



Lesson 40

THE NEXT STEP

Reading: Acts of the Apostles 2

It has been our pleasure to share this Bible Study Course with you. We have now reached the end of these lessons and you are probably wondering: What next? What do I do now?

Before we attempt to offer some help with these questions it is important to remember what the Course is all about.

We have been introducing to you the doctrines of the Bible. But the message in these lessons was not simply *our* message. Every time you opened and read your Bible you were *listening* to the *Word of God*. This is the way that God teaches men and women about Himself and His purpose with the world. Because you respected God's Word He was speaking to *you* and hoping for *your* response.

The whole of the Bible is inspired by God and it has great power to change your life. If, in preaching the Gospel to you through these papers, we have been able to help you by inviting you to look inside the Scriptures for yourself, then we are very glad.

How have the lessons affected you?

You have probably learnt some things you did not know before. You have thought about great men like Abraham or David. You have seen

- how the gospel is to be found in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament;
- how the Jews are God's witnesses among the nations;
- how the Lord Jesus lived and died to save men and women who believe in him;
- how the death and resurrection of Jesus provided the guarantee of God's plans for the future;
- how the Lord Jesus Christ will come back to earth to set up the Kingdom of God.

But *knowing* these things is not enough, in itself.

After all, many men and women go to college to study religion in order to gain certificates or to obtain work as 'ministers'. But that does not convert them into Christians. Nor does the Christadelphian Bible Mission offer degrees or certificates for Bible knowledge.

We preach the Gospel because we know that God is willing to extend His grace, through Jesus, to all who wish to be saved from their sins. God invites every man or woman who will accept His way of salvation to share His Kingdom on the earth.

What it means to be a Christian

True Christians are people who believe in the commandments of Jesus and who have chosen to be baptized and to live as his disciples, preparing themselves for service with the Lord when he returns as King of the world.

True Christians are different from all other people, because they are being called out and trained for the coming Kingdom of God on earth. The Creator has only one plan for the earth and the way we respond to God's invitation to take part in that plan must be the same wherever we live.

God does not have one set of rules for men and women in India, and another for those in Arab countries, or Africa, or the Caribbean, or the Pacific Islands. There is only one Saviour, and one way to be saved. As the Apostle Peter said:

“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:1 2).

Why so many Churches?

You may ask: "Why, then, are there so many different sects and churches?"

That is a question which worries many people who are thinking of joining a Christian community.

But consider this fact: it was not *God* who divided the churches of Christendom into "Catholics", "Protestants" or "Pentecostals". The answer is that in many cases it was ambitious *men* who "led away disciples after them" in order to form new groups. Many became too "wise" to listen to the simple truths of the Gospel as taught by Jesus and his disciples. They did what the Apostle Paul foretold:

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3, 4).

What about me?

The moment of truth comes when we begin to understand that we are sinners against God and that only God, through Jesus, can help us:

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God ... (Romans 3:23). "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

The 'next step' for you may depend on how much you have been moved and excited by what you have learned from God's Word. Each of us is on the way to finding salvation when we start to learn the truth about ourselves; as Jeremiah said:

"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

Do *you* feel like that? Is God's Word beginning to urge you to do something about "*seeking the Kingdom of God and his righteousness*"?

Sooner or later, every Christian must see the need to make a change in his life — a change from being a continual sinner "*in Adam*" (that is, perishing for ever) to becoming a "*saint in Christ*" (that is, having the hope of resurrection at the return of Jesus and of everlasting life in his Kingdom).

Certain men of Jerusalem, when *they* began to understand the truth,

"were pricked in their heart, and said ...Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

The answer of the apostle was:

"Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins..." (Acts 2:37, 38)

It is our hope that you have been thinking very carefully about your position. You probably feel a little uncertain at this point. You do not wish anyone to pressure you. You want time to think. We understand that!

Maybe you would just like to continue your study of the Bible for a little while? Perhaps you would like to meet some Christadelphians to talk things over? Perhaps you are already convinced that you ought to be baptized soon?

Some suggestions, to help you

1. Please go back through Lessons 1 to 39, making a note of any difficulties, and marking important quotations in your Bible.
2. Write and tell your Tutor how you feel about what you have learned from the Bible. Did you enjoy the lessons? Were some subjects difficult for you? Would you like to have more explanation of some of the lessons?

3. You have been using the BIBLE READING PLANNER for your daily readings and you have received our BIBLE COMPANION, which is a plan for reading at least three chapters a day, and which will take you through the whole Bible in one year (the New Testament twice). Keep on reading the Bible every day. It is not a book you read and put down. If read again and again, the Bible will influence your heart, mind and life.
4. Would you like to be put in touch with Christadelphians in or near your own country? You might wish to write to them or, if it is convenient to do so, to meet them for further Bible discussion. If they are near enough, would you like to attend some of their meetings?
5. Do you wish to do some further reading on Bible matters? If so, please write to your tutor saying which subjects you are most interested in. We have useful booklets on many Bible subjects.
6. If you wish to move towards baptism but feel that you need more time and instruction, we have other courses available. Ask your tutor.
7. If you agree with all the subjects covered by this Correspondence Course, and if you are thinking about being baptized, ***please write and tell us.***

How could I be baptized?

As you learnt in Lesson 31, it is essential that you understand the Gospel, how serious it is to be baptized, and the effect it will have on your life. It is our responsibility to ensure that you understand before we help you to be baptized.

So we will first of all send you some questions to answer by post — questions about the essential teachings of the Bible and about some of the practical aspects of living the Christian life. After this, if you have made a good response we will arrange for one or more of our Mission members to visit you.

If you are truly ready for baptism, this will be arranged wherever there is a convenient and adequate supply of water.

If there is a nearby Christadelphian group you will become a member of that ecclesia. If not, then we will ensure that you receive a constant supply of helpful articles to read, together with literature for you to give to your friends. We would also send you 'exhortations' – papers suitable for you to use at your own weekly Breaking of Bread (communion) services in your own house.

To become a Christadelphian is to be born into the family of Jesus Christ, with brothers and sisters all over the world who have the same faith and share a very real fellowship with you.

Your next step is easy

Simply write to your tutor, together with the completed coupon which you will find with this lesson.