

The Life Changer

Study Series

A New Faith Community

There was a new faith community worshipping among the Jews in Israel. It was a faith community that believed in Jesus as the Messiah and Savior of the world. What were they doing as a new faith community? They were baptized, they were practicing the truths they believed, they fellowshiped with each other, they were eating together and praying together, both publicly and privately. They had gladness in their hearts and shared their lives together. It was a genuine community.



Lesson 5



Shining Stars Series (Philippians 2:14-16)



Mert looked carefully at the flask in front of him. He had spent the last 45 minutes of his weekly chemistry laboratory class applying the instructions given to the students by their teacher. He had measured out the different chemicals and put them into the flask and mixed them together. He saw that some of the solid chemicals had seemingly disappeared and the rest had sunk to the bottom of the flask. A majority of the chemicals had "gone into solution," that is they had combined chemically with the liquid solution and seemingly disappeared. But there was more solid chemical matter available than the solution could absorb and the remaining solid chemical precipitated to the bottom of the flask.

"It seems like the solution isn't going to absorb anymore," Mert said to himself. "Some of the solid chemicals joined with the liquid, but the liquid could only absorb so much. The rest of it separated and sank to the bottom of the flask. Well, it didn't leave the glass, but it was alongside the solution but not in or of the solution. If I cook eggplant in oil, the eggplant will absorb some of the oil but not all of it. At some point the eggplant can't absorb anymore. The remaining oil is in the pan alongside the eggplant but is not in the eggplant nor a part of it. Later the eggplant will even release some more of the oil onto my plate. If I soak beans in water, the beans can only absorb so much. The beans and the remaining water are in the same container but the remaining water is not a part of the beans."

Mert thought about his mom's Bible study group that would be at their home that night. They were coming together and sharing God's word and their lives. The group seemed like that solid material that precipitated out of the solution. The Bible-study group was still in society and was not completely separate from it, but it was different and separate in some ways. They had precipitated out. They were a new faith community altogether. As water vapor in a cooling cloud becomes solid water and is ready to separate from the cloud as rain, so their new faith community was different from their surroundings. (To be Continued)

② Q1. What new faith community do we see in the book of Acts?
Read Acts 2:41-47.

A. _____

Those early believers probably did not understand that their faith community would be driven from Judaism and emerge as a new religion in the world. They were simply rejoicing in the fulfillment of all that the prophets had spoken concerning the Messiah. They probably hoped and assumed that all of Israel would accept their Messiah. Unfortunately their hopes would be dashed. They were cast out of the society of Judaism and had to worship separately.

How was the new faith community of Jesus' followers different from Judaism? What happened regarding the promises God had made concerning Israel as a nation? Were those promises now null and void? What about the covenants God made with the descendants of Jacob? Were those promises and covenants now invalid? What was God's purpose for this new faith community?

The good news is that God's purposes didn't change but everything happened according to His foreknowledge and will. The new faith community was actually a continuation of the community of faith that traces its line all the way back to Abraham, even back to the promises made in the garden of Eden.

Eternal life had been given to Adam on condition of obedience. In our last lesson, we learned that when Adam rebelled against his Creator, he forfeited his right to eternal life. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Adam and we, his descendants, cannot atone for our sins by doing "good deeds." We already owe obedience as a condition of eternal life and any good thing we do is already required. Doing good is the what the kingdom of God is all about.

Eternal life is infinite and we are finite. Nothing a finite being can do can atone for even one sin. Nothing a finite being can do can earn something infinite. That is impossible. To think that a man's good deeds can merit eternal life is an insult to the greatness and glory of God and His kingdom. Any religion that teaches that man can atone or compensate

for his sin by some "good deed" is a lie. Eternal life is only by the grace of God.

"The wages of sin is death." This is not death and shortly afterward resurrection to eternal life; it is an eternal forfeiture of everything that resembles life. When Adam sinned, he could not atone for his sin and live again. His nature turned from being unselfish to being selfish. The very best service he could possibly give was still mixed with selfish motives. This corrupted nature Adam would pass on to all his descendants. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 5:12; 3:23). There was only one hope for mankind. The human race needed a Savior.

The promise of a Savior was prophesied in the garden of Eden. God said to Satan and to Eve, "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."¹ The coming Savior would defeat Satan. He would crush his head. The Savior would pay the sin-debt for man by His death. Thus Satan would "attack" (In the Turkish KK translation) the Savior's heel. The entire sacrificial system finds its meaning in this truth. Every bleeding animal was a symbol pointing to the Savior who would come and pay the sin-debt for humanity. This was God's everlasting covenant of grace to humanity.

You remember that at the tower of Babel, because of sin and disobedience, the languages were multiplied and the people were scattered across the face of the earth. But God chose faithful Abraham to be a missionary to the world. He placed him in the land of Canaan where Abraham's faithfulness to the true God would be spread among the nations. And God made a covenant, that is, an agreement with Abraham. God promised him that in him, that is, in his seed, all the nations of the world would be blessed. The covenant that God made with Abraham was simply a renewal of the covenant of grace made in the garden of Eden. It was the everlasting covenant. Abraham believed God's promise of a Savior that would come through Abraham's offspring. Because of his faith God

1 Genesis 3:15.

counted Abraham as righteous. We call this “righteousness by faith.” God himself would provide the righteousness necessary for Abraham to receive eternal life. God Himself would provide the sacrifice.

The conditions of the covenant were that Abraham was to remain faithful and keep the Commandments of God. If he sinned, Abraham was to trust in the merits of the Savior to come. We see that although Abraham made mistakes at times, his greatest test of faith was on Mount Moriah when he offered his son as a sacrifice to God. It was there that he demonstrated that Abraham really did believe in God's promise. Abraham believed that God could keep His promise by raising Isaac from the dead. (Hebrews 11:17-19). Likewise we see that Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob were partakers of the same everlasting covenant. They believed in God and His promises for inheritance of eternal life through faith in the coming Savior.

Jacob's children multiplied and became known as the Jewish people. The covenant promises were carried by this group of people who had a mission to the world.

② Q2. What was the mission of ancient Israel? Isaiah 49:6.

A. _____

God made a covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai. God was trying to lead the people into the everlasting covenant.² They were to believe in the promise of God for a Savior to come who would be a sacrifice for sin. The whole temple service with its sacrificial system was a teaching mechanism to illustrate the truths concerning the atonement. This Savior would be a child of Abraham and come through the line of Isaac and Jacob. The Israelites were to trust God to give them the grace to keep God's law of Ten Commandments.

Unfortunately most of the people did not enter into the everlasting covenant by faith as Abraham did. Instead, over time, they created a salvation system of their own. It was a system of salvation by works. They thought that if they simply sacrificed the animals, came to prayer

² Ezekiel 16:60.

time at the appointed hour and generally performed the temple services that God would bless them and take them to heaven. They trusted in their own ability to keep the law. They thought their deeds were righteous enough to please God. They thought their rituals earned merit toward gaining eternal life. Does that system of salvation sound familiar to you? But such a system of salvation cannot produce a righteous person. While they kept the temple services they soon fell into idolatry and were bound to their false worship.

They didn't understand that their hearts were selfish by nature and would naturally go in the path of sin without daily reliance on God. What the people really needed was a new heart. And this was predicted.

③ Q3. What promise was given to Israel regarding a change of heart? Jeremiah 31:31-33.

A. _____

In spite of God's continual appeal to Israel through the prophets to repent and receive a new heart towards God, the Israelites fell deeper and deeper into apostasy. God gave them promises of restoration, expansion, and healing as a nation based on their repentance and return to Him. In the face of the disobedience of the nation as a whole it became clear to everyone that the promises of restoration and expansion would not be fulfilled in Israel. As a nation in rebellion, Israel was unable to carry the good news of salvation through the Savior who was coming. But God did promise that a remnant would come out from Israel that would be faithful.

③ Q4. What was God's promise concerning a remnant? Jeremiah 23:3-6.

A. _____

There is a promise in these passages that God would gather a remnant of faithful believers to Himself. God's people are called His "flock." There is also a promise here that someone would come who is called the "Branch" and also called the "Lord our Righteousness."

② Q5. What did Jesus establish on the day He was crucified?
Matthew 26:28.

A. _____

Jesus, the Lord our Righteousness, established the New Covenant with the shedding of His blood. He died for the sins of the world. He was the Savior promised to Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. He was the Savior that would come from Abraham's offspring. He was the Savior that would come through the line of Isaac and Jacob. He was the Savior that all the sacrificial animals pointed to. There was no need for the animal sacrifices anymore. Jesus was here. The promise was fulfilled.

Jesus ratified the everlasting covenant with His blood. It is also called the New Covenant because it was ratified after the covenant at Sinai. We often call the covenant at Sinai the "Old Covenant" but we must understand an important distinction. God was trying to establish the everlasting covenant with Israel at Sinai, but the people were disobedient and made their own religious system of works. It became an established idea in the minds of the people that they could earn salvation by "keeping the law." This was wrong. Salvation is by grace through faith in God's promises, not by our good works. It was very difficult for people growing up under a system of salvation by works to grasp the concept of salvation by grace through faith. Many people tried to hang on to the old system of works. Often in the New Testament you will see the system of salvation-by-works referred to as the "Old Covenant." When the "Old Covenant" is spoken of this way, this is not referring to the system that God was trying to set up, but to the one that the people made themselves.

② Q6. What do you see as the difference between the Old and New Covenants in Hebrews 8:7-13?

A. _____

② Q7. What shocking revelation did Jesus make to His disciples?
Luke 12:32-34.

A. _____

Jesus said that God would give the kingdom of heaven into the hands of Jesus' disciples. The Jewish people would reject the Messiah and could no longer be the faithful people of the covenant. But a remnant out of Israel would be saved. This was the "little flock" of Jesus' followers. They were a new faith community in one sense because they were not functioning as a nation like the Jewish people. But they were the remnant of Israel and the true Israel by faith. Therefore they were the continuation of faithful believers with Abraham as their spiritual father.

Q8. What promise do we see about the remnant in the New Testament? Romans 11:5-6.

A. _____

There is a remnant that is elect according to the grace of God and not by trying to earn salvation by our own merit.

Q9. Who are Abraham's children? Romans 9:6-8.

A. _____

The promises were made to Abraham and his children. We see that the true children of Abraham are the ones who have faith, not those who are physical descendants of Abraham. You are a child of Abraham when you accept Jesus as your sin-bearer and accept Him in your heart by faith. You are then baptized and participate in the Lord's Supper and join the community of faith.

Jesus was a physical descendant of Abraham and could inherit the promises. We become partakers of those promises when we are spiritually united to Christ by faith. As we believe, the Holy Spirit is given to us forming the spiritual union. Thus Jesus' prayer is fulfilled that Jesus would be in us through the Holy Spirit.³ The Holy Spirit writes the law of the Ten Commandments on our hearts and we obey from love. Our sins are canceled by Jesus' death for us. This is the everlasting covenant.

³ John 17:20-23.

*Shining Stars Series (Philippians 2:14-16)*

The things that Mert was learning in his mom's study group were giving him some different perspectives and he felt different in his surroundings at school sometimes. When he mentioned something spiritual to his friends or classmates at school, some appreciated his spiritual comments but most looked with scorn at him or made a joke about it. Soon Mert kept his thoughts about spiritual things to himself. He found himself blending into the common talk of music, movies and video games and just tea and chit-chat. After all, what was life really about, if it wasn't those things?

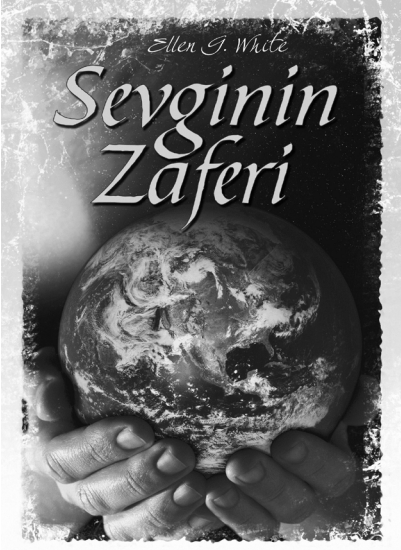
As Mert looked at the flask in front of him he saw the precipitation at the bottom and he wondered about the solid chemical that "disappeared" into the solution. He said to himself, "If I reject the new faith community that my mother is a part of, I will "disappear" into the society around me. I will be a part of the world of my classmates that believes in God's existence but doesn't really live for God. Like vapor in a cloud I will disappear from God's ranks and not become rain to bless the people of the earth."

① Q10. What do you think Mert should do?

A. _____

Call to commitment through prayer.

SEVGİNİN ZAFERİ



Kötülüğün kaynağı, henüz çözülememiş bir sırdır. Neden kötülük var? Nereden geliyor? Kötülüğün bir sonu olacak mı? Bunlar yanıtlanması gereken çok önemli sorulardır.

Büyük mücadele, görünen dünyayı, görünmeyen dünyadan ayıran perdeyi aralamakta ve bu dünyanın tüm sakinlerinin dahil olduğu doğaüstü savaşı gözler önüne ermektedir.

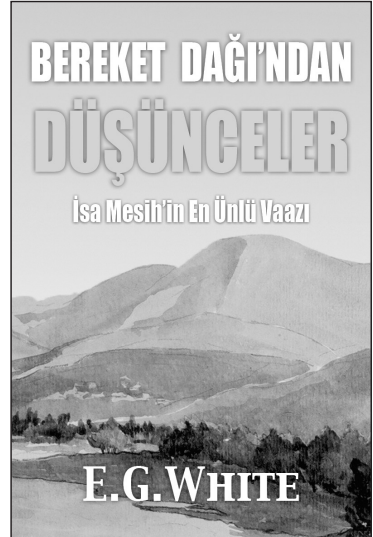
Kitap, uğrunda savaştıkları şey için çok önemli olan iki tarafın, iyinin ve kötünün arasında geçen evrensel savaşın nasıl başladığından ve nasıl sonlandırılacağından bahsetmektedir. Geçmişten, şimdiki zamandan ve gelecekte söz etmekte, çok dokunaklı bir ricayla ve ciddi bir uyarıyla sona ermektedir. Bu kitabı okurken, sanki Tanrı ile röportaj yapıyormuş hissine kapılacaksınız.

Güzel olduğu kadar şok edici bir yolculuğa çıkmaya hazırlanın. Okuduktan sonra artık aynı kişi olmayacaksınız.

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Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:1-5)



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This study series is a continuation of the Fate Changer series
and a product of Istiridye Medya.