

quakes, droughts and floods, and it isn't too hard to see how mankind itself is in deep trouble as well.

Before the Flood, God could see that man was very wicked indeed and that every conceivable thought from his imagination was continuously evil. King Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived, said, "There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good" (Eccl. 7:20). Jesus said that out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts. He also said that things such as evil thoughts, sexual sins, murder, stealing, being desirous of other people's property, and so many other sins come from inside man himself and make him *unclean* before God.

Man is guilty before God. God is high and holy and cannot put up with sin; He was truly sorry that sin entered into the world.

It must be stressed here that it was not God's fault or desire that man fell into sin. God does not make anyone sin, nor does He tempt anyone. A person tempted to sin is tempted by his own sinful desires and is dragged down to sin by those desires.

Many sins are habit-forming. A person may try to break these habits, but when he sees that he can't, he realizes that he is in bondage to the habit.

The Old Testament prophet, Isaiah, wrote about Jesus 700 years before He was born! While here, Jesus referred to these writings, saying, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised." *Did you catch it?* Preach deliverance to the *captives*. In Galatians 5:1, Paul says, "Stand fast therefore in liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." In Romans 6:22 we hear Paul again, saying, "But now being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life."

God loved man very much and wanted there

to be some way for him to be brought back into right standing with Him. When man sinned, he cut off his contact with God; he could do nothing of his own power to get God's attention and get right with Him. But God, who was so full of mercy, so loved the world and gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

It was God's plan that a sacrificial shedding of blood was necessary in payment of sin. In the Old Testament it is written that more than 1,200,000 animals a year were sacrificed by the priests. These rituals were done as a sign of a covering for sin; however, all of the blood that was shed did not take away sin. God promised that His Son, Jesus, would come to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Jesus suffered and died because we sinned. Because Jesus was both divine and human, He was the most suitable offering to take away the sins of the world. And He did this, not because we loved Him, but **because He loved us!** He came to deliver us from the bondage that we had put ourselves in.

In the Book of Romans, Paul talks about sinful man—"O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law (bondage) of sin and death." And ". . . being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness."

How does Jesus give us this freedom? How do we get back into right standing with God? Without Jesus' death on the cross and the shedding of His blood as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, there would have been no way for man. This offering pleased God so that He could forgive all sins. But giving forgiveness was not all that God did, and it is so much more than just receiving an "acquittal." If we believe, we can stand before God as though we had done nothing wrong. We are not only released from paying the penalty, but

we can also come into God's presence and have fellowship.

But to receive this, we must repent. "Repentance" is being sorry for our sins and forsaking them. At the start of His ministry Jesus said, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). The Apostle Peter said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Paul the Apostle said in Acts 17:30: "(God) commands all men every where to repent."

A man cannot make himself right before God. It requires an act of God in the life of the person who believes in God and accepts Jesus as His Lord and wants his sins forgiven. For that person, the penalty of sin is forgiven and he can then grow to be like Jesus Himself. This is only available because of God's love—and our acceptance of this love.

But God does more than this for us. He actually becomes our Father. And if we are faithful to His Word, the Bible, we will live in His house (heaven) forever. If we choose to disobey God's Word and will for our lives, it is possible to forfeit our right to sonship and eternal life in heaven. But God *will* welcome us back if we confess our sins and want to come back into right standing with Him again.

All you have to do is let Jesus take control of your life, it is that simple. Isaiah was a prophet in the Old Testament. He says, "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:6, 7). "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9b). To do this, bow your head and ask Him to come into your life. Tell Him that you realize that you are caught up in the bondages of sin and that you want forgiveness so you may be set free. Ask Him to prepare your heart to live for Him here and now, and to spend eternity with Him in heaven. Tell Him that you want