



Advanced Bible Correspondence Course

Lesson 3 The Misery of Man

LORD'S DAY 3

Q.6. DID GOD THEN CREATE MAN SO WICKED AND PERVERSE?

ANSWER: NO, BY NO MEANS, BUT GOD CREATED MAN GOOD, (A) AND AFTER HIS OWN IMAGE, (B) IN TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HOLINESS, THAT HE MANY RIGHTLY KNOW GOD HIS CREATOR, HEARTILY LOVE HIM AND LIVE WITH HIM IN ETERNAL HAPPINESS TO GLORIFY AND PRAISE HIM (C).

(A) GENESIS 1:31 (B) GENESIS 1:26,27 (C) EPHESIANS 4:24, COLOSSIANS 3:10, II CORINTHIANS 3:18

Created good

We will now look for the cause of our wickedness. Does this wickedness come from God or from us? In Job 34:10 we read: *"Far be it from God that He should do wickedness and iniquity."* So the fault is not in God and neither in our creation by God. How then did God create man? In Genesis 1:31 we read "very good, perfect." That means without blemish in body and soul.

After God's image

Man has been created after the image of God. In our answer we read that man has been created in true righteousness and holiness. This shows us that the image of God consisted in spiritual attributes. Righteousness or equity means that in Paradise man perfectly met all the requirements of God's Law. Everything was good between God and man. Sin did not exist. Man possessed holiness. Holiness indicates that man was entirely God-oriented. Man has been created with a pure knowledge of God, with a holy mind and a good will. And only in this way, could man know his Creator rightly, that is, perfectly. Through the possession of God's image, man was distinguished from animals, capable of having perfect communion (= fellowship) with God. Having this image of God man was able to love his Creator and to live with Him in eternal happiness, to glorify and praise Him eternally. To love Him heartily means that man neither could nor wanted to do otherwise. Man would live happily with God to glorify and praise Him for ever and ever.

Q.7. WHENCE THEN PROCEEDS THIS DEPRAVITY OF HUMAN NATURE?

ANSWER: FROM THE FALL AND DISOBEDIENCE OF OUR FIRST PARENTS, ADAM AND EVE, IN PARADISE (A); HENCE OUR NATURE IS BECOME SO CORRUPT, THAT WE ARE ALL CONCEIVED AND BORN IN SIN. (B)

(A) GENESIS 3, ROMANS 5:12, 18, 19. (B) PSALM 51:5, GENESIS 5:3

Man's disobedience

The origin of sin is not in God and in His creation, but in man himself. Adam had been created without sin and without shortcomings. Neither was he created to die one day, but to live eternally in glorious Paradise. This applied to Adam, Eve, and all their descendants.

Voluntary love required

But God had not created Adam and Eve in such a way that they *could* not sin. For God did not want to receive an enforced obedience and love, simply because they then could not do otherwise. No, God wanted obedience and love voluntarily.

Therefore he left the choice with Adam. He made a covenant with Adam. With this He put Adam to the test: Adam and Eve were allowed to eat from all the fruits of the trees in Paradise, except of one tree, which stood in the midst of Paradise. This was “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” God forbade Adam and Eve to eat of the fruit of that tree.

If Adam and Eve loved God voluntarily and perfectly by not eating of this tree, they would live eternally in perfect happiness. But if they were disobedient and ate of this tree, then they would have to die and lose God's favour.

Adam and Eve were created perfectly good and were therefore capable of obeying well. There was no temptation from within to sin either. They only had to resist the temptation from without. And the reward was unprecedented bliss: the eternal enjoyment of God's favour and communion – eternal life which they would never lose.

The covenant also implied that Adam's obedience would be imputed to all his posterity and the reward would also be given them.

But *if* he should sin, then this disobedience and its punishment would also be imputed and given to his posterity. In this covenant, Adam, the ancestor of all mankind, represented the whole human race which had to be born yet. He was their covenant head. As he could *earn* salvation in this covenant, we call this the covenant of works.

The fall

But alas, Adam did not remain obedient. Satan moved man to be disobedient. Satan said, “You can be like God”. Then Eve listened to the devil and so did Adam. Adam and Eve did what Satan whispered in their ears and they ate of the forbidden fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. By doing this Adam broke the covenant and

injured God's sovereign authority since the tree was the token of God's authority. Not eating of that tree meant acknowledging that only God determines what is good and evil. But Adam wanted more. He wanted to be like God: he himself wanted to determine what is good and evil. Through this one deed Adam became a sinner. By doing this he destroyed the masterpiece of God's creation, the perfect man. Adam became sinful: from now on he was prone to sin. And through his disobedience all men became sinful.

Conceived and born in sin

Through the sin of Adam and Eve, our nature became so corrupt that all of us are born in sin and iniquity. We read this in Psalm 51:5, "*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me*". Here David does not only speak about the sin he has committed, but he also confesses to have a sinful heart. Not only are our deeds, words and thoughts wrong, but our nature is sinful. Man lost God's image and through this he became a sinner. "To sin" means: "to miss one's mark". Through sin man misses the mark for which God created him: to live to God's honour and to obtain eternal happiness.

Q.8. ARE WE THEN SO CORRUPT THAT WE ARE WHOLLY INCAPABLE OF DOING ANY GOOD, AND INCLINED TO ALL WICKEDNESS?

ANSWER: INDEED WE ARE (A); EXCEPT WE ARE REGENERATED BY THE SPIRIT OF GOD. (B)

(A) GENESIS 8:21 & 6:5, JOB 14:4 & 15:14, 16, 35, JOHN 3:6, ISAIAH 53:6

(B) JOHN 3:3&5, I CORINTHIANS 12:3, II CORINTHIANS 3:5

Lost God's image

By his deep fall man lost God's image. There is no righteousness or holiness in him anymore. Granted, man is a rational being, which means that he remained gifted with reason and judgment. Man has still some knowledge of God and of good and evil. His conscience still speaks. But man is powerless to do any good. What is more, he is prone to all evil. It is impossible for fallen man, who is spiritually dead through sin, to return to God. And really, man does not want to. He persists in his first sin and wants to determine himself what is good and evil. Man is incapable of raising himself out of this fall. Paul writes to the Ephesians, "*And you has he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins*" (Ephesians 2:1).

Regeneration

What must happen then? Man must be born again by the Holy Spirit. This is not being reborn after one's death, like Hinduism teaches, but a total spiritual renewal in this life. God must work a wonder. He must renew the heart of a man altogether. Jesus taught: "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the*

kingdom of God.” (John 3:3). Regeneration must take place. A new beginning must be made by God.

When Nicodemus heard about regeneration, he did not understand what Jesus meant. It is the same with us. It is a spiritual and not a natural birth. Regeneration is making alive, a birth through Word and Spirit, an inner renewal, a new creation. Man is so utterly lost that nobody but God can save him. Regeneration is not an act of man; it is an intervention of God. A miracle must happen to man: his heart must be renewed. Only in this way will the image of God be restored in man.

Questions:

1. How did the Lord create man?

2. What is righteousness?

3. What is holiness?

4. a) What sin does David refer to in Psalm 51:5?

b) And what sin in Psalm 51: 3&4?

5. What miracle must happen to man?

Evaluator: _____