

FAITH REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SUNDAY SCHOOL

CURRICULUM PROJECT ©

**** Grades 9-12, Year III ****

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MAN AND SALVATION

by Robert C. Walton

**Grades 9-12
Year 3
Quarter 1**

THE DAYS OF CREATION

Lesson Aim

To acquaint students with the major evangelical views of the Creation, noting the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Memory Verse

Genesis 1:26 - “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in Our image, in Our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.’”

Lesson Background

Today we begin the third quarter of the high school curriculum devoted to doctrinal studies. Previously, we had a quarter devoted to the doctrine of Scripture and one devoted to the three persons of the Godhead. This unit is designed to survey the teaching of God’s Word concerning man and salvation. We will be dealing with the creation, nature, and fall of man, and then looking at the doctrine of salvation through the categories of the *ordo salutis*.

In today’s lesson, we will look at the days of Creation. The focus of this lesson would have been absurd as recently as a century and a half ago. Prior to the nineteenth century, few orthodox Christians would have questioned the 24-hour-day view of Genesis 1. The proliferation of theories that confront us today results from the development of modern science and Christianity’s efforts to come to grips with it. It is of the utmost importance that we exercise caution in the application of the Scriptures to the field of science. Undue dogmatism concerning a particular interpretation of Scripture could easily place the church

in the same embarrassing position in which the Catholic Church found itself when Galileo was condemned by the Inquisition for teaching the heliocentric view of the solar system. On the other hand, we may never take the position that Scripture must be tested and confirmed by science - it must always be the other way around.

This lesson, though it is heavy on content and light on application, should be of considerable interest to your students. In a sense, the application for this lesson comes next week, when we look at the significance of Creation. Your students can, however, be taught important lessons today about how to interpret Scripture and how to apply it to various scientific theories. Take care to emphasize where the real and final authority lies.

Lesson Procedure

Begin the session by explaining to the students what the lessons this quarter will be covering. Then ask them, from material they may have learned previously, to list as many views of the Creation of the world as they can. They will probably list various theological and scientific theories - evolution (of course), the Big Bang Theory, perhaps the Gap Theory, etc. Interpretations of Genesis 1 in recent years have tended to focus on the scientific questions raised though advances in astronomy, physics, and biology. Our interest in these issues causes us to ask questions of the text that the text was never intended to answer. We will start by surveying some of the approaches taken in the last few centuries and attempt to connect them to the purpose of the text as delivered to the original recipients. The result should be a clearer idea of what we should and should not be expecting Genesis 1 to tell us. At this point, give to each student a copy of the handout worksheet on the days of Creation.

1. Chronological Interpretations

The most common approaches to Genesis 1 over the years have focused on the meaning of the chronology of the passage.

A. The Twenty-Four Hour Day Theory

This one very simply views the days of Genesis 1 as normal 24-hour periods. It has several clear advantages:

- It is the most natural way of interpreting the chapter. Other ways of reading the passage must be explained and justified, while this one is clear from even a surface glance.
- The phrase “evening and morning” supports a literal understanding of the word “day.”
- Exodus 20:11 supports this view if we assume that every time the word “day” is used in the verse, it means the same thing.

It also has certain disadvantages:

- It completely contradicts all current scientific evidence regarding the age of the earth. Those who reject this view argue that the text permits alternative explanations that fit the scientific evidence such as that associated with the geologic ages much better.

- It requires massive use of the concept of created age. Those who believe God created the universe in six literal days must also believe that He created it in a mature state.
- It poses problems when compared with the extended picture of the sixth day given in Genesis 2.

B. The Gap Theory

This hypothesis, popularized by the Scofield Reference Bible, postulates a large time gap between the first two verses of Genesis, during which an earlier creation was destroyed as a result of Satan's fall and the earth was rendered "formless and empty" (supporters argue that Genesis 1:2 should be translated to read that the earth *became* formless and empty). The seven days of Creation are still seen as 24-hour days. What are its advantages?

- The system is an attempt to combine an old earth and a young human race in a biblical framework. It thus accommodates such scientific data as fossils, dinosaurs, geologic ages, and even cave men by placing them in the earlier "lost" creation, while at the same time giving a literal reading to Genesis 1 and taking the genealogies of Genesis seriously.
- The Gap Theory claims biblical support from Jeremiah 4:23-26, which proponents see as a fuller description of God's judgment of His original creation, based on the similarity of wording between Jeremiah 4:23 and Genesis 1:2.

The disadvantages, however, are significant:

- The major flaw in the theory is that it is completely lacking in positive support, either scientific or biblical. It is certainly an ingenious device for bringing science and the Bible together, but it can muster not a single shred of corroborative evidence in its favor (though supporters point out that there is also no evidence against it). The theory is thus pure speculation - an attempt to be biblical while leaving room for the findings of modern science.
- The attempt to connect Genesis 1:2 and Jeremiah 4:23 as a basis for the Gap Theory is highly dubious. The structure of Genesis 1 nowhere suggests a huge gap between the first two verses. Worse yet, Jeremiah 4 is a description of the destruction of Judah by the Babylonians. The only connection between the two passages is that Jeremiah is using the image of primordial chaos to describe in somewhat hyperbolic terms the state to which the land of Israel will be reduced after Nebuchadnezzar is through with it. To see Jeremiah 4 as somehow "typical" of the judgment following Satan's fall from heaven is exegetically unwarranted.

C. The Day-Age Theory

The Day-Age Theory is the view that the creative "Days" of Genesis 1 were not 24-hour days, but were instead long periods of time, perhaps millions of years in length. It has certain clear advantages:

- This theory has the obvious advantage of meshing rather easily with accepted scientific theories, including the theory of evolution. Some have even suggested that the "days" of Creation correspond very nicely to the geologic ages.
- The word translated "day" in Genesis 1 (Hebrew *yom*) has a semantic range similar to the word "day" in English. It does not always refer to a 24-hour period. It can refer to the daylight hours, which would make it less than 24 hours. References to longer periods of time include the use of the

term “The Day of the Lord,” as well as Genesis 2:4 (God’s creative rest clearly lasted longer than 24 hours; see Hebrews 4:11).

- Since the sun was not created until the fourth day, proponents of the Day-Age Theory maintain that the phrase “evening and morning” is a figurative way of saying “beginning and ending.”

The theory also has significant disadvantages:

- It ignores the interdependence that exists among various life forms. It is implausible, for instance, that complex plant life could have existed for a long period of time without birds and insects.
- Opponents argue that when days are numbered in Scripture, they always refer to twenty-four hour periods.
- A person’s motivation in holding this theory is important to examine. The theory has its origin in the nineteenth-century doctrine of uniformitarianism (though something like it was proposed as early as the fifth century by Augustine of Hippo), which states that the natural laws in operation today have always governed the universe, and that they have done so in generally the same ways as may be observed today. In essence, the Day-Age Theory became popular as a theological justification for theistic evolution, which teaches that our present world evolved through natural processes now in operation, but under the superintendence of God. While I have no desire to suggest that all who hold to the Day-Age Theory are theistic evolutionists (which would be undeniably false), I think it is important to ask whether or not the theory is held out of a desire to make the Bible conform to accepted scientific dogma.

D. The Progressive Creation Theory

The theory of Progressive Creation is similar in most respects to the older Day-Age Theory except that it sees the days of Genesis 1 as specific creative acts of God separated by long periods of time. It shares many of the same advantages and disadvantages of the Day-Age Theory, but note the following:

- Because adherents sometimes argue that the long periods of time following the creative days overlap, this view does a slightly better job of accounting for interdependence.
- It coheres rather nicely with the contemporary evolutionary view of *punctuated equilibrium*, in which long periods of stasis are interrupted by brief, intense periods of rapid change.

2. Literary Interpretations

In the last few decades, increasing recognition of the milieu in which the book of Genesis was written has caused some scholars to question whether or not Genesis 1 should be read in chronological terms at all. These scholars have advocated instead a literary approach, arguing that those who argue about chronology are simply asking the wrong questions of the text. Here are some examples of recent literary approaches to the interpretation of Genesis 1.

A. The Vision Theory

This theory completely denies that any scientific conclusions may be drawn from the account of Creation in Genesis 1. Advocates argue instead that the account recorded here is the result of six nights of

visions given to a chosen man in which God revealed the scope of his creative activity. The six days are not thus a chronology of how God created the world, but instead a chronology of how He revealed His handiwork to His chosen servant. When this approach is taken, it clearly leaves people free to adopt any scientific explanation currently in favor without fear of facing contradiction from Scripture.

B. The Framework Theory

This little-known approach to Genesis 1 suggests that the chapter was never intended to be a chronological narrative of creative events, but rather is a poetic picture of God's creative activity. Advocates cite several advantages:

- Hebrew poetry is created, not by the repetition of sounds, but by the repetition of ideas. Advocates of the Framework Theory see in Genesis 1 repeated patterns and refrains (“evening and morning”; “God saw that it was good”), as well as a parallel structure in the events recorded on the six days:

1.	Light	4.	Light-Bearers
2.	Heavens, Seas	5.	Birds, Fish
3.	Dry Land	6.	Animals, Man

- The theory emphasizes issues of form and function that were major concerns of the people of the Ancient Near East.
- This approach would automatically eliminate any conflict with science by disallowing any chronological interpretation of the passage. What is poetic certainly cannot be seen as literal.

The Framework Theory also has its problems:

- The chronology of Genesis 1 is so emphatic as to preclude its being incidental. It even serves as the basis for the Fourth Commandment in Exodus 20:8-11.
- The style of the chapter is not poetic, but merely repetitious. For examples of Hebrew poetry in the time of Moses, see Exodus 15, Deuteronomy 32, and Psalm 90. For a poetic description of the Creation, see Psalm 104.
- Again, this seems a rather transparent attempt to force Scripture into the mold created by modern science.

C. The Liturgical Theory

Very similar to the Framework Theory, this approach views Genesis 1 as a worship text that somehow found its way into the Bible out of its original context. Again, the implication would be that the passage is useless for scientific purposes. Note also that this interpretation undermines the inspiration and authority of the Bible.

D. The Temple Theory

This approach suggests that Genesis 1 is a description of the creative labors of God that was deliberately modeled on man's work week. God thus completes the work of building a temple He wishes to inhabit in a work week of six days, then on the seventh day enters and inhabits that temple. Though Isaiah

66:1-2 pictures Heaven as God's throne and the earth as His footstool, several problems exist with this approach. The first is that Genesis 1 pictures the Creation as made for man rather than for God. After all, God needs no material dwelling place. Furthermore, the Temple Theory makes the seventh day the climax of the creative week. Though God's rest is that toward which all things move (Hebrews 4:1-11), the extended description of the sixth day in Genesis 2 would seem to indicate that the climax of God's work is the creation of man, for whose habitation the entire universe was assembled.

Conclusion

The conclusion to today's lesson must of necessity be somewhat tentative at best. This is an area where dogmatism is simply not wise. Be sure to emphasize two things to your students - the fact that Scripture, not science, is the final authority, and that we will spend next week's session talking about the significance of God's creative work.

THE DAYS OF CREATION

THEORY	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
24-HOUR DAYS		
GAP THEORY		
DAY-AGE THEORY		
PROGRESSIVE CREATION		

THE DAYS OF CREATION

THEORY	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
VISION THEORY		
FRAMEWORK THEORY		
LITURGICAL THEORY		
TEMPLE THEORY		

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CREATION

Lesson Aim

To convey to students the significance, both for doctrine and for practical living, of the fact that God created the world.

Memory Verse

Genesis 1:27 - “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Lesson Background

Students today live in an era where the doctrine of Creation is being attacked on all sides, both scientifically and theologically. Many view the doctrine much like the human appendix, as a sort of theological “vestigial organ,” a tradition from the past that hangs on but serves no useful purpose.

It is clear from Scripture, of course, that just the opposite is the case. The doctrine of Creation has enormous and far-reaching implications for both theology and practice. Today’s lesson will focus on a number of those implications. The content of the lesson may require some work on the part of your students, since not many habitually think through the logical implications of what they believe. It is for that very reason, however, all the more important, since those who fail to recognize the implications of their beliefs are in no position to put them into practice. Your students must understand that a right view of Creation is foundational to right living.

Today’s lesson unavoidably touches on the subject of the theory of evolution. It is not our purpose here to go into a detailed examination of the scientific evidence involved in the Creation-evolution controversy, but rather to bring out the doctrinal and practical implications of the opposing positions. It is

not enough to be able to argue that man came into being by means of Creation rather than evolution; one must understand why it matters.

Lesson Procedure

Begin the class by asking the students this question: “What difference does it make whether or not God created the world and man?” Allow the students to discuss this question for a few minutes, then note that answers to the question can be divided into two categories - theological differences and practical differences. Today’s lesson will be devoted to an examination of those differences. Give each student a worksheet on which to record the implications of the two contrasting positions.

1. Theological Differences

A. The Reliability of Scripture

If God did not create the world, the Bible is unreliable from its first word onward. It is no different from any other ancient book of legends. This, of course, would call into question everything else the Bible says.

B. The Creator-Creature Distinction

God is distinct from His handiwork. The Bible makes no room for pantheism. God exists outside of time, while the world is temporal, having a distinct beginning in time.

C. The Present Abnormality of Man and Nature

The original Creation was good, not ethically neutral. As a result of sin, man and the world around him are profoundly abnormal. The evolutionist, on the other hand, must affirm that what is, is right.

D. Man’s Uniqueness

Because man was made in the image of God, he is different from everything around him. This distinction bestows upon man both the inherent dignity and dominion that are denied to him by evolutionists.

E. God’s Sovereignty

If God made the world, He rightly rules it. Evolution postulates a world governed by time and chance. In this sense, “theistic evolution” is a contradiction in terms. Chance evolution requires God no more than divine Creation requires evolutionary development. In the same way that God renders evolution superfluous, evolution renders God superfluous.

2. Practical Differences

A. Human Dignity

Only one who believes that man is made in the image of God has a basis for ascribing worth to man. If evolution is true, man is an animal, and ought to be treated like one.

B. Human Destiny

If man is not a creature of God, he is not eternal. This life is all there is. Macbeth was right - "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more . . . a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

C. Human Dominion

If man is not the pinnacle of Creation, he has no right to dominate other creatures. This is the position taken by radical animal rights activists, who maintain that we should not deprive other creatures of life in order to feed and clothe ourselves, let alone for medical research.

D. Human History

If chance governs all and human life has no purpose, then history has no goal or direction. Evolutionists who say their theory predicts progress forget that chance can move downward as well as upward.

E. Human Responsibility

If chance governs all, a man cannot be held accountable for what he does. Ultimately, there can be no right or wrong, since what is could not be otherwise.

F. Human Science

Ironically, if chance governs all, there can be no such thing as science. Science requires predictability. If events are not predictable and repeatable, if the universe is not orderly, science is dead. How foolish it is that the very theory that champions "scientific objectivity" winds up making such objectivity impossible!

Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by summarizing the basic point of today's lesson - that the doctrine of Creation is an essential foundation, not only for Christian faith, but also for life as we know it.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CREATION

	IF GOD CREATED	IF GOD DID NOT CREATE
DOCTRINAL		
PRACTICAL		

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CREATION

Go over the chart you completed in class today, and write an essay about how you would live differently if you really believed that the world had come into being by chance and that man had evolved in the same way. How would you make decisions? Treat other people? Worship? What would you consider important?

THE UNIQUENESS OF MAN

Lesson Aim

To show students the importance of the uniqueness of man as a creature made in the image of God.

Memory Verse

Genesis 1:28 - "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'"

Lesson Background

As we saw last week, one of the implications of the fact that man and the universe were created by God is that man is unique among God's creatures. This week we will be examining in greater detail the Bible's teaching about man's uniqueness.

Like the fact of God's Creation, the uniqueness of man has only been questioned by "Christian" society in the past several hundred years. This questioning, however, has brought about profound changes in ethics, psychology, politics, and many other areas. What your students must realize is that how one views man ultimately determines how one treats man. A person who thinks people are animals treats others (and incidentally, himself as well) like animals.

In examining man's uniqueness this week, we will focus our attention on a Bible passage and a theological concept. The biblical passage is Psalm 8, which establishes the truth that man is different from the inanimate creation, from animals, and from God Himself. The theological concept is the idea that man is made in the image of God. Though clearly taught in Scripture, the concept of man being in the image of

God is often not clearly understood. If it is not understood, neither can it be applied. It will also be helpful when we get to Lesson 5, on the fall of man, if the students have a good grasp of the condition from which man fell, and thus will be able to see more clearly the seriousness of sin.

Lesson Procedure

Begin the class by asking what makes man different from all the other creatures made by God. As students begin to give responses, make sure they think about ways in which man differs from inanimate objects and supernatural beings as well as from other living creatures on earth. After a time of discussion, tell the class that you will now spend some time examining a passage of Scripture that talks about these things, and have them turn to the eighth Psalm.

1. Man Set Apart By God (Psalm 8)

Ask your students to outline the Psalm on the basis of the categories you just discussed. Hopefully, the result will look something like this:

Introduction - Praise (verses 1-2)

- I. Man distinct from inanimate creation (verses 3-4)
- II. Man distinct from supernatural beings (verse 5)
- III. Man distinct from other living creatures (verses 6-8)

Conclusion - Praise (verse 9)

A. Man vs. Inanimate Creation (Psalm 8:3-4)

When gazing at the sun, moon, and stars, a person can quickly realize his own smallness and insignificance. One can only marvel at the fact that God chose to focus His love on such paltry creatures as ourselves!

Yet many in today's world would assert that the only distinction between us and the rocks is one of time and chance. Of course, this implies that man is no more than a collection of chemicals, and ultimately denies human freedom and responsibility. If man is no more than a rock, his behavior is completely determined by chance molecular interactions.

B. Man vs. Supernatural Beings (Psalm 8:5)

The NIV translation of the verse is a good one, since the Hebrew word involved is Elohim, which can refer either to God or to angels. The marvel of the fact that man is in some way like God will be examined in the next section when we talk about man being made in the image of God. While to us man's closeness to God is amazing, there are many who would identify God and man. These people are called pantheists, and they believe that everything in the universe, including man, is an extension of God. This view, of course, denies the first distinction we discussed - man is God, but so is the rock. As a result, human personality would be ruled out - God is impersonal, the universe is impersonal, and so is man.

C. Man vs. Other Living Creatures (Psalm 8:6-8)

This distinction, of course, is denied by evolutionists, as we saw last week. It exists nonetheless, and has at least four aspects:

i. Physical Uniqueness

Man is neither superior nor unique in any single physical capacity (size, speed, strength, etc.), but the unique combination of skills sets him apart.

ii. Mental Uniqueness

Man possesses greater mental capacity than any animal. This displays itself in sophisticated communication, creativity, and powers of abstraction.

iii. Moral Uniqueness

Only man has a sense of right and wrong, a conscience, a concept of duty. Animals can be trained to obey, but this involves no moral dimension. Of course, many would maintain that human ethics are no more than the products of behavioral conditioning.

iv. Spiritual Uniqueness

Only man has the capacity to know and worship God. He was created with a God-consciousness against which all men sinfully rebel, but even in his hardness of heart, man's spiritual capacity sets him apart from the animals.

It is because of all these that man rightfully exercises dominion over the animals. Man is to care for God's other creatures, but they are not his brothers (cf. Genesis 2:18-20).

2. Man in the Image of God (Genesis 1:26-27)

Man is described in language that is used for no other creature - he is said to be "in the image of God." What does this mean?

A. What is the Image of God?

The image of God consists largely of the areas of man's uniqueness that we just went over. It can be divided into three areas:

i. Personality

The intellect, emotions, and will that make man in a small, limited way like God.

ii. Dominion

God is the Ruler. He has designated man as His sub-ruler.

iii. Knowledge, Righteousness, and Holiness (cf. Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10)

The image of God involves knowing Him and being holy like Him.

B. Sin and the Image of God

The image of God was marred by sin, but not destroyed. Man's personality and dominion remain intact, though sin has distorted both. Knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, however, have been lost. It is these that are restored by God's gracious work of re-creation. One who is in Christ is having the Fall "rolled back" in his life as God remakes him in the likeness of Jesus Christ.

C. The Significance of the Image of God

The Bible derives specific ethical requirements from the fact that man is created in the image of God. In Genesis 9:5-6, God emphasizes that human life is precious because man is made in God's image. James 3:9 points out the contradiction inherent in using the same tongue to bless God and to curse men who bear His image. In short, if we believe that man is made in the image of God, then we must affirm that an assault, physical or verbal, against any man, righteous or wicked, is an attack against the God whose image he bears.

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

THE UNIQUENESS OF MAN

1. What does it mean to say that man is created in the image of God?
2. In what ways is man unique when compared to God? to angels? to animals? to inanimate objects?
3. If a person believes that man is a unique creature made in the image of God, how would that belief affect the way he treats other people? The way he deals with ethical issues involving life and death (abortion, “mercy killing,” capital punishment, war, etc.)?
4. In what ways do you need to change the way you use your tongue if you are to take seriously the fact that all men are made in God’s image?

THE UNITY AND COMPONENTS OF MAN

Lesson Aim

To bring out for students the implications of the individual and racial unity of man and help them to understand the component parts of which man consists.

Memory Verse

Genesis 2:7 - "And the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being."

Lesson Background

The focus of this lesson is on the unity of man, both racially and individually. Both teachings have great practical importance. The unity of the human race because all people descend from a common ancestor reduces to absurdity any racial prejudice. The psychophysical unity of the individual speaks strongly against such extremes as hedonism and asceticism. Thus this teaching has great practical importance for young people in contemporary society.

It would be very easy, however, particularly for the theologically-minded teacher, to get bogged down in the second part of the lesson, which deals with the component parts of man. Two competing positions exist here, of course - dichotomy and trichotomy. The former position sees in man two components, a material part (the body) and a non-material part (the soul or spirit). Dichotomists thus maintain that the terms "soul" and "spirit" are synonyms, or at best different functions of the non-material part of man. Trichotomists see soul and spirit as distinct, with the former referring to the mind, emotions, and will, while the latter refers to the conscience. Trichotomy was the position held in the Ancient Church

for the first three centuries, but was then displaced by dichotomy, largely in reaction against the Apollinarian heresy. Trichotomy has made somewhat of a comeback in the last two centuries, though most Reformed theologians affirm a dichotomist position. Frankly, I see little relevance to the debate. It represents a valid theological distinction, but is of little practical importance. As a result, I have organized the material so that it can be taught from either perspective with minor modifications.

Lesson Procedure

Begin the lesson by asking your class where they think racial prejudice comes from. They will surely bring up various social and psychological reasons for the fear and ignorance that feed prejudicial attitudes and behavior. Then ask why racial prejudice is wrong. The class members may mention the commandment to love others and the fact that God is no respecter of persons, but probably will not suggest that the unity of the human race is a relevant consideration. At this point, tell them that this issue is one of the reasons why today's lesson has such great practical significance. Much of our attitudes and behavior are rooted in our understanding of who man is.

1. The Unity of Man

The unity of man can be asserted in two different ways. The racial unity of man is the idea that the entire human race is essentially one. The individual unity of man is the idea that man consists of a psychophysical unit, and may not adequately be described either as a purely material organism or as a soul imprisoned in a body.

A. The Racial Unity of Man

The Bible clearly teaches that the human race is essentially a single unit. How do we know?

- All people come from a common ancestor - Adam and later Noah (cf. Genesis 10; Acts 17:26).
- All people share the same sinful nature and face the same judgment for sin (Romans 5:12,17-19).

The Bible thus gives no grounds for racial prejudice. In fact, it is the theory of evolution, which leaves open the possibility that different races may have evolved differently, and thus have both different origins and different characteristics, that provides fertile ground for assertions of the inherent genetic superiority of one race over another.

B. The Individual Unity of Man

Each individual man is the unity of the material and the non-material, of body, soul, and spirit (these component parts will be discussed in the next section). As with the racial unity of man, this concept has some very important practical applications.

i. In what senses is each man a unity?

- In being - Each part of man is part of what it means to be man. Man is neither a body without a soul nor a soul imprisoned in a body.

- In action - When a person acts, it is his whole person that acts. The soul cannot disclaim responsibility for what the body does. “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak” does not mean that the two function independently.
- In sin - This is what total depravity means. No part of man is unaffected by the ravages of sin.
- In salvation - Christ redeems the whole man. Isn't this the point behind the resurrection of the body?

ii. What are the implications of the fact that man is a unity?

- Asceticism is a mistake. You cannot enhance the soul by abusing or depriving the body. The body is not more depraved than the mind or will.
- Materialism is wrong. Man is more than a physical organism. The indulgence of the body often stems from a denial of the soul.
- If Christ has died for the whole man (not just his soul), then Christian ministry should be to the whole man. It is not true that it is unspiritual to meet people's physical needs.
- The Intermediate State is an unnatural condition. Death, the result of sin, separates the soul from the body, a condition contrary to the way God intended man to be. The resurrection of the body rectifies this unnatural separation for both the righteous and the wicked.

2. The Component Parts of Man

We have already alluded often to the component parts of which man consists. A brief summary should be helpful to the students, but I would not advise introducing the dichotomy-trichotomy controversy.

A. Man's Non-Material Part(s)

The non-material part of man is referred to as the soul and/or spirit. The soul is the seat of self-consciousness, and is part of the image of God. It is manifested in man's intellect, emotions, and will. The term “spirit,” when not used as a synonym for “soul,” seems to refer to the conscience of man, or his God-consciousness.

B. Man's Material Part

Man's body is not a prison or a house for the soul, but an integral part of what it means to be human. If the spirit (or soul) links us to God in immortality, the body links us to this world in temporality. Man is a creature both of this world and the next.

Conclusion

Complete the lesson by reviewing the importance of a right understanding of who man is, especially with regard to his unity.

THE FALL OF MAN

Lesson Aim

To help students understand the devastating and far-reaching effects of the sin of Adam on the human race.

Memory Verse

Genesis 3:6 - “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.”

Lesson Background

There are very few events that could legitimately be described as altering the history of the entire human race. One of these events, of course, is the Fall of man, in which Adam, the designated head and representative of the race, chose to rebel against God, with the entire race sharing both the guilt and the penalty for that decision.

For the last two weeks we have been looking at the glory of God’s greatest creation, the only creature fashioned by God in His own image. We turn now to the event that marred that image and put man in need of the salvation that only God Himself could provide. Today’s lesson will be divided into three parts, dealing respectively with the probation, temptation, and results of the Fall.

The topic to be covered today has enormous practical application. It helps us see ourselves as we really are and understand why everyone needs Christ. It also gives us a realistic view of the world in which we live, with all its conflicts. If the last two lessons taught us to value man’s dignity and deplore those who

would depreciate it, today's lesson should teach us to appraise man's condition realistically, and recognize as blind folly the notion that man is inherently good while society is evil but perfectible. The lesson also will enable you as a teacher to emphasize to your students the impossibility of resolving human conflicts on any level apart from the grace of God.

Lesson Procedure

Start the lesson by having the students engage in a little creative writing. Have each one imagine he or she is Adam or Eve. Then let him describe how he would have handled the temptation presented by Satan. Would the girls have eaten the fruit? Would the guys have taken it from their wives? Why or why not?

After the students have finished writing, use their work as a springboard for discussion of the circumstances surrounding the Fall. Use the opportunity to point out the representative nature of what occurred in the Garden of Eden - not only do all people experience the consequences of Adam's sin, but they share the guilt for that sin, indicating at the very least that each one of us, had we been in the same position, would have done the same thing. Proceed at this point to the body of the lesson, which involves a consideration of the probation, temptation, and results of the Fall.

1. The Probation (Genesis 2:15-17)

"Probation" is the term used by theologians to describe the period of testing between the time God issued His command to Adam and Eve and the time that command was violated.

A. The Condition of the Probation

Ask your students to think about the command God gave to Adam and Eve. Why this command rather than any other? Did it have any special significance? Was there anything special about the tree? Why was one command given rather than many? After some discussion, note the following:

i. The command was unitary

The issue was clear-cut and focused at one point. There was only one sin Adam and Eve could commit and only one sin they had to avoid.

ii. The command was arbitrary

The tree was not special in any way except that God had singled it out. It was neither especially attractive nor especially repulsive. As a result, obedience depended directly upon faith and could not be influenced by any pragmatic factors.

iii. Man's will was free

Unlike man since the Fall, Adam was fully capable of choosing to please God. People born into the world after Adam have not had that choice.

iv. The choice was not between knowledge and ignorance, but between two ways of gaining knowledge

Adam and Eve had to choose between knowing good by experience and evil by contrast or knowing evil by experience and good by contrast.

B. The Penalty Threatened for Sin

God told Adam and Eve that if they ate the fruit of the tree, they would die. This death can be seen to have three different aspects:

- i. Judicial** - Immediate condemnation by God.
- ii. Moral** - Immediate subjective separation from God.
- iii. Psycho-physical** - Deterioration of mind and body that began immediately.

Note that the first two are far more serious than the third. Man exists forever as a psycho-physical unity (except for the temporary separation of the Intermediate State), but is doomed to live forever apart from God (the real definition of death) unless the Spirit of God intervenes.

C. The Promise Implied for Obedience

No promise is given, but we may safely assume that if sin brought death, then obedience would have brought life. Though anything said in this realm must remain nothing but pure speculation, may we surmise that the probation had a temporal limit, after which Adam and Eve would have been confirmed in righteousness? The experience of the angels suggests that this may have been the case, since it appears that those angels who did not fall with Satan are no longer capable of doing so.

2. The Temptation (Genesis 3:1-6)

Though the passage never specifically says so, we may safely assume that the temptation was the work of Satan (cf. Revelation 12:9; 20:2). The way in which he approached Eve can teach us much about how he continues to work today. NOTE: If time permits, you may do the take-home paper in class at this point.

A. Doubting God's Veracity (Genesis 3:1)

Satan begins by introducing doubt, and does so by a subtle misrepresentation of what God actually had said. When Satan leads people astray, he does not usually begin with a bold lie, but with a small distortion of the truth. How many heresies in the history of the church have resulted from overemphasizing (and thus distorting) one aspect of the truth!

B. Denying God's Word (Genesis 3:4)

Only when the mind has been led to doubt can Satan attempt flat contradiction of God's Word. In reality, of course, the sin occurred, not when Eve ate, but as soon as she placed her own judgment above the

command of God. The devil's lie has not changed. He still strives to convince people that they must use their own judgment to determine whether God's Word is true or false rather than subjecting themselves to the judgment of God's Word.

C. Defaming God's Motive (Genesis 3:5)

Here is the Big Lie. Satan here projected onto God his own motives - envy, jealousy, and selfishness. It has always been Satan's way to tell men they can be like gods in order to make them act like animals.

3. The Results of the Fall (Genesis 3:7-24)

The Fall damaged not only man, but also the entire created universe.

A. The Curse on the Serpent (Genesis 3:14-15)

The serpent itself bore a physical curse, being forced to grovel in the dust (we need not conclude from this that snakes used to have legs!), while the possessor, Satan, was doomed to ultimate defeat by the Offspring of the woman he had deceived.

B. The Curse on the Woman (Genesis 3:16)

The woman's curse is twofold. The source of her greatest joy (childbirth) becomes the source of her greatest pain, and fulfilling her purpose in life (being a suitable helper to her husband) becomes burdensome submission. (One need look no further than the feminist movement to see how the curse is evident both in its causes and its motives).

C. The Curse on the Man (Genesis 3:17-19)

Man's efforts to exercise dominion over the earth are now met with resistance rather than cooperation.

D. The Results of the Fall on the Human Race

We find in this chapter the roots of the human condition. Note the following:

i. Shame (Genesis 3:7-10)

This is a blessing, not a curse. If man had no conscience, his sinful nature would produce unrestrained viciousness.

ii. Separation

The root of all human conflict is found here. Spiritual problems stem from man's separation from God (verse 8), psychological problems from man's separation from himself (verses 8, 10), social problems from man's separation from other people (verses 11-13), and ecological problems from man's separation from nature (verses 17-19). This has vast implications. All problems are at their root spiritual, and can only be solved by God, not man. Man's efforts to improve himself and his society, whether by psychological, social, economic, or political means, are doomed to failure. The only true solutions are Christian solutions.

iii. Salvation

The roots of God's redemptive plan are also found in Genesis 3. We find the promise of a Redeemer (verse 15), the principle of substitution (verse 21 - skins could not have been provided without the shedding of blood "to provide a covering for sin"), and the provision of grace (verses 22-24 - the banishment from the Garden of Eden was punishment, but it was also an act of mercy. Partaking of the Tree of Life would have confirmed Adam and Eve in their unrighteous state permanently).

Conclusion

The lesson obviously does not allow time for discussion of all the issues raised, but it is important that students grasp the basic principles needed to understand the true nature of the world in which we live.

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

THE FALL OF MAN

As we saw in today’s lesson, Satan’s lies do not change. In fact, the same temptations faced by Eve in the Garden of Eden were faced by Christ in the wilderness and confront Christians every day. Fill out the following chart, listing the temptations faced by Eve and Jesus as they fit into the categories established in I John 2:16.

I JOHN 2:16	THE CRAVINGS OF SINFUL MAN	THE LUST OF HIS EYES	THE BOASTING OF WHAT HE HAS AND DOES
GENESIS 3:6			
MATTHEW 4:1-11			

What can we learn about how to handle temptation from Eve’s experience? from that of Jesus?

SIN AND DEPRAVITY

Lesson Aim

To show students the thoroughness with which sin has permeated the human condition and help them to see themselves in the light of this truth.

Memory Verse

Psalm 51:5 - "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."

Lesson Background

Sin is never a pleasant subject to discuss, but if we are to understand the human condition, we must discuss it. Our students live in a world that seeks to deny the reality of sin, both by affirming the essential goodness of man and by denying any accountability to God. It is easy for a Christian to fall into this flattering and self-centered mindset without even realizing it. Since the doctrine of sin has such enormous and far-reaching implications, it is vital that your students understand it properly.

The biblical doctrine of sin also serves as an important bridge between the doctrine of man and the doctrine of salvation. It is man's sinful condition that places him in need of salvation and makes him incapable of attaining it on his own. This universal need of salvation must be communicated to your students, especially if you have those in your class about whose spiritual condition you are uncertain.

The lesson today is divided into three sections, dealing respectively with various biblical words for sin, appropriate characterizations of sin, and the issues of original sin and depravity. Obviously, much more could be said in this area (we will not, for instance, be touching on the subject of imputation), but this

summary should be helpful to your students in enabling them to understand the extent of man's (and their own) sinfulness.

Lesson Procedure

Sometimes the words we use most frequently are the hardest to define. This is especially true with regard to religious language. Many of the words we use in discussing biblical truths are used almost as clichés, without real thought about their meanings. This is certainly true with regard to the concept of sin. Last week we talked about sin's entrance into the world. Today we will be spending our time trying to gain a better understanding of what sin really is.

1. What Is Sin?

In order to understand what sin is, we will look at some of the more prominent words used to describe it in Scripture.

A. Missing the mark

The Hebrew and Greek words most frequently translated "sin" both mean "to miss the mark." This shows that sin involves falling short of the standard established by God. This should not be visualized in terms of an archer just missing the bull's-eye but getting a good score anyway. A more accurate picture would be that of a man leaping a chasm. If he falls short, he dies, whether he misses by an inch or a yard (cf. Romans 3:23).

B. A twisted or perverse character

An important Old Testament word meaning this is often translated "iniquity." This aspect of sin emphasizes its innateness (Psalm 51:2). If you or any of your students are familiar with C. S. Lewis' space trilogy, it could be noted that the concept of iniquity corresponds closely with the idea of "bent *hnau*" that appears in *Out of the Silent Planet*.

C. Going beyond prescribed limits

A group of related words with this meaning are often translated "trespass" or "transgress." While sin speaks of the inability to do what is required, transgression involves the determination to do what is prohibited. As with missing the mark, the distance doesn't matter. One who steps off the edge of a cliff perishes just as surely as one who goes over with a flying leap (cf. Psalm 32:1).

D. Unrighteousness

That which is righteous is straight, while sin is crooked. The prophets often described Israel's sin by picturing God as measuring the walls of Jerusalem with a plumbline and finding them crooked (cf. Amos 7:7-9; II Peter 2:15).

E. Rebellion

Sin involves a revolt against constituted authority, that of God as expressed by His law (cf. I John 3:4; II Thessalonians 2:8).

F. Debt

Sin is a failure to pay to God that which is owed (cf. Matthew 6:12).

G. Disobedience

Sin involves refusal to acknowledge a command (cf. Ephesians 2:2; 5:6).

H. Ungodliness

Finally, sin is a lack of conformity to the image of God. A godly man is one who is like God (cf. II Peter 2:5,7). Ungodliness can only be overcome by the justifying work of God Himself (cf. Romans 4:5; 5:6).

These terms should indicate to your students both the seriousness and the depth and pervasiveness of sin, both in their own lives and in the world at large.

2. What Does it Mean to Say that “Man is a Sinner”?

Let your students kick this one around for a few minutes. Hopefully they will be able to come up with at least some of the following:

A. It means that he sins

The obvious response to the question is that man is a sinner because he sins. This is a shallow answer, but a true one (Romans 3:10-19, 23). It should also be noted, of course, that one sins by failing to do what is right as much as by doing what is wrong (James 4:17).

B. It means that the attitude of his heart is one of rebellion against God (Romans 1:21-25)

Sin can never be restricted only to overt actions. Actions stem from attitudes, and the sinner's actions are expressions of rebellion against and hatred of God.

C. It means that his entire orientation of life is self-centered

This implies that even the good deeds of the sinner are motivated by selfishness (Proverbs 21:4).

D. It means that everyone is born with a sinful nature (Romans 5:12-19)

This is the root of man's sinfulness. In the final analysis, man is not a sinner because he sins; he sins because he is a sinner.

What do these truths indicate that a Christian should expect from the attitudes and behavior of unbelievers? What should they indicate about how a Christian should view his own heart?

3. What are "Original Sin" and "Total Depravity"?

The preceding discussion leads naturally to the subjects of original sin and total depravity. The former concept deals with the origin of each man's sinfulness, the latter with its extent.

A. Original Sin

Scripture makes it clear that every man to enter this world except for Jesus Christ was born a sinner (Psalm 58:3; John 3:6; Ephesians 2:3). Psalm 51:5 goes even further, indicating that all are sinners from conception. This sin was passed on by Adam to all of his descendants, as evidenced by the universality of death (Romans 5:12-14).

B. Total Depravity

This sin inherited from Adam is no mere handicap that people must struggle to overcome. Unregenerate man is dead in sin, incapable of helping himself in any way (cf. Genesis 6:5; 8:21; Isaiah 1:5-6; I Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:12; 4:18; Romans 3:10-19). Since this concept is often misunderstood, the following distinctions might be helpful:

i. What it is not

- That every man is as bad as he could be (common grace prevents this).
- That sinners have no knowledge of God (contra. Romans 1:18-21).
- That sinners have no conscience (contra. Romans 2:14-15).
- That sinners do not admire virtues in others or seek to cultivate them in themselves (contra. Rich Young Ruler).
- That every sinner commits every form of sin.

ii. What it is

- That man has in himself no spiritual good, nothing that could commend him to God.
- That every aspect of man's nature is touched by sin (intellect, emotions, will, etc.). This is why sinful man cannot be argued, manipulated, or coerced into salvation. He is incapable of understanding, feeling, or choosing that which is of God.

All of this, of course, leaves man in a rather dismal situation from which there seems to be no escape. But God sent His Son into the world to save sinners. The remainder of the quarter will be spent examining what God has done, is doing, and will do to remedy man's miserable predicament.

SALVATION - ETERNITY PAST

Lesson Aim

To help students appreciate the extent of God's saving grace by examining the concepts of election, predestination, and foreknowledge.

Memory Verse

Ephesians 1:4-5 - "For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will."

Lesson Background

Much of the controversy surrounding the concept of salvation variously associated with the terms "Calvinism," "Reformed theology," or "the Doctrines of Grace" centers around the saving purpose of God as set forth in the councils of eternity. No one with any knowledge of church history can seriously doubt the enormous implications that derive from the understanding of what went on before the world began that is espoused by an individual or church.

Consequently, as we commence now to study the Bible's teaching about salvation, we must begin at the beginning. A proper understanding of election, predestination, and foreknowledge is essential if we are to grasp the nature and significance of God's saving work in time. Other issues could be discussed as well, of course. In the realm of eternity past, some would incorporate discussions of the Covenant of Redemption, or of the supralapsarianism/infralapsarianism controversy. These issues do not fall within the scope of this course. The ones we are discussing are, of course, quite controversial in themselves, and

because of this our approach will be an inductive one, in which students are challenged to define these key terms by examining their use in Scripture. As far as practical application is concerned, you should emphasize the humility and gratitude that should stem from a proper apprehension of these doctrines.

Lesson Procedure

The Doctrines of Grace provide the foundation for the understanding of the Gospel in Reformed Baptist congregations. Perhaps your church is one where these doctrines are constantly kept before the people in preaching and teaching. If that is the case, this lesson may serve as little more than a review of familiar ideas for your students. In some churches, however, these doctrines are more assumed than emphasized. If that is the case with your congregation, your students may in this lesson be exposed to these truths in a systematic way for the first time.

Begin the lesson by having the students turn to Ephesians 1. Read verses 3-14 and then ask the students to define “predestination.” Their response should give you a good picture of the extent of their understanding of the Doctrines of Grace. Then announce that we will be studying today the saving activity of God prior to the creation of the world (cf. Ephesians 1:4). This saving work can be summed up by examining three key words - election, predestination, and foreknowledge.

1. Election

When we hear the word “election,” we usually think of a voting process by which a political officeholder is designated. When the word is used in a theological sense, however, it simply refers to the idea of choice. The elect are those whom God has chosen for Himself. At this point several questions need to be answered about this choice made by God.

A. When did God choose those who would belong to Him?

According to Ephesians 1:4, this choice was made before the creation of the world - in effect, before time began.

B. Who are the chosen ones, the elect?

The term is used in various ways in Scripture. Israel is described as “my chosen” in Isaiah 45:4 and elsewhere. Even today, Jews sometimes refer to themselves as “the chosen people,” harking back to the fact that God set them apart when He called Abram out of Ur (I refer here to the source of a common phrase, and am not suggesting the current appropriateness of the designation in a theological sense). Christians in the New Testament are also called “chosen” in passages such as Colossians 3:12. The term is even applied to angels in I Timothy 5:21, distinguishing God’s faithful messengers from those who joined Satan in his rebellion.

C. How did God decide whom to choose?

The answer to this question is a crucial one. We must affirm unequivocally that God’s choice was totally unconditioned by anything in the ones who were chosen. The choice was God’s alone (John 15:16), was grounded in the work of Christ on the cross (Ephesians 1:4), and is related in no way to the desirability of those who are chosen (I Corinthians 1:27-28). Of course, there are many who maintain that God’s choice

was based on His foreknowledge (I Peter 1:2), inferring by this that God chose those whom He knew would believe. The unraveling of this issue must await our discussion of foreknowledge.

2. Predestination

The Greek word often translated “predestinate” appears only six times in the New Testament. Have your students look up Acts 4:28; Romans 8:29-30; I Corinthians 2:7; Ephesians 1:5,11, and then try to define the word from the way it is used in its various contexts. They should be able to conclude that the word refers to something that is determined ahead of time. Now have your students reexamine the passages to find out what the Bible speaks of as having been determined ahead of time. They should be able to discern the following:

A. Acts 4:28

God planned and decided on Jesus’ death long before it happened.

B. Romans 8:29-30

God determined long ago that those He foreknew (more on this in the next section) would be conformed to the likeness of His Son - that the same ones who were chosen before Creation would ultimately become like Christ.

C. I Corinthians 2:7

The wisdom that Paul spoke, the message of the Gospel, the plan of salvation, had been determined before time began.

D. Ephesians 1:5,11

God determined ahead of time, solely on the basis of His own will, that those who were chosen by Him would be adopted into His family.

3. Foreknowledge

Foreknowledge is a key concept because it is used by many to make man’s will the determinative factor in salvation. Such people argue that God predestined for salvation those whom He knew would believe, i.e., He chose those whom He knew would choose Him! Two questions will enable us to deal effectively with this issue:

A. Does the term “foreknowledge” refer to prior knowledge of a fact or prior relationship with a person?

The English word “know” can refer to people or facts (contra. French verbs *savoir* and *connaitre*, the former referring to knowing facts and the latter to knowing people). To which does foreknowledge refer? Does the Bible teach that God knew *something* or knew *someone* before the Creation of the world? Have your students look up the seven occurrences of the word in Scripture (Acts 2:23; 26:5; Romans 8:29; 11:2; I Peter 1:2, 20; II Peter 3:17). Note that some of these refer to prior knowledge of facts, but that the ones

dealing with salvation clearly imply a prior relationship. God chose and predestined those He loved before the Creation of the world.

B. Even if foreknowledge is seen as a prior knowledge of who would believe, would it make man's will the determinative factor in salvation?

This is clearly not the case. If God knew before He created the world that certain people would be saved and certain ones not, could it have happened any other way? Certainly not - those foreknown by God could not be anything but predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by reemphasizing the gratitude and humility that these doctrines should generate in the Christian.

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

SALVATION ETERNITY PAST

1. According to Ephesians 1:4, when did God choose those who were to be saved? On what did God base His choice?
2. Why do you think so many people dislike the doctrine of predestination?
3. Based on Romans 8:29 and I Peter 1:2, how is foreknowledge related to election and predestination?
4. Why should the doctrines studied in class today make Christians humble and grateful?

SALVATION PAST - CALLING AND REGENERATION

Lesson Aim

To familiarize the students with the work of the Holy Spirit in calling and regenerating those who are dead in sin.

Memory Verse

II Corinthians 5:17 - “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

Lesson Background

This section of the course takes us through what is called the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation). Within the three-week segment covering Salvation Past, the topics covered must be seen to fall into logical rather than temporal sequence. In other words, calling, regeneration, repentance, faith, justification, and adoption are placed in that order not because they occur at different times (there is no such thing as a person who is regenerated but not yet adopted, for instance), but because of their logical priority to one another. The key point to be noted is the placement of regeneration in the sequence. Many would place regeneration after repentance and faith, thus implying that repentance and faith are works of which the unsaved man is capable and that render him acceptable to God. This is obviously unbiblical, and we will approach regeneration as the change in heart that renders a person capable of repentance and faith.

Today’s lesson deals with calling and regeneration. We will look at calling in both its general and particular senses, and seek to relate both calling and regeneration to the material studied earlier in the quarter (e.g., depravity and election). The practical emphasis of the lesson should be directed toward helping

unbelievers recognize both their need and their responsibility, and helping believers in your class see that they in no way contributed to their own salvation.

Lesson Procedure

Begin today's lesson by reviewing briefly the material covered in the last two weeks. Summarize the key ideas in terms of man's condition and God's choice. Then indicate that today we will move from prehistory into history, from eternity into time, and begin to examine the way in which God overcomes the death brought about by sin in those He has chosen. How does God awaken one who is dead in sin and elicit a response of repentance and faith? This week we will look at God's work of awakening, under the headings of calling and regeneration. Next week, we will examine man's response of repentance and faith, followed after that by a study of God's response to repentance and faith - justification and adoption.

1. Calling

The area of calling is one that can generate some confusion if not handled carefully. On the one hand, Scripture identifies those who are called as those who were chosen (Romans 8:30); on the other hand, Jesus says that "many are invited (called), but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14). Who, then, does God call - all people, or just His elect ones? Theologians generally tackle this problem by speaking of two calls - a universal call and an effectual call.

A. The Universal Call

We are talking here about a call issued by God to everyone (cf. Acts 17:30). The following points should be noted:

- The basic content of this call is the message of the Gospel, the good news of the accomplishment of the work of salvation by Christ (since there is some confusion in many circles about what the Gospel really is, you may want to ask your students to write a one-paragraph summary of the Good News; I Corinthians 15:3-4 gives a good concise model).
- The call is disseminated by preaching, whether formal or informal (Romans 10:14-15). God issues His call through His messengers.
- The call includes a demand for repentance and faith (Acts 2:21, 38; 17:30) and a promise of redemption to those who obey (Acts 16:31).
- The call is indiscriminate. Only God knows whom He has chosen, so we are to preach to all (Matthew 28:19).
- This call neither presupposes the ability of men to respond nor enables them to do so. The preaching of the Gospel could accomplish nothing apart from the work of the Holy Spirit (this, of course, leads us to our next consideration).

B. The Effectual Call

Essentially what we are talking about here is the way in which the Spirit of God empowers the issuance of the universal call in such a way as to produce a response of faith. Thus while the universal call

is issued through human instruments, it becomes effectual when God uses it to produce results. An effectual call is necessary because the sinner is unable to respond positively on his own; it comes only to the elect, and accomplishes what it sets out to do (cf. John 8:34; Romans 1:6; 6:20; I Corinthians 1:23-26; Ephesians 4:18; 5:8; II Peter 1:10; Revelation 17:14).

2. Regeneration

The next issue we must consider involves what God does in the heart of the sinner to elicit a response of repentance and faith. The change involved is called “regeneration.” Although the word itself is used only twice in Scripture (Matthew 19:28; Titus 3:5), the concept is conveyed clearly by three word pictures.

A. New Birth (John 3:1-21)

We are all familiar with the description of a Christian as one who has been “born again.” In what ways is the image of birth particularly appropriate to describe what happens in regeneration?

i. Regeneration is passive

A person does not cause himself to be saved any more than he causes himself to be born.

ii. Regeneration is a radical change

The difference between regenerate and unregenerate states is like the difference between being and non-being.

iii. Regeneration is necessary

A person cannot respond to God in faith until God gives him a new heart.

B. New Creation (II Corinthians 4:6; 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:10)

In the same way that the material world was made by God out of nothing, so the believer is formed anew by God through a transformation - the old is dead and gone, replaced by the new.

C. New Life (Ephesians 2:1-7)

If it is true that the unsaved are dead in sin, then it is also true that regeneration gives life to the dead. When God breathes new life into a sinner, a response of faith occurs that was not possible before. It is that response that we will be examining next week.

Conclusion

Conclude the lesson by asking the class what today’s discussion of calling and regeneration should mean for both believers and unbelievers. Point out that for an unbeliever, today’s lesson in itself could function as a call, revealing his need and requiring repentance. If there are non-Christians in your class,

encourage them to respond in faith. For your Christian students, the lesson should produce a realization that “He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy” (Titus 3:5).

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

SALVATION PAST CALLING AND REGENERATION

1. What is the Gospel? If you did not do so in class, write out a brief summary of the Gospel message.
2. What are the differences between the universal call of the Gospel and the effectual call of the Spirit? How are they related?
3. How do the images of New Birth, New Creation, and New Life give us a picture of regeneration?
4. How do the doctrines of calling and regeneration relate to the doctrines of depravity and election we studied earlier?

SALVATION PAST - REPENTANCE AND FAITH

Lesson Aim

To communicate to the students the response God demands and to make clear that this response cannot be given apart from divine enablement, but is a gift of grace

Memory Verse

II Corinthians 7:10-11 - “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter.”

Lesson Background

Repentance and faith, the subjective human responses to God’s work of calling and regeneration, have often been described as two sides of the same coin. If the “heads” side of a penny were separated from the “tails” side, what was left would no longer be a penny. Similarly, if faith is separated from repentance, what is left is not conversion. Despite this fact, many have tried to separate the two. On the one hand, we have the Social Gospel types who tell us that turning away from sin and living a good life is acceptable to God. On the other hand, the exponents of “easy-believism” peddle an empty faith with no notion of turning away from sin.

Today we will be examining repentance and faith in three ways - what they mean, how they relate to each other, and how they relate to the *ordo salutis*. Though we will focus largely on the past aspects of repentance and faith as they relate to the experience of conversion, it should be noted that the entire life of

the believer involves turning from sin and to God. One cannot legitimately claim conversion in the past if the present life does not back it up.

Lesson Procedure

Last week we talked about the work of God in changing the heart of a sinner by means of calling and regeneration. This week, we will look at the response of that changed heart - repentance and faith. Ask your students why the material covered last week must precede that to be discussed today. Hopefully they will realize that an unregenerate sinner is incapable of repentance and faith, but that the heart that has been changed by God readily turns to God.

In examining repentance and faith, we will look at three basic areas - what the terms mean, how they relate to one another, and how they relate to some of the other concepts covered this quarter.

1. The Meaning of Repentance and Faith

A. Repentance

Ask your students to define this term before giving them a definition. Most will probably realize the need for sorrow for sin, and even the need to confess and ask forgiveness, but few are likely to include the necessity of turning away from sin. Tell your students that the basic meaning of the word is related to changing or turning. In Scripture, it refers specifically to a change with respect to sin. It incorporates three essential elements:

i. Sorrow for sin (II Corinthians 7:10)

One who truly repents realizes the seriousness of the offense perpetrated against God and is genuinely sorry.

ii. Confession of sin (I John 1:9)

Acknowledgment of sin before God brings forgiveness.

iii. Turning away from sin (II Corinthians 7:11; I Thessalonians 1:9)

One who expresses sorrow and asks forgiveness has not truly repented unless he also turns his back on sin; otherwise, he is like a pig going back to his mud puddle after a futile bath.

B. Faith

If you ask your students for a definition of faith, they will probably either quote Hebrews 11:1 or come up with some tautology about "believing." Faith, like repentance, can be seen as incorporating three elements:

i. Knowledge (believing that . . .)

Faith has its foundation in facts (Romans 10:9,12). The call to faith is not a call to credulity, nor is it a leap into the dark. The roots of faith are found in God's revelation, the Word of God. It must also be recognized, of course, that the knowledge with which faith begins is not the knowledge of the senses (Hebrews 11:1).

ii. Assent (believing in . . .)

Faith is knowledge, but it is more than knowledge. It also involves an intellectual and practical commitment to that knowledge. Assent to a basic body of knowledge is essential to Christian faith (I Corinthians 15:3-4). The assent must be practical as well as intellectual, for as James tells us, "faith without deeds is useless" (James 2:20).

iii. Trust (believing for . . .)

While there is a sense in which faith is active and practical, there is also a sense in which it is passive. The faith that saves is not a work but an abandonment of works. One who truly trusts Christ is acknowledging that nothing he can do can contribute to his salvation, but that he must trust the work of Christ completely to make him right with God. Of course, faith in anything or anyone other than Christ is totally worthless as far as salvation is concerned.

2. The Relationship of Repentance and Faith

Several points need to be made about how these fundamental facets of conversion relate to one another.

A. Repentance and Faith are Inseparable

There are several ways of illustrating this fact. One is the coin illustration used in the Lesson Background. Another would be to visualize a person entering a room through the door and walking toward a window on the opposite wall. If he were to turn toward the door, he could not do so without turning away from the window. Similarly, one cannot turn to God without turning away from sin.

B. Repentance and Faith are Gifts

The unregenerate man is incapable of turning from his sin or trusting Christ. Therefore, if any are to be saved, God must grant repentance and faith as a gift (Acts 5:30-31; 11:18; Ephesians 2:8-9).

C. Repentance and Faith are Necessary

There can be no salvation apart from repentance and faith (Acts 2:37-38; Hebrews 11:6).

3. The Placement of Repentance and Faith

At this juncture reiterate the point made at the beginning of the lesson relating repentance and faith to depravity and regeneration. Close the lesson by making clear to your students that repentance and faith are not just past events on which Christians look back, but also continuing experiences of the Christian life.

Believers must continually trust God and turn away from sin. Challenge the students in your class who are not living this way with their need to put their trust in Christ and turn away from their lives of sin.

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

SALVATION PAST REPENTANCE AND FAITH

The great chapter on faith in the Bible is Hebrews 11. Each of the Old Testament characters mentioned in the chapter illustrates a different truth about living by faith. Go through Hebrews 11:1-31 and summarize, in a sentence or two, what can be learned about faith from each of the following:

Abel -

Enoch -

Noah -

Abraham and Sarah -

Isaac and Jacob -

Joseph -

Moses -

Joshua -

Rahab -

SALVATION PAST - JUSTIFICATION AND ADOPTION

Lesson Aim

To familiarize students with the positional aspects of salvation, justification and adoption, and examine the significance of these two terms for the child of God.

Memory Verse

Romans 5:1 - "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Lesson Background

In the last two weeks, we have spent time looking at the subjective aspects of conversion - those that describe what actually happens in the life of the individual. God's calling and work of regeneration, along with the sinner's response of repentance and faith, are all subjective in nature. This week we will examine two objective works of God associated with conversion - justification and adoption. These are objective in the sense that they alter the standing of the sinner rather than his state.

Justification is a teaching of Scripture that has often been misunderstood, resulting in serious doctrinal deviation. We will be examining it by trying to answer four questions: What does the word mean? What are its positive and negative aspects? Who does the work of justification? How is the work of justification done? As we seek to answer these questions, we will also take note of misunderstandings that necessitate the asking of the questions.

Adoption is a concept that is easily understood because, like that of the New Birth, it is analogous to a common human experience. We will consequently spend our time dealing with the relationship between regeneration and adoption (How can a person be both born and adopted into the same family?), as well as with some of the implications of the doctrine.

Lesson Procedure

Begin the lesson by reviewing the four ideas presented in the last two weeks. Point out that all four refer to things that happen to a person, or that a person does, that produce a noticeable change. A person who has been called and regenerated by God knows that something has happened - he “feels” different and knows he is a different person. One who repents and believes has acted, and continues to act, in a manner that separates him from his former life. The two concepts before us this week, however, do not reflect subjective changes, but rather objective ones - changes in the way God views a person, though the individual in question doesn’t “feel any different.” These two doctrines are justification and adoption.

1. Justification

As indicated in the Lesson Background, we will approach the subject of justification by trying to answer four questions:

A. What does the word mean?

Ask your students to define “justification.” Some may respond with the oft-repeated statement that, if I am justified, it is “JUST-as-IF-I’D never sinned.” While this does express one of the aspects of justification about which we will be talking shortly, it is not a definition. “To justify” is “to declare righteous.” Note carefully that it does not mean “to make righteous” (cf. Job 32:2; Luke 7:29; Deuteronomy 25:1-3; Proverbs 17:15). Those who see justification as the act of making someone righteous fall into two errors. Firstly, they confuse justification and sanctification. Secondly, they imply that one who ceases to be holy ceases to be saved, and thus conclude that a person can lose his salvation.

B. What are its positive and negative aspects?

Though justification is not something that causes a subjective change in the individual, it is nonetheless very real. God does not lie, and if God declares a person to be righteous, that person is righteous, in God’s sight if not yet in totality. The difference is similar to the case of a person who commits a crime, but is acquitted in court. Subjectively, he is guilty, but objectively he has nothing against his record. Justification, of course, goes further than that. Not only does the sinner have his sins wiped off the books, but he also has a good record inserted there - the record of Jesus Christ Himself. Thus justification has both negative and positive components:

Negative: forgiveness - the sinner’s sin is removed from the record.

Positive: imputation - the righteousness of Christ is credited to the sinner’s account

C. Who does the work of justification?

Clearly, this is the work of God (Romans 3:24-26; 8:33). No one can justify himself, and any poor fool who tries to do so will never be justified by God (cf. Luke 18:9-14).

D. How is the work of justification done?

The Bible speaks of justification as being accomplished by means of three things:

i. By grace (Romans 3:24)

No one deserves to be declared righteous by God.

ii. By blood (Romans 5:9)

The forgiveness of sins and imputation of righteousness were won by Christ for His people by His death on the cross.

iii. By faith (Romans 5:1)

God justifies sinners in response to their faith, which, as we saw last week, is in itself a gift from Him.

2. Adoption

The concept of adoption is a very familiar one, and its application to the matter of salvation an easy one to grasp. Adoption refers to the practice of legally incorporating into a family one who was not part of the family by birth. In the spiritual realm, God incorporates those who are by nature children of Satan (or wrath or disobedience) into His family.

A question immediately arises about the relationship between adoption and regeneration. How can Christians be spoken of as being both born and adopted into the family of God? Again, our distinction between the subjective and objective, the personal and positional, the state and the standing can be helpful. From the perspective of the Christian, salvation is a birth, the beginning of a new life. For God the Father, however, the change was more of an incorporation, taking a lost sinner and making him a son. Several points should be noted:

A. Adoption is a present possession

Christians are part of God's family now, with all the privileges that implies (I John 3:2; Romans 8:14-17). God's people may legitimately address Him as "Father."

B. Adoption promises a future glory

A child who is legally adopted has the right to an inheritance from his adoptive parents. Similarly, those adopted into God's family have an inheritance awaiting them (Romans 8:23; I Peter 1:4).

Conclusion

Finish the lesson by drawing together all six aspects of the conversion experience studied in the last three weeks.

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

SALVATION PAST JUSTIFICATION AND ADOPTION

1. What does “justification” mean? What errors result from defining justification as “to make righteous”?
2. If justification means “to declare righteous,” what is James saying in James 2:14-26 when he talks about justification by works? [HINT: By whom and to whom is the declaration being made?]
3. How can the Bible describe Christians as being both born and adopted into God’s family? How do the two ideas relate to one another?

SALVATION PRESENT - SANCTIFICATION

Lesson Aim

To familiarize students with the ongoing work of salvation in the life of the believer, the work of sanctification.

Memory Verse

I John 2:16 - “For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world.”

Lesson Background

It is true not only that the believer has been saved by the work of Christ, but he also is being saved. This present aspect of salvation will be the subject of our study for the next two weeks. Our topic for today is sanctification, the setting apart of the believer from sin and unto God. Sanctification involves God accomplishing what He has already declared. When the Christian is justified, God declares him to be righteous; when he is being sanctified, God is making him righteous.

The major error associated with sanctification is perfectionism, the doctrine that entire sanctification (i.e., sinless perfection) may be attained in this life. Such a teaching fails to take seriously the pervasiveness of sin, restricting it only to that which is conscious and deliberate. It also undermines the doctrine of perseverance, which will be our subject for discussion next week.

There are numerous aspects of sanctification that we will be studying this week, but probably the most important for your students is the section on the means of sanctification. Your Christian students need to understand the importance of these means in their own growth as Christians, while your non-Christian students should be cautioned against thinking of them as meritorious works that earn the favor of God.

Lesson Procedure

Last week we talked about justification, the procedure whereby a person is declared righteous by God on the basis of the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. We noted that, although believers had been declared righteous, they continued to sin as long as they were in this world. This week, we will talk about the process by which God brings about conformity between a person's standing and his state - in other words, the way God takes those whom He has declared to be righteous and actually makes them righteous. This process is known as sanctification, and we will study it by trying to answer a series of questions.

1. What Does The Word "Sanctification" Mean?

The word "sanctification" refers to being "set apart," and comes from the same root word as the words translated "saint" and "holy." The word is used variously in Scripture to apply to persons (I Corinthians 6:11), places (Exodus 19:23), and things (Exodus 29:44). What does it mean for a place or thing to be sanctified? It means it is set aside and reserved for a special purpose. When a believer is sanctified, he is set apart in two ways - set apart from sin and set apart for God's use.

2. When Does Sanctification Occur?

Actually, this question may appropriately be answered in three ways:

A. Believers were sanctified when they were converted (I Corinthians 6:11)

It is appropriate to say that Christians have already been set apart for God's purposes. This is sometimes called positional sanctification.

B. Believers are being sanctified throughout their earthly lives (John 17:17)

God is constantly working in His people by the Holy Spirit to separate them from sin and bring them to greater maturity. This is called practical sanctification.

C. Believers will be sanctified when they reach heaven (I Thessalonians 5:23)

There will come a time when the Christian is totally separated from sin - perfect sanctification - but this will not occur during our earthly lives.

3. Why Is Sanctification Necessary?

The simple reason for this is that believers continue to sin (I John 1:8). This sin is an abomination to God and cannot be rationalized away by our continued existence in the world (I John 2:16). The fact that believers continue to sin should cause conflict and dissatisfaction. There is no room in the life of the Christian for the smugness of an “Oh well, nobody’s perfect” attitude. The Christian must strive to master sin, knowing that Christ has already won the victory over it.

4. How Is Sanctification Accomplished?

Scripture does not tell us the details of how God brings about the sanctification of His people. God’s work in the hearts of believers is something not open to our analysis. We are told, however, about certain outward means that God uses to make His people holy. Three such means readily come to mind:

A. The Word of God

Scripture provides both a means of sanctification (John 17:17) and the pattern and criteria against which it may be measured. Any notion of what it means to be holy must be grounded in the Bible. No one may consider himself holy who falls short of the standard (as did the Pharisees), nor may anyone demand as a requirement for holiness anything beyond the Scriptures (the Pharisees did that, too). What are some of the ways in which people today try to set standards for holiness that go beyond Scripture (e.g., certain kinds of legalism)?

B. Prayer

Every Christian knows that he is supposed to pray. Scripture clearly commands it (Colossians 4:2; I Thessalonians 5:17) and indicates that its neglect is sin (I Samuel 12:23). Prayer, of course, is not for God’s benefit, but for ours. Ask your students how prayer contributes to sanctification. Among other things, they should realize that prayer is a form of worship, that it is a way of serving others (intercession), and that it is a way of developing a greater sense of our own dependence upon God.

C. Trials and Discipline

While these are not often thought of as means of sanctification, it is important to realize that difficult times bring about greater maturity in the life of the Christian (Hebrews 12:10-11; James 1:2-4,12; I Peter 1:7). Again, ask your students how increased holiness can be the result of trials. Be sure to point out to them that the positive results of trials are not automatic, and can only be gained by those who submit to them and trust God. Someone who reacts to hard times by complaining, turning against God, or relying on himself is going to gain nothing from the experience.

5. What Is The Goal of Sanctification?

The ultimate goal of sanctification is holiness, of course, the perfection that can only be experienced in heaven. This perfection is not some abstract concept, but consists of conformity to Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). In other words, the goal toward which Christians are moving throughout their lives is to be like Jesus. To the Christian, this is a challenge made meaningful by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. To the unbeliever, of course, it is an impossibility, and this can be used as another means to point out to the non-Christians in your class their need of a Savior.

SALVATION PRESENT - UNION WITH CHRIST AND PERSEVERANCE

Lesson Aim

To help students understand the union of the believer with Christ and appreciate both the comfort and warning to be taken from the doctrine of perseverance.

Memory Verse

John 10:28-29 - "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."

Lesson Background

This week, as we conclude our study of the present aspects of salvation, we will be dealing with two things - a simple yet profound truth concerning the relationship between the Savior and the saved ones, and a much-abused and frequently misused doctrine of the Christian life. At first glance, the doctrines of union with Christ and the perseverance of the saints may not seem to have much of a relationship, but it should become obvious as the lesson progresses that a proper understanding of perseverance is impossible apart from the foundational truth of a believer's union with Christ.

The lesson today concentrates largely on the issue of perseverance and the related matters of assurance and eternal security. Though there are those true believers who suffer from a lack of assurance, a far more prevalent problem is the presumption of salvation by many on the basis of a fruitless profession of faith. Today's session should provide a useful means for clearing up many misconceptions probably held

by your students concerning this whole area. Use the opportunity to encourage those who have demonstrated perseverance in their lives and to challenge those whose presumption of salvation is not supported by their manner of living.

Lesson Procedure

Start the class by opening up discussion on a very basic question: “How can a person know whether or not he is saved?” The answers given by your class should give you a good idea of how much work you will have to do during today’s lesson to clear up areas of misunderstanding. Having allowed the discussion to flow freely for a few minutes, tell the students that today’s lesson will try to answer the question by examining two key ideas - what it means to be “in Christ” and what it means to persevere in the faith.

1. Union With Christ

The Apostle Paul, in his letters, often describes Christians as being “in Christ.” Two basic questions about this concept need to be addressed:

A. What does it mean to be “in Christ”?

- It means that Christ acted as the representative of His people in His death and resurrection. When He died, we died; when He rose, we rose (II Corinthians 5:14-15; Romans 5:12-21; 6:3-4).
- It means that Christians are part of the spiritual organism known as the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13). He is the Head, giving direction to all parts of His Body.
- It means that Christians experience the presence of Christ (Matthew 28:20). All that we do is done in the gracious presence of the Savior.

B. In what sense may salvation be said to be “in Christ”?

Since we are presently talking about salvation, it is important for us to see the relationship between our salvation and this matter of union with Christ. It may be easily discerned that, in fact, every facet of salvation is associated with the believer’s union with Christ.

i. The Accomplishment of Salvation

Christ’s people were “in Him” when He died and rose again, thus accomplishing salvation on their behalf (Romans 6:2-11; Ephesians 2:4-6; Colossians 3:3-4).

ii. The Application of Salvation

Whether thinking in terms of God’s design in eternity past (Ephesians 1:3-4), the work of conversion in the past (Ephesians 2:10), the present work of sanctification (I Corinthians 1:4-5), or the believer’s glorification in the future (I Thessalonians 4:14; I Corinthians 15:22; Romans 8:17), all aspects of the application of salvation are described as being “in Christ.” There is no part of salvation that is not directly connected to the work of Christ.

It is this beginning-to-end continuity that provides the foundation for our consideration of perseverance. If, as Romans 8:29-30 indicates, those who are to be glorified in the future are the same ones who were chosen in the past, then those who are “in Christ” will always be “in Christ.” As we move on to this subject, however, remember that it is only because Christians are “in Christ” that they are able to persevere.

2. The Perseverance of the Saints

Again, we will be addressing two basic questions:

A. What does the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints mean?

In very simple terms, it means that those who have been regenerated will not fall away. Those who are saints will persevere, and those who persevere are saints. The doctrine does not teach that true believers never backslide, nor can it be used to assert that anyone who makes a profession of faith will be saved no matter how deeply he falls into sin (cf. Matthew 10:22; Mark 4:5-6, 16-17; John 6:39-40; 8:31-32; 10:28-29; Romans 8:28-30; Hebrews 4:14). It is some of the misunderstandings just noted that lead us to the other question we must consider:

B. How does the perseverance of the saints relate to other similar doctrines?

i. Perseverance and Faith

It is true that a Christian must strive to persevere (Philippians 2:12), but we must realize that this, like any other aspect of salvation, is impossible apart from the grace of God. A Christian not only is saved by faith, he also lives by faith. We noted three weeks ago that faith must be the constant experience of the Christian, and it is by faith that those who have been saved are kept (I Peter 1:4-5).

ii. Perseverance and Assurance

These two are not at all the same. Perseverance involves action, while assurance involves conviction. While assurance is obtainable (Romans 8:38-39; I John 3:14; 5:13), it is not of the essence of salvation. There are those who are saved who are uncertain of their salvation, and those who think they are certain who are not saved. Assurance is grounded in the full grace and faithfulness of God, not in our own worthiness or excellence. It is perseverance, though, that produces assurance - one who is persevering may have confidence in his standing before God, while one who shows no signs of perseverance is not entitled to any of the comforts of assurance.

iii. Perseverance and Eternal Security

The doctrine of eternal security has often been abused through separation from the doctrine of perseverance. Apart from the fruit of God’s continuing work in a person’s life, to speak of eternal security is pure presumption. Nothing is more deadly than spiritual presumption, which sends people to hell who believe themselves on the way to heaven. It would be appropriate to close your class with a suitable warning and encouragement (as needed) to the students in connection with the need for self-examination with respect to this issue.

SALVATION FUTURE - GLORIFICATION

Lesson Aim

To present to your students the glorious future awaiting believers in the final completion of their salvation in Christ.

Memory Verse

I John 3:2 - “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Lesson Background

The teaching of the Bible concerning the future has always generated a lot of speculation among Christians. Curiosity about what lies ahead, a desire to understand what is beyond our experience, and the sparse and symbolic nature of scriptural teaching about the future all combine to produce many questions, many guesses, and few solid answers beyond the obvious generalities. This problem will become particularly apparent when we study eschatology next fall, but it crops up in today’s discussion as well. In such areas it is safest to shun speculation and stick to the clear, albeit general, teachings of Scripture.

Glorification is the culmination of the salvation process, the bringing to perfection of those same ones God chose for Himself in eternity past. All of the paradoxes and discrepancies of standing vs. state and objective vs. subjective are resolved as the Christian becomes in reality everything God has declared him to be in Christ. This future glory should serve as both a motivation and a mystery to your students. The promise of perfection in Christ should produce greater Christlikeness now, while each of us should recognize with humility his own inability to comprehend the glory that is to come for those who are in Christ.

Lesson Procedure

Begin the class by allowing each of your students to write individually on a piece of paper his or her answer to the following question: "If I am a Christian, how will I be different in heaven from what I am today?" After giving the students some time to answer, discuss their answers, leading from that point into the consideration of the aspect of salvation to be considered today - glorification.

1. What Is Glorification?

Glorification may be understood in connection with two ideas, both of which are closely related:

A. Perfection

Glorification is the end of the salvation process. The Christian is completely separated from all sin. Sanctification is finished. The dichotomies that a Christian faces now will be removed. Standing and state, objective and subjective realities will be united. Christians will then finally be the righteous ones God had declared them to be. They will be sinless in fact as well as in God's book. What will this perfection mean for our souls? our bodies?

B. Christlikeness

If the goal of sanctification is to become like Christ, as we saw two weeks ago, then glorification involves becoming like Christ. Today's memory verse, I John 3:2, underscores this truth. But we must understand what it means to be like our Savior. Does it mean we become gods, or God-men, or part of God? Certainly not - it means that we become like Him in the sense of being totally separated from sin. Early in the salvation process believers were separated from the penalty and power of sin; at glorification, they are separated from its practice and presence.

2. When Does Glorification Occur?

It is perfectly obvious that glorification does not occur in this life. The fact that believers die demonstrates that they are not yet separated from the presence of sin. When, then, does it occur? Ask your students to discuss whether they think glorification occurs at the death of the individual or at the Last Judgment. What reasons do they give? The following factors would favor locating glorification at the time of the Last Judgment rather than at death:

- Death is the separation of soul and body, but salvation involves the whole man, thus glorification must await the reuniting of soul and body at the resurrection. I Corinthians 15:54 indicates that not only must the perishable be put off, but also the imperishable must be put on.
- Glorification is corporate, not just individual. The Body of Christ is glorified together (Ephesians 5:27). Consequently, it is not possible for one part of the body to be glorified before other parts. Glorification thus must await the resurrection of the body, when all believers, both living and dead, will be united with their bodies, and with Christ (I Thessalonians 4:15-17).

3. What Are The Aspects Of Glorification?

We usually think of glorification in terms of the experience of the individual believer, but we should note that it has other aspects to it as well. It is a much broader teaching than we usually think, and fits in with several of the ideas we have studied this quarter.

A. The Glorification of Christ

There is no aspect of the believer's salvation that is apart from Christ, as we saw last week. It is the glorification of Christ in which believers participate (Titus 2:13; I Peter 4:13). The Christian's union with Christ goes on through all eternity.

B. The Glorification of the Body of Christ

As noted in the last section, there is an important corporate aspect to glorification. All Christians are brought to completion in Christ together (Ephesians 5:27; Romans 8:17-18). In general, Christians tend to be far too individualistic in their view of heaven, thinking of mansions and rewards. Such thinking can easily encourage pride, as we conceive of our rewards as being greater than those of other Christians. Not only does such individualism generate a distorted view of heaven, but it also serves to undermine the unity of the Body of Christ today. The Church is not a competitive arena, but a supportive body.

C. The Glorification of the Creation of Christ

Glorification is in a sense a cosmic concept, extending even to the created universe (Romans 8:21-23; II Peter 3:12-13). The effects of the Fall on the universe will be eradicated, and man will once again be at peace with his environment. The closing chapters of Revelation describe a new creation. In what ways is it like the Garden of Eden? In what ways is it different?

FOR REVIEW AND FURTHER THOUGHT

SALVATION FUTURE GLORIFICATION

1. Glorification involves becoming like Christ. In what ways will Christians be like Christ? In what ways will they never be like Him?
2. When does glorification occur? Why is it necessary to conclude that it does not occur at the time of death?
3. How does glorification relate to election? to sanctification? to justification? to union with Christ?
4. How will believers in heaven be like Adam before the Fall? How will they be different?