

Lesson 21

- Is the bible unreliable?
- Jesus Christ reigns
- Our attitude towards other people

Is the bible unreliable?

Lesson 21a

Is the bible unreliable?

The bible has been written by human beings and human beings have their imperfections. What does that imply for the reliability of the bible? Isn't the bible just a book of human imagination? Or can we put all our trust in it?

A human book?

Is the bible the Word of God or is it the word of men about God? In lesson 2a we already gave an answer to that question: God very clearly lets us know in the bible that He is its author. Nevertheless, more and more people think that the bible is an ordinary human book, a book that tells us in the Old Testament how the Israelites thought about God and in the New Testament how the gospel writers and apostles thought about Jesus. According to this view the bible is no more than a collection of stories made up by men.

If that is true, we need to take into account that the bible is full of incorrect information. That is often what people assume. Even many contemporary theologians regard the bible as a human book with imaginary stories that often portray history better than it really was.

Often these people are not too worried about inaccurate information in the bible because they say the bible is not a history book. The intention of its writers was never to write a detailed account of history. They did not want to lay out facts. Rather, their intention was to give an account of the great deeds of God. They wanted to show us how God's deeds are still significant in our time and in the future. They wanted to bring us to faith in Jesus Christ. This implied that sometimes they had to use facts in a different way than how we would in our time and culture.

One passage of the bible that is regarded as unhistorical by many theologians is the beginning of the book of Genesis. In this lesson we will discuss what is being said about this passage and what the implications of it are for reading the rest

of the bible. Besides we will discuss how Jesus himself and the writers of the bible regarded and used the bible.

Folktales

Many people regard the first eleven chapters of the bible as unhistorical. They assume that the stories of creation, the Fall, Cain and Abel, the flood and the tower of Babel are folktales, stories that men made up to explain the origin of the world, mankind, death and sin. Of course there can be a hint of truth in these stories, they say, but in our time we no longer need to believe that God made everything that exists in six days. We know that everything has come into existence through evolution. The writer of the story of creation only wanted to tell in his way that God is the source of life.

Another thing people no longer want to believe is that the whole of mankind is descended from Adam and Eve and that the serpent has persuaded them to rebel against God. In our time we know that snakes cannot talk. We need to look at the intention of the story. Apparently the writer wants to tell us that man has omitted his duty towards God from the very beginning. It is not important how it happened as long as we realise that it has happened.

How about the flood? In numerous different cultures there are ancient stories about an enormous flood. Apparently there had been a disastrous flood at some point. People assume that the writer of the book of Genesis has given his own explanation based on his faith. God could no longer tolerate the sin of man.

According to the view that we outlined here, the book of Genesis is not historical. The real historical writing only begins from chapter 12 onwards where it relates the story of Abraham, the ancestor of the Israelites whom God told to go to Canaan.

Jesus and the bible

How should we react to this type of criticism? Is the bible unreliable? Should we only look at the intention of a story and leave it undecided whether it has actually happened or not?

For an answer to these questions we should look at Jesus' attitude to the bible.

In Jesus' time the Old Testament was already complete. Jesus knew all of the Old Testament and He certainly did not regard it as a human and, therefore, deficient book. He accepted the Old Testament as the Word of God. In his eyes nothing in the Old Testament was incorrect or dated. As He said in the Sermon on the Mount:

Matthew 5:17-18

'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.'

When Jesus talks about the Law, He means the first five books of the bible. This includes the first eleven chapters of Genesis. In everything He did Jesus was guided by what God had said in the Old Testament. He did not criticise the bible. He assumed that the bible was the Word of God and that it therefore had authority. Jesus knew the Old Testament was written through the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

Mark 12:35

'How is it that the teachers of the Law say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared:...'

Even though the Old Testament is written by men, at the same time it comes from the Holy Spirit and therefore it is reliable all the way through. As Jesus says in a prayer to his Father:

John 17:17

'...your word is truth'

The Old Testament is not a collection of unreliable folktales. It is the Word of God and the Word of God is truth. It is reliable. Jesus Himself acknowledged that and He taught his followers to speak and think about the Old Testament with reference.

The authors of the bible and the bible

Not only Jesus regarded the bible as the Word of God, his followers did the same. One way we can tell is from the way the apostles and other New Testament writers treat the Old Testament. They continually refer to the Old Testament:

Matthew 1:22

'All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet:...'

The followers of Jesus regarded the history described in the bible as the truth. They regarded the words of the prophets and the Psalm writers as the words of God:

Acts 4:24-25

'You made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:...'

They knew that the words of the prophets came from God Himself:

2 Peter 1:21

'For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.'

Not only the Old Testament comes from God but also the New Testament. We can tell for example from the book 2 Peter. In this book Peter calls on the Christians to live as Paul has told them to in his letters. It appears that Peter regards the letters of Paul as 'scripture', in other words, as scripture coming from God. The entire bible is the Word of God. It is evident from numerous passages. Although God used men to write down his words, we cannot conclude that the bible is a human book with shortcomings and mistakes. If we did that we would underestimate the wealth of the bible. We would act as if we knew better than God's own Son, who accepted the bible as truth.

Is the bible unreliable?

The consequences of criticising the bible

At first sight it might not seem a serious matter to criticise the bible. Does it make a difference if we regard the first eleven chapters of Genesis as actual history? Or, to use another example, does it matter if we believe that Jesus actually rose from the grave?

It does matter. In the case of the first example, if we do not believe that the first eleven chapters of Genesis actually happened, the foundation of our Christian faith collapses. It would mean that Adam and Eve never existed, that Satan does not exist and the Fall never happened. If that is so, then why did Jesus have to come to the world? If He did not come to save man from the power of Satan, then why did He come? Someone who does not believe in the first eleven chapters of Genesis will automatically arrive at a very different understanding of who Jesus is. For example, that Jesus only came to show God's love to mankind. Or that He was not God's Son but only a man whose life was a good example to us.

If someone denies the truth of Genesis 1, he will also have trouble with the fourth commandment of God's law that says that God made the heavens and the earth in six days. God wrote this law Himself centuries after the creation.

Jesus told us to accept the first chapters of Genesis as truth when He said:

Matthew 19:4

'Haven't you read ... that at the beginning the Creator made male and female...?'

The apostle Paul also believed that what Genesis describes as history in the Garden of Eden, actually happened. He emphasises the relationship between Adam's sin and the work of Jesus:

Romans 5:18

'Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men.'

The bible is reliable

As we saw at the beginning of this lesson, many people today say that the intention of the bible writers was not to write a history book. Rather, they say, their intention was to bring us to faith in God and Jesus Christ.

The latter is certainly true. The writers of the bible want to make known to their readers who God is and who Jesus Christ is. They want to convince their readers that they should believe in God and in Jesus Christ. The writer John says at the end of his gospel:

John 20:31

'... these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.'

However, we cannot say that because of their intention to bring us to faith, the writers of the bible have not taken historical facts seriously. It does not mean that the bible is full of incorrect information. On the contrary, the writers have been most precise in writing their books. The Holy Spirit has guided them. He has made sure that the bible does not contain any falsehoods.

The bible cannot be put to one side as containing non-historical information. From beginning to end the bible is the Word of God. Although we cannot prove it, we can be certain of it. God has said so Himself and He is reliable.

Questions

1. From our discussion of Genesis 1-11 we have seen that it is important to maintain that everything the bible describes has actually happened.

Explain why it is also important to believe that Jesus has truly risen from the grave? Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-22.

Lesson 21b

Jesus Christ reigns

Jesus' death was not his end. God raised Him from the dead. His disciples and many other people were witnesses to the fact that He came back to life. They were also witnesses of his kingship.

Jesus: the king who has all the power

Read: Matthew 28:16-20

The author Matthew does not mention anything in his gospel about the fact that Jesus' disciples initially did not want to believe that He had risen. He does not mention how Jesus had to convince his disciples that He was truly alive again. Matthew only tells what happens when the eleven disciples finally believe the good news. They go to Galilee as Jesus had told them before his death.

There they meet their master on a mountaintop. When they see Him, they fall down on their knees and worship Him. They recognise Him as God. Some of the disciples still struggle with doubts and that is not surprising. What has happened is truly incredible. Who could have imagined that God would let his own Son become human to bear the guilt of mankind and who could have imagined that the Son of God would have to die on a cross?

Jesus does not keep a distance from the disciples. He walks up to them and says:

Matthew 28:18-20 *'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'*

Jesus speaks majestic words because He is now king. He is the most powerful king ever. God has given Him all the power on heaven and earth.

Jesus commands the eleven men who have been with Him all the time to go out into the world and make people from all nations into his followers. Whoever believes in Jesus can begin a new life. He can belong to God the Father and to his Son, Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit. Baptism will mark the beginning of that new life.

The son of David, the son of Abraham

Matthew started his gospel with a genealogy of Jesus. He called Jesus *'the son of David, the son of Abraham'*. At the end of his book it is clear that Matthew did not exaggerate in the title he gave Jesus.

Jesus is the son of David. He is the promised king who will reign forever. That Jesus has all the power in heaven and on earth shows that He is king. Jesus shows that He will reign forever when He promises his disciples that He will always be with them till the very end of time.

Jesus is also the son of Abraham. God had promised Abraham that in him all nations on earth would be blessed. That promise is now fulfilled. People of all nations can belong to God and to mark it they will be baptised. Through Jesus all nations will be blessed.

The king takes his seat on the throne

A good month after He has risen from the dead Jesus ascends into heaven. Luke is one of the writers who describes this ascension. He even describes the event twice, both in his gospel and in the book of Acts which gives an account of what Jesus Christ did through his followers after his ascension.

Jesus Christ reigns

Read: Acts 1:1-11

1:1 *Theophilus*: the man whom Luke wrote his book originally for

1:2 *apostles: representatives*, this is how Jesus' eleven disciples are called from this moment onwards. As eyewitnesses of everything Jesus did on earth He has sent them into the world to make known the good news.

1:11 *men of Galilee*: the disciples were from Galilee.

In the period after his resurrection Jesus is no longer constantly with his disciples. From time to time He is all of a sudden with them and speaks with them and then afterwards He disappears again.

In the same way He appears to them now that they have returned to Jerusalem from Galilee. He tells them to remain in the capital until God the Father has fulfilled his promise of baptising the disciples with the Holy Spirit.

At the beginning of his work on earth, Jesus was also baptised with the Holy Spirit. That way He was prepared for his task.

The Holy Spirit equipped and enabled Him to fulfil his task.

Now the disciples will also be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The disciples know that Jesus is the promised descendant of David – the king who will reign forever. They hope therefore that the kingdom that He has told them so much about, will now begin. However, Jesus cannot give them a date. Only his Father knows when his kingdom will finally and permanently come.

Jesus can tell his disciples something else. They will receive power when the Holy Spirit will come over them. Everywhere they will be giving a witness about Jesus, in Jerusalem, in the surrounding areas of Judea and Samaria and even far away in foreign countries. Everywhere they will tell people about the salvation that Jesus brings.

This is the last thing the disciples hear from Jesus. After these words He is lifted into heaven. The powerful king of heaven and earth ascends to his throne.

A moment later, two angels tell the disciples how Jesus came to heaven. They also promise that Jesus has not left the earth for good. He will return!

It is easy to imagine that this event made the disciples sad. Only a month after they have received their master back from the dead He leaves them again. They hear that He will return but they do not know when. However, from the end of Luke's gospel we know that when they return to Jerusalem they are happy rather than sad. They spend their time in the temple, thanking and praising God.

They cannot start their work immediately. Jesus will let them know when they can start. He will send the Holy Spirit. Only after the apostles have been baptised with the Holy Spirit they will be able to go out into the world. Now they prepare themselves for this task. They know that there is a vacancy amongst them that needs to be filled. They need to be twelve when they start their work. With God's guidance they choose a new apostle to replace Judas: Matthias. He followed Jesus from the moment of his baptism in the river Jordan. Just like the original apostles he has seen everything that Jesus has done and therefore qualifies as a witness.

The king takes care of his subjects

A week and half later the harvest festival is celebrated in Jerusalem: Pentecost. The wheat harvest has been gathered in. From the first fruits of the harvest people bake bread that is taken to the temple and sacrificed to God. Just like during the Passover festival, Jerusalem is full of Jews. They have come from everywhere. Jews living in foreign countries have also come to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival.

During the festival Jesus gives his followers the gift He had promised: the Holy Spirit.

Read: Acts 2:1-13

2:3 *tongues of fire*: something that looked like flames of fire

2:4 *other tongues*: foreign languages

A large group of followers of Jesus has gathered together early in the morning, before nine o'clock. All of a sudden something unexpected happens. They hear the sound of a strong wind coming from heaven. The house in which they are together seems to fill up with it. And that is not the only thing; the people see something like flames of fire on each other's heads.

It goes beyond outward signs. Everyone in the house knows that the Holy Spirit has come. All men and women in the house are filled with the Spirit. They can do things they could not do in their own power. They start speaking in foreign languages!

In lesson 4b we discussed how God punished the people by making them speak all different languages. At that time it caused their community to collapse. One day God will make an end to that punishment. At Pentecost God makes a start. The Holy Spirit makes it possible for all people to understand the good news. The Holy Spirit begins to rebuild people's communities.

No one actually sees the Holy Spirit. However, his presence and the work He does, can be heard and seen by everyone. Also the many people who have gathered in Jerusalem are aware that something extraordinary is happening. They crowd around the place where the sound comes from. In front of the house where Jesus' followers have gathered they hear them speak about the wonderful things that God has done. The people are very surprised. The followers of Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified, all come from Galilee. They are not educated people. How is it possible that they can all of a sudden speak in foreign languages?

Some people seriously wonder what the meaning of this is. Others do not even want to think about it. They say the Galileans are drunk.

Repent!

The twelve apostles stand up. Peter gives a speech to explain to the people what is happening. They are not drunk at nine

o'clock in the morning! God has poured out his Holy Spirit over them. Jesus Christ has baptised his followers from heaven. Not with water but with the Holy Spirit.

Peter explains: 'The prophet Joel has announced that this would happen. All people including children, old people and slaves can now be filled with the Holy Spirit. This is the work of Jesus of Nazareth – the man who did so many miracles and whom you have killed! Doing so, you did what God had already decided should happen. Jesus' death was not the end. God has raised Him from the dead just as king David prophesied. All of us are witnesses that Jesus is alive again. Jesus has ascended into heaven and God has exalted Him. He sits at God's right hand and reigns. From heaven He has poured the Holy Spirit over us. The same Jesus whom you have crucified as if He were a criminal, has been appointed as Lord over all and as the promised Christ.

Read: Acts 2:37-47

2:42 *the breaking of bread*: communion

2:47 *the Lord*: In the New Testament the title "Lord" is not only used for God the Father but also for Jesus Christ.

People who only seven weeks ago cried out: 'Crucify Him!', are now deeply moved. They ask the apostles what they should do. Peter calls on them to repent. That means they need to radically change their attitude towards Jesus. Besides they need to be baptised in the name of the one they wanted to die. That way they can show their grief over their sins and their faith in Jesus. Through baptism in the name of Jesus they will belong to Him.

Peter promises the people that when they repent and are baptised, God will forgive their sins – even their sin of killing Jesus. Furthermore, they will also receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not only for the apostles. He is for every Jew that is listening and for their children. Moreover, He is for all people who will be called by God.

Jesus Christ reigns

A massive crowd does what Peter says; three thousand people are baptised. It is a clear proof that the Holy Spirit is working. The Holy Spirit gave Peter the words for his speech. He caused those people who killed Jesus to come to repentance and start a new life. He also gives the apostles the power to do miracles like Jesus did. Because of the miracles everyone can know that God is with these people. Every day Jesus, the Lord, uses the Holy Spirit to bring people to repentance.

Before his ascension Jesus promised his disciples that He would never leave them alone. At the day of Pentecost we see how He keeps that promise. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus the king of heaven and earth is personally present with his subjects. Through his Holy Spirit, He takes care of them. Every single day they will know this again.

Questions

1. Why are Jesus' disciples called apostles?
2. What is the importance of Jesus' ascension to us?
- 3a. How do the apostles know that the Holy Spirit has come?
- 3b. How do the people in Jerusalem know?
4. How is Pentecost related to Genesis 11:1-9?

Lesson 21c

Our attitude towards other people

In the previous two lessons in the c-series we discussed the first four commandments. These four commandments teach us what our attitude towards God should be. God also wants to teach us about the way we should treat the people around us. We see this in the other six commandments. In this lesson we will discuss the fifth and sixth commandments.

The fifth commandment

'Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.'

In the fifth commandment God tells the Israelites to honour their parents. What does that mean? The word that is used for 'honour' in Hebrew, the original language of the bible, actually means something like 'regarding someone as important'. Children should regard their parents as important – they should respect them, think highly of them. They should not do so because their parents are good or important in themselves but rather because God has given parents authority over their children.

God's command to children

In what way should children honour their parents? The bible shows that one aspect of honouring is obedience. While they are young children should listen to their parents and obey them.

In this context it is important to remember the special task that God has given to parents. Parents should teach their children about God. They should tell them about what God has done and what He asks from people. When God had given his law to the Israelites, He said to them:

'These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them

when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.'

Israelite parents were told to teach their children what God asked from them. God did not only ask that from Israelite parents, He also asks it from parents today. Even now parents have the duty to teach their children who God is and what He asks from people. They need to tell their children who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for people.

This is a very important task that parents have. They have to tell their children things that are of vital importance and for that reason children should listen to their parents and obey them.

Honouring one's parents involves more than just obedience. It also means that children should treat their parents respectfully and that they should love them.

When children grow up the element of obedience disappears. However, love and respect should remain, even when parents have grown old. In the time of the bible children had the responsibility to earn a living for their parents when they had grown old and suffered from infirmities. In our time, when people who can no longer work receive an allowance or a pension, it is usually not necessary for children to earn a living for their parents. Nevertheless, children can show their love for their parents in a different way, for example by regularly visiting them and by helping them where necessary.

God's promise to children

The fifth commandment contains a promise. For children who honour their parents, things will go well. They will live a long life in Canaan, the land that the LORD will give to them. God gave this promise to the children of the Israelites. However, He also has a promise for children in our time. We know this from the New Testament. Paul writes to the children in the church of Ephesus:

Ephesians 6:1-3 *'Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother" – which is the first command with a promise – "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on earth."*

Children should obey their parents *'in the Lord'*. That means, out of love for the Lord. Whoever believes is no longer under his own command. Jesus has become his lord. For that reason a believer will do what his lord would like him to do, including in his relationship to his parents.

It will go well for children who obey their parents. We know this from our daily lives. Young children do not know for themselves what is good or bad for them. Parents do. They protect their children by forbidding them to do things that can be dangerous for them, like playing with matches or crossing the street without paying attention. It is beneficial for a child to obey his parents.

When Paul speaks of God's promise he also thinks of something else. He thinks of the teaching parents give to their children. When a child listens to that teaching and believes in Jesus Christ, it will go truly well with him. God will free him of the guilt of sin and always take care of him. He will also receive a long life: a life for eternity.

God's command to parents

In the fifth commandment God speaks to children. However, God also has a message for parents. Parents cannot just do what they want. They do not have unlimited power over their children. Their children do not fully belong to them, rather they belong to God and will always belong to God.

Parents will have to treat their children the way God wants. Paul puts it this way:

Ephesians 6:4 *'Fathers, do not exasperate your children: instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord'*

Parents should not cause their children to grow angry or bitter by being too strict with them and treating them unjustly. They

need to shape them and discipline them the way the Lord would.

All authority comes from God

The fifth commandment teaches children to honour their parents. God has given parents authority over their children. However, there is more to be learned from this commandment. There is more authority than only the authority parents have. That authority also comes from God.

An example is the authority of the government. The bible very clearly states that the government is an institution that belongs to God. God wants to use the government to govern people. We should therefore acknowledge and obey the legal government.

Nevertheless, there is a limit to obedience to parents and government. There are situations when Christians have to disobey the people who normally have authority over them: when they are asked to do something that is against God's will. In such a case Christians have to *'obey God rather than men'* (Acts 5:27-29).

The sixth commandment

'You shall not murder.'

In the sixth commandment God forbids the Israelites to murder. This does not mean God forbids every form of killing. Killing animals was for example allowed and the Israelites were also allowed to kill their enemies in war. Sometimes, when a person had committed a sin deserving of the death penalty according to God's law, the Israelites even had to kill that person.

In some cases killing was allowed or even obligatory. Therefore, what killing is it that God forbids in the sixth commandment? The bible explains us that God forbids killing without having a right to do so. In the sixth commandment God forbids us:

Our attitude towards other people

- Murder: killing someone intentionally;
- Manslaughter: killing someone in a fit of anger;
- Killing unintentionally but through fault. For example, an Israelite had to put up a fence on the roof of his house. If he had not done so and a visitor would fall down from the roof, the owner of the house would be responsible.

God regarded every one of these scenarios as murder. In the time of the Old Testament every murderer was deserving of death penalty. This shows us how valuable a human life is in God's eyes.

Man: God's image

Why is it wrong to kill? Why is human life so valuable? It is because man has been created 'in God's image'. Man has received the highest place amongst all created beings. He represents God on earth.

Whoever kills a fellow human being commits a terrible crime, not only towards his fellow man but also towards God. He kills someone who was made in God's image. He kills someone who had the important responsibility to represent God on earth, someone who was on earth to honour and praise God.

The sixth commandment in our time

The sixth commandment is still valid in our time. Even in our time no human being has the right to decide over another person's life. Life comes from God. God is the Lord of life. He has carefully made every human being and He is the only one who has the right to decide over life and death.

If we believe that life comes from God, we need to reject certain things that have become common practice in our society such as abortion and euthanasia.

Abortion

An unwanted pregnancy can be a huge problem in a woman's life. In such a situation many women choose to have an abortion. However, when you consider all life as belonging to

God, abortion cannot be the answer to the problem of an unwanted pregnancy. An unborn child is also a human being and it deserves protection. It has the right to live, even if it might be born disabled. God has given life to this child and no human being has the right to take the life of another human being. Not even when that life is only in its earliest stages. Obviously, we should not make light of the enormous problems a woman has to face when she is pregnant against her will or of the sadness of a woman who knows that the child she is expecting is disabled. Women in such difficult positions need to be helped in every possible way.

Euthanasia

In an increasing number of cases doctors and nurses will, on his request, make an end to the suffering of a seriously ill patient. However, someone who believes that life and death are in God's hand will have to reject the option of purposely ending someone's life. People do not have the right to end the life of a fellow human, not even when a person asks for it. Only God has that right. That does not mean that doctors need to stretch a person's life endlessly. A person should be able to die. However, there is a difference between killing someone and allowing someone to die.

Obviously, there is more to be said about this issue. People can be confronted with very difficult situations and we do not always have easy solutions. Nevertheless, even in difficult situations it is important that God's commandments remain our basis for thinking.

Jesus' explanation of the sixth commandment

We cannot put the sixth commandment to one side just because we have never killed a person. Jesus explains this in his Sermon on the Mount. He tells his followers:

Matthew 5:21-22

'You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgement." But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to

his brother, "Raca," is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, "You fool!" will be in danger of the fire of hell.' (Raca stems from the Aramaic word for empty and probably means something like 'empty-head'.)

In other words, someone who is angry with another person for no good reason or swears at him, deserves God's punishment of eternal death.

This seems strange. Is it not more serious to take someone's life than to call someone a name? At first sight that is true. However, Jesus teaches us to think differently. We are not to hurt our fellow humans. Not with deeds, not with words and not even in our thoughts. To God feelings of jealousy, hatred, anger and revengefulness are equal to killing someone. In the sixth commandment God does not only forbid murder but moreover everything that goes ahead of it. God wants us to love the people around us. Not only the friendly people but also the people that we do not naturally like. We even need to pray for our enemies. If we do so, we behave like children of God our Father who takes care of good and bad people alike.

Questions

1. In giving the commandments God is after the happiness and well-being of the people (lesson 18c).
 - a. Prove this from the fifth commandment.
 - b. In the light of the fifth commandment what can you say about bringing up children liberally?
2. In the time of the New Testament there was a lot of slavery.
 - a. What does the bible say about slavery? Read Galatians 3:26-28 and 1 Corinthians 7:21-24.
 - b. How were slaves and masters to treat one another (while slavery existed)? Read Colossians 3:22-4:1.
 - c. What does Paul's letter to Philemon say about this issue? (Read lesson 19a for the context of the letter.)
3. At first sight the sixth commandment, 'You shall not murder', seems a very easy one to fulfil. Is that so? What

does the sixth commandment have to say to a person who has never killed anyone?

4. Exodus 22:2-3a discusses a situation where a person acts out of self-defence when he is attacked or robbed. Explain why the self-defence in verse 2 is allowed and the self-defence in verse 3a is not?