Biblical Teaching Week 6

We move this week from favourite stories in the Bible to the most important passages.  These have to be about God’s eternal plan for humankind, fulfilled in the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, son of Mary and Son of God.  We know from everyday experience that human beings are capable of selfless acts of immense courage and generosity, and of selfish acts of great cruelty and depravity.  We know that we ourselves are sometimes kind and good, but at other times we are thoughtless and hurt people.  It is part of our DNA.  The very start of the Bible illustrates this in **Genesis (chapters) 1 to 3**, describing how we are made in the image of God (where our goodness comes from), but we have fallen from grace and from Paradise by our disobedience and arrogance as in the Garden of Eden.  The Jewish Law attempted to put this right, but failed.  All human ideals, such as Communism or Humanism, are equally unsuccessful.

The only solution, planned by God from before the beginning of time, was for God Himself to come into the world as a perfect human being, living a human life with all its joys and griefs, all its beauty and stresses, but never departing from the standards of grace and of Paradise that God intended for humankind.  This amazing event began in the little town of Bethlehem: **Luke 1 and 2, Matthew 1 and 2**.  Jesus grew up in Nazareth, then at the age of about 30 chose some disciples and for 3 years travelled around Palestine.  He taught, He healed, He told stories, He challenged, He prayed and He obeyed his Father in heaven.  Then He allowed Himself to be arrested, convicted although completely innocent, and crucified.  He knew that He was carrying the enormous weight of all human wrong-doing as He Hung on the cross.  His innocence has made us innocent, and restored us to that state of grace which God originally planned for humanity.  The accounts of this supreme act of self-sacrifice are in **Matthew 26 and 27, Mark 14 and 15, Luke 22 and 23, and John 18 and 19**.

The death of Jesus, although real, was never intended to be end of His story.  As the One who had breathed life and light and love into the universe (**John 1**), He was able to defeat both evil and even death itself.  The accounts of His resurrection are in **Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20 and 21**.  Although there are credible testimonies by witnesses of His return to life, at the end of the day the truth of the resurrection has to be an act of faith on our part.  Just as God has always given human beings the freedom to choose grace or disobedience, just as Jesus chose freely to go to Jerusalem to be killed before returning to eternal life, we too have the choice between grace and eternal life beyond death on the one hand, and disbelief and disobedience and darkness on the other hand.  Read the tremendous truths of the Biblical chapters shown in bold type above, and then choose life.

*Produced by Glenn Evans on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  All quotations from the Good News Translation unless otherwise stated.  You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme on the Sheffield Methodist Circuit website and also the Sheffield Methodist Circuit Facebook page.*