

MAILBOX BIBLE COURSE

LESSON 1 – CHURCH OF GOD BIBLE STUDY

Welcome to our Mailbox Bible Study Course. We trust you will enjoy these lessons as much as we did composing them. We are glad to be able to serve the Lord and you in this way. Many are being saved and helped through these simple Bible lessons. We suggest that you try to do one lesson each week; this will keep your interest in them active. This particular course contains nine lessons on The Church of God Bible Studies. Please save this lesson onto your computer, read the lesson carefully, full in the answers in the blocks provided then attach this lesson into an email addresses to us biblelessons@uniserve.com and then push your send button. We will then evaluate and return any corrections to you with your next lesson. On completion of the full course, you will receive a beautifully presented certificate. Should you have difficulty opening or sending this file to us, please let us know by return email. We suggest that you print these lessons and put them in a binder for future studies.

*May God richly bless you as you proceed?
Your Instructor
Harold Smith*

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LESSON 1 – THE CHURCH OF GOD (by Franklin Ferguson)

THIS COURSE is the substance of addresses given at a number of places in New Zealand. There is no attempt at a scholarly exposition of the subject. Rather, have we written for the average reader in a style easily understood. Wherever these addresses were delivered a marked interest was shown, alike by old and young, and not infrequently was it remarked, "we rarely get ministry now along these lines." More than ever is there the danger of letting slip the truths we have learned and been assured of, hence the need for putting God's people in remembrance of them, though we know them and be established (2 Peter 1:12-13). Especially is it essential for the rising generation that there should be given occasional restatements of Church truths and principles. Looking back over 60 years of an intimate fellowship with Assemblies in this Dominion, one cannot refrain from fervent praise to God for what He has wrought in planting a large number of Churches of the New Testament pattern, well distributed over both Islands. Our old teachers and guides taught definitely the truth, which gathered us to the Lord's Name, severing our former connection with denominations where vital Church doctrines were not practiced nor could be taught. Some thousands of such companies of Christians are found all over the earth today. Things change with the times. This is ever so in the affairs of men: not so with God and His Word. Here we have no change nor revision, for we read, "Thou art the same," and "forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven." Whatever the character of the times the "Churches of the saints" must still frame themselves on the New Testament model, the whole thing is to be the same way as at the first.

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Its truths and principles.

ALL the peoples of the earth are now divided, by God's arrangement, into three divisions, according to 1 Corinthians 10:32. " Giving none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God." Not to observe this distinction is to fail to apprehend a Divine plan working out a great purpose. A most important law, in the study of the Holy Scriptures, is " rightly dividing the Word of Truth " (2 Tim. 2:15). The idea is seen in Leviticus 1: 6, concerning the burnt offering, " cut it into his pieces." We shall now consider together this Divine partition of the human race.

THE GENTILES

We find in the Bible the use of such words as "nations," "peoples," and "heathen"; but wherever found it is the Gentiles the writers have in view. our present use of the word "heathen " is to distinguish between so-called Christian countries, and non-Christian; but the term properly applies to all nations outside the Jews. " Christian countries " is an expression unknown in Scripture; while a little thought will reveal the fallacy of it. The Father's decree concerning the Son, "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance " (Psalm 2:8), correctly means the nations, and is not limited to " heathen," as we understand it.

AFTER THE FLOOD the descendants of Noah and his three sons took a definite form as nations, on the Plain of Shinar (Genesis 11). There God confounded the language of the people that He might bring to naught their evil purposes to build a city, and a tower whose top should reach unto heaven, and to make themselves a name lest they should be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth. God's plan was the repopulation of the world, and with this end in view to scatter the new race abroad everywhere. Men in attempting to frustrate the will of God, had their language confounded, and they ceased to build, for they could no longer understand one another, and so became scattered as intended. It occurred about 100 years from the Deluge. From this point, each group, speaking its own new tongue, went forth to seek its territory. But time sped on, generation succeeding generation, the nations got further and further from God, and wickedness increased in the earth.

When Noah and his family emerged from the ark, they were verily, **GIVEN A NEW START** and had the awful remembrance of the Flood as a solemn warning of the consequences of sinning. Surely, such people, with such a warning, would do better than the sinners who were overthrown and perished in waters of judgment. No, they did not; and for this reason, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." (Genesis 8:21) There is not, and never can be, a moral evolution gradual evolving from a present inferior state to a better state, and so onward. Human history, all through the ages, definitely proves evolution to be impossible; the tendency is always from good to bad, from better to worse. Therefore Saviour declares, " ye must be born again " (John 3:7) A "new creature " is what alone will suffice for one lost and ruined in the Fall (2 Corinthians 5:17). From the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans we read how that the Gentiles did not like to retain in their knowledge, and were given over to a mind void of judgment; becoming filled with all unrighteousness and reaching a sevenfold apostasy, by the time of advent of Christ (verses 21-23). Despite all subsequent efforts of so-called

civilization, with a Christianizing influence, the present position of the Gentile nation is that of being without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:12). But during this present period of time, from the cross to the second coming of our Lord, God is visiting the Gentiles through the preaching of the gospel, "to take out of them a people for His name sake." (Acts 15: 14). of this, we shall speak further on.

THE JEWS

This ancient and unique people had their origin in the Divine call of Abram from the land of the Chaldeans, about B.C. 1921, as far as available chronology can guide us. Their present number was said to be 16 millions, before the World war. We read in Genesis 12, " Now the Lord had said unto Abram, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee. And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

AT THE TIME OF ABRAM'S CALL idolatry had then established itself in the earth, with all that it involves." Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things " (Romans 1:22-23). Four hundred years from the Deluge had witnessed a lamentable departure of men from the only true God. They fast became as evil as the race, which He destroyed in Noah's day. But God who is " long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance " (2 Peter 3:9) now purposed a new thing. He would set up in the world a true testimony to Himself among the false gods, namely, a redeemed people who should be an example of worshiping the Supreme Being " in the beauty of holiness," and be teachers of the true knowledge of the Most High. Those people were the Hebrews, commonly called the Jews.

WE PASS BY THE GOING DOWN INTO EGYPT of the then small company of Abram's descendants, the 400 years' sojourn there; the people's increase and bondage under Pharaoh; the mighty deliverance from Egypt and the 40 years' wandering in the wilderness; the great conquest of Canaan and the establishment of God's people in the promised land; their multiplication and enrichment with every earthly blessing; and in due course the setting up of Solomon's temple, the most beautiful and costly building the world has ever seen, with a priesthood and worship of Divine institution and order.

ALL THE WORLD HEARD of these new people whom God had chosen for. Himself and heard of. His mighty acts in the plagues brought upon Egypt; the Exodus and the dividing of the Sea and the complete overthrow of Pharaoh and his pursuing host in its mighty waters, the daily manna from heaven for the chosen people; the water from the smitten rock which followed them, the dwelt among them; the giving of the Law from Sinai; the holding back of the River Jordan to let the people over; the extraordinary battles in Canaan, with the standing still of sun at the command of Joshua.

THEIR EXCEPTIONAL ADVANTAGES.

Here let we note a very remarkable sevenfold privilege appertaining to the Jews, recorded in Romans 9:4-5.

- (1) "To whom pertaineth the adoption": that is, adopted by God as His own nation, a particular witness in the earth.
- (2) "And the glory " the visible glory of God's presence in the Tabernacle in wilderness, and later in the Temple in land; God actually dwelling with men.

- (3) "And the covenants " covenants made of God with this people concerning themselves and the promised land.
- (4) "And the giving of the law"-- a law written by the finger of God and given to Moses on the top of Sinai, whither he had gone up to meet with Him. Subsequently, from time to time, the various portions of the Old Testament were given to the custody of the Jews, who zealously preserved them.
- (5) "And the service of God"--- referring to the ordinances and ritual of a divinely-given religious service, in contrast to the false worship of the nations.\
- (6) "And the promises " promises directs given from God, marvellous in their nature and dependant upon obedience.
- (7) of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came a wonderfully special distinction, at the Son of God, the Redeemer, should be born a Jew, this foretold by the Prophets. See Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6-7

In this foregoing exceptional manner did God mark off the Jews from all the rest of mankind; established them as His chosen witness in the earth; that through them the Gentiles might learn the true knowledge of God; might see what blessings accompany obedience to His laws; and that in the light of heaven they might forsake every false way and turn to Him.

THE JEWS FAILED BADLY in their testimony for God; reminding us that man in responsibility, under the most favourable circumstances, is an unreliable creature. Chastisements and deliverances; apostasies and captivities; and a final dispersion to every quarter under heaven (as at the present time), marks the course of this people, once so highly privileged and so greatly responsible. Yet not all was failure. Out of Israel's ruin did God make His name to be feared among the nations, and glorified Himself, notwithstanding all.

BUT GOD HAS NOT DONE FOR EVER with that people of His covenant. In His unalterable purpose, He will bring to pass their repentance and restoration to His favour, with their re-establishment as His witness in all the world, and during the thousand years of the coming Millennium. This time, through them, " the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters shall cover the sea (Isaiah 11: 9). Never again shall their name be tarnished with failure. The purposes of God, though, meanwhile frustrated, must, ere long, be gloriously on summated. " Who hath resisted His will?" (Romans 9:19). Hebrew prophets and New Testament writers have spoken of these things, which must now shortly come to pass.

JEWS AND GENTILES, MEANTIME, "are all under sin"; all the world have become guilty before God" (Romans 3). The salvation of God, without distinction, is now offered to Jews and Gentiles and all who believe are " justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus "; thus constituting a new people for God's possession -"the Church." Well may we add, " O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out " ! (Romans 11.33).

TEST PAGE OF LESSON 1 OF THE CHURCH OF GOD BIBLE STUDY

1. Into how many divisions did God divide the human race? _____
2. Name the three divisions? _____
3. What does the word "heathen" mean in the Bible? _____
4. When did God give the human race a new start? _____
5. What man did God call to be the head of the Jewish nation? _____
6. How many years before God finally brought the Jews into the land? _____
7. Paul lists seven privileges of the Jews. Name three of them? _____
8. Does God consider the "Jews" as well as the Gentiles "under sin?" _____
9. Is God all through with Israel as a nation? _____
10. What is God now doing with both Jews and Gentiles? _____

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QUESTIONS & COMMENTS:

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