

Lesson 1

A Universal Problem

This is the first of three lessons about The World: God's Purpose for Action. All three lessons treat some big ideas. People feel safer starting with small ideas and moving slowly. Not so with God. He starts big. His work is bigger than the world. He moves fast. His are matters of life and death.

You see, God's place of action is the entire world. God's plan includes the salvation of a dying world. The church, His people, is a world-wide community rescued from sin, and commissioned to assist in the rescue of others from sin.

What does this have to do with you? First, you are living in this sinful world. God and His Son, Jesus, have taken action to save the world. Second, you are a part of this action.

In this lesson you will discover how sin came into the world, and how it affects our world today. God's solution for the sin problem was to give His Son as a sacrifice for our sins. And we have been given the privilege of taking this message of salvation to those who are still in bondage to sin. We are included in God's great plan for redeeming the world!



lesson outline

Discovering the Problem

Understanding the Problem

Solving the Problem

lesson objectives

When you have completed this lesson, you should be able to:

- Discuss the problem of sin and its effects upon the world.
- Identify examples of the spirit of the age as it is demonstrated in present-day society.
- Explain the effect of God's redemptive plan upon the problem of sin.

learning activities

1. Carefully read the introduction section in this study guide.
2. Study the lesson outline and lesson objectives. These will help you identify the things you should try to learn as you study the lesson. Read all Scripture references given in the lesson development as you come to them.
3. Study the lesson content and do the exercises as you come to them. Try to give your own answers before you check the answers we have given at the end of the lesson.
4. Look in the glossary at the end of this study guide for definitions of any key words you do not understand.

- 5. Take the self-test at the end of the lesson and check your answers with those given at the end of the study guide. Review any items you answered incorrectly.

key words

Understanding the key words we have listed at the beginning of each lesson will help you as you study. You will find key words listed in alphabetical order and defined in the glossary at the back of this independent-study textbook. If you are in doubt about the meaning of any of the words on the list, you may look them up now or when you come across them in your reading. Please take time to learn the definitions of any new words, since they are important for a complete understanding of this course.

bondage	marred	sacrifice
carnal	rebellious	universal
covenant	receptive	
dispute	reconciliation	
independence	redemption	

lesson development

DISCOVERING THE PROBLEM

Objective 1. *Describe the origin, nature, and extent of sin in the world.*

The Sin Problem

The Bible is a record of human sin and a loving God who wants to rescue men from sin. In the beginning, God created a sinless world. Man was his unique creation. Man stood out among God’s other creatures. Man was created in God’s image, with intelligence, with a free will, and with emotions to respond. Man was created to have fellowship with his Creator.

1 We will be studying many Scripture passages in these lessons to learn truths taught in the Bible. Find Colossians 1:16 in your Bible now, and explain what this verse means to you.

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The Bible also records that Satan is the agent by whom sin and evil entered God's creation. Adam and Eve broke God's laws. They were holy laws, because God is holy. Man broke God's laws and was separated from God (Genesis 3). This separation from God's communion and fellowship meant that man was lost. Because of the first man's sin (Adam), the world was cursed by sin. Since that time, man has been born into sin (Romans 5:12-18).

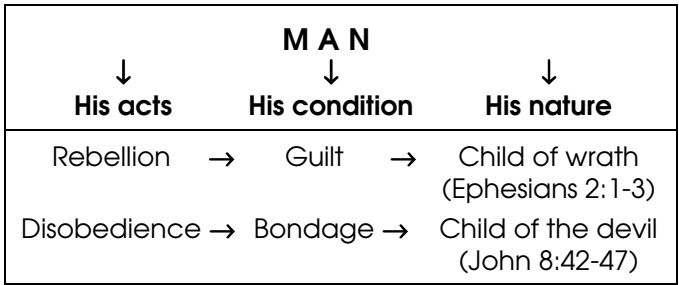
Let us look at three ways of describing sin. The Bible describes the sin of man as:

1. *Acts of rebellion.* A *rebellious* person is one who refuses to do what another commands. Man refused to obey God. He refused to obey any other voice than his own. Man refused to bend to any other will but his own. He refused to recognize God as Creator and Father of the world. "They know God, but they do not give him the honor that belongs to him, nor do they thank him. Instead, their thoughts have become complete nonsense, and their empty minds are filled with darkness" (Romans 1:21).

2. *Acts of disobedience.* "God's anger is revealed from heaven against all the sin and evil of the people" (Romans 1:18). God's laws were holy and made to be obeyed. God made an agreement with man (Genesis 2:15-17), but man disobeyed. It was a binding covenant, or agreement, but man failed to recognize the God of the covenant. Lawlessness stirs God's anger toward man (John 3:36).

These acts have created a *condition* in man. Not only does man commit acts of sin, but he is a sinner by his very nature. Sin consists not simply in deeds, but in a condition, a condition common to all men who are *by nature* dead in sins and trespasses and are children of wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3).

3. *A condition of bondage.* One that is sold is a slave. "I am carnal, sold under sin" (Romans 7:14 KJV). Being sold under sin is to be under the control and power of sin. The person becomes the property of the one in control. In this case, it would be Satan. Service is also rendered to this master. Sin has made man a slave and has taken away his freedom. He has lost the freedom that he once had. He is in bondage and is a prisoner of sin.



2 Match the three ways of describing sin with their definitions. Write the number for your choice in each blank space.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>.... a Man refused to listen to God's instructions.</p> <p>.... b Man did not keep his covenant with God.</p> <p>.... c Man was controlled by sin.</p> | <p>1) Condition of bondage</p> <p>2) Act of rebellion</p> <p>3) Act of disobedience</p> |
|---|---|

The Scope of the Problem

Man's basic sin was the denial of the nature and qualities of God. Man failed to recognize God as Creator and Father of the universe. Let us look at the scope, or extent, of his sin.

1. *Sin began with one man.* The story concerning the nature of sin in man's life is found in Genesis 3. The origin of sin in the human race began with Adam and Eve. They disobeyed God's command. They doubted the rightness of God's order not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They were created with a free will and they had a choice. They chose to disobey God, and they suffered the consequences. The result of the first sinful act was guilt and a feeling of nakedness before God.

2. *One man's sin was passed on to all men.* The penalty of death is passed on to the human race which came from Adam and Eve. Because of the first man's choice, all men have been born separated from God. Men do not have in them just the *tendency* (leaning) to sin when they are born—they are born in sin, with a sin nature, in a state of sin. Unless he is renewed by the grace of God, man must suffer the penalty for his sin.

Sin, by its very nature, involves two personalities. It involves the one who sins, and it involves the one against whom the sin is committed. Although one may also sin against one’s neighbor, man’s greatest sin is against God.

God’s nature is holy and just. His laws are holy and unchanging. He will punish those who break these laws. But His nature is also that of a loving father. As Creator and Father of the world, He moves toward man and his sin problem. His is the driving force that brings the sinner into communion with Himself through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Now in your own words, explain when sin came into the world, and the effect it has had upon the world.

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The Problem-Solver

Objective 2. *Explain the three aspects of the fatherhood of God.*

Everything that belongs to the world—what the sinful self desires, what people see and want, and everything in this world that people are so proud of—none of this comes from the Father; it all comes from the world. The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; but he who does the will of God lives forever (1 John 2:16-17).

God’s will in this changing and sinful world is that man recognize and accept Him as Creator and Father. Man’s sin has been against the nature and qualities of God. To be restored in fellowship will mean that man must know God for what God is.

God is the Creator

God is the God of all the world. At the beginning, in the center, and at the end of everything, there stands an eternal God. He is the Creator of the universe and of mankind. He is the only and absolute God. He is very jealous, in that he wants to be recognized in those terms.

4 Read these Scriptures and state how each one describes God: Nehemiah 9:6, Acts 15:18.

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Not only is God the Creator of physical things, but He is also the Creator of the moral order for the world.

1. God has established laws of right and wrong.
2. God’s laws are the highest standards of morality.
3. God insists that the laws be obeyed.
4. God brings punishment when His laws are broken.
5. God sent Jesus to help us obey God’s laws.

God is the Father

God’s creative acts must be recognized. God’s saving acts must also be accepted. He is the God of salvation.

5 Read Exodus 14:13; 15:2; 2 Samuel 22:3, 47; Psalm 18:46; 38:22; Acts 28:28. How do they speak of God?

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God willed salvation for the world. It was His choice and desire. These actions of God reveal God’s love for His children as the Heavenly Father of creation.

There is a fatherhood of God by creation which is universal to all mankind. Then there is a fatherhood of God by relation that only His Son, Jesus Christ, enjoys. And finally, there is a fatherhood of God by redemption which is for all who accept the sacrifice of His son for their sins.

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD		
THE FATHER	“MY FATHER”	OUR FATHER
of the world by creation	of Jesus by relation	of all believers by redemption
An earthly time and space	From eternity to eternity	From now to eternity

6 Describe the two ways in which God is the Creator.

.....
.....

7 Explain what these statements mean:

a God is the father of the world by creation.

.....

b God is the father of all believers by redemption.

.....

c God is the father of Jesus by relation.

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UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Objective 3. *Identify aspects of change in modern society which present opportunities for ministry.*

Here is an amazing story of modern times: Two Japanese soldiers were found in the jungles of an island in the Pacific Ocean. They had been hiding since World War II, a period of more than 35 years. They were surprised to hear the news that the war was over. They were also surprised to see the great changes as they entered the modern cities.

They were amazed, and certainly they had reason to be. Our world is changing rapidly. Some people are afraid of what is happening and others cannot understand it. We must face the world.

The Lord wants us to be in the world and understand it. It is important that we are aware of the strong forces that are forming society. The world is changing, but the force of sin is still present. Our sinful world presents opportunities for ministry that perhaps no other generation has experienced.

8 Whom has God chosen for this ministry to the world?

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The Climate of the City

The number of people is increasing all over the world. Many people are being attracted to the cities. They are leaving their small villages and towns to find better conditions in the cities.

9 Make a list of changes in your town or city in the past ten years.

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It is said that three out of every four persons in the world live in cities. Small towns change and grow also, but cities are suffering the results of change the most. This is where people are affected most by the changing society.

As the number of people increases, so do their needs increase. These needs are physical, social, and economic. The rate of increase causes an imbalance and creates social problems. Poverty (the state of being very poor), poor housing, lack of jobs, and even beggars on the street are all examples of the strain of change.

But the cities are also opportunities for ministry. People in need are fertile soil for the “gospel of the poor” to be preached.

10 Read Matthew 9:35 and explain where Jesus ministered.
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11 Read Luke 4:18. Describe the people of the city.
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A changing society also indicates changing values. New places, new circumstances, and new neighbors are involved in our move to a new home. New forms and patterns of living are accepted. New friends and new churches are found. Cities represent all of these things.



CITIES—A MISSION FIELD

Change can affect a person very deeply, and usually does. Not only do cities represent new values, but new problems also. The feeling of being cut off from family and friends can result in loneliness. A new freedom is experienced that a small community never gave one. Just like the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, who went out to find a new freedom, this independence draws people away from things that are right.

12 Read Luke 15:11-16 and James 4:13. In what way are both verses the same?

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13 Choose the two best completions of this statement: (Draw a circle around the letter in front of your choices.) Cities become opportunities for ministry because

- a) they represent more unreached people.
- b) the people in them are mostly comfortable and happy.
- c) there is little change in large cities.
- d) cities produce fear and insecurity.

Cities have become very important in our day because of their size and their effect upon modern society. Jesus said,

“A city built on a hill cannot be hid” (Matthew 5:14). Christians must pay special attention to them for ministry. For example:

- 1. Jesus ministered in cities (Matthew 9:35).
- 2. Jesus saw them as centers of sin (Matthew 11:20).
- 3. Jesus noticed receptive people there (Matthew 10:11).

The Spirit of the Age

Cities are special areas for ministry not only because of the many people, and the changes that are taking place, but also because they reflect (show) the spirit of the age. In this day and age there are certain thoughts and ideas that are very popular. Through these can be seen the age-old sin of selfish human nature. The cities represent 1) a desire for material things over the spiritual; and 2) the desire for self and human life over God and His rightful place as Creator.

To illustrate this, I have given special names to two “movements” or attitudes of man and one movement of God toward man. They are:

1. *The “Canaan Movement”* (Exodus 3:8). The spirit of the age seems to be one of looking for the land of “milk and honey.” The desire is to move ahead in life. There is a desperate search for a better life. Man is driven to seek the comforts in life. The world is saying, “Today or tomorrow we will travel to a certain city, where we will stay a year and go into business and make a lot of money” (James 4:13).

14 Read Deuteronomy 8:17 and James 4:13.

- a** What do they have in common?
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- b** What is wrong with this way of thinking?
.....
- c** Read Matthew 6:33. What is the right way of thinking?
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2. *The “Tower of Babel Movement”* (Genesis 11:1-9). Not only does the world today want to get ahead in life, but it also wants to move upward. These are not the same thing. To move ahead is to want more possessions. To move upward is to obtain a higher position. Man wants to be over and above, rather than under someone else. He is seeking to be his own boss and master. Wanting to be a god unto himself was man’s original downfall (Genesis 3:5). He still continues to want to make a name for himself. He is still running away from God’s wrath and punishment. Not only does he leave God out, but now he wants to put himself in God’s place.

3. *The “Bethlehem Movement”* (Luke 2:4-7). The Canaan and Babel movements have not satisfied the world. Generation after generation of men have tried to move ahead and move upward in different ways. Man has failed and is still lost and unhappy.

The Bethlehem movement is God coming down through Jesus Christ. He came to pick man up since man could not pick himself up. The Son of God appeared in the form of man to unite with man’s need. It is by divine grace and love that this has taken place. Man is now able to reach God through Jesus Christ. Man obtains a better and eternal life.



Fame and riches do not make a person happy and right with God. God’s way of salvation is not discovered nor earned by man. It comes to him by revelation. This must be preached to him from the Word of God. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” (See Romans 10:8-17, KJV.)

Man is lost, but he preserves a marred (damaged) representation of God's image in which he was created. The Holy Spirit creates the right time for response and makes people responsive so that they may regain this likeness through salvation.

15 Circle the letter in front of the TRUE statements concerning changes and attitudes seen in people in this present age.

- a** The world is changing from day to day.
- b** Because the world is so sinful, the effort to reach it with the gospel is not so strong.
- c** Cities suffer more from changing society than do small towns.
- d** People want to have more things and higher positions today.
- e** Jesus Christ has provided the only way man can be truly happy and right with God.
- f** The changes a person faces when he moves to the city usually turn him to God.

SOLVING THE PROBLEM

Objective 4. *Explain how God made it possible for man's fellowship with Him to be restored.*

It was God's will that the world be saved. A third Person was brought into the dispute (disagreement) between man and God. God the Father sent His Son, Jesus, as the solution to sin (John 3:16). Jesus' ministry was made necessary because of the problem of sin in the world. If there were no sin there would have been no need for Jesus to be born a man. Without sin there would be no need for Jesus to die on the cross. Without sin there is no need to restore to man something he has lost.

What has man lost? His freedom and fellowship with God. His awareness of God the Creator and the Father. Read in Luke 15 the story of a restored relationship between a son and his father. This will help you to understand the God-to-man relationship.

16 Luke 15 is the *Lost and Found* chapter in the Bible.

a What three things were lost and then found?

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b Which of the three is the most valuable?

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c State why it is so important.

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d Describe the celebration.

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e How does this compare to a sinner coming back to God, or being found?

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How did God restore man’s fellowship with Him? He did it through the life and acts of Christ. Christ came to this earth and died on the cross. Through these acts of Christ God offers four things:

1. *God offers reconciliation.* To *reconcile* means “to bring two things together correctly.” Man became an enemy of God because of his rebellious acts. Christ came to amend (repair) the differences between man and God. His love is the power that draws God and man together.

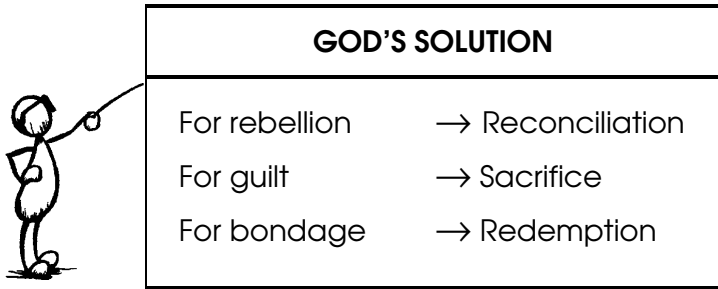
2. *God offers a sacrifice.* God’s anger against man was because man broke His holy laws. God is a righteous God and He requires that His laws be obeyed. Since man could not obey these laws, Christ came to obey them for man. Now God’s anger was satisfied. Christ was able, through his sacrifice on the cross, to pay the price. We must remember that not only did God ask for a price but He also *gave His Son* as that price.

3. *God offers redemption.* This is Christ paying the price to make the sinner free from sin’s bondage. It means the sinner is rescued, delivered, and saved. He is the slave who is bought for a price to take him from his old master and to set him free. This free slave may be so grateful to the gracious person who has bought his freedom that he offers himself for service to that

person. This is the story of the Christian. This is shown to us in the following Scriptures: Mark 10:44, Galatians 3:13, Romans 3:23-24, and Ephesians 1:7.

17 Read 1 Peter 1:18-19 and write in your own words what this Scripture means to you.

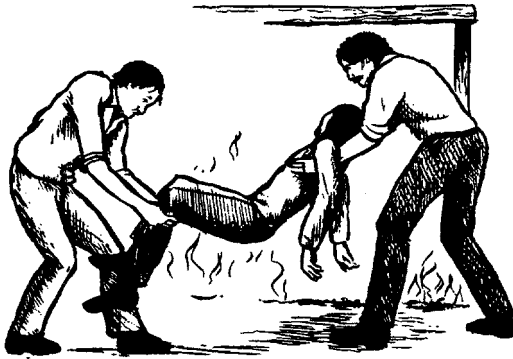
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4. *God offers participation.* All of the above aspects of salvation are made available by God. The Father willed it and the Son acted in behalf of man's salvation. But man is offered a part in the solution to the sin problem. Man must 1) turn away from sin and turn to God, and 2) turn to the world with the *good news*.

Conversion is man's first step toward a restored fellowship with God. Repentance and faith are the two basic aspects of conversion. *Repentance* is the act of turning from sin and feeling sorrow for sin through looking at the cross. *Faith* speaks of the positive activity of man when he turns to God. He sees God the Father as one who loves and cares. He trusts his whole life and destiny to God.

The picture now is of one who was in the world, doomed for eternal punishment, but who is rescued from destruction. Once rescued he senses the responsibility for others who are doomed as he once was. So he turns to their rescue.



RESCUED

This is the picture of the church. The church is a chosen body of people called out from the world to be a special people, and to take the message of salvation to the world.

The church is commissioned by God to make His redemption known to the world. It must believe that the world without Christ is lost, and that Christ is man's only hope. If the world is to know about Christ it will be through His church, the believers. These have all been called to witness and will give account to God for what they have done at the time of Jesus' return.

18 *Reconciliation* gives us the *why* of salvation. Explain why reconciliation was necessary.

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19 *Christ's sacrifice* gives us the *how* of salvation. Explain how this was done.

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20 *Redemption* gives the *results* of salvation. What are these results?

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21 *Participation* describes man's involvement in God's redemptive plan. Describe the two ways man is involved.

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self-test

After you have reviewed this lesson, take the self-test. Then check your answers with those given in your student report. Review any questions you answered incorrectly.

SHORT ANSWER. Answer these questions in your own words.

1 How did Adam and Eve’s sin affect the whole world?

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.....

2 Put an **X** in front of the words below which describe the spirit of the age in which we live:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| ... Change | ... Bondage |
| ... Problems | ... Disobedience |
| ... Peace | ... Selfish values |
| ... Security | ... Happiness |
| ... Rebellion | ... Independence |
| ... Sacrifice | ... Sin |
| ... Loneliness | ... Fear |

3 What three words in the list above describe the spirit of the redeemed person?

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4 In what way are the cities a good place to minister and tell people about God’s redemptive plan?

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5 How did God’s redemptive plan affect the problem of sin?

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6 Whom has God chosen to take the message of salvation to the lost and dying world?

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answers to study questions

These answers have been mixed so that you will not accidentally see the answer to the next question before you write your own response. Please do not look ahead, but write your own answer to each question before comparing it with the one we have given. This will help you to remember what you have studied.

- 11** The poor, the prisoners, the blind, and the oppressed were among the people in the city.
- 1** My answer would be: God created me, and He created me for Himself.
- 12** James talks about the spirit of freedom, and the verse in Luke talks about the son's acts in searching for freedom.
- 2 a** 2) Act of rebellion.
b 3) Act of disobedience.
c 1) Condition of bondage.
- 13 a)** they represent more unreached people.
d) cities produce fear and insecurity.
- 3** Sin came into the world when Adam and Eve sinned. Because of their sin, all men are born in sin.
- 14 a** They both speak of man wanting more things and getting the credit for obtaining those things when they get them.
b They leave out God.
c If we put God's kingdom first, He will take care of our needs.
- 4** He alone is God. He created all things. He knows all things.
- 15 a** True.
b False.
c True.
d True.
e True.
f False.

- 5** As the one who saves; as the Savior.
- 16 a** A sheep, a coin, a son.
b The son.
c The fellowship between father and son was restored.
d The father gave his son clothes and food. There was much music and joy.
e There is also joy in heaven.
- 6** He is the Creator of the physical universe and all that is in it. He is the Creator of moral order, or laws.
- 17** It was not with money that God paid the sacrifice to set me free from sin, but it was with His own Son that He paid it.
- 7 a** We are His children because He made us.
b We are His redeemed (saved) children because Jesus became our sacrifice for sin.
c Jesus is His Son who was born a man to save us from sin.
- 18** Because man lost fellowship with his Creator.
- 8** His redeemed people, the church.
- 19** Christ's death on the cross met God's demand, and Christ took God's anger upon Himself.
- 9** The list may contain whatever physical, social, moral, or spiritual changes you can think of.
- 20** Man is free from the law of sin, and he is no longer a slave to sin.
- 10** Christ's ministry was in the cities (towns) for the most part.
- 21** When man sees his need for salvation through Christ he repents. Then he takes the message of salvation to other lost men and women.