jesus Christ is part of a Trinity, but that, as the Bible says, he is the Son of God, the first of God's creations; that he had a prehuman existence and that his life was transferred from heaven to the womb of a virgin, Mary; that his perfect human life laid down in sacrifice makes possible salvation to eternal life for those who exercise faith; that Christ is actively ruling as King, with God-given authority over all the earth since 1914.
- (4) **God's Kingdom:** They believe that God's Kingdom is the only hope for mankind; that it is a real government; that it will soon destroy the present wicked system of things, including all human governments, and that it will produce a new system in which righteousness will prevail.
- (5) **Heavenly life:** They believe that 144,000 spirit-anointed Christians will share with Christ in his heavenly Kingdom, ruling as kings with him. They do not believe that heaven is the reward for everyone who is "good."
- (6) **The earth:** They believe that God's original purpose for the earth will be fulfilled; that the earth will be completely populated by worshipers of Jehovah and that these will be able to enjoy eternal life in human perfection; that even the dead will be raised to an opportunity to share in these blessings.
- (7) **Death:** They believe that the dead are conscious of absolutely nothing; that they are experiencing neither pain nor pleasure in some spirit realm; that they do not exist except in God's memory, so hope for their future life lies in a resurrection from the dead.
- (8) **Last days:** They believe that we are living now, since 1914, in the last days of this wicked system of things; that some who saw the events of 1914 will also see the complete destruction of the present wicked world; that lovers of righteousness will survive into a cleansed earth,
- (9) **Separate from the world:** They earnestly endeavor to be no part of the world, as Jesus said would be true of his followers. They show genuine Christian love for their neighbors, but they do not share in the politics or the wars of any nation. They provide for the material needs of their families but shun the world's avid pursuit of material things and personal fame and its excessive indulgence in pleasure
- (10) **Apply Bible counsel:** They believe that it is important to apply the counsel of God's Word in everyday life now - at home, in school, in business, in their congregation. Regardless of a person's past way of life, he may become one of Jehovah's Witnesses if he abandons practices condemned by God's Word and applies its godly counsel. But if anyone thereafter makes a practice of adultery, fornication, homosexuality, drug abuse, drunkenness, lying, or stealing, he will be disfellowshipped from the organization.

## **Other notes**

Apart from the quotations from *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, the following notes have been provided by a Christadelphian who for many years had received instruction from Jehovah's Witnesses.

**Jesus:** Before his birth was the archangel Michael, crucified, rose spiritually, not physically, becoming an invisible Spirit creature (Michael again), eventually to come alongside earth rather than returning to it.

The name of this Michael occurs only five times in the Bible. The glorious spirit person who bears the name is referred to as "one of the chief princes," "the great prince who has charge of your [Daniel's] people," and as "the archangel." (Dan 10:13; 12:1; Jude 9, Revised Standard Version) Michael means "Who is like God?" The name evidently designates Michael as the one who takes the lead in upholding Jehovah's sovereignty and destroying God's enemies.

At 1 Thessalonians 4:16 (RSV), the command of Jesus Christ for the resurrection to begin is described as "the archangel's call," and Jude 9 says that the archangel is Michael. Would it be appropriate to liken Jesus' commanding call to that of someone lesser in authority? Reasonably, then, the archangel Michael is Jesus Christ. (Interestingly, the expression "archangel" is never found in the plural in the Scriptures, thus implying that there is only one.)

*Reasoning from the Scriptures, Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, inc., Brooklyn, New York, USA.*

**The kingdom of God:** They believe in the kingdom of God on earth after Armageddon, populated by Jehovah's Witnesses, ruled from heaven by God, Jesus and his elite 'little flock' of 144,000 who are sometimes described as a separate kingdom of heaven in heaven.

**The Return of Christ:** They believe that Christ has already returned, in an invisible form, and is only seen by the effects of his presence. They translate the Greek word *parousia* (as in 1 Corinthians 15:23) as 'presence' rather than 'coming'

*In what sense will 'every eye see him'?* They will discern from events on earth that he is invisibly present. Also referring to sight that is not physical, John 9:41 reports: "Jesus said to [the Pharisees]: 'If you were blind, you would have no sin. But now you say, "We see." Your sin remains.'" (Compare Romans 1:20) Following Christ's return, some persons show faith; they recognise the sign of his presence. Others reject the evidence, but when Christ goes into action as God's executioner of the wicked, even they will discern from the manifestation of his power that the destruction is not from men but from heaven. They will know what is happening because they were warned in advance. Because of what is overtaking them, they will "beat themselves in grief."

*Reasoning from the Scriptures, Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, inc., Brooklyn, New York, USA.*

**Death:** The soul is believed to be part of the body, not separated at death. In the case of the 144,000, they are held to be translated to heavenly glory immediately on death while everyone else returns to the dust awaiting resurrection. Abraham and his family are servant to the 144,000.

**Fighting:** Jehovah's Witnesses do not take part in military service.

**Devil:** Held to be Satan, a supernatural tempter, currently ruling the earth by means of demons, having been cast out of heaven in 1914.

**Blood:** Jehovah's Witnesses believe that receiving transfusion is sinful.

**The Jews:** No longer God's people, nor his witnesses.

**Authority:** Vested in the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses.

**The Bible:** Inspired, but Watchtower publications have authority also, having the backing of the Publishing Committee of the Governing Body.

**Baptism:** Immersion in water of a believing adult (though exceptionally as young as 6 has been recorded). Baptisms follow a period of formal instruction and 3 separate interviews. Usually baptisms are 'saved up' and take place at large annual assemblies. In the UK, a typical number of baptisms at a regional assembly would be 30-40.

**Holy Days:** Strongly against celebrating Christmas, Easter, Birthdays, etc.

**Last Days:** Understood to relate both to 33-70 AD, end of Jewish system, and to 1914 onwards, the last days of the present system.

**Angels:** Not immortal, as Satan (a fallen angel) will be destroyed.

**Prophecy:** This has always been an important part of the Jehovah's Witnesses faith, with 1914 as a pivotal date. They hold that:

- in 1914, Jesus became present but invisible, his active rulership and the last days both began.
- the generation then living will not pass away till all things (including the destruction of existing systems) have been fulfilled.
- three and a half years later in 1918 the resurrection of believers began.
- his followers went into captivity in Babylon the Great in 1918 being released in 1919 being then acknowledged by Jesus as his 'good and discreet slave' his only channel of communication with his servant worldwide.
- the final harvest has been in progress ever since, with all people being divided into sheep and goats with salvation or destruction as their destiny.

The 1914 date was calculated by adding 2,520 years (7 times 360, based upon Daniel 4) to 607 BC which is taken to be the date of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. (The 607 BC date is not supported by historical evidence).

Although it is not now widely known, even by Jehovah's Witnesses, Watchtower taught for over 50 years that the invisible reign of Christ began in 1874, before it adopted 1914. Up to 1922, Watchtower taught that the last days began in 1799, but this was then also revised to 1914. Similarly, the date of the beginning of the resurrection was originally held to be 1881, but this was later revised to the presently accepted date of 1918. The harvest was originally to begin in 1878 with all human institutions being destroyed in October 1914, but this is now believed to have begun in 1914 and to be continuing, though there was great expectation that it would end in 1975.

The Jehovah's Witnesses place a particular emphasis on the apocalyptic prophecy of the 144,000, holding it to be a literal number of the top class of the redeemed who will rule the earth with Christ from heaven. As time has gone by, this number has been made up and a second class of salvation has been introduced.

## ***Organisation***

The Governing body is based in Brooklyn, New York, and has many subcommittees. There is an authoritative chain of command right down to local congregations, with all members being expected to take part in regular door-to-door canvassing, the sect's main method of preaching. They used to sell their magazines on the doorstep, but now they give them away. Their meeting places are called Kingdom Halls.

### ***Think about the Jehovah's Witnesses' Doctrines set out above.***

On what points do you think their beliefs are in agreement with what the Bible teaches?



What can we learn from them?



Where do you think they have misunderstood what the Bible teaches? Try to be specific, and to give examples of passages that clearly state the Bible teaching.



Use the concordance to explore the New Testament use and meaning of parousia and establish whether the Jehovah's Witnesses' understanding of the second coming stands up to scrutiny.



Look up the references to Michael the archangel, and decide what you would say on this subject to Jehovah's Witnesses



Many of the direct references in the Bible on this subject are concerned with drinking because drugs as we know them and cigarettes were not used in Bible times. However, the principles are the same.

***How should we regard our bodies?***



1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 9:24-27



***Who is in control of your life?***



Galatians 5:22-23



***Are there any good points?***



***What does God think about drunkenness?***



Galatians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 6:10; Romans 13:13;  
Proverbs 20:1; Luke 21:34; 1 Timothy 5:23.



***What can we do to avoid the dangers?***



Ephesians 5:18-20; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Romans 13:14; Matthew 5:29-30;  
Philippians 3:7-8.

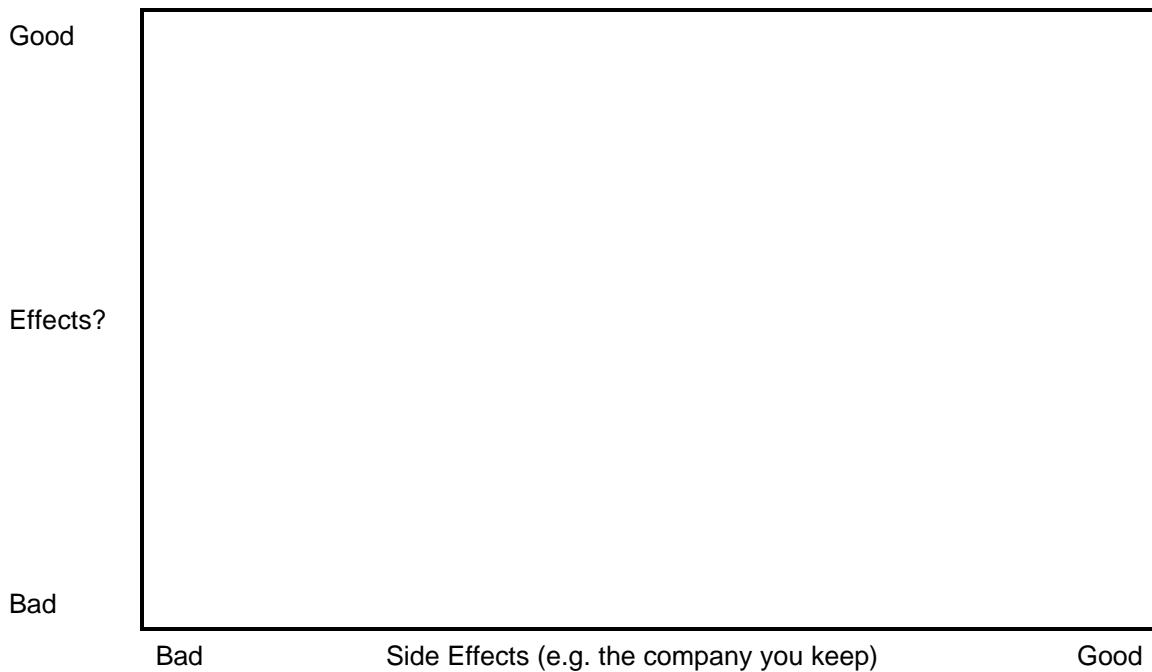
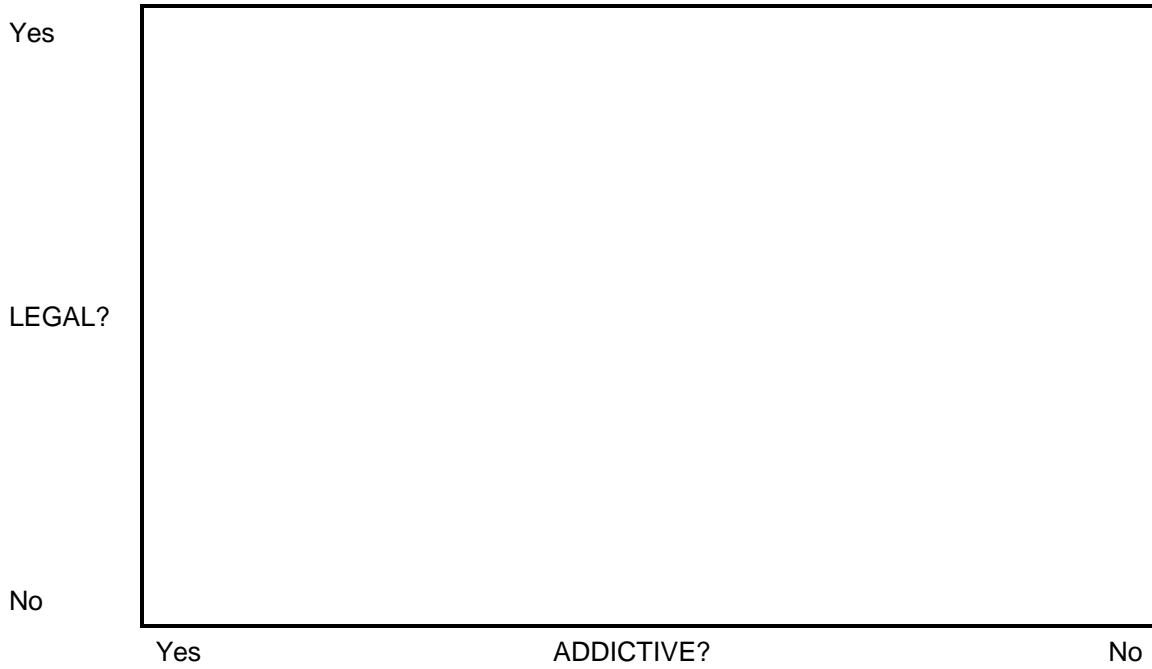


***Does it matter what other people think?***



1 Corinthians 8:9-13; 1 Corinthians 12:26; Romans 14:13-22 (particularly v21).

**Position some common drugs in these charts:**



What or who are angels?



Are angels the same person as God, or are they separate beings?



Are angels visible or invisible when they visit earth?



What do angels do, and how do they do it?

***Actions***

***Characteristics***

Do angels help us in our life now?



**Some examples of prayers**

Hannah	1 Samuel 1:9-20
Hezekiah	2 Kings 19:14-20, 32-37
Nehemiah	Nehemiah 2:1-8
David	Psalms 51:1-2, 32:1-11
Jesus	Matthew 26:36-47; Luke 22:43
Paul	2 Corinthians 12:7-10
All disciples	Matthew 6:5-15

**Why?****How?**

### Where and When?



Daniel 6:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Philippians 4:6



### What?



### What can I do to make it easier?



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