



## THE NEXT STEP

**Reading:** Acts 2

### God's message

We have now reached the end of this Bible Course and we hope that you have enjoyed using it to learn more about the Bible. We have shared with you the wonderful teaching of the Bible, because it contains the message of salvation. However, even in 40 lessons we cannot cover God's entire message to mankind, so it is important that you continue to read the Bible regularly and to pray for a greater understanding of it.

It is also important that you do not see this course in the same way that people might learn about subjects at school or college. The Bible is a book that can really change your life, if you want it to. The apostle Paul wrote that:

*“with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” (Romans 10:10).*

If we accept the Bible as the Word of God, it will affect our **hearts**. There will be a deeply held belief within us that being a disciple of the Lord Jesus is something we really want in our lives. This is essential because only through the Lord Jesus can we be saved from our sins, as the apostle Peter explained:

*“... there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).*

### The importance of believing God's truth

We are told that God *“desires all people to be saved and to come to the **knowledge of the truth**”* (1 Timothy 2:4).

This means that God wants you to be saved. It also shows that you can only be saved when you believe the things that are right: the message that God has revealed in the Bible. Believing wrong things – things the Bible does not teach – will not help you. It will confuse you, as well as the people you talk to about your beliefs. True believers must have a correct understanding of Bible truth. This is essential if our lives are to be right with God. So we need to make sure that we have a true understanding by checking whether our beliefs match Bible teaching.

The apostle Paul told Timothy:

*“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, **rightly handling the word of truth**”* (2 Timothy 2:15)

*“Keep a close watch on yourself and **on the teaching**. Persist in this, for by so doing **you will save both yourself and your hearers**”* (1 Timothy 4:16).

These verses show the importance of true Bible teaching. Timothy was to make sure that he believed and passed on the true Gospel message. Paul also warned Timothy:

*“For the time is coming when **people will not endure sound teaching**, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and **will turn away from listening to the truth** and wander off into myths”* (2 Timothy 4:3,4).

We should have nothing to do with people who preach and teach a false gospel.

### The teaching of Jesus

Jesus ascended to heaven nearly six weeks after his resurrection from the dead. During those 40 days he spent time teaching his disciples, so you can see how important it is to have a right understanding about the purpose of God. Jesus taught them what the Scriptures said about his coming and his saving work, saying to his disciples:





“ *‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things’* ” (Luke 24:44-48)

“*To them (the apostles) he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God ... and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*” (Acts 1:3,8).

Notice what we learn from this.

1. **Before** the disciples were ready to preach the Gospel – to be witnesses for Jesus – they had to understand what the Bible taught about Jesus Christ, both about the forgiveness of sins through his name, and about the Kingdom of God.
2. The Lord Jesus taught them from the Old Testament as well as new things that would later be written down in the New Testament – so the whole Bible is essential.
3. The disciples had been learning from their Master for three years. Yet they still needed further instruction. Understanding God’s message takes time.

What Jesus taught became the basis of belief for all members of the church in the first century.

### The teaching of the first century church

Acts 2 tells us what the apostle Peter taught the Jews on the day of Pentecost. He spoke about God’s plan of salvation: Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension, as well as other important doctrines. Many of the hearers believed and were baptized:

“*So those who **received his word were baptized**, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they **devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and the prayers*” (Acts 2:41,42).

Notice the importance of the apostles’ teaching.

1. The teaching came before baptism – only those who received the teaching of Peter were baptized.
2. After baptism they continued with the same beliefs – they “*devoted themselves*” to this teaching.
3. This was the basis of their fellowship.

This was the start of the true Christian church. Notice that those who accepted the teaching that Jesus had given his apostles were admitted into the church. Their fellowship was based on a common belief of this teaching. They also broke bread and worshipped together.

In Acts 8 we read of Philip who preached in Samaria. He did many great miracles which attracted the attention of the people and showed that he was a man of God. But it was only when they understood and believed his message that they were baptized:

“*But **when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ**, they were baptized, both men and women*” (Acts 8:12).

Notice that Philip taught the people the “*good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ*”. This is what Jesus had taught the apostles after his resurrection. This is why when a person is baptized by a Christadelphian, he or she will be asked the following question just before going down into the water:





**Do you believe the things concerning the Kingdom of God  
and the name of Jesus Christ?**

In this way the person being baptized confirms that he (or she) believes the true Gospel message as taught by Jesus and the apostles.

From the beginning of the true Christian church, only those who had accepted true Bible teaching and had been properly baptized into Christ were accepted into the church. This is why Christadelphians keep separate from other churches. It is not because we feel superior to them, or condemn them. We do this because we believe and teach the Gospel message exactly as Jesus and his disciples taught it and we accept that we must keep separate from those who have wrong teachings and beliefs. This does not mean that we should not talk to members of other churches about the Bible – this is a great delight in the lives of Christadelphians who are ready to talk to anyone about the Bible. It means that we should not worship with them and should not break bread with them.

### **What next?**

When you have finished this course there are four options open to you.

1. You could decide that this teaching is not what you want in your life and end your contact with the CBM.
2. You could decide that you are interested in Bible teaching and want to learn more, but you do not yet feel ready to be baptized.
3. If you have been baptized already, by full immersion, you may decide that you do not need to be baptized again.
4. You could decide that you want to follow the teaching of Jesus and ask to be baptized.

We need to look at each of these possibilities in turn.

1. If you decide that you do not want further contact with Christadelphians we will respect that decision. However, we will always be willing to re-open contact with you in the future if you so wish. We do ask though that you consider the seriousness of your decision. When Jesus Christ returns to judge the world, all those who have learned the Gospel will be called to give account, and you would not want to have made the wrong decision (see Hebrews 10:30,31).

It may be that you decide not to continue because you are satisfied with what your church teaches. If this is the case, then you must decide for yourself what is true. Remember that the Bible is the only authority. Do not be influenced by what other people say but ask them to prove their beliefs from the Bible and make your own judgement. You should examine your beliefs against what you have learned in this course and especially against what the Bible teaches. Lesson 39 will help you.

2. If you are interested in the Bible message but do not feel ready for baptism just yet, do not worry. We will not put pressure on you to make a hasty decision. It is essential that you are fully convinced before you make this decision. Here are some suggestions to help you.

- Go back through Lessons 1-39 and re-read them. Make a note of any doubts or difficulties you have and contact your tutor about them.
- Write to your tutor explaining your situation. He or she will be willing to continue writing to you. They will send you another Bible course if you wish, or can supply literature about Bible passages you may find difficult.
- Continue to read your Bible daily (the Bible Reading Planner and Bible Companion will help you with this).
- If you wish we may be able to put you in contact with Christadelphians in your own country. They may be able to meet you and talk to you about the Bible.





- Above all, please pray carefully to God about your situation.

3. If you have already been baptized in another church you may feel that you do not need to be baptized again. It is important to understand that this course does not ask you to be baptized into the Christadelphians, but into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen what this means earlier in this lesson – people in the first century were only baptized after they understood and believed the one true Gospel message.

In Acts 19 we read of some people who were baptized after being taught by the followers of John the Baptist. Their understanding of the Gospel was incomplete, so the apostle Paul re-baptized them into the name of Jesus Christ and they were accepted by God. In the same way some people have to be re-baptized today because their original baptism was not effective. Paul says in Ephesians 4:5 that there is only *“one baptism”*. Some people take this to mean that you only need to be baptized once, but this is not what it means. Paul is teaching that there is only one true baptism. It is essential for salvation that disciples believe the one true Gospel message before they enter the water. Please think carefully about this and talk to your tutor.

4. If you want to be baptized that is wonderful news – there will be rejoicing in heaven as well on earth at your news. The first thing to do is to pray and share your decision with God. Then contact your tutor who will advise you further.

If you are really ready for this step, you will be sure that you believe with all your heart the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, as taught in the Bible and explained in this course. Before we baptize you, we will arrange a friendly discussion so that you can talk through with someone what you have come to understand and believe. Baptism is the most important decision you will ever make and we want to make sure that you have thought about it carefully.

When you are baptized you will become a member of a Christadelphian ecclesia in your area and will be able to meet with other brothers and sisters in Christ for worship and Breaking of Bread. If there are no Christadelphians living nearby, we will arrange support for you from the UK. It is important to remember that whether you belong to a large ecclesia or are on your own, you will belong to a worldwide family of brothers and sisters in the Lord who will care for you and want to keep in touch.

## Finally

Thank you for studying these lessons. We hope that you have enjoyed them and found them helpful. We sincerely hope that you will find a place in God’s kingdom when the Lord Jesus returns. It is because of this that we pray that you will accept the true Gospel teaching, be baptized into the saving name of Jesus and enjoy fellowship with God and His Son, as well as with a worldwide family of believers.

Please continue to read your Bible, to pray to Almighty God and ask for His guidance on these things in your life.

**Verses to read: Acts 20:28-32; 1 Timothy 6:2-4**



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