

62. Q. What is the first great truth revealed in the Bible?
63. Q. What is the full significance of this statement in the first verse of Genesis?
64. Q. What is meant by Creation?
65. Q. By what method did God create all things?
66. Q. By what means did God create all things?
67. Q. Why did God create the world around us?
68. Q. Why, then, did God create man?
69. Q. In view of all these great truths, what should we do?

Lesson Eight

GOD THE PRESERVER

Scripture Reading: Psa. 148; Acts 17:22-31.

Scripture To Memorize: "For he commanded, and they were created. He hath also established them for ever and ever; he hath made a decree which shall not pass away" (Psa. 148:5-6).

70. Q. Who is the First Cause of all things?

A. God.

(1) He alone is unoriginated, uncreated, eternal. (2) Spirit precedes, unifies and controls Matter. A magnet, for instance, will attract to itself all the steel filings on a laboratory table. That is, it is not the magnet which does it, but the energy stored up in the magnet. In this sense, this invisible energy may be said to build a body around itself. In like manner, I believe, Spirit gathers around itself particles of Matter. Your spirit, or self—the real you—attracts to itself the particles of which your body is composed, and welds them into a unit. When the spirit leaves the body, the body dissolves into its original elements—calcium, phosphorus, hydrogen, oxygen, etc.—because its unifying entity is gone. This change we call death. But it is only the dissolution of the body; the spirit, unaffected by it, lives on. (3) So, when the Divine Spirit began to "move upon the face of the waters" (literally, to brood, vitalize, cherish incipient life, etc.), He assembled around Himself the sub-

stance of which He fashioned our universe. See Gen. 1:2. (4) It follows, that if your spirit can build around itself a body adapted to your needs in this world, it can also gather (reassemble) from the elements those particles necessary to the building of a spiritual (ethereal) body, which will be adapted to your needs in the next world. For spirit unifies and controls body, and determines its kind; or, to state it in another way, body is subordinate to and subject to spirit, not spirit to body. 1 Cor. 15:44—"If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." It will thus be seen that the scripture doctrines of resurrection and immortality rest upon a sound scientific basis. (5) All this is in harmony with the latest science, which holds that Matter is an "emanation" from Space. Is it not more in accord with facts to say that Matter was called unto being by Divine fiat, i. e., by a decree of the Eternal Spirit? Psa. 33:9—"He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Psa. 148:6—"he hath made a decree which shall not pass away."

71. Q. What does God still do with respect to His creation?

A. He preserves, sustains and governs it.

72. Q. By what method does God preserve and govern the world?

A. By the exercise of His Almighty Will, as in creating it.

God thus caused the world to continue in such manner and forms as it pleases Him, and as long as it pleases Him, in conformity to His purposes and plans. He also causes it to undergo such changes and renovations as may become necessary at times in the execution of His purposes and in the accomplishment of His divine ends; as for example, in the days of Noah, and as will occur at the close of the present age or dispensation. See 2 Pet. 3:1-13.

73. Q. By what means does God preserve and govern the world?

A. By means of His Word.

2 Pet. 3:1-13—"knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own

lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old, and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But forget not this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Note especially v. 10—"the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up," i. e., the corruption, iniquity, mortality, etc., incidental to this earthly state, shall be eliminated. This points forward to a renovation, not an annihilation; for, out of the conflagration, we are told, there shall emerge "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Cf. Isa. 60:18-22; 65:17-25; 66.22, etc. Also Rev. 21:1-5. The first general renovation, in Noah's day, was wrought with water as the element; the final renovation, in the Day of the Lord, will be wrought with fire as the element. Whether this will be fire literally, or a period of universal strife, calamity and suffering that will purge our world of its dross, we have no means of knowing; the matter of importance is that when God speaks the Word, judg-

ment will overtake the world that now is and a complete renovation will take place, to be followed by the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Cf. Psa. 102:25-27, "Of old didst thou lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."

74. Q. What do we call this Divine care in preserving and ruling the universe?

A. We call it Divine Providence.

75. Q. But if God governs the world, why is so much evil done in it? Is it because God wills it?

A. God does not will evil. God abhors evil. Evil is in the world because man allowed it to come in; and it remains in the world, because man allows it to remain.

(1) Jas. 1:13, 14—"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man; but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed." Heb. 1:9—"thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity."

(2) God's ultimate end in the management of His moral system is to have a holy universe, for the obvious reason that He cannot fully enter into fellowship with moral beings, nor they with Him, unless they are holy. Matt. 5:8—"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." John 17:11—"Holy Father." 1 Pet. 1:16—"ye shall be holy; for I am holy." 1 John 3:8—"To this end was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." (3) But God cannot have holiness without freedom, for the very idea and definition of holiness is a free, voluntary choice of right in preference to wrong. Therefore, in order to make holiness possible in His creatures, God of necessity endowed them with free will. But free will carries with it the possibility of choice, and where there is such a possibility, there is always the possibility of choosing the wrong. And in this possibility of choosing

the wrong, lies the potentiality of sin. It is thus obvious that not even Omnipotence can, in a system of free moral action, have holiness and at the same time prevent the possibility of sin. God's entire moral system rests upon the nature of things. We conclude, therefore, that evil is unavoidable in the best moral system, i. e., the system designed to effect holiness as its primary end. (4) In the final analysis of the case, moreover, the choice between right and wrong rests with the creature, and when man chooses the wrong, chooses his own way above God's way, the consequence is sin; and the responsibility for sin rests upon the creature who makes the selfish and wrong choice. This is how sin came into the world, and it is why sin remains in the world; for the tragedy of it all is that "all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

76. Q. But why does God, seemingly at least, often permit the wicked to prosper while evil befalls the good?

A. For two reasons: 1. Because the righteous can be confirmed in true holiness only by trials and sufferings; and 2. Because God will not allow even the little good which the wicked may do, to go unrewarded; and therefore, as He cannot reward it in the next world, He takes this means of allowing it to be rewarded in this world.

God tells us repeatedly in His Word, that our state here is probationary, and that justice will be meted out to all persons according to each one's works, not in this world, but in the world to come. Acts 17:31—"he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness." Rom. 2:16—"in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ." Matt. 5:45—"he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." Matt. 13:27-30, "And the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence then hath it tares? And he said unto them, An enemy hath done this. And the servants say unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he saith, Nay; lest haply while ye gather up the tares, ye root up

the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." Rom. 12:19—"Vengeance belongeth unto me; I will recompense, saith the Lord."

77. Q. What are the two kinds of God's Providence?

A. They are: His general Providence, and His special Providence.

78. Q. What is meant by His general Providence?

A. By His general Providence is meant His preservation and care of the world at large, including the physical world and the unregenerate among men.

Psa. 148:6—"he hath also established them forever and ever; he hath made a decree which shall not pass away."

Psa. 83:18—"That they may know that thou alone, whose name is Jehovah, art the Most High over all the earth."

Psa. 1d3:19—"Jehovah hath established his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all." Job 12:23—

"He increaseth the nations, and he destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and he leadeth them captive." Psa.

104:14—"He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth," etc. Eph. 1:11—"him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will." Matt.6:30—"If God doth so clothe the grass of the field," etc. Acts 17:25, 26—

"He himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation," etc. Cf. Jer. 18:7-10.

79. Q. What is meant by His special Providence?

A. By His special Providence we mean all His special manifestations of grace and lovingkindness towards His covenant people.

Psa. 34:15—"The eyes of Jehovah are towards the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry." Psa. 34:7—

"The angel of Jehovah encampeth round about them that

fear him, and delivereth them." 1 Cor. 10:13—"God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above all that ye are able, but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it." Matt. 7:11—"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" 2 Cor. 4:17—"For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory," etc. Matt. 5:11, 12—"Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven." John 16:33—"In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Jas. 1:17—"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." Phil. 2:12, 13—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure."

80. Q. What attitude should we take, then, with regard to trials and sufferings that may overtake us in this life?

A. We should accept and meet them in the spirit of resignation, and thus allow them to build us up in the most holy faith.

(1) We should accept them in faith believing that "to them that love God all things work together for good," and knowing that "our light affliction which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2) We should not pray so much to be delivered from earthly trials, as we should pray for the strength to meet them when they come upon us. (3) We should follow the example of the Master in regarding adversity as the means divinely appointed to make us "perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:10), and to thus fit us for the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12). (4) Finally, we should learn from sufferings and trials and the other incidents of our earthly state, that in this present life we are

but pilgrims, journeying toward that city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10).

REVIEW EXAMINATION OVER LESSON EIGHT

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Lesson Nine

GOD OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

Scripture Reading: Matt. 6:19-34.

Scripture To Memorize: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. They will be done, as in heaven, so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you" (Matt. 6:9-14).

81. Q. What among other things was the mission of Jesus?
 - A. It was to make God known unto us.