

Th224 Sin and Atonement: The Restoration of Relationship

Lesson Th224-1 God's Glory

The course, that begins with today's lesson, will help you understand the nature of God and the nature of human beings. It will also discuss sin, the law of God, and the nature of atonement. Atonement is the restoration of the broken relationship between mankind and God. But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Let's start first with what God is like.

Imagine students sitting in a classroom staring down at exam papers on their desks. This exam will test their knowledge of world history. They have studied the history textbook and each student hopes that they will remember the various events, dates, and world leaders. They are being tested on the information contained within the book. Each one wants a perfect score, but they all know that having a few incorrect answers is more realistic. Some of the students just hope that they will have enough correct answers to make a passing grade. None of them wants a failing mark.

Every person ever born faces a different type of exam. Passing this exam will require more than just a high score. The only way to pass this exam is to have a perfect score. The facts of this exam are not found in any book or teaching. This test will be based upon God himself. He is the standard by which every student will be graded. And it is our lives that are to be examined. Everything we do, everything we say, and every thought we think will be compared to the standard – which is God himself. Again, we must remember that this exam is pass or fail. The minimum score is perfection.

The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the church in Rome, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). Paul is saying that everyone fails the test of living a perfect sinless life. He tells us that because of sin, we fall short of God's glory. So what is the glory of God?

The apostle John sent three letters to new Christians in Asia. In his first letter he makes a simple statement about the nature, and thus the glory, of God. He wrote, "This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all" (1John 1:5). If we were able to stand in God's presence, we would find a place of brilliant light. There would be no shadows, as his light would surround us and perfectly shine through every part of our beings. This perfect light, his glory, sets the standard demanded of us. And yet no one, except for Jesus, has been able to meet this standard of sinless perfection—having "no darkness at all."

The apostle Paul himself admitted to his student Timothy, "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst" (1Tim 1:15). If even Paul could not meet God's standard, how can anyone else stand such scrutiny?

Of course, people will say that this test is not fair. How can we be expected to truly comprehend a God, who cannot be comprehended? We have learned the story of Jesse's son

named David, who became one of the greatest kings of Israel. When David was just a boy he watched over his father's flocks of sheep. Can you picture this young boy, sitting on a hillside, looking up into the night sky? Perhaps he even tried to count the stars. David marveled at God's awesome creation. How do we know that? We hear the many songs, or Psalms, he wrote about the glory of God. In his eighth song David wrote, "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens.... When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you take thought of him?" (Ps 8:1-4).

David understood a truth about God's glory that mankind seldom sees. God has revealed himself to man through what he has created. The apostle Paul wrote this in the first chapter of his letter to the Romans: "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse" (Rom 1:20).

The lesson is **important** because it reveals that the glory of God is the standard by which every human will be judged.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that all have sinned and have fallen short of God's glory. Everyone has failed the test.

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. The apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Romans, saying, "For all have sinned and have fallen short" of something. What is it that we all fall short of? [Pause 5 seconds.]

A. If you said, "The glory of God," you are right.

2. The apostle John wrote a letter in which he compared God to something. What was that? [Pause 5 seconds.]

A. If you said, "God is light," you answered correctly.

3. The apostle Paul wrote a letter to Timothy his student. In the letter he said, "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Paul then went on to say something about himself. What was it that Paul said of himself? [Pause 5 seconds.]

A. If you answered, "Paul said that he was the worst sinner," you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is first to memorize Paul's statement: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Then, take some time to think about your own life and how you have failed to live up to the glory of God.