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Bible Studies Church

What is the Church? The obvious answer is **we are**, we are the Church. Most of us never ask the question in the first place. How we view the church is very important because it will effect our expectations and our actions.

The Greek word for Church is the word Ecclesia, (from which we get ecclesiastical) it means.

those called out
those called together
those called for

In Greek it spoke of a group of citizens called together, by a competent authority, for a specific purpose. In modern English the word *Assembly*, gives most of the meaning of Ecclesia. The Children of Israel are called the 'Ecclesia in desert'. He was in the assembly in the desert, Acts 7:38. God called the people out of Egypt, He called them together and He called them to be His special people. Ecclesia not only referred to the chosen group when they assembled, but also when they were apart.

**How does this definition of church apply to us?
Who called us together? What from? What for?**

To understand the church in this light is to realise our importance and significance. God called us together and we have a destiny.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9
Thirty times the NT refers to us as called.

Jesus said:

I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. Matthew 16:18

Three views of the Church

1

Historically The Roman Catholics saw the Church as an institution with a fixed hierarchy. Leaders, buildings, rules. It was the perfect society and contained within itself all it could need.

Do you agree with this view of the Church?

2

The Reformers (c1600, origin of the Protestant Church) were not happy with this view of the Church, instead they described it as the place where the Sacraments (Baptism & Communion) were administered and the

Gospel correctly preached.

Is this view of the Church sufficient?

3

Today we see the church as the Community of God's people.

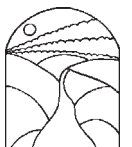
This community has two expressions; The **universal** (invisible) church believers from everywhere and every time. And the **local** (visible) church, a group of people who meet together in one place. (Like us for example)

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Our definition of the Church is **The community of God's people** Bearing this in mind which of the following is the Church.

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A denominational structure |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A central/local Administration. |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A building |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Christians together in worship |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Believers scattered throughout the town during the week |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Me as an individual believer |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A missionary team |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A missions organisation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A youth group |
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The Church is...

Ephesians 1v22-23	<input type="text"/>
1 Timothy 3v15	<input type="text"/>
John 15v5	<input type="text"/>
Ephesians 5v27	<input type="text"/>
Acts 20v28	<input type="text"/>
Ephesians 2v19	<input type="text"/>

What do each of these metaphors tell us about the Church?

Is the Church best described as..

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | An institution |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | An Organisation |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | A living Organism |

Yes the church is an organisation and an institution, to deny it is to deny the obvious (we need structure) but it is not *primarily* an institution it is a living organism. All of the above list speak of life and growth, (with the exception of the last one but even then we are called living stones, being built into a spiritual house 1 Peter 2v5.) The Church is a living growing thing. The big danger comes when we concentrate on the structure and forget that we are a living entity.

Living entities grow and reproduce themselves, by definition that I part of what it means to be alive. If, as a church we have life, we will grow it is part of the nature of the church. If on the other hand we have only rigormortis....

Where does our life come from?

As a church what are the signs of life and death?

It is not enough to sit back and say "since we are alive we will grow so I don't have to do anything" we must also get rid of the things that inhibit our growth.

What does inhibit our growth?

Conclusion

It is not primarily what we do that makes us effective as a church it is what we are that is all important. All the outreach and witnessing in the world will do us no good if we do not have life. If on the otherhand we become what God wants us to be, our witness to the community will become natural and effective.

Do you agree?

Bible Studies

Church Goals



What is the Church for?

Jesus said “I will build my church”, He designed and commissioned it. It is not the invention of man but God. The Church belongs to it’s head, Christ Jesus. At the same time the NT has little in the way of a blue print for how the Church organises itself. It seems this has been largely left to us. This is good for it allows a great deal of flexibility, the Church is free to meet each culture and each age at it’s need. The danger in this is that we will mistake mans organisation for the body of Christ that it was intended to facilitate. That our structures obscure the real reasons for the Church’s existence and the goals it needs to meet.

Take a few minuets to think about these questions before you answer them.



What do you need from the church?



What does God require from the Church?



What does the World (the unsaved) need the Church to be?

The Church cannot be what everyone wants it to be. I have been accused of not covering certain areas in my preaching. The accusation was true, there are some things it is not my job to teach. Sometimes an unsaved person finds a social life in the Church (which is good) until he expects the church to meet his social needs and ignore his spiritual ones.

Does the church have to cater for everyone’s needs? (or wants?)

Who decides what needs the Church should meet?

What does the Church gain from being a community?

I believe that the Church has three fundamental goals;

- To cause believers to grow and mature
- To see the unsaved come to a knowledge of Jesus
- To Glorify God

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:25



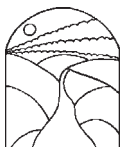
What are the consequences if we give up meeting together;
for ourselves?
for the Church?
for the unsaved?
for God?

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The early church defined its function with three words

Kerygma/Martureo	Proclamation of the Gospel/ be a witness
Diakonia	Service
Koinonia	Fellowship

(Martureo which means witness, also means martyr).

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Ephesians 4:15-16

What does it mean "each part doing its work"?

Goals

John 15v8

Ephesians 3:21

1 Timothy 2v4

1 Peter 2v2

1 Peter 2:9

Ephesians 1v9-10

Colossians 1v20

Ephesians 3v10-

The first verses said the things you expected, but the last three point to something else that God is using the Church to achieve. He wants to reconcile all things to Himself, ie. Reverse the effects of the Fall. He also wants to prove to spiritual beings (both good and evil) that His dealings with mankind are true wisdom. Something that it appears Satan would contest.

God's purposes for the Church go beyond time and space.

Bible Studies

Light and Salt



Salt

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.”
Matthew 5:13

Salt was used for three things;

- As a preservative
- To season
- To ratify (witness) an agreement

As Salt we are called to season, to give an example of Holiness in an unholy world. To preserve, to demonstrate a true set of values to a world that is fast drifting from even the idea that we should have values. And lastly to represent the truth.

Salt does its work silently but effectively. It speaks of an indirect approach to witness. Witness by being who we are. Jesus used a similar illustration when He spoke of the Kingdom of God being like Yeast that works its way through the dough. Matthew 13:33

What does it mean for us to “loose our saltiness”?
How does this metaphor of salt apply to our witness?



Light

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16

Light speaks of revelation of the truth and of knowledge about God.

Light speaks of a more direct and open witness. Sharing the revelation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Letting people see who He is in us. Telling what we know and what He has done for us.

How do people see our light?
What does Jesus want us to do with the spiritual light we have received?
How does this metaphor of light apply to our witness?

“A light bulb does not have to think about how it will light up a room it just does it, that's its nature”

Which method is more effective, salt or light?

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 1 Peter 3:15

All of this demonstrates the prophetic nature of the Church. We are called to live and to show a way of life that is in direct contrast to the World.

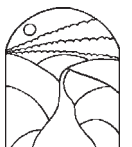
What do we mean when we say the church should be prophetic?

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A prophet is someone who speaks a message from God. The Church has a message from God to share.

What is this message?

Jesus said “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” John 9:5 But now “You are the light of the world”. Matthew 5:14

We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthinas 5:20
This is an awesome responsibility.



Sheep among wolves

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Matthew 10:16

This was Jesus instruction to His disciples when He sent them ahead of Him to preach the Gospel.

What did Jesus mean when He told us to be a shrewd as snakes and as harmless as doves?

I think it means to be gentle, innocent and guileless but not to be naive or foolish.

What does it mean to be sheep among wolves?

Matthew 5v38-48 for some examples.

There are many answers to this, but I think Jesus is saying we must reject the worlds way of doing things in favour of a Divine way. When everyone else is happy being a wolf we are called to be sheep.

2 Corinthians 10v4

What are the worlds weapons, what are ours?

2 Corinthians 4v2

What methods did Paul renounce? Why?

“We are constantly on a stretch, if not a strain, to devise new methods, new plans, new organisations to advance the Church and secure enlargement and efficiency for the gospel. This trend of the day has a tendency to lose sight of the man, or sink the man in the organisation. Men are God’s method. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men.” E. M. Bounds

What does The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men & Women mean?

If we are to follow this vision of the Church, renouncing the worlds methods, being sheep among wolves what practical implications will it have for us?

Presence	Proclamation	Persuasion
Being who we are	Declaring the true	Leading people to the answer

**Can we really effect the world we live in this way?
If so How?**

Bible Studies

The Kingdom and The Church

John the Baptist's message	"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." Matthew 3:2
Jesus' message	"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." Matthew 4:17
The disciple's message	'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Matthew 10:7
Philip's message	he preached the good news of the kingdom of God Acts 8:12
Paul's message	I have gone about preaching the kingdom. Acts 20:25

It is only recorded that Jesus used the word Church twice, in contrast he used the word kingdom almost every time He opened His mouth. While Paul uses the word Church more often, he also talks of the Kingdom frequently.

Why do we use the word kingdom so infrequently?

Many of Jesus Parables were told to explain what the kingdom was like.

He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a....
Matthew 13:24, 13:31, 13:33, 13:44, 13:45, 13:47, 13:52, 18:23, 20:1, 22:2

Are the kingdom of God and the Church the same thing?

You may have answered yes. And practically speaking for us here on earth the two are the same. But in fact the Kingdom of God is larger than the Church.

The Church is part of the kingdom,
The Church is the agent of the Kingdom.

We talk of being saved or becoming a Christian, Jesus spoke of entering the kingdom. **Is there a Difference?**

Can we still preach that the Kingdom of God is near?

There are many definitions of the Kingdom of God. I have a very simple one. **The Kingdom of God is wherever Jesus Christ is ruling.** It is the place where His will is done.



Some people get very confused about where the kingdom of God is, here on in heaven. And whether the Kingdom exists now or only in the future. (ie the millenium)

But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Matthew 12:28

I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom." Matthew 16:28

Heal the sick who are there and tell them, "The kingdom of God is near you." Luke 10:9

Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17: 20-21

While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. Luke 19:11

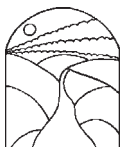
I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew

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with you in my Father's kingdom." Matthew 26:29

Even so, when you see these things happening, ... the kingdom of God is near. Luke 21:31

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." John 18:36

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. Matthew 25:34

Jesus taught that the Kingdom was current but also future, that it was here, but also from another place. Where ever Jesus is acknowledge as King, the Kingdom of God exists. The day will come when that Kingdom is universal. "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." Revelation 11v15

Kingdom Consciousness

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Luke 12:32

And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, Luke 22:29

Christ has conferred on us a Kingdom. Kingdom consciousness is an awareness of ourselves as God's kingdom. It means taking up our destiny as the kingdom.

Firstly we are subjects of the Kingdom.



What responsibilities does this place on us?

Second we are agents of the Kingdom. In His wisdom God is using the Church to further His kingdom



Kingdom Priorities But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. **Matthew 6:33**



Kingdom Obligation "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. **Matthew 7:21**



Kingdom Authority I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." **Matthew 16:19**



Kingdom Dedication Jesus replied, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God." **Luke 9:62**



Kingdom Prayer your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. **Matthew 6:10**



Kingdom distinctive For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, **Romans 14:17**



Kingdom Power For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. **1 Corinthians 4:20**



Kingdom Morals Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders **1 Corinthians 6:9**

Bible Studies

Clean Garments for Joshua

Read Zechariah 3v1-10

This is one of a series of visions given to the prophet Zechariah. At first reading it may seem very strange and irrelevant. The goal of this study is to explain what this passage means and to give an example of how to understand some of the obscure OT passages.

Who are the three main characters?

Who was Joshua? Zechariah 6v11, Haggai 1v1
(Zechariah, Haggai, Ezra & Nehemiah all refer to the same period in time, the return from exile in Babylon.)

The High Priest is the representative of the people before God. What is done to the High Priest is symbolic of what is done to the people as a whole.

Does this passage deal exclusively with the characters of the time or does it have an ongoing significance? verse 8

Who do you think Joshua represents?

What is Satan doing?

Revelation 12:10
job 1v6-12

The idea here is of a court room with the accuser standing beside Joshua to bring charges against him. The angle of the LORD, later just called the LORD is the Judge. Satan in Hebrew is not a name, but a title, *lit* The Satan, the Accuser. Satan is still the accuser of the brethren. **In what way does he accuse us?**

Why is LORD written in capitals?

In the OT, LORD means that the Hebrew word being translated is Jehovah/YHWH. Lord in small letters translated Adonai.

What was the Lord response to Satan's accusation?

Jude v9

Do we have the authority to rebuke Satan?

I think it is highly significant that this formula is used by Michael, and even by God Himself. I would not go beyond it.

What does a stick snatched from the fire mean?

Amos 4v11
Matthew 12v20
Jude v23

Who does this relate to us?

What were Joshua's filthy cloths?

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.
Isaiah 64:6

What was his rich garment?

I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
Isaiah 61:10

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How does this relate to us?

Jesus gives a similar illustration when He taught the parable of the weeding feast Matthew 22v1-13

According to the Law it was forbidden for a priest to let his garments become unkempt, even in mourning he was forbidden to tear his robe or wear sack cloth. During mourning all personal hygiene took a holiday. Leviticus 21:10. He had ornate robes to wear, to discard them was to show disrespect for his calling.

How does this apply to us?

We need to keep our robe of righteousness in good condition by the way we live. When it gets dirty we need to wash it! 1 John 1v9

In verse 4 God gives the command to remove Joshua's dirty robes and to replace them with the priestly robes. "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you." This is what God has done for us. The robes represent the righteousness that God has given us in Christ Jesus.

And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. Philipians 3:9

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. Romans 3:22 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. Romans 4:24

Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. Romans 10:4 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21

What do we do to receive this righteousness?

Is this righteousness real or a fake?

What was the condition that Joshua had to keep? Verse 7

Does this apply to us?

Was this a condition of receiving righteousness or a result of it?

The next paragraph explains how this cleansing will come about. My Servant, the Branch and the Stone are all Messianic titles, *Isaiah 52v13, Isaiah 11v1-3, Isaiah 28v16*. They all refer to Christ. The *seven eyes* also find a reference in *Revelation 5v6*, again they refer to Christ, (Seven horns = complete strength, seven eyes = omniscience and omnipresence.)

Later in *Zechariah 6v11-13*, Joshua himself is established as a type of Jesus Christ, v13 is interesting for it states that Jesus would be both Priest and King, two role carefully separated in OT times.

On which day did God remove the sin from the land? Verse 9c

The invitation to sit under a vine is a recurring theme in the prophets. It symbolises peace, security, prosperity and freedom from oppression.

What is the overall picture Zechariah 3 paints?

Can this same method be applied to other OT passages?

And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. Luke 24:27

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, John 5:39

Bible Studies

The Dead Sea Scrolls

In 1947 a young bedouin shepherd boy throw a stone into a cave, he heard the sound of breaking pottery and went to investigate. In the cave which was situated in the Jordan Valley at the NW corner of the Dead Sea, he found a series of jars containing ancient scrolls. He tried to sell a few pages he had hacked of one of the scrolls, but the buyer recognised the significance of the fragment and alerted the authorities. Thus came to light the most significant archaeological find of the century.

What the boy had come upon were the remains of a library belonging to a group known as the Dead Sea sect, who lived in the area between 130BC and 70AD. Over the next few years the whole area was seached intensivly and more caves were discovered containing more manuscripts.

Many of these MS were The sectarian writings of the Dead Sea Sect, (eg, the Manuel of Discipline, The Habakkuk Commentary, The war of the Children of light (themselves cf Luke 16v8) against the Children of Darkness (everybody else but especially the Romans), the Temple Scroll, etc). There were also commentaries on several books of the Bible, a series of extrabiblical psalms and corespondence between the sect and outsiders, notably the High Priest in Jerusalem. Almost all of this was written in Hebrew, (red faces from the schollars who believe only Aramaic was used during this period cf Acts22v2) Many of the smaller manuscripts have yet to be published.

The far more significant set of MS are 100 biblical scrolls representing all the books of the OT with the exception of Ester. Few or these manuscripts are complete, and some of the books are represented more than once, (eg Isaiah 3 times.) These scrolls date between 100 & 200 years before Christ.

Why so significant

The NT was written after the compeation of the OT, but ironically while we have whole copies of the NT from the 4th Century, chunks from the 3rd and fragments from the 2nd, the oldest copies of the OT date from the 900's AD.

Between the years 100 and 900 groups of Jewish scollers called Masorites (from *Masoret*, tradition) in Tiberias and Babylon, took it upon themselves to copy the scriptures. We know that in the time of Jesus there were versions of the OT that were quite different from the Hebrew text we now have. The Masorites compared these versions and standadized them, they then removed from circulation any MSS they considered inferior. The question is how good a job did they do? What if the changed it to fit their own beliefs? How can we be sure that the text they ended up with was the same text Jesus used? Liberal scollers were sceptical, they told us that the diferences must be enormous, we could not rely on the Masoretic text at all.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are 'B' grade documents, ones left behind when the group fled from the Romans in AD 70. They are a 1000 years older than any other MSS we have, dispite this the differences between, for example Isaiah A and the Mesoretic Isaiah, are minimal. The Dead Sea Scrolls have filled in for us 1000 year of questions and given the answer, yes the OT scriptures have come down to us intact.

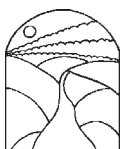
a genizah (hiding place) Old or surplace

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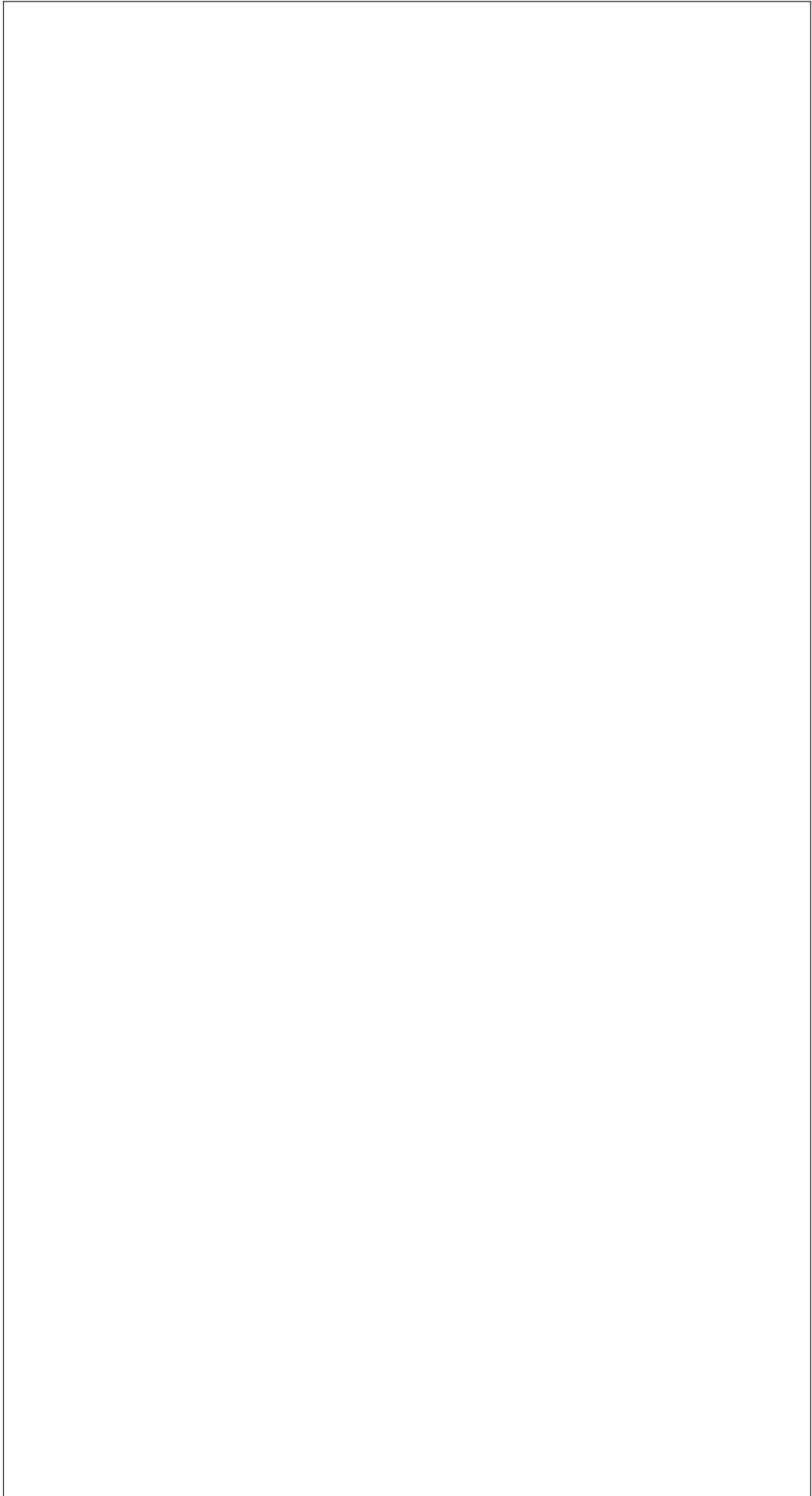
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Bible Studies

The Call of Elisha

Read 1 kings 19v15-18

Elijah was a truly great prophet, yet even the best of people have their failures and their weakness. From the heights of Mt. Carmel, where Elijah had called down fire from heaven and seen a whole people turn back to God. Where he had prayed and seen a three year drought broken. Elijah had slipped, he had run for no other reason but fear and is now found bitter and disillusioned on Mt. Horeb, the Mountain of God.

Often in the midst of our greatest triumphs we find defeat, this we must guard against.

God reminds Elijah that he is not alone nor is he God's only hope (as he seems to believe) He is sent back to do three things, the most significant of which (and the only one he actually did,) was to appoint Elisha to be his successor.

The prophecy

Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. 1 Kings 19:17

This threefold prophecy explained God's plan for the restoration of His people. Something Elijah seemed to think was now impossible. God always has a plan.

Hazael was king of Aram (Syria), Israel's natural enemy.

His sword is the sword of War and of Judgement. 2 Kings 8v12-13

Jehu was to be King of Israel, a good king (mostly). He destroyed Baal worship

His sword is the sword of Justice and Zeal for God. 2 Kings 10v16,30

Elisha's sword was different, he never killed anyone but it was no less effective.

His sword was the sword of the Word and the Spirit.

Isaiah 11v4b

Hosea 6v5

Matthew 10v34

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Elijah seemed to think he was Israel's only hope, but God is not tied to one man or one method. God always has His 7000. When we think we are indispensable, we make ourselves eminently dispensable.

How might this effect us?

The Gospel does not finish with us. God always has His eye on the next generation - so should we.

The Call

Read 1 kings 19v19-21

Elisha means 'God is Salvation.'

What was Elisha doing when he was called?

What would 12 yoke of oxen suggest about his family?

That Elisha took his turn at the plough tells us what about him?

Some of us sense that God has a call for us and we waste years waiting to find what He has for us to do. Not so Elisha, not so the disciples, they were called at work.

Consider Ecclesiastes 9v10 & Luke 16v10-12.

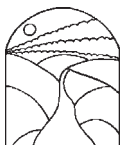
It has been said 'God calls busy people' is this true?

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What significance's did Elijah's Cloak have? (1K18v46,9v13,2K2v8,13,14)

Elisha understood it as a call.

It symbolised friendship.

It symbolised coming under Elijah's covering and protection.

It symbolised Elijah's anointing and power.

For us what would the cloak be symbolic of?

Was Elisha eager or reluctant? cf Psalm 110:3

We read that Elisha downs tools and runs after Elijah. Do not hesitate in God's call.

Do you think Elisha might have been in some way prepared for this moment?

Compare 1 Kings 19v20 with Luke 9v59-62.

Maybe Jesus had Elisha in mind when He spoke these words, as if to say that the service of the kingdom is much more urgent than that to which Elisha was called.

But Lot's wife gives us the example of those who look back, not Elisha. For the man to whom Jesus spoke, saying goodbye to family was an excuse to delay, or even not go at all. In Elisha's case he was simply honouring his parents.

What excuses are good enough for you not to follow Christ?

If you accept an excuse, then there will always be one to accept.

Elisha took the oxen he was ploughing with and slaughtered them cooking them with the wood from the plough (I bet his father was ecstatic!) Then he gave a farewell banquet.

What was he doing?

What have I done?

"Go back," Elijah replied. "What have I done to you?" 1 Kings 19:20

These were surely dangerous times to be a prophet. Not a time to leave the safety of a well off family.

Elisha did not go back nor did Elijah want him to. **So what does it mean?**

The choice to follow had to be 100% Elisha's choice. God has the right to call even reluctant disciples but man does not have the right to force others against their will. For me this sentence speaks of the awesome nature of the call to follow. It is a divine call and carries with it divine responsibilities. It is not something to be taken lightly. To follow Jesus is an all encompassing thing, it will at some stage cost you everything. Elijah knew the cost of following. A prophet cannot chose when, where, or if he will speak God's word, he can only obey.

The prophecy stated that Elisha should be Elijah's successor in the prophetic ministry. **What in fact did Elisha become?**

It appears that Elisha was Elijah's attendant for some 10 years.

How do you think those 10 years served Elisha?

What lesson does this have for us?

It is human nature to want everything now, to grasp the prestigious role. After all it was prophesied. Elisha had to learn his calling. Zec 4:10. Always take the opportunity to learn from those around you. God gives you the abilities for the tasks to which He calls you but that does not mean you do not need the instruction of those who have already been there and know the calling.

What does this story tell us today?

Luke 5:11 So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

Bible Studies

Elisha - A Double Anointing

Read 2 Kings 2v1-18

It would appear everyone knows what is about to happen, the company of prophets, Elisha and Elijah, but the subject is not to be discussed.

Three times Elijah tells Elisha to stay while he goes on three times Elisha refuses.

Why did Elijah tell Elisha to stay?

Is it possible that this was some kind of test?

Why did Elisha refuse?

There is a hint here of Jacob wrestling with God, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." Gen 32:26. Elisha had been faithful in following and serving Elijah some 10 years, he was not about to leave him at the end.

Is there a lesson for us in this?

The prophets said to Elisha "Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?" A literal translation of the Hebrew says 'from over your head'. This could imply the physical way that Elijah went up, but also that today Elisha would be the one with the prophets authority. Elisha was not going to miss what he had been waiting for 10 years.

The two prophets cross the Jordan, the area where Moses had died. It is not until here that Elijah asks, "Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?" Had he waited at Gilgal, Bethel or Jericho the question would not have been asked the blessing not imparted. For such blessing come to those who stay close to their master.

God gave Solomon a similar opportunity 1 Kings 3v5. Jesus also used the same kind of expression, Mark 10v51. The Bible says that God will give us the desires of our hearts. The question is are those desires godly.

What would you ask for?

Are you asking for it?

You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. James 4:2b-3.

Mark 10v36-38 is an example of this.

What did Elisha ask for?

This require thought, we immediately think that Elisha is asking for twice as much of the power of the Holy Spirit as Elijah had. After all this passage is clearly about receiving the Gifts and Anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Did Elijah have the power to dictate how the Holy Spirit would come upon Elisha?

It is the Father we ask for the Holy Spirit not Elijah, notice also that spirit here is without a capital letter.

What was the double portion of Elijah's spirit?

Deut 21v17

The inheritance of the double portion belonged to the first son, the others just got a single share. Elisha is asking to be Elijah's successor as prophet, what he was first called for and what the company of prophets already acknowledged he was to become.

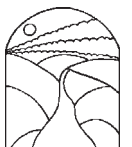
If it was prophesied that you would receive a gift, would that obviate the need to pray for and seek after that gift?

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Why was this a hard thing?

Maybe the difficulty was not in Elijah recognising Elisha as his successor, but in Elisha filling the role?

The next perplexing thing is the condition Elijah requires of Elisha.

What was the condition?

Why was this necessary?

It is required of those called for spiritual tasks to see what others cannot see.

F.B.Meyer writes, 'had we been there, we should probably have been unconscious of anything, save the sudden disappearance of the Prophet.' To be a prophet you must see through the eyes of a prophet.

2 Corinthians 4v18

Hebrews 11v1

Hebrews 11v27

Romans 4v17

This does not mean Elisha made up what he saw rather he saw what was invisible, he saw through the eyes of faith, he saw spiritual realities.

Examining a painting by Turner, a woman remarked that she had never seen such colours in real life, the artist replied 'no madam, but don't you wish you could?'

An artist can see what others cannot, so must the man and woman of faith.

What did Elijah cloak represent?

Elijah was the second man to be translated and not see death (who was the first?)

The mechanics of how this happened are irrelevant. Twice a whirlwind is mentioned, (caught up in the Spirit as Daniel or Philip were?). A flaming chariot is also mentioned which could mean an angelic chariot as Angels are consistently associated with fire. (Seraphim means flaming ones).

Cowley refers to Elijah as *the second man to leap the ditch, where all the rest of mankind fell*. It reminds us that death is not our goal but that which lie beyond death, of the immediate presence of God. Philipians 1v23. Also of the Rapture that awaits those are alive when Christ returns.

Evidently Elisha felt nothing of this double portion, no new power, no tingling sensation, no rush of the Lord's presence. It is not until he stands before the Jordan, in need of the anointing that was so evident in Elijah, that he found the reality of the impartation. When they see the river part the company of prophets recognise that Elisha is God's anointed servant.

Did Elisha receive a double portion? Whether it is coincidence or not we do not know but the Bible records twice as many of Elisha's miracles than Elijah's.

We have noted that the significance of this passage for us has to do with receiving gifts of the Spirit.

If so what can we learn from Elisha?

We must seek and persevere, as believers we are to ready to stay at Gilgal, or then at Bethel, or finally Jericho. Ready to stay with the others when we must press on following our master.

We must ask for what we desire, and desire what is right. We must not assume that everything will come automatically because it is preordained.

We must prepare ourselves in service to our master as Elijah did.

We must act in faith, seeing things from a spiritual perspective.

We need not expect to feel it, (though we may,) but step out in faith as Elisha did.

Bible Studies

Elisha Two Miracles

Read 2 Kings 2v19-22

Jericho is one of (if not the) oldest cities in the world. The reason for this is its position. It sits in the rift (Jordan) valley, the climate is warm even in winter. It was on a main road between Syria and Egypt, and afforded good hunting and pasture. The Jordan valley is the lowest point on Earth, the air pressure makes breathing a little easier, giving a sense of serenity and peace. Jericho today is a real oasis and still a city of Palms as it was in Biblical days.

Why was the Water bad? Joshua 6v26, 1 Kings 16v34

Jericho had only recently been rebuilt (14 years) before that it had been a partial ruin for c400 years. We know that there was some kind of settlement during this time. 2 Samuel 10v5.

In light of this was Elisha action more than just to do with water?

There is today a spring called Elisha's spring, from which I have drunk. This is claimed as the one Elisha healed. Clearly it was not the salt that physically healed the water, but the faith and obedience it represented. The incident is reminiscent of the bitter water at Elim, in Moses day. Exodus 15v23-27

Two interpretations



What was cursed is now blessed.

There are times when we may have deliberately disobeyed God, or simply make wrong choices and miss His will.

Can you think of any examples?

Does this mean that you will never know God's blessing?

What must we do?

We must repent and obey Him now.

Abraham disobeyed God when Ishmael was conceived, but this did not stop God from providing Abraham with Isaac, God even blessed Ishmael. When Jonah obeyed God his evangelism was still blessed.

Psa 30:5 For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning.

Which of these is true?

Because I have disobeyed.

I may as well keep on disobeying because continuing a sin is no worse than committing it in the first place.

It doesn't matter if I am disobedient because God will accept me back when I repent.

Since I disobeyed God, He has finished with me so there is no longer any hope and no point in repenting.

God will bless me if I repent and do what is right now.

God has a hundred ways to turn my failure into blessing.

Since God has forgiven me I will not have to live with the consequence of my action.

Consider Joel 2:25, Genesis 50:20, Romans 8:28

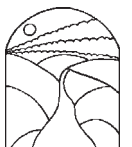
The best example of all this is Israel. Israel went through many rebellious times when they turned from God's will, even serving other gods, but when they repented God always drew them back and blessed them again.

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Renewing the Heart

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Proverbs 4:23

This ties in with the similar account at Elim, the bitter water is the bitterness of an unforgiven life. The Salt is the Gospel message. Mark 9v50. The Gospel renews the heart and heals it's corruption so the it can again be productive.

What does it mean that the heart is the wellspring of life?

Matthew 12v33-36, 15v18-19, Luke 6v45.

How do you guard your heart?

1 Peter 2v11, Philippians 4v7, Luke 12v15.

See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. Hebrews 12:15

In John Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit was like a spring welling up inside us. James warns that the mouth is like a spring of water, bitter and fresh water cannot come from the same spring.

Read 2 Kings 2v23-25

This is a passage that offends many people. *Our faith is all sweetness and light - far be it from God (or Elisha) to do such a thing.*

Elisha went from the School of the Prophets in Jericho to the School of the Prophets in Bethel.

What else was in Bethel? 1 Kings 12:28-29.

These were set up by King Jeroboam to stop the people worshipping God in Jerusalem as the law prescribed. They were Idols, but they were also a deviant way to worship God. God was very displeased, 1 Kings 13, 14v9. I cannot imagine that Elijah or Elisha were silent on the subject. Consequently I imagine neither of them were too welcome in Bethel. The School of the Prophets probably put up with this behaviour all the time. The prestige and finical income from the golden calf would have been large. The true prophet threatened all this. (Paul got into trouble in exactly this way in Ephesus. Acts 19v26-29)

Such a large group (42+) were probably not there by accident. They were probably sent to make Elisha unwelcome and, if possible, keep him from entering the town. If this is all true, we can see why such a judgement came down on them. it was a judgement on the whole town not just the youths.

Go on up - Is a term of contempt, but it could also be their way of saying ' *why don't you go after Elijah and we will be rid of both of you* '.

But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. 2 Chronicles 36:16

"Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm." Psalms 105:15

It is a serious thing to mock God's anointed, or to make fun of those who speak His word.

A New Testament perspective

Read Luke 9v52-56

Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Luke 6:28

Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. Romans 12:19

Why the change?

Bible Studies

Elisha- Widows oil

Read 2 Kings 4v1-7

Most of the New Testament miracles had a specific purpose, theological or evangelical to them. This miracle seems to have been preformed purely on compassionate grounds to meet a desperate need.

We have already read much of the company or school of the Prophets, a group who when the nation turned from God remained faithful to Him. I cannot imagine such a group as being only concerned with themselves. I imagine they saw their task as halting the nations apostasy by their example and their teaching.

Does being a servant of God make us immune from tragedy?

What was the woman's plight?

In Biblical times her sons and the widow herself, could be taken into slavery as payment for a debt. They would remain slaves for the next six years, or until the next year release. Exodus 21v2. (We also know this was not always observed.) During this time a relative could pay to redeem them. In fact it was his obligation to do so.

Is it right for a Christian to get into debt? Romans 13:8

We do not know how he got into debt, so we will not judge him, it could well be that it was a result of the persecution under Jezebel.

If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. 1 John 3:17-18

Four simple lessons

The Women had to ask.

She had to ask and to state her need.

God uses what we have.

Elisha asked her first what she wanted then what she had. God uses what we have, this may be possessions or it may be talents. These things are only used when they are first given to God.

Then the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" "A staff," he replied. The LORD said, "Throw it on the ground." Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. Exodus 4:2-3

How do these two stories compare?

God's provision requires an act of faith.

In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. James 2:17-18

How did she show her faith?

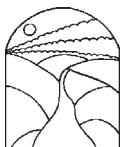
What would have happened if she had got just a few jars?

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The miracle came in the pouring.

Open wide your mouth and I will fill it. Psalm 81:10

This is so often true in receiving God's provision. Especially in receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit or giving a prophecy. Until you start doing what God calls you to do you never know His power to help you.

Can you think of a similar story in the NT (feeding 5000)

Why did she go to Elisha to ask what to do?

Maybe she recognised it was not her oil!

How do you think this story applies to us today?

What are the vessels?

What is the Oil?

What is the need?

The Jars had to be empty and clean.

Empty of what?

Clean from what?

Three principles (Courtesy of A.Maclaren)

Desire

To be filled we must desire God's fullness

You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. James 4:2-3

God does not force himself on us, He does not give unless we desire.

God will not make you holy unless you desire holiness.

He will not make you wise unless you are eager to learn.

It is our capacity to receive that determines how much God gives us. Our desire must be real and strong, not weak and indecisive. It must be steadfast. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does. James 1:6-8

Expect

To desire is one thing, to positively expect God to fill us is another. Often our expectations fall far below our desire. Our low expectation of God limits His supply.

Read Luke 11v7-9

Why did the man not give up?

Expectation, like desire opens the heart.

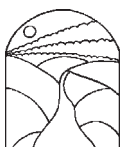
How does low expectation limit God?

Obedience

Desire and expectation go only so far, we can desire and expect what is not right for us. We ask with wrong motives. James 4v3. We must obey God and walk in the light. If we do this our desires will be godly. The area of obedience is another where we can be double minded. One moment our desires are Godly, the next we run off after some sin.

Bible Studies

Elisha - Naaman



Read 2 kings 5v1-3

Who was Naaman?

Aram (Syria) was Israel's natural enemy, during this whole period there was intermittent war between Israel and Aram.

For me the most important character in this story is not a king, commander or prophet but a slave girl.

She took the opportunity.

She exercised faith.

She sowed the seed.

If you compare her with the king of Israel or Gehazi, Elisha's servant, then she stands out as an example for us to follow.

She could not heal Naaman, but she knew who could!

And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" Ester 4:14

It is by no means clear that the disease indicated here, is what we know as leprosy. The Hebrew indicates a skin disease, but the word is not used exclusively of leprosy. Epidemiologists are uncertain whether leprosy was known in the Middle East at this time. However in the heat of the Mediterranean, all skin diseases were treated with extreme suspicion and subjected to quarantine. This was the end of Naaman's distinguished career.

Read 2 Kings 5v4-7

Why was Naaman sent to the king not the prophet?

What was the Kings reaction? Why?

What was his conclusion about the reason Naaman had come?

The king faced with an impossible situation resorted to despair. Is such a situation despair is always at hand, a snare for the unwary, we should resort to faith. By the way the kings conclusion, that the king of Aram was out to provoke a war was unfounded. Human nature tends to invent the worst and exercise paranoia. Faced with trouble it is easy to make unfounded conspiracy theories, we must guard against this.

Read 2 Kings 5v8-11

What was Elisha's response to the king?

You can imagine Naaman and a large entourage arriving outside Elisha's modest dwelling. We have to understand that what Elisha did next was very strange.

Naaman was a very important man. He deserved respect. He deserved to be met personally by Elisha.

Instead what does Elisha do?

Why did Elisha act this way?

What was Naaman to do?

Seven in Scripture is the perfect number the number of completion. It pertains to divinity.

Faith Rating.	1 to 10
Servant Girl	□□□□□□□□□□
King of Israel	□□□□□□□□□□
Elisha	□□□□□□□□□□
Naaman	□□□□□□□□□□

Read 2 Kings 5v11-12

What was Naaman's reaction?
What had his expectation been?

The Jordan is still a remarkably unimpressive river. In biblical times, at the end of summer it could dry up to almost nothing.

Were the waters of Jordan of special spiritual effectiveness?

Do you think Elisha deliberately chose a demeaning way for Naaman to be healed?

Why? James 4v6, 1 Peter 5v5

Naaman's problem

He had a false understanding of how God would act.
His pride stopped him from doing what God required.
He did not want to obey God or Elisha.

Do you think these are still problems for us today?

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. James 4:10

He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the LORD. 2 Chronicles 36:12

It is recorded that Jesus *learned obedience*. We too must learn to be obedient to God. Sometimes God tests this obedience.

Had Naaman refused to bathe would he have been healed?

If we refuse to humble ourselves will we receive from God?

Read 2 kings 5v13-14

Another servant who acquits himself well.

What was the servants argument?

This servant is another role model for us. We must encourage one another to be obedient to God and to ditch our pride.

Faith Rating. 1 to 10

Naaman's Servant

What was the effect of bathing?

I imagine that after Six dips in muddy Jordan Naaman's condition was unchanged, obedience had to be completed.

In Scripture what is leprosy a type or symbol of?

Going down to the water
Going to make myself real clean
Seems so long since I felt holy
Guess Naaman felt the same.

Got no Jordan in this country
Can't count much more than five
And I don't believe that seven's
Going to make my soul alive

Seems I've been around a long time
Found no prophet got no cure
Now you say 'go bathe in Jesus'
Only way to make me whole.

Adrian Snell

How do we bathe in Jesus?

How does this make us clean?

Assuming this story refers to salvation identify the factors it contains.

Bible Studies

Elisha- Gehazi's Fall

If you don't remember the story of Naaman, look over the passage to remind yourself. 2 Kings 5v1-14

Read 2 Kings 5v15-16

A Changed man.

Naaman is cleansed, but he has also learnt some very important lessons. His whole attitude is different. Like the Samaritan that Jesus cured of Leprosy, Naaman comes back to thank Elisha. Luke 17,12-19. Elisha would not see Naaman before, his pride had to be broken first, besides it was God who had to take center stage, Elisha had to stay in the back ground. Now he welcomes Him.

What two things does Naaman do?

Why did Naaman offer a gift?

Why would Elisha not receive the gift?

We do not know the reasons. Naaman could have offered the gift in pure gratitude, or to solve his conscience, or because he was treating Elisha as he would a pagan priest or magician.

If it was one of these last two possibilities, then Elisha's reasons for refusing are obvious. He was not about to take glory for what God had done, nor by accepting a gift was he going to let Naaman think he could buy healing.

Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Matthew 10:8

The Bible says that a workman is worthy of his hire but we must never become hirelings.

Read 2 Kings 5v17-19

Imperfect faith

In verse 15b Naaman makes a confession of faith in God. His healing was complete but his faith was not.

What defects do we find in Naaman's faith?

Naaman's request for two mule loads of earth seems strange. His intention was either to worship God on the soil or to use the soil to set up an altar. While he has acknowledged that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. He still thinks that God is somehow a local deity tied inextricably to the geographical land of Israel. Like bottled water from the Jordan it is a kind of superstition.

It is so easy for faith to degenerate to superstition.

Can you think of any examples?

Naaman's next request was as much political as religious, as Commander of the army he would have had to take part in the rituals in the temple of Rimmon. While he will physically comply his heart will stay true to God.

Is this all right?

Can what we do outwardly and believe inwardly be separated?

Can you ask God for the forgiveness of a sin in advance?

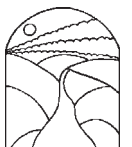
Elisha does not sanction or condemn, nor was he asked to, he just says Go in Peace, Doubtless his prayers were that Naaman would find courage when the time came to stay true to God.

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Waiuku AG
Ray Moxham
www.wag.org.nz
WaiukuAG
@maxnet.co.nz

Read 2 Kings 5v20

Do you think Elisha was too easy on Naaman?

Sometimes we are tempted to put conditions and restrictions on people that God does not impose.

This could be true in salvation;

You can't be a Christian unless...

forgiveness of a sin;

I won't accept your apology until...

acceptance in Church;

You can't come in here unless...

True, there are standards, but they are not subject to our opinion of what is right and proper, rather on God's love, grace and holiness. Gehazi thought he knew better than his master. Sometimes we think the same.

Read 2 Kings 5v21-24

What was Gehazi's true motive?

Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God. 2 Cor 2:17

Like always, temptation started in the thought life. Regulate desire and you control conduct.

Is it possible that by asking for a gift it was Gehazi that let Naaman off lightly?

Read 1 Timothy 6v5b-11

What's the difference between godliness is a means to financial gain and godliness with contentment ?

What should our attitude to money be?

What sins did greed cause Gehazi to commit?

Read 2 Kings 5v25-27

Elisha knew. Often God revealed these things to Elisha, although he did not always. 2 Kings 4v27. In extreme cases God still does. Even when no one else knows God does, and after all He is the one who matters.

For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. Ecclesiastes 12:14

The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden. 1 Timothy 5:24-25

What did Elisha mean when he said "this is not the time..."?

Elisha had a whole perspective that Gehazi did not even know existed. Gehazi did not see a problem with receiving Naaman's gift. For Elisha God's will always took priority over personal gain.

How could it be so for us?

Therefore Jesus told them, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. John 7:6

It is ironic that Naaman is cured and Gehazi becomes a leper.

Gehazi's sin was great, so was his punishment. It reminds us of Ananias and Sapphira. In a sense the outward leprosy was a sign of an inward leprosy, the greed of Gehazi's heart. Maybe if the inner leprosy could be healed there would be hope for the outer one.

Bible Studies

Elisha at Dothan

Read 2 Kings 6v8-14

Again Aram is at war with Israel. It is not always easy to work out what King is on the throne in these passages. The leading contender in this case is Joram, while he was not a good king he was not all bad either, at least he listens to Elisha.

What spiritual gift is the prophet exercising?

The king of Aram sends a force by night to capture Elisha. They surround the city of Dothan, which is 15km north of Samaria the capital of Israel.

Did you notice a flaw in the kings logic?

Based on this why didn't Elisha run for it?

Read 2 Kings 6v15-17

We assume that Elisha's servant is still Gehazi. He is mentioned in chapter 8 so he was still on the scene.

Is this surprising? How do you account for it?

The might not yet have taken effect, he may have repented and been healed or this section of Kings may not be in strict chronological order.

What was Gehazi's response?

What was Elisha's response?

Why were they different?

Yes, Gehazi was taken by surprise when Elisha wasn't. Yes, Elisha had a faith Gehazi had not grasped. But he also had a depth of experience in the Lord that led him to know he could trust God.

Gehazi had to learn faith, Elisha set an example.

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:1

Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. Titus 2:7

What example should you set for those younger in the faith than you?

What did Elisha do?

Firstly he said "Don't be afraid" an oft repeated line in Scripture and one we need to take note of. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." 2 Kings 6:16

2 Chronicles 32v7-8

Isaiah 55v10

Romans 8v31

1 John 4v4

Secondly he prayed a very short prayer. "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." 2 Kings 6:17. He did not give him a Bible study or a motivational talk.

When did this heaven army arrive?

What is clear is that they were already there. Gehazi suddenly got to see them.

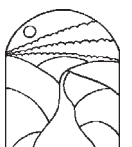
The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. Psalm 34:7

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Can you imagine the look on his face?

Do we know for sure that Elisha saw the angels?

The miracle was not the presence of the angels but that for a moment they were seen.

We have already learnt in this series of studies that the servants of God must see things that others cannot see. They must have a spiritual sight, the eyes of faith. They must look at God and not the problem.

Concentrating on the problem brings fear, hopelessness, depression and defeat. Concentrating on God brings faith, hope, encouragement and victory.

When I am afraid, I will trust in you. Psalm 56:3

Can you think of any examples?

2 Corinthians 1v8-10 springs to mind, or the time Paul and Silas were in prison.

We do not live in denial. We know and acknowledge the problem, but we also know and acknowledge God and God is bigger than the problem. Romans 4v18-21.

The wonder is, not that we should sometimes be afraid, but that we should ever be free of fear if we look only at the visible facts.

The world says seeing is believing we say believing is seeing. Maclaren.

For this spiritual sight we must also have our eyes opened.

Read 2 Kings 6v18-23

Were the angels used to deliver Elisha?

What were they there for?

It is speculated that this blindness could have been a kind of confusion rather than literally not being able to see. They did not have a clue what was happening.

Either way it must have been a comical sight.

15 km's later they arrive in Samaria and their eyes are opened. They must have got an almighty shock.

Why did the king want to kill them?

Why did Elisha forbid him?

What was the outcome?

God always seems to have something more going on than we expect. He used one problem to solve another. And in the reverse of what we normally expect to happen everyone had a nice cup of tea and went home.

This gives us a practical example of what Jesus meant when he told us to love our enemies and do good to those who persecute us.

When we do this what range of outcomes might we expect?

And I myself will be a wall of fire around it,' declares the LORD, 'and I will be its glory within.'
Zechariah 2:5

What can we learn from this story?

Bible Studies

Elisha & The Siege of Samaria

Read 2 Kings 6v24-33

What was the state of the City and it's people?

What was the kings response?

Who did the king blame?

What would have been a better response?

As the city ran out of food and even the most unappetising meal sold for a fortune, morale sank and people began to do what at other times would be unthinkable. The king was at his wits end, "If the Lord does not help you where can I get help for you" he was in the same boat as everyone else.

We may suppose that Elisha had been telling the king to wait for the Lord. But the king was through waiting.

Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and **wait for the LORD.** Psalm 27:14

Are you ever impatient with God?

The king tore his clothes in despair and anger, he would have been better to rent them in repentance.

Elisha obviously trusted God for he was still in the city and still meeting with the elders. What were they doing? Were they praying?

Read 2 Kings 7v1-2

Elisha predicted that within 24 hours food would be in abundance and sell for a normal price. This was clearly impossible. The kings attendant pointed this out. *Even if the heavens rained down corn, even if manna fell as in the desert.*

Did God have to open the windows of heaven?

'Unbelief is a sin by which men greatly dishonour and displease God and deprive themselves of the favours He designs for them' Matthew Henry.

Just because we cannot see how something could happen does not make it impossible. With God all things are possible. Matthew 19v26

Read Mark 9:23

Elisha did not tell how it would happen, if indeed he knew himself. God very rarely spells out His methods in advance.

Does not knowing how make it harder to believe?

It is almost as if God is saying "stand back and be amazed".

Why did God wait until they were desperate?

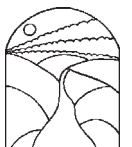
The LORD will judge his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees their strength is gone and no one is left, slave or free. Deuteonomy 32:36

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Read 2 Kings 7v3-16

What happened to the Aramean army? v6-7

The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as bold as a lion. Proverbs 28:1

What was the lepers logic?

(Jewish tradition says these lepers were Gehazi and his three sons.)

What did they do?

Why did they report it to the King?

Why did no one in the city notice the Aramean's had fled?

What was the Kings assumption?

The Aramean's have fled leaving everything too heavy to carry, including their food supplies. All the King has to do is go get the food and sell it to the people.

So where is the miracle?

The miracle is two fold; only that Elisha knew what would happen (or at least that something would happen) and only that God caused the Aramean's to hear a sound.

Were these big miracles?

Track the river of life to it's source and you will find God.

We may think it a wonder that an entire army could be routed by just a sound, that they would be so fearful that they would not even check to see if the Egyptians and Hittites were there. Stranger things have happened. God used this trick more than once (2 Kings 19:7), but it is also a favourite of the Enemy. He makes us hear some doubt or rumour or lie and as a result we quit whatever good work we are doing in God's service.

Can you think of any examples?

What can you do to counter this tactic?

Read 2 Kings 7v17-20

The doubter got his comeuppance and God's word was fulfilled.

Why was he judged so harshly?

Two Lessons

Some people try to find scientific explanations for the miracles of Scripture. Others seem to get very disappointed when God uses understandable or human methods. I think we should just let God work any way He wants.

1

The first lesson is never doubt that God can do what He has promised. Just because it seems impossible, that it would require a supernatural extraordinary miracle does not mean God can't find an easy way to do it. Faith is so simple. We do not have to work everything out.

Sometime we are frightened to think through how God will achieve something because we then think that it stops God from doing it that way.

Is this a valid argument?

Do we need to work out how God will do something?

2

There is an allegory in this passage. The lepers stand for Christians who discover the Good News of deliverance.

What happens next?

Then they said to each other, "We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us." 2 Kings 7:9

In what way would this be true for us?

Read Ezekiel 33v1-8

Bible Studies

Elisha, Hazael & Jehu.

Elijah's unfinished tasks

¹⁵The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. ¹⁶ Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. ¹⁷ Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. ¹⁸ Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him." 1 Kings 19:15-18

It was only Elisha that Elijah anointed. We now find that Elisha anoints Hazael and Jehu and that as the penultimate acts of his ministry, which the Bible records.

Why such a long delay?

What does this tell us about prophecy?

Therefore Jesus told them, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right." John 7:6
For us the time is always now, not so for God. Isaiah 5v18-19. We must wait for God's timing, which is sure and perfect.

For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. Habakuk 2:3

What should our attitude be waiting for God to fulfil His Word?

- Force it to happen as soon as possible.
- Figure out God's will just do it, and do nothing.
- Wait actively for God, then seize the moment.

Read 2 Kings 8v7-15 The sword of Hazael

Ben Hadad was Israel's arch enemy. Yet he would seem mild compared with his successor. The Gift (40 camels) was rather large for a simple Yes or No. Maybe it was intended as an incentive for Elisha to heal him.

Why did Ben Hadad turn to Elisha? It is interesting how people, when they are desperate, forsake their own gods and look for the truth.

Was Elisha deceitful?

Did Elisha condone Hazael behaviour?

What Was God's purpose in Hazael? 2 Kings 10v32

God gives us the freedom to sin, He even knows that we will sin and can prophesy such. Eg. Peter's denial of Christ. But that is never an excuse for our sin.

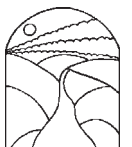
Hazael was clearly a butcher, his act of murder seemed to open up a side of him that became increasingly ruthless. Sin opens the door to more sin.

It is said that it is more likely that a person should never sin than that he would sin just once.

Often our attitude to sin is 'just one', does it ever stay that way?

Read 2 kings 9v1-13 The sword of Jehu

Elisha also arranged for Jehu to be appointed King. The King of Israel at this time was Joram, son of Ahab and Jezebel (The worst King/Queen Israel ever had. 1 Kings 21:25). Immediately, Jehu did two things to fulfil prophecies that had been given through Elijah.



He destroyed the family of wicked Ahab. 1 Kings 21v19
He killed Jezebel 1 Kings 21v23

Jehu said, "Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD." 2 Kings 10:16
After that he assembled all the prophets of Baal in their temple, declaring that he intended to worship Baal, like never before. After he sacrificed he had the army slaughter all the priest of Baal and destroy the temple. 2 Kings 10v18-27.

Is zeal for the Lord enough?

Romans 10:2
Romans 12:11
Galatians 4:18

Sometimes our zeal is misguided, sometimes our outward zeal is a cover for an inward life that we are unwilling to yield to God. I suspect it was this way with Jehu.

What is God saying?

Two bloody kings. One an enemy of God, one a worshipper. One destroying from outside, one from inside. Both achieving God's purposes.

There are many passages in the OT that seem to us to be very bloodthirsty. In comparison with the morals of the day, even the passages of the OT that we may object to stand out like beacons of light.

God did not order Hazael's actions nor Jehu's slaughter of the prophets of Baal, but He certainly used them! God did order the destruction of Ahab's family as a judgement for their sins. How can we understand a loving God doing this?

For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die. Ezekiel 18:4

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 6:23

The Bible makes it very clear that we all deserve to die for our sins. God is not love in a wishy washy, wouldn't hurt a fly way. He is love, against the background of the awful consequences of sin, His righteous judgement and His right to destroy the soul that sins. God's judgement on sin in the OT stands out as an example of what will be on the day of Judgement. In light of that His mercy and patience now are incredible. It is God's judgement that makes His love all the more powerful.

So when you,... do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? Romans 2:3-4

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

What was God's purpose for Hazael and Jehu?

God clearly intended to purify the nation, He did this by two forces; without and within.

What are these two forces as applied to us?

Perhaps this is a warning for us. God wants to purify us as he purified the Nation of Israel. We must be as zealous as *Jehu* and purge the sin from within. Or he will send a *Hazael*, to bring us to the point where we are willing to deal with the things within us.

This sounds frightening, but God is not unjust or vindictive, He is patient with us. But sooner or latter He will deal with the sin in our lives.



The Jehu attitude *Matthew 5v30*
The Hazael effect *1 Peter 4v17*

Bible Studies

Elisha & the arrow of Victory

Read 2 kings 13v14-17

Elisha has been a prophet in Israel for some 60 years. He is now old and on the point of death. Jehoash is King at this time, he is described as an evil king v11, but seems to have been one of the better, evil kings! Again Israel is under pressure from the Assyrians. This is obviously the motive behind Jehoash's desire for an audience with Elisha.

Where has "My Father, My father, The chariots and horsemen of Israel" already been used? 2 Kings 2:12

What is the similarity in the context?

Any ideas what it could mean?

The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the LORD. Proverbs 21:31 For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory." Deuteronomy 20:4

The phrase "the Lord God Almighty" (KJV Lord of Hosts) translates the Hebrew LORD of Armies. (Either of Israel or of Heaven). The idea is that only God can bring victory, this He did through the prophetic utterances of the prophets. When Elisha died, what hope would there be for the defence of the Land?

Do we ever put too much reliance on the man and to little on God?

What can happen when the man of God moves on?

What did the arrow shot from the window represent?

Why did Elisha put his hands over the king's hands?

The Arrow represented victory over the Aramians (Assyrians). When Elisha covered the king's hands he could have been doing several things. Imparting an anointing, expressing that Jehoash's hands would do Elisha's work, or telling the King that God could be with him the same way He was with Elisha if he would trust Him.

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. Isaiah 41:10

As such shooting the arrow was a symbolic act, it had no efficacy in itself. We can sometimes get carried away with such symbolic acts. Or conversely we may discount them as irrelevant or as superstitious.

Can you think of any areas of church life where we practice such things?

Often it is good to respond in a physical way to the Lord, eg. Walk to the front of the church, put your hand up etc. Even though these things can be easily discounted they often have great significance in them.

How do these kind of actions help us?

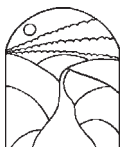
On a much deeper level, Baptism, Communion, laying on of hands are also symbolic of awesome realities.

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Read 2 kings 13v18-19

The imagery of the first passage is clear, but why did Jehoash have to strike the ground with his arrows? Why was his failure to continue, (when Elisha had given him no indication that it was required of him,) so reprehensible? Why should this failure be carried so directly across to defeat on the battle field?

Any Answers?

It is clear that Jehoash is being tested. It is equally clear that he is unaware that this is a test, and, that he failed.

Do we always know when God is testing us?

Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. James 1:12

Then the LORD said to Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. Exodus 16:4 (also Jeremiah 11:20)

Jehoash's Failures

1

Jehoash was give the promise of victory. But the promise required a response from him, to show that he would take this promise for himself and act on it.

What did his response show?

2

The accounts of Elisha have given us a criterion by which to judge Jehoash. When Elijah told Elisha to quit following him would he? 2 Kings 2v2-6 After Naaman had emersed himself 6 times and nothing had happened did he quit? 2 Kings 5v14

Jesus told a parable to make the same point. Luke 18v1-8.

We must have the same zeal and tenacity for the things of God.

3

You cannot help geting the impression that Jehoash only struck the ground (a very foolish and pointless thing for a king to do) to keep the old prophet happy. He had no passion for the promised victory. This directly explaines why he did not receive the complete victory that was available to him.

What does this incident tell us about Jehoash's characture?

The point of this passage is not that Jehoash's failure in a seemingly insignificant test caused him to miss out. Rather, the test revealed the deficiencies in his inner person. It was these deficiencies that caused his failure on the battle field.

What should we do when we see such deficiencies in ourselves?

A curse on him who is lax in doing the Lord's work! A curse on him who keeps his sword from bloodshed! Jeremiah 48:10

In the words of the old hymn, *where duty calls, or danger, be never wanting there.*

The last verse of the parable in Luke 18 says. "However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" No one is entirely sure what Jesus ment by this, maybe the above helps us to understand. Will he find those who shrink back when the command is to advance?

Read 2 Kings 13v22-23

What was the end of the story?

Who succeeded Elisha as prophet? Elisha unlike Elijah had no direct successor Joel a prophet in Judah seems to have ministered over the latter part of Elisha ministry. Thirty years after Elisha death, Hosea, Jonah and Amos all emerged.

Bible Studies

Rejoice

Rejoicing is a command

There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the LORD your God has blessed you. Deuteronomy 12:7

Seeking & finding

Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. 1 Chronicles 16:10

And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' Luke 15:9

Promised & completion

I rejoice in your promise like one who finds great spoil. Psalm 119:162

In that day they will say, "Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation." Isaiah 25:9

Abundance & Want

They will come and shout for joy on the heights of Zion; they will rejoice in the bounty of the LORD—the grain, the new wine and the oil, the young of the flocks and herds. They will be like a well-watered garden, and they will sorrow no more. Jeremiah 31:12

Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. Habakkuk 3:17-18

Salvation and persecution

that I may declare your praises in the gates of the Daughter of Zion and there rejoice in your salvation. Psalms 9:14

"Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets. Luke 6:23

Joy & Sorrow

But may the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful. Psalms 68:3

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; Romans 5:3

Service & Worship

Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. Psalms 2:11

Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, "The LORD reigns!" 1 Chronicles 16:31

Protection & Affliction

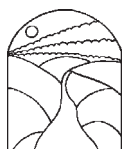
But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. Psalms 5:11

I will be glad and rejoice in your love, for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul. Psalm 31:7

Righteousness & Trust

Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart! Psalms 32:11

In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. Psalm 33:21



Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Philippians 3:1

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Philippians 4:4

What is rejoicing?

The outward demonstration of joy and pride, and the exultation experienced in public worship. E Beyreuther. Dictionary of NT Theology

Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:18

In what circumstances should we rejoice?

Do we rejoice for our problems or despite our problems?

Are rejoicing and giving thanks related?

What is the connection between rejoicing and joy?

Rejoicing is expressing Joy. But sometimes it is not until we rejoice that we realise the Joy that God has put into our lives.

What reasons do we have to rejoice?

We have noted it is a command to Rejoice.

Why is this?

What purpose does it achieve?

How do you rejoice?

Why should I rejoice when things are going wrong?

What effect is rejoice despite my circumstances likely to bring?



Help me to rejoice.

I am down, I have had a terrible day, everything has gone wrong. God doesn't listen to me any more, I feel sinfull and hopeless. I am likely to thump anyone saying "Smile Jesus loves you" and frankly I find your smile quite infuriating.

How are you going to help me to rejoice?

(A lot of answers required)

Blank writing area with horizontal lines.



Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Romans 12:15

The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." Zephaniah 3:17

Bible Studies

I Pray...

Paul opens all of his letters the same way. They conform to a standard way of writing letters current in the first century. He identifies himself as the author and then states who the recipients are;

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: Ephesians 1:1

Next he gives a greeting;

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, Galatians 1:3

Finally a thanksgiving to God in which he complements the church on something they excel in;

I thank my God every time I remember you. Philipinas 1:3

This was all standard to a Greek letter, Paul was conforming to the norm, but in about half his letters he adds an additional section. He assures his readers that he prays for them.

What did Paul pray for? For each of these identify what the main thing that Paul prays for, then identify the goal of the prayer. **You need a pen.**

Ephesians 1v18-19

Pray:

1

Summary:

Goal:

Why is this important?

Ephesians 3v16-19

Prayer: v16

In the Greek to be strengthened is the opposite of to be discouraged.

How is this done?

Prayer: v17

Prayer: v18

Summary:

Goal:

Is there a hint of unity in this passage?

Why is it important that this happen together?

Is this something we need?

What will be the result if we don't understand this?

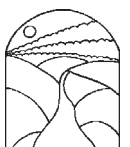
Was this prayer for the individual or the Church?

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Philippians 1v9-11

prayer: v9

Goal:

What is the link between love and knowledge?

Love must be intelligent and morally discerning. It is not based on sentiment but a knowledge of God. (Kent)

Prayer: v10

Goal:

How does discerning what is best link with love based on knowledge?

(Is this helpful or harmful to my brother)

How can you put this in practical terms?

Prayer: v11

Goal:

Where does this fruit come from?

Summary:

2 Thessalonians 1v11-12

Prayer:

Goal:

Prayer:

Goal:

What is the connection between Glory and Grace?

Colossians 1v9-12

Prayer:

5

Goal:

How does a life worthy of Christ come into being?

What kind of fruit is Paul praying for?

How would you summarise this kind of prayer?

I would call this kind of prayer *strategic praying*. It goes beyond simple everyday needs, even beyond the special needs we often have. It concentrates on our spiritual maturity.

Do you think this is still a good way to pray? Why?

What other ways are there to pray?

Bible Studies

I Pray...

Paul opens all of his letters the same way. They conform to a standard way of writing letters current in the first century. He identifies himself as the author and then states who the recipients are;

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: Ephesians 1:1

Next he gives a greeting;

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, Galatians 1:3

Finally a thanksgiving to God in which he complements the church on something they excel in;

I thank my God every time I remember you. Philipinas 1:3

This was all standard to a Greek letter, Paul was conforming to the norm, but in about half his letters he adds an additional section. He assures his readers that he prays for them.

What did Paul pray for? For each of these identify what the main thing that Paul prays for then, identify the goal of the prayer. **You need a pen.**

Ephesians 1v18-19

Pray:

1

Eyes might be open

know the hope

Know our glorious inheritance

know God's power & Stength

Summary:

Know what you already have & God's power

Goal:

increasing faith

Why is this important?

2 Peter 1v3

Ephesians 3v16-19

Prayer: v16

2

Strengthened with power

In the Greek to be strengthened is the opposite of to be discouraged.

How is this done?

Prayer: v17

Christ may dwell

Rooted & Established in love

Prayer: v18

Grasp Christs love. Four Dimensions

Summary:

Jesus Love

Goal:

Spiritual strength; Maturity, relationship with Christ.

Is there a hint of unity in this passage?

Why is it important that this happen together?

Is this something we need?

What will be the result if we don't understand this?

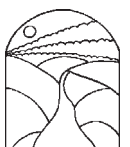
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Ray Moxham
www.wag.org.nz
WaiukuAG
@maxnet.co.nz

Philippians 1v9-11

prayer: v9

love for one another

Goal:

fellowship unity bond of peace

What is the link between love and knowledge?

Love must be intelligent and morally discerning. It is not based on sentiment but a knowledge of God. (Kent)

Prayer:v10

Discern what is best

Goal:

Holiness

How does discerning what is best link with love based on knowledge?

(Is this helpful or harmful to my brother)

How can you put this in practical terms?

Prayer: v11

Fruit of righteousness

Goal:

Isaiah 32v17, Glory of God

Where does this fruit come from?

Summary:

God's part in spiritual growth

2 Thessalonians 1v11-12

Prayer:

Be worthy & His power my work in us

Goal:

Service

Prayer:

Jesus be glorified in you

Goal:

Glory of God

What is the connection between Glory and Grace?

Colossians 1v9-12

Prayer:

Knowledge of his will

Spiritual wisdom & understanding

Live a life worthy of God

please God

Bear fruit

Grow in knowledge of God

Be strengthen with all power

Great endurance, patience, joy

Give thanks

Goal:

be effective Christians

How does a life worthy of Christ come into being?

What kind of fruit is Paul praying for?

How would you summarise this kind of prayer?

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Bible Studies

Jesus Prayed



John 17.

It is the evening on which Jesus was arrested. We do not know where Jesus was when he prayed, in the upper room or on his way to the Garden of Gethesemeny. We do know that his time was short. This makes his prayer all the more significant for us.

Who does Jesus pray for?

How do you find eternal life? v2



Read John 17v1-5

What does Jesus pray for himself?

How was Jesus going to bring Glory to God?

“Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” John 12:27-28

Verse 5 is important what does it tell us?



Read John 17v6-19

What does Jesus pray for? v11b

v11c

v13b

v15b

v17

How would you describe Jesus Prayer?

What does this passage tell us about Jesus? Eg v7,10

What doesn't Jesus pray for? v9, v15

for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. John 17:14

Is this true?

What does it mean to be in the world but not of it?

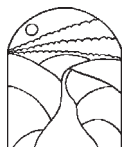
How does Jesus compare His ministry to theirs? v18

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Why does Jesus pray separately for his disciples and those who will become disciples? Maybe this pray was specifically for the time of testing that they would experience when Jesus was arrested and crucified.



Read Luke 22:31-32
How does this tie in with John 17?

There is similar content some people think it is the same prayer. I think 'that your faith may not fail' Is a very powerful prayer, and one that we should pray. Maybe it is only in a universe where faith is daily tested, that faith can flower and grow, or even exist at all!



Read John 17v20-26

What does Jesus pray?	v21 & 22	<input type="text"/>
	v23a	<input type="text"/>
	v23b	<input type="text"/>
Goal	v23c	<input type="text"/>

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:35

What does Jesus pray?	v24a	<input type="text"/>
	v24b	<input type="text"/>
	v26b	<input type="text"/>

This passage describes a four square unity

You are in me and I am in You v21  that they may be one v22
 May they also be in us v21 I in them and you in me v23

- Make sure you know who the you, me's and them's are.**
- What does 'You are in me and I am in you' mean? v21**
- What does "that they may be one" mean? v22**
- What does "May they also be in us" mean? v21**
- What does "I in them and you in me" mean? v23**

I find it very significant that of all the things Jesus could have prayed for us, he prayed for our unity, both with each other and with Him.

- Why is our unity so important?**
- Do you think these kinds of unity are interdependent?**

Jesus idea of unity seems to be Unity in **Relationship** before it is unity of believe, or practice or style.

Unity in Style and practice is not necessarily a good thing.

Why do you think variety between different churches in a town is important?

People are different and the Church needs to reflect those differences. A loud, joyful bouncy church is exactly what some people need, others want reverence and calm.

God is bigger than all our forms of worship, none of our styles worships Him in totality, Taken as a multicoloured mosaic we get a bit closer.

Unity in believe has two defects: it is hard to achieve, but it can be practised at a distance. *I am in unity with... I never see them or talk to them, I don't really know them but we are in unity, Hallelujah.* I think Jesus prayer aimed at something greater than this.

- What is unity of relationship?**
- How do we achieve unity?**

Bible Studies

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Who does Jesus pray for?

Himself

the Disciples

those who would believe.

How do you find eternal life? v2



Read John 17v1-5

What does Jesus pray for himself?

That He may bring glory to God

That God may Glorify him

How was Jesus going to bring Glory to God?

By providing eternal life

By revealing the Father.

“Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” John 12:27-28

Verse 5 is important what does it tell us?

That Jesus was Pre existant ie Jesus was with God before he cam to earth, he was no mere mortal



Read John 17v6-19

What does Jesus pray for?

v11b

Protect them

v11c

They may be one

v13b

Full measure of Joy

v15b

Protect them from TEO

v17

Sanctify them

How would you describe Jesus Prayer? Very natural full of confidence & faith.

What does this passage tell us about Jesus? Eg v7,10

What doesn't Jesus pray for? v9, v15

for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. John 17:14

Is this true?

What does it mean to be in the world but not of it?

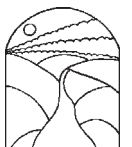
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Ray Moxham
www.wag.org.nz
WaiukuAG
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Read John 17v20-26

What does Jesus pray?	v21 & 22	All of them may be one
	v23a	I in them
	v23b	Complete Unity
Goal	v23c	World may know.

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:35

What does Jesus pray?	v24a	Be with me
	v24b	See my Glory
	v26b	God's love in them

This passage describes a four square unity

You are in me and I am in You v21  that they may be one v22
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Make sure you know who the you, me's and them's are.

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What does "that they may be one" mean? v22

What does "May they also be in us" mean? v21

What does "I in them and you in me" mean? v23

You=Father, I=Jesus
 They=us
 They=us, Us=Father & Jesus
 I=Jesus, Them=us, You-Father

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Bible Studies

God is

Part 1



What do you imagine God is like?

What is God like? What does He like?

Knowing God is not something you do in a Bible study, it's something you do with your life. It's a quest and it means nothing unless that knowledge of God is seen in the way we live our life.

Is knowing God alone enough to inherit His blessing?



God Is...

Numbers 23v19,

God is

Job 33v12

Is God a Woman?

This seems obvious. People today are trying to tell us that God is female. This is ludicrous, if only for the fact that **God is not male**. God is not human! We are mortal, (def. Subject to death, human beings Oxford Dictionary) He is Immortal.

Does God have a feminine side?

At first glance this might seem true. But it is also illogical for us to say that God has female aspects, for it was God who created woman. It is true then to say that part of God's image is seen clearer in women and part seen clearer in men. God doesn't have feminine side, women have a Godly side!

Why does the Bible always use the masculine pronoun (He, Him etc.) for God?

I don't know. But if that is the way God chose to reveal Himself, we must accept it. To arbitrarily change it would be to superimpose our own ideas onto God. God clearly wanted us to see him as a person, not a force or alien being. He wants us to understand Him in Human terms, not as a God so dissimilar to us that we could never know Him.

John 4v24

God is

2 Corinthians 3v17

What does this mean?

God does not have a physical body, He is Spirit, not flesh. Sometimes the Bible talks as if God had a body "Is the Lord's arm too short?" Numbers 11:23. The passage is not talking about the length of God's arm, but his ability to reach out and provide.

Because we cannot comprehend a God so much greater than our selves, we use human language to explain what God is like. This is very helpful but it can never full explain God to us.

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever.

Amen. 1 Timothy 1:17

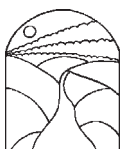
who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honour and might forever. Amen. 1 Timothy 6:16

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These passages tell us that;

God is

God is

God is

Why is it that no one has or can see God?

By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible. Hebrews 11:27

Read Exodus 33v20-23 & 34v5-7

So what did Moses see when he went up the mountain?

I believe that Moses saw a little bit of God nature, what He is like. Just a little bit for our humanity could not comprehend the vastness of God, It would kill us.

Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. Psalm 145:3
Jehovah is Big,.. Bigger than you can explore. (my translation)

God is bigger even than the universe. Whatever you concept of God is, however good it may be, God is bigger. His greatness will not fit into any language, nor can your mind contain it.

Jesus said

No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. John 6:46
"All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Mat 11:27

How do we see God?

<input type="text"/>	Romans 1v20
<input type="text"/>	Genesis 1v1 - Revelation 22v21
<input type="text"/>	2 Corinthians 4v6
<input type="text"/>	1 John 4v12

What does it mean that we were made in God's image? Genesis 1:27

I believe this means that in a very limited way, God's nature is seen in us.



Eg. God is Love, we humans have the ability to love. God is a forgiving God, we are capable of forgiving. These abilities are part of God's image in us.

How should this inspire us?

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Col 3:9-10

In Christ Jesus we are new creations being recreated in God's image.

We are made in God's image. The problem is that we are very keen to make God in our image - with our limitations.



Eg. We find forgiving hard, so we assume that God finds forgiving hard. This is not true, Forgiving sins is (it seems to me) one of God's favourite pastimes.



Can you think of any other examples?

Do not base your ideas about God on; *your father; your teacher; Santa Claus* etc. Let the Bible speak, let God reveal Himself.

Read Psalm 29

Bible Studies

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Read Psalm 29

Bible Studies

God is...

Part 2

We are flesh and blood, God is Spirit.
So what are the attributes that make God, God

Genesis 21:33 **God is** [REDACTED]

1 Timothy 1:17, Deuteronomy 33v27

God did not start and God will not finish, He just always is.

Einstein explained to us that time, space and matter are a part of the universe. Time is as much a part of creation, as the chair you are sitting on. God as creator of the universe stands outside of time. He is not limited by time.

When the Bible speaks of Eternity, it does not mean unlimited time, it means the suspension of time, outside time.

This is not a concept the human mind finds easy to grasp.

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. Psalms 90:2

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.” Revelation 4:8

When we talk about Eternal life do we mean Endless time or life without time?

God is [REDACTED] *infinite* in every way.

Acts 17v28 **God is** [REDACTED]

Deuteronomy 4v39, Ephesians 1v23 (Omnipresent)

The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good. Proverbs 15:3

“Am I only a God nearby,” declares the LORD, “and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?” declares the LORD. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the LORD. Jeremiah 23:23-24

Just as God is not limited by time, He is not limited by space. God is everywhere, but **all** of God is right here. God is not diluted through the universe.



How can God be everywhere?

If God is everywhere, how can He then promise to be ‘with us’?

Eg. Hebrews 13v5, Matthew 18v20, 28v20

The answer is found in the reason for God's presence, eg. to bless, help, answer prayer etc.

The LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him. Deuteronomy 4:7

Where is God, and in what ways?

Read Psalm 139v7-10

Some religions teach that God is everything. *God is all around us because the trees and rocks, even we ourselves are God* (this is called pantheism.) This is not what the Bible teaches, God is separate to from His creation, yet he pervades every part of it. He is everywhere but He is not everything.

If God is everywhere, then is He is Hell?

Someone said that is where God's wrath and judgement are.



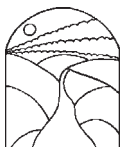
What implications does God's Omnipresence have for us?

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Malachi 3:6 God is

James 1v17, Hebrews 13v8

If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. Psalm 50:12
God does not change. He is not reliant on anyone or anything. In the Psalm quoted above, God is explaining that He does not *eat* sacrifices. It was common belief that sacrifice enhanced the power of the god they were offered to. Acts 19v27.

God does not need us. Our worship does not make Him bigger and our disobedience does not make Him diminish. God is self-existent and self-reliant. He contains in Himself all that He needs. If we stopped believing in Him, He would not cease to exist. He is *immutable*.

Then why has He chosen to create and fellowship with man?

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. John 5:26

What does it mean has life in himself?

We do not have life in ourselves, someone said “man's existence is like the note of an organ, lasting as long as God's fingers are on the keys.” Job 34v14-15

Genesis 18v14 God is

Jeremiah 32v17, Revelation 19v6 (Omnipotent)

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” Matthew 19:26

The Almighty is a commonly used name for God, He is just that.

If God can do anything what can't he do?

For a God who can do everything there are a lot of things He cannot do. Basically He cannot be inconsistent with His own nature, for Him to do so would be, to stop being God. (clearly this is impossible). So He cannot, lie or cheat, He cannot break His promises, He cannot stop loving us etc.

Is God bound by the rules of the universe?

Daniel 4v17. God is

Not only is He almighty, He is also sovereign, He has the right to use His power as he sees fit, He does not have to answer to us. Isaiah 45v9,

What does this mean for us?

What if you don't like God's way of doing things?

The passage in Daniel 4, goes on to explain how King Nebuchadnezzar had to be brought to the place where he acknowledged God's sovereignty.

What does it mean for us to acknowledge God's Sovereignty?

1 John 3v20 God

1 Chronicles 28v9, Hebrews 4v13 (Omniscient)

God's knowledge is part of His being, not acquired through learning or experience. It is intuitive, not the result of reason, (God does not have to stop and think about things). It is perfect, not successive, (it does not increase with the passage of time.)

Does God know in the same way that we know?

God knows the future and the past, He knows and understands everything, even our hearts.

I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. Isa 46:10



Read Psalm 139v1-6,16

What implications does this have for us?

for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Matthew 6:8

What kind of judge does this make God?

Bible Studies

God is...

Part 2

We are flesh and blood, God is Spirit.
So what are the attributes that make God, God

Genesis 21:33 **God is** **Eternal**

1 Timothy 1:17, Deuteronomy 33v27

God did not start and God will not finish, He just always is.

Einstein explained to us that time, space and matter are a part of the universe. Time is as much a part of creation, as the chair you are sitting on. God as creator of the universe stands outside of time. He is not limited by time.

When the Bible speaks of Eternity, it does not mean unlimited time, it means the suspension of time, outside time.

This is not a concept the human mind finds easy to grasp.

Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. Psalms 90:2

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come.” Revelation 4:8

When we talk about Eternal life do we mean Endless time or life without time?

God is **infinite** in every way.

Acts 17v28 **God is** **Everywhere**

Deuteronomy 4v39, Ephesians 1v23 (Omnipresent)

The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good. Proverbs 15:3

“Am I only a God nearby,” declares the LORD, “and not a God far away? Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?” declares the LORD. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the LORD. Jeremiah 23:23-24

Just as God is not limited by time, He is not limited by space. God is everywhere, but **all** of God is right here. God is not diluted through the universe.



How can God be everywhere?

If God is everywhere, how can He then promise to be ‘with us’?

Eg. Hebrews 13v5, Matthew 18v20, 28v20

The answer is found in the reason for God's presence, eg. to bless, help, answer prayer etc.

The LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him. Deuteronomy 4:7

Where is God, and in what ways?

Read Psalm 139v7-10

Some religions teach that God is everything. *God is all around us because the trees and rocks, even we ourselves are God* (this is called pantheism.) This is not what the Bible teaches, God is separate to from His creation, yet he pervades every part of it. He is everywhere but He is not everything.

If God is everywhere, then is He is Hell?

Someone said that is where God's wrath and judgement are.



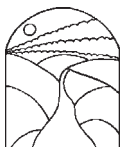
What implications does God's Omnipresence have for us?

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Malachi 3:6 God is Self sufficient

James 1v17, Hebrews 13v8

If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it. Psalm 50:12
God does not change. He is not reliant on anyone or anything. In the Psalm quoted above, God is explaining that He does not *eat* sacrifices. It was common belief that sacrifice enhanced the power of the god they were offered to. Acts 19v27.

God does not need us. Our worship does not make Him bigger and our disobedience does not make Him diminish. God is self existent and self reliant. He contains in Himself all that He needs. If we stopped believing in Him, He would not cease to exist. He is *immutable*.

Then why has He chosen to create and fellowship with man?

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. John 5:26

What does it mean has life in himself?

We do not have life in ourselves, someone said “mans existence is like the note of an organ, lasting as long as God’s fingers are on the keys.” Job 34v14-15

Genesis 18v14 God is All powerful

Jeremiah 32v17, Revelation 19v6 (Omnipotent)

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”
Matthew 19:26

The Almighty is a commonly used name for God, He is just that.

If God can do anything what can't he do?

For a God who can do everything there are a lot of things He cannot do. Basically He cannot be inconsistent with His own nature, for Him to do so would be, to stop being God. (clearly this is impossible). So He cannot, lie or cheat, He cannot break His promises, He cannot stop loving us etc.

Is God bound by the rules of the universe?

Daniel 4v17. God is Sovereign

Not only is He almighty, He is also sovereign, He has the right to use His power as he sees fit, He does not have to answer to us. Isaiah 45v9,

What does this mean for us?

What if you don't like God's way of doing things?

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Bible Studies

God is...

Part 3

We have seen that God is Spirit, we have listed characteristics of His essential nature, Omniscient, Omnipotent etc. But what is God like? This list tells us some of God's Communicable Attributes, if you like, His personality.

After each Statement ask **What does this mean?**
How does this effect me?

Deuteronomy 4v31 **God is**

What if He wasn't?

Daniel 9v9 **God is**

2 Chronicles 30v9 **God is**

Psalm 116v5, 103v8

Psalm 7v11 **God is**

1 Samuel 12v5 **God is**

Numbers 14v18 **God is**

Jeremiah 51v56 **God of**

Deuteronomy 4v24 **God is**

Hebrews 12v29

Nahum 1v2 **God is**

What is He Jealous of?

Who is He angry with?

Can we ignore these aspects of God?

Psalm 48v14 **God is**

Does this mean that there are other gods for other people?

Psalm 54v4 **God is**

Hebrews 13v6

Psalm 56v9 **God is**

Romans 8v31

Deuteronomy 30v20 **God is**

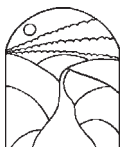
Psalm 23v1 **God is**

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Psalm 46v1 **God is** [redacted]

Joshua 4v24 **God is** [redacted]

Psalm 135v5 **God is** [redacted]

Isaiah 33v22 **God is** [redacted]

2 Peter 3v9 **God is** [redacted]

Psalm 99v9 **God is** [redacted]

Daniel 9v14 **God is** [redacted]

What's the difference between Holy and Righteous?

John 3v33 **God is** [redacted]

Psalm 31v15, Isaiah 65v16

1 Corinthians 10v13 **God is** [redacted]

1 John 4v8 **God is** [redacted]

Grammatical this is wrong love is an emotion as humans we can be faithful but we cannot be love. Instead we show love or feel love. God is love it is part of His very nature. I am flesh and Bones God is Love.

2 Thessalonians 1v6 **God is** [redacted]

Can you separate God's love from His Justice?

What happens if you do?

1 John 1v5 **God is** [redacted]

What does it mean In him there is no Darkness?

Judges 6v24 **God is** [redacted]

Psalm 34v8 **God is** [redacted]

What if He was not Good?

Psalm 29v3 **God of** [redacted]

Romans 15v13 **God of** [redacted]

2 Corinthians 1v3 **God of** [redacted]

Bible Studies

God is...

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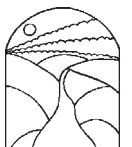
- Deuteronomy 4v31 **God is Merciful**
What if He wasn't?
- Daniel 9v9 **God is Merciful & Forgiving**
- 2 Chronicles 30v9 **God is Gracious & Compassionate**
Psalm 116v5, 103v8
- Psalm 7v11 **God is Righteous Judge**
- 1 Samuel 12v5 **God is a witness**
- Numbers 14v18 **God is Slow to anger**
- Jeremiah 51v56 **God of Retribution**
- Deuteronomy 4v24 **God is A consuming Fire**
Hebrews 12v29
- Nahum 1v2 **God is Jealous and Angry**
What is He Jealous of?
Who is He angry with?
Can we ignore these aspects of God?
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Does this mean that there are other gods for other people?
- Psalm 54v4 **God is My help**
Hebrews 13v6
- Psalm 56v9 **God is For Me**
Romans 8v31
- Deuteronomy 30v20 **God is your life**
- Psalm 23v1 **God is my shepherd**

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Psalm 46v1 **God is** **Refuge and Strength**

Joshua 4v24 **God is** **powerful**

Psalm 135v5 **God is** **Great**

Isaiah 33v22 **God is** **King**

2 Peter 3v9 **God is** **patient**

Psalm 99v9 **God is** **Holy**

Daniel 9v14 **God is** **Righteous**

What's the difference between Holy and Righteous?

John 3v33 **God is** **Truthful**

Psalm 31v15, Isaiah 65v16

1 Corinthians 10v13 **God is** **Faithful**

1 John 4v8 **God is** **love**

Grammatical this is wrong love is an emotion as humans we can be faithful but we cannot be love. Instead we show love or feel love. God is love it is part of His very nature. I am flesh and Bones God is Love.

2 Thessalonians 1v6 **God is** **Just**

Can you separate God's love from His Justice?

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What does it mean In him there is no Darkness?

Judges 6v24 **God is** **Peace**

Psalm 34v8 **God is** **Good**

What if He was not Good?

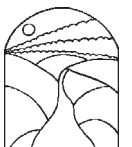
Psalm 29v3 **God of** **Glory**

Romans 15v13 **God of** **Hope**

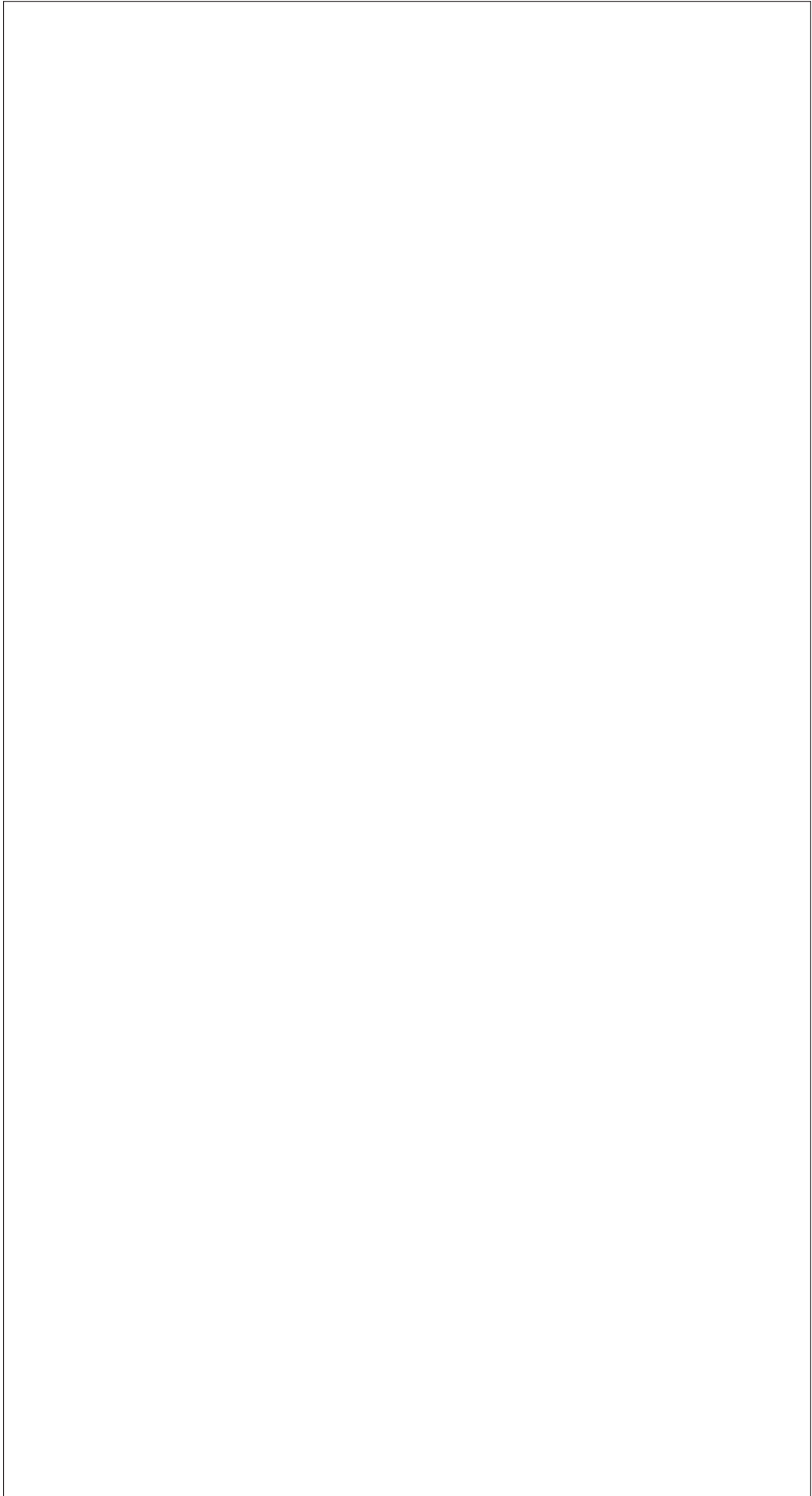
2 Corinthians 1v3 **God of** **All Comfort**

Bible Studies

STREAMS IN THE DESERT

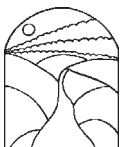


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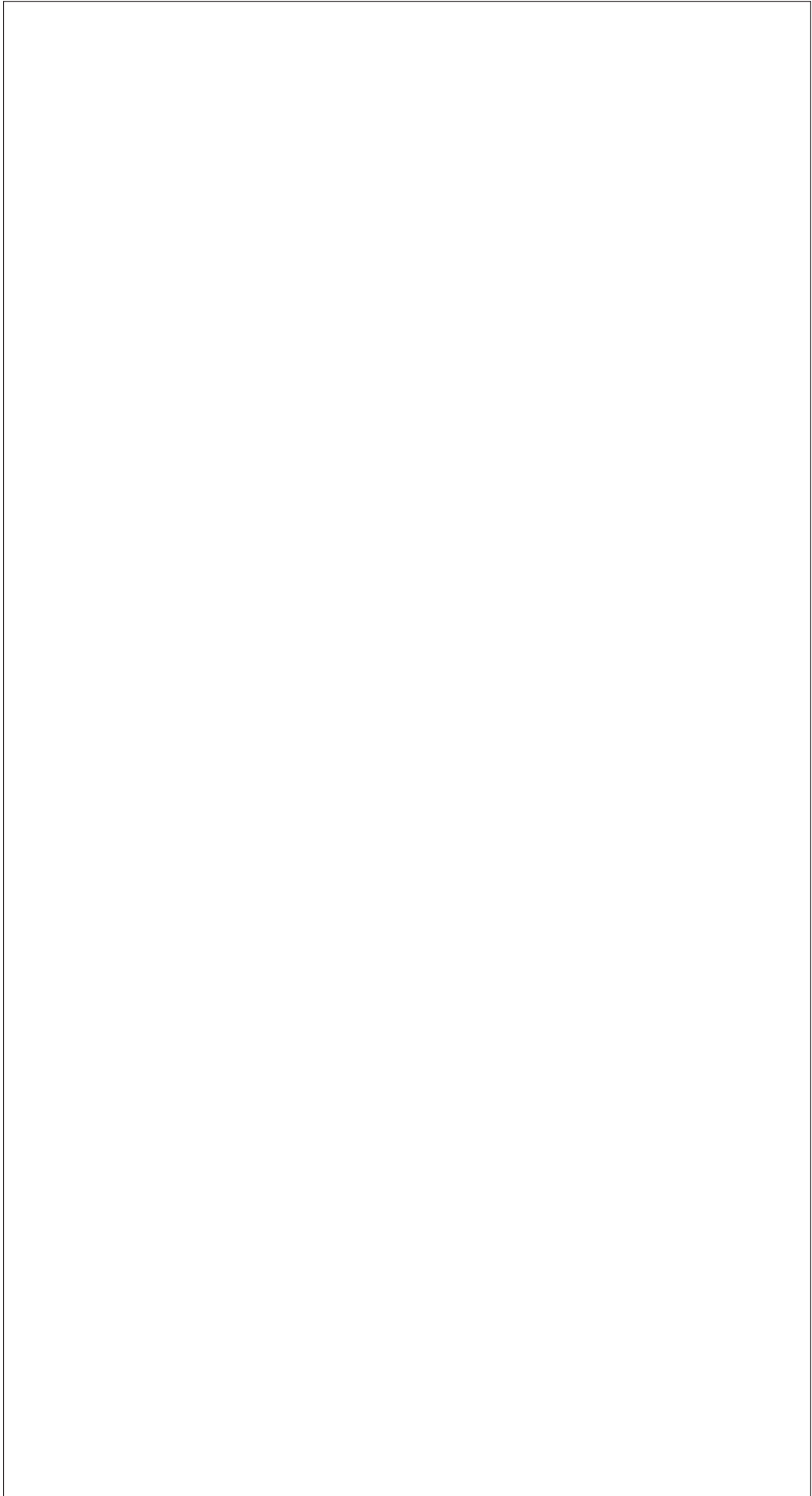


Bible Studies

STREAMS IN THE DESERT



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Bible Studies

A hard Question

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:17

As a Christian what make me different from who I used to be?

What makes me different from a non Christian?

What makes me different from someone who is morally good?

The front page of this study is for us to brain storm and come up with some answers. The back of this sheet is Pastor Rays answer (He had as long to think about it as you do). ***Do not cheat.***

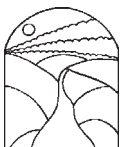


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I have faith.

I have a relationship with God. I know God as my own friend. I know I can trust Him with my whole life. I know I don't have to defend myself because he will

I have different standards.

2 Corinthians 10v2

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

I have different values.

I have different goals.

I know where I am going.

I act differently

I treat people differently

I want to please God not get rich

I have forgiveness of sins

I have a different status before God.

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation Colossians 1:21

I see things from a spiritual perspective

Spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

I am set free from the power of sin.

I have the power to be righteous. I have the power to resist temptation.

I am able to live a holy life and please God

The indicative and the imperative

This is a grammatical trick Paul often uses. Many of us look at the above list and say *yes I know this is what I should be, but I also know I fall short of it. This means I am not a Christian, or at least not a very good one.* Paul looks at it a different way

The **indicative** means "You are,"

The **Imperative** says "You must."

Paul sums it up by saying "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are". 1 Corinthians 5:7

The **indicative** = You are a new batch of dough without yeast (Sin)

The **imperative** = Therefore get rid of the Yeast (sin) from your life.

Be what you already are.

Other examples Romans 6v11-14

Colossians 3v1-2

God has made us holy and righteous (Indicative - you are Righteous) so we must live accordingly (imperative - you must be righteous). We are already new creations, so we must live as new creations.

Do not doubt what God has done in salvation, just ask Him for the ability to live out in your life what He has already made you.

Grace says We are already righteous therefore our actions should be righteous

legalism says You must be righteous so that God will accept you.

Licence says I am righteous so it does not matter what I do

Which statement is true?

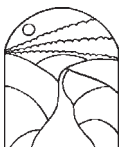
If I am really good God will accept me

I am going to be really good because God has already accepted me

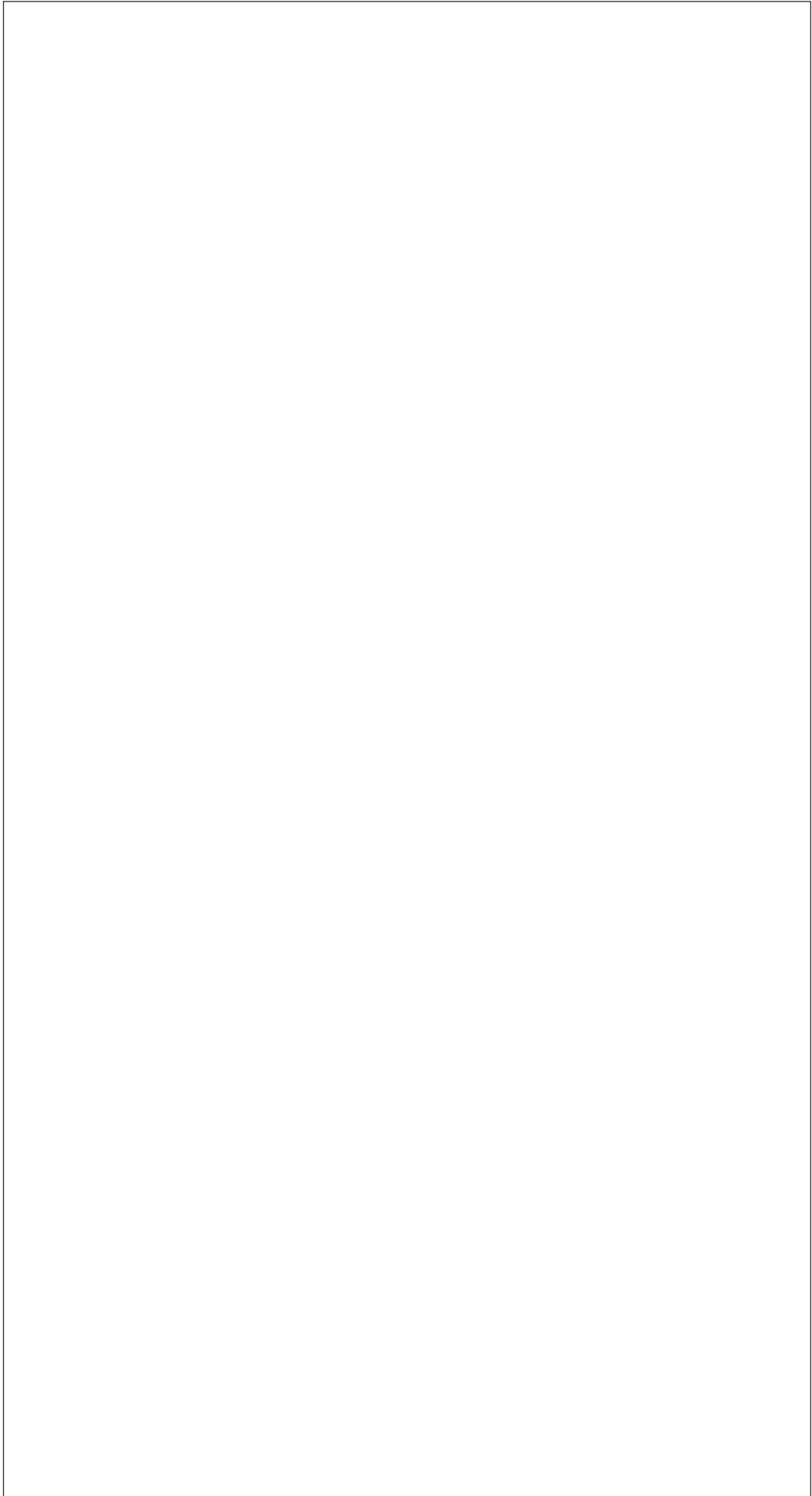
It does not matter if I am good or bad because God accepts me anyway

Bible Studies

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Bible Studies

Prayers that don't get answered

The **WICKED** prayer

Proverb 24v17, Matthew 5v44

Goes beyond God's commandments and promises and asks for something plainly forbidden in Scripture. This could be praying for someone's harm.

Can you think of an example?

The **UNFORGIVING** prayer

Mark 11:25

When we pray for our needs but hold a grudge against someone. This is really denying the very basis for prayer it is only because of God's forgiveness of us that we can pray to God at all. Unforgiveness kills prayer.

The **CLUELESS** prayer

2 Corinthians 12v7-9

Praying without understanding what God wants to do. I wonder how often we find ourselves praying the against what God is doing. Jeremiah 7v16

Can you think of an example?

The **WILL-LESS** prayer God's will

1 John 5:14

God answers prayers that are in His will. We can pray for some good thing and see no answer because it is simply not what God wants to do. Prayer cannot force God to act.

What will happen if we pray for something that is not God's will?

If you are sincere in your prayer and open to hear from God He will direct your prayers.

Our prayer should be surgical, we should pray first of all that we will know God's will and what we should pray for. The we should be as specific as we can in our prayers.

How do you pray if you do not know God's will?

Romans 8:26-27

Matthew 6v10

The **SELFISH** prayer

James 4v3, Ezekiel 14v3

These are prayers with our own interests in view and not God's Glory. Often it is our **Attitude** that is the problem not the *subject matter* itself.

Eg If Pastor Ray prays that the Church will grow so that God's kingdom will increase, this is good. But if his desire for growth is so that he will look good, then that prayer is wicked.

The **SELF RIGHTEOUS** prayer

Luke 18v10-14, Matthew 6v5, Job 35v12-13

Prayer must centre on God not ourselves. God opposes the proud. He does not answer their prayers.

What should mark our praying?

The **DOUBTING** prayer

James 1v6-7, Matthew 21v21

Faith must mark our prayers not doubt, Prayers offered in doubt are self defeating.

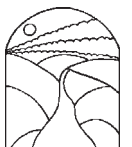
What if I can't help but doubt? Mark 9:24.

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Ask God to increase your faith.

The **HALF HEARTED** prayer

Luke 18v10

Faithful in prayer. Romans 12:12. Too often our prayers lack sincerity and earnestness. It is as if we were just going through the motions, not really caring if God answers or not.

Is that real prayer?

The **SINFUL** prayer

Psalms 66v18-19, John 9v31.

Sin stops our prayers from being answered, part of our prayer should be confessing our sin so that sin will not make our prayer life ineffectual.

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. James 5:16

The **UNSpoken** prayer

James 4v2, Philippians 4v6

It is not enough to think of the need, we must put our desires and request into prayer. There is no substitute for actually praying.

I wonder how many things we have failed to receive because we have failed to ask?

The **WORDY** prayer

Mark 12v40, Matthew 6v7

Prayer does not have to be long, or using just the right words. Prayer can be very simple.

If in prayer we do all the talking and don't listen will that effect our prayers?

The **DISUNITY** prayer

1 Peter 3v7

If we are in disunity with our partner it will 'hinder our prayers'.

Do you think this has a broader application than just marriage?

Matthew 18v19

There is another reason why prayers appear to go unanswered.

Daniel 9:23

The answer has been given, we just have not yet seen it come about. God answers prayer in His time.

I am indebted to **Winkie Pratney** for some of the above material.

Bible Studies

Ezekiel 37

Read Ezekiel 37

Was this a vision or did it really happen?

To me it seems clear that this was a vision, It did not literally happen. But this does not make it unreal for it described events that would really happen much latter.

To begin with all Ezekiel sees is dry bones across the valley floor.

What picture is being generated? cf. 11b

Four stages

- 1 Bones came together.
- 2 Tendons and flesh covered them.
- 3 Breathe entered them
- 4 They stood up.

Ezekiel 37:

- 1 he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD
5 I will make breath enter you.
6 I will put breath in you, and you will come to life
8 but there was no breath in them.
9 Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath; prophecy
9 Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain
10 So I prophesied as he commanded me, and breath entered them;
14 I will put my Spirit in you and you will live,

Each word underlined is the word Ruach. It has two main meanings Spirit and Wind (Jesus & Nicodemus John 3v8). It can mean breath, but this is not it's common meaning. (It is not the word used in Genesis 3v7 when God breathed into Adam.)

How you translate the word depends on the context, but you must remember that it is the same word. The breath and wind are the Spirit.

What was it that gave the corpses life?

- Job 33v4
- John 6v63
- Romans 8v2
- 2 Corinthians 3v6

Why did God ask Ezekiel if the bones could live?

What did Ezekiel need to do?

Ezekiel as a prophet spoke out God's will directly to the bones, this was more than a prayer. He only did this at God's implicit command.

Can we do the same?

What are the bones? Ezekiel 37v11

Read Ephesians 3:62 & 2 Corinthians 1v20 & Romans 9v4

This prophecy is for:

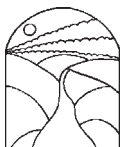
- Israel only because it was given before the Church existed.
- The Church only, because we have replaced Israel.
- The Church and Israel because we are co heirs in the promises.

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Lots of people today try to claim that God has rejected Israel and that all of the promises now only apply to the Church, (Israel of course can keep all the curses).

Read Romans 11v1

Did God reject his people? Many wish Paul had answered yes. But he didn't.

God made two covenants with Israel, one with Abraham, the at Mt. Sinai. In Christ the Law (Mt. Sinai) is abolished. Hebrews 8v13, Ephesians 2v15. But the Abrahamic Covenant is not, It had no conditions to break, it was based on a promise not law. Galatians 3v18.

Ezekiel 37 applies to Israel.

Read Ezekiel 37v12-14

The bones = the destruction of the holocaust in which 6,000,000 Jews died, only because they were Jews.

The tendons and flesh = The re-establishment of the State of Israel, with it's Government and the return of the Jews from their 2000 year exile.

The breath = Salvation through faith in Jesus Christ the Messiah.

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins." Romans 11:25-26

Where are we in regard to Ezekiel's prophecy?

The recreation of the State of Israel in our time is a sign of the return of Christ. He is restoring His ancient people. They will not be saved by obeying the Law, for Christ is the end of the Law. They will not be saved by building a Temple, for Christ was the final sacrifice. They will be saved through faith in Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. Saved the same way that you and I are saved. Together Jews and Gentile one people of God. Natural olive branches, regrafted into their own root, along side the ingrafted wild branches. Romans 11v16-24.

Israel is always in the news and is busy becoming an international out cast. While Israel does many things that are wrong, the media take a bias view, often the reporting is woefully inaccurate and misleading. Israel is an unsaved nation that needs Christ. But God is finishing the purposes He started with Abraham 4000 years ago in front of our very eyes!

Does supporting Israel mean agreeing with everything she does?

Does Ezekiel 37 applies to us?

What does this picture represent when applied to us?

What is the effect of the Spirit in the individual and the Church?

Does the Church fit the description of the Bones?

What areas of our lives are dead?

One of the themes of this chapter is division and reunification.

Do you think it also speaks to church unity?

What do we need to bring us life?

Bible Studies

Generous

Read Matthew 6v20-24

There is much debate about what this passage means. It is hard for many commentators to explain why having *good eyes* and a *body filled with light*, should be sandwiched between verse that talk about money.

Any explanations?

The answer is easy and is found in Hebrew idiom. In Jesus day and in modern Hebrew, to have a good eye, means to be generous. “Give with a good eye” say the adverts on TV for national appeals. Jesus is calling for us to be generous. By doing so we will be storing our treasure in heaven, and ensuring our lives serve God and are not dominated by money.

Consider:

Matthew 5v42

Luke 11v41

Luke 12v33

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” Luke 6:38
Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 2 Corinthians 9:6

This is a basic scriptural principle, when we do, God does. The measure we use is the measure used for us, with interest.

Do you think this just applies to financial giving? What other things might it apply to?

If we do not give what happens?

We all want to be blessed by the Lord. Financially but in other areas of our lives also the problem is that often we give God nothing to bless us with. Our measure is so small that what is measured back to us hardly exists at all.

One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.

A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. Proverbs 11:24-25

A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor. Proverbs 22:9

What do we learn from these verses?

How do we give?



Matthew 6v3-4

Does this mean we must give in total secrecy?

Is it significant that Jesus said when not if?

Did Jesus give to the poor? John 13v29, 12v5-6

(in keeping with His own teaching we cannot expect a direct statement)



Mark 12v41-44

Why was her gift more?

Is anyone too poor to give?



2 Corinthians 8v12

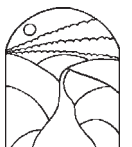
What makes a gift acceptable?

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2 Corinthians 9v7

What kind of giver does God love?

Why?

How shouldn't we give?

What does this say about those who are always trying to drum up money?

Gifts that are given under compulsion or gifts that are given with strings attached to them are no gift at all. Gifts must be given freely and from the heart.

What gifts would you not accept?

When a gift is given freely should we accept it?

the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35

Do not rob someone of their blessing.

Read 2 Corinthians 8v1-5

This passage refers to a collection Paul organised on behalf of the believers in Jerusalem who were living in dire poverty. It was not a collection Paul wanted for himself, we know he bluntly refused to accept money from the Corinthian Christians. After explaining that he has the right to receive money from the Church, he then explains that he will not use this right! 1 Cor 9v15, 2 Cor 12v14. Nor is he collecting to build some church. This was giving to where the need was.

but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. 2 Corinthians 8:5

What do you think this means?

I think it means that our giving should be an expression of our devotion to God.

What did they give?

What do you think God wants more us or our money?

What do you think the Church wants more?



2 Corinthians 8v7

This verse tells us two things: firstly that giving is necessary for and a part of Christian maturity. Secondly that giving is a grace. The word grace is the Greek Charisma, the same word we translate Gift when we talk about the gifts of the Spirit.

Is giving a gift of the Spirit? Romans 12v6-8

Who do we give to?



Malachi 3v8-10

This verse talks about tithing the money we give to the Church to finance it's operations. In fact it is not given to the Church by to God as the passage implies. Obviously this is necessary. But it also speaks of offerings. This is money we give for other things.

What was the money the Philippians sent to Paul for?

Philippians 4v15-16, (2 Corinthians 11v8)

Should we do the same?



1 John 3v16-18

I have been very careful in this study to avoid the mistake of thinking that generosity is only expressed in Dollars and Cents, **How else is it expressed?**

When we give to missions, charity, the poor or a brother in need, who are we really giving to? Matthew 25v40

Bible Studies

A hard Question

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:17

As a Christian what make me different from who I used to be?

What makes me different from a non Christian?

What makes me different from someone who is morally good?

The front page of this study is for us to brain storm and come up with some answers. The Back of this sheet is Pastor Rays answer (He had as long to think about it as you do). Do not cheat.

I have faith.

I have a relationship with God. I know God as my own friend. I know I can trust Him with my whole life. I know I don't have to defend myself because he will

I have different standards.

2 Corinthians 10v2

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

I have different values.

I have different goals.

I know where I am going.

I act differently

I treat people differently

I want to please God not get rich

I have forgiveness of sins

I have a different status before God.

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—Colossians 1:21

I see things from a spiritual perspective

Spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

I am set free from the power of sin.

I have the power to be righteous. I have the power to resist temptation.

I am able to live a holy life and please God

The indicative and the imperative

This is a grammatical trick Paul often uses. Many of us look at the above list and say *yes I know this is what I should be, but I also know I fall short of it. This means I am not a Christian, or at least not a very good one.* Paul looks at it a different way

The ***indicative*** means "You are,"

The ***Imperative*** says "you must."

Paul sums it up by saying "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are". 1 Corinthians 5:7

The ***indicative*** = You are a new batch of dough without yeast (Sin)

The ***imperative*** = Therefore get rid of the Yeast (sin) from your life.

Be what you already are.

Other examples Romans 6v11-14

Colossians 3v1-2

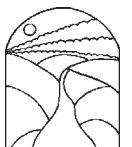
God has made us holy and righteous (Indicative - you are Righteous) so we must live accordingly (imperative - you must be righteous). We are already new creations,

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so we must live as new creations.

Do not doubt what God has done in salvation, just ask Him for the ability to live out in your life what He has already made you.

Grace says We are already righteous therefore our actions should be righteous

legalism says You must be righteous so that God will accept you.

Licence says I am righteous so it does not matter what I do

Which statement is true?

If I am really good God will accept me

I am going to be really good because God has already accepted me

It does not matter if I am good or bad because God accepts me anyway

Bible Studies

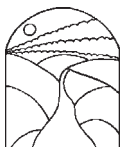
Ezekiel 34

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Complaint against the Shepherds

As you listen to this passage keep an ear open for the Lord's criticism of the Shepherds.

Read Ezekiel 34v1-6

What did the Shepherds do wrong?

God Shepherds His sheep

What two things will God do to the shepherds?

Read Ezekiel 34v7-10

God will

Complaint against the Shepherds

Watch out for how God acts as a shepherd.

Read Ezekiel 34v11-16

What did the good Shepherd do?

Complaint against the Sheep

There is a problem among the flock what is it?

Read Ezekiel 34v17-22

What are the two complaints against the sheep?

How did the sleek strong sheep get sleek and strong?

God's Solution

Look out for what God will do for the flock.

Read Ezekiel 34v23-31

Who is going to be the Shepherd?

Was Ezekiel before or after King David?

What will he establish? v25

To understand this passage we must ask first what it meant to those who first heard it.

The sheep are -

The shepherds are -

God's Shepherd is -

What is the point Ezekiel is trying to make?

Now we must apply this to us today.

The sheep are -

The shepherds are -

God's Shepherd is -

What is the warning God wants us to hear?

Is the pastor alone responsible for tending the sheep?

What are the responsibilities of a pastor according to this passage?

What are the responsibilities of a sheep?

The sleek and the strong

This of course is not a problem for us!

Matthew 18v6

Galatians 5v15

James 4v1

The accusation was that the strong sheep destroyed the food for the weak.

How do you think this applies to us?

Can you think of any examples of how we behave this way?

Jesus is: Hebrews 13:20

1 Peter 5:4

Read John 10v1-16

Is this passage connected with Ezekiel 34?

What is Jesus claiming?

How do you think the Pharisees and Saducees reacted?

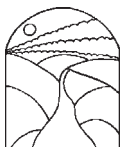
Jesus was applying this passage to himself, He was directly claiming to be God's Shepherd.

For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. 1 Peter 2:25

Could this have an application wider than just Pastors, could it apply within the nation and within the family?

Bible Studies

Ezekiel 34



Complaint against the Shepherds

As you listen to this passage keep an ear open for the Lord's criticism of the Shepherds.

Read Ezekiel 34v1-6

What did the Shepherds do wrong?

Took care of themselves not the sheep.

Took care of themselves as the cost of the Sheep.

Did not strengthen the weak.

Bought back the strays.

Abandoned them.

Treated them harshly.

God Shepherds His sheep

What two things will God do to the shepherds?

Read Ezekiel 34v7-10

God will

Hold them accountable.

Remove them from their place.

Complaint against the Shepherds

Watch out for how God acts as a shepherd.

Read Ezekiel 34v11-16

What did the good Shepherd do?

search for the sheep.

bring them back.

Feed them.

Give them Security (lie down).

Bind up and strengthen.

Destroy the sleek & Strong.

Complaint against the Sheep

There is a problem among the flock what is it?

Read Ezekiel 34v17-22

What are the two complaints against the sheep?

Preventing the others from feeding.

Fighting among themselves.

How did the sleek strong sheep get sleek and strong?

God's Solution

Look out for what God will do for the flock.

Read Ezekiel 34v23-31

Who is going to be the Shepherd?

Was Ezekiel before or after King David?

What will he establish? v25

A covenant of peace

To understand this passage we must ask first what it meant to those who first heard it.

The sheep are - The people of Israel

The shepherds are - The kings & leaders of Israel

God's Shepherd is - The promised Messiah

What is the point Ezekiel is trying to make?

Now we must apply this to us today.

The sheep are - Believers in Jesus

The shepherds are - The pastors and leaders

God's Shepherd is - Jesus

What is the warning God wants us to hear?

Is the pastor alone responsible for tending the sheep?

What are the responsibilities of a pastor according to this passage?

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Bible Studies

Ezekiel 33.



Read Ezekiel 33:1-6

This passage starts with a parable. The watchman of the city had a very responsible job. They had to guard the City while everyone else slept. They watched against an enemy who may attack silently from the darkness. If they slept on the job they put not only themselves in danger but the whole city.

What was the watchman watching for?

What two conditions does Ezekiel described?

If he sees the danger, sounds the trumpet and no one listens - who is responsible for the lives of those who die?

If he sees the danger, but does not sounds the trumpet - who then is responsible for the lives of those who die?

Read Ezekiel 33:7-9.

The Lord now applies the parable. The application expands the parable slightly.

Who is the Watchmen?

What is the sword coming against the land ?

What are the two possible actions described?

In both cases what is the reason they died?

In which case was the watchmen held accountable?

Why did the watchmen keep silent?

Historically, Ezekiel was writing at the time of the exile, to the generation born during the exile, both in Babylon and in Israel. They blamed all that had befallen them on their parents and their sin. Ezekiel is trying to make them see the consequences of their own sin.



How does this apply to us?

What is our role as watchmen?

Can you think of any examples?

How should we sound the trumpet?

We know God's ways, even if we don't always keep them ourselves. Does this passage give us a mandate to inform our friends and colleges of everything they do wrong? If we then fail what are the consequences for us?

In the original context is Ezekiel talking to the heathen nations or to God's people?

He is speaking to God's people, but not exclusively to God's people, it is also speaking to the unsaved.

Say to them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, O house of Israel?' Ezekiel 33:11

What was the result that God had in mind for those warned by the Watchman?

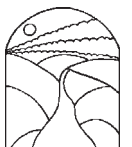
The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9

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In the Church

Is there a difference between showing someone their error and bringing them into condemnation?



Read Galatians 6v1

What is the Goal?

How does the goal dictate the means?

What does it mean that we 'Watch ourselves'?

Obviously we should watch ourselves in case we fall for the same sin, but maybe we should watch ourselves in case we get into pride or start to judge others or act from wrong motives.

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Luke 6:37



Read Jude 1v22-23

What is the Goal?

Does this verse prescribe one response or several?

Why?

Different people need to be warned in different ways, some people will respond to encouragement better than correction.

Can you think of an example?

In what circumstances would you act and in which would you refrain from acting?

We must watch that we do not become busy bodies.

What did Paul think about busybodies? 1 Timothy 5v13-15

Is there another way to deal with it? 1 John 5v16a (and only 16a)



In the World

We are called to be light and salt

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds Matthew 5:13-17

We are called to stand for Godliness.

As Christians we have values on things like Abortion, Homosexuality etc. Which are not shared by the world.

Do we have the right to impose these standards?

What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? 1 Cor 5:12

Do we have the right to advocate for them?

An excellent example of this was the abolition of slavery, those who campaigned against slavery in Britain were to a man believers.

What things might we take a stand on?

What things should we not take a stand on?

Did you notice that Matthew 5v17 called us to shine our lights by our actions.

What do you think Jesus means by this?

Bible Studies

What God requires of me.

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8

What does the above verse tell us of God's requirements?

If it is our desire to please God, then it is vital that we know what it is that He requires of us. This is the kind of question that is too big to handle, so we will try to break it down into more easily managed sections.

The verses are examples only and not complete answers. You should think it through before checking the scripture

What does God require of me in my family?

Colossians 3v18-20
1 Timothy 5v8
Genesis 18v19

What does He want of me in my marriage?

Hebrews 13v4
1 Peter 3v1-7

What does God require of me in my work?

Colossians 3:23
2 Thessalonians 3:10

What does God require of me in my finances?

Proverbs 3:9
Matthew 6v3

What does God require of me toward other people?

John 13v34
1 John 3v16

What does God require of me in the church?

Ephesians 4:16
1 Timothy 5:17

What does God require of me towards my enemy?

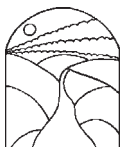
Matthew 5v44
Romans 12:20

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What does God require of me towards the needy?

1 John 3v17

What does God require of me in my leisure activities?

What does God require of me in my thought life?

2 Corinthians 10:5

How does God require me to treat my body?

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

What does God require of me regarding the state?

Romans 13v1-6
1 Timothy 2v1-2

What does God require of me towards the unsaved?

Colossians 4v5
1 Peter 2:12

Does everyone have the same answer?

If something is taught in Scripture it is incumbent on us all, but there may be other things God requires of you that He does not require of other.

Eg?

You should not force those things on other people.

What you do is being done to the Lord. The Bible makes this clear within Marriage; *Eph 5:22*, Work; *Col 3:23* and matters of conscience; *Rom 14:6*. But it is true of all that we do. This means that even the humblest actions cross over from our physical being to our spiritual lives.

If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. *Romans 14:8*

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. *Colossians 3:17*

If you can't do it unto the Lord should you do it?

Bible Studies

3 John

Read 3 John (Yes all of it).

This book was written by the Apostle John. It is one of 5 book he wrote that we have, **the others are?**

John mentions three people by name. All of them seemed to have held positions of influence in the Church. **they are?**

The Church of the first century relied heavily on itinerant ministry. It also took hospitality for believers as they travelled from place to place as the responsibility of the Church. (There was, in practice, nowhere else they could stay.)

It looks like a group (or groups) of believers from John's church had recently visited the church to whom 3 John was written, and received a very mixed welcome.



Gaius

Gaius is the person the letter was sent to. He seems to have been a personal friend of John and was perhaps saved under John's ministry. There are several people called Gaius mentioned in the New Testament, but it was a very common name and we have no strong evidence to link him with any of the others.

**What are the two kinds of health John mentions in verse 2?
How do you assess spiritual health?**

What report had John received about Gaius?

v3

v6

**What is the difference between being faithful to the truth and walking in the truth?
Had Gaius shown hospitality to the brothers?**

What exhortation does John give Gaius? Why?

John encourages Gaius to continue with his hospitality, perhaps for fear he will yield to pressure from Diotrephes.

Consider: Matthew 10:41

What implications does this have for us?

Anyone who gives to a missionary because he is a missionary will receive a missionaries reward,
Matthew 10:41 RAV¹

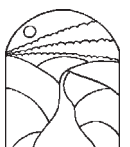
How important do you think hospitality is?

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Diotrephes

What was Diotrephes doing?

What was Diotrephes problem?

Read mark 9v36-37

Diotrephes loved too, he loved to be first! Pride had got the better of him and he had 'lost connection to the head'. Diotrephes wanted to be first. He wanted people to look to him and recognise his authority. This is why he tried to keep John out of the Church for fear people would recognise John at his expense.

What attitude should he have taken?

What will happen if this kind of ambition is found in the Church?



Can you push yourself forward without hurting others?

If you are insecure in your position, will you need to defend yourself at other expense?

If you are always critical of others, what does it say about you?

Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him. You may be sure that such a man is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned. Titus 3:10

What does divisive mean?

What effect is a divisive person going to have?

It was far more important that Diotrephes was honoured by the people, he cared too little that Christ honoured him.

How do you advance in the Church?

It is of little importance if you do advance in the Church, what is important is that you advance before God. We receive our reward when God sees our work, not men. Matthew 6v1-2.

Reading verse 11 in context, what is John saying about Diotrephes?

By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. Matthew 7v16-20

What does it mean to imitate what is good?



Demetrius

What is the report about Demetrius?

Who are the three groups that witness about Demetrius?

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What do you think 'Even the truth itself' means?

Some people think that 'the truth' is another way of saying God. Alternatively it could mean that the Gospel is so much evidenced by his live, that he has become living evidence of it's truth. His actions witness for him.



What kind of a letter would people write about you?

Bible Studies

3 John

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This book was written by the Apostle John. It is one of 5 books he wrote that we have, **the others are?**

John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John & Revelation.

John mentions three people by name. All of them seemed to have held positions of influence in the Church. **they are?**

Gaius

Diotrephes

Demetrius

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v3

Faithful to the truth

Walking in the truth

v6

his love

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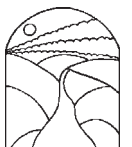
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Diotrephes

What was Diotrephes doing?

Will have nothing to do with John

Suppressed the letter

Gossips maliciously

Refuses to receive the visitors from John

Forces others out of the Church

What was Diotrephes problem?

He wanted to be first

Read mark 9v36-37

Diotrephes loved too, he loved to be first! Pride had got the better of him and he had 'lost connection to the head'. Diotrephes wanted to be first. He wanted people to look to him and recognise his authority. This is why he tried to keep John out of the Church for fear people would recognise John at his expense.

What attitude should he have taken?

What will happen if this kind of ambition is found in the Church?

People are going to get hurt



Can you push yourself forward without hurting others?

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It was far more important that Diotrephes was honoured by the people, he cared too little that Christ honoured him.

How do you advance in the Church?

It is of little importance if you do advance in the Church, what is important is that you advance before God. We receive our reward when God sees our work, not men. Matthew 6v1-2.

Reading verse 11 in context, what is John saying about Diotrephes?

By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. Matthew 7v16-20

What does it mean to imitate what is good?



Demetrius

What is the report about Demetrius?

Who are the three groups that witness about Demetrius?

Everyone

Even the truth

John

What do you think 'Even the truth itself' means?

Some people think that 'the truth' is another way of saying God. Alternatively it could mean that the Gospel is so much evidenced by his live, that he has become living evidence of it's truth. His actions witness for him.



What kind of a letter would people write about you?

Bible Studies

The Fig Tree

Read Luke 13v6-9

Jesus told a story about a fig tree, a gardener and the owner of the vineyard in which the fig tree stood.

Many people find a very easy interpretation of this parable by applying it to the Jews. *They are the fig tree that failed to bear fruit, the three years are the three years of Jesus ministry*. Unfortunately nowhere in the whole Old Testament are the Jews likened to a fig tree: a vine, yes, a vineyard, frequently, or even an olive, yes but never a fig tree. So we cannot get away with just blaming the Jews.

Some people believe the fig tree represented the city of Jerusalem, this makes sense as the fig tree was planted in a vineyard, and the vineyard is a metaphor used of Israel. If so then Jesus spoke this parable against the religious and political leaders in Jerusalem (the capital city). If so this highlights the mercy of the Lord even though the Saducees and Pharisees failed to recognise who he was He still gave them more time. The end came in AD70 when the city was razed to the ground. If this is the case then this parable in Luke carries the same message as the cursing of the fig tree found in Matthew (21v19 & Mark 11v14)

Let look at the context.

Read Luke 13v1-5

Is Jesus talking to the nation or to individuals?

Why did the people believe the Galileans had been killed?

What was Jesus reply?

When Jesus warned that they too would perish, what did he mean by perish?

Even today too often we blame someone's afflictions on their sins. Like Job's comforters we say "you must have sinned very badly for this to have happened". Jesus is not denying that there can be a connection between sin and strife. He is pointing out that if such is the case, we are all on dodgy ground for "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Rom 3:23

Who is the fig tree?

Who is the owner?

Who is the man who takes care of the fig tree?

This passage is not suggesting that there is disagreement between God the Father and God the Son, or that Jesus displays more mercy than the father. The discussion is method Jesus used to explain His point.

What do you think that Jesus is trying to say in this parable?

What is the Fertiliser that is dug in around the tree?

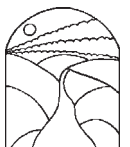
I think you could say it is a whole lot of things; the blessing we receive from God, the way He nurtures us and cares for us. It also includes all the teaching that we receive from the Word.

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What is the Fruit the Father is looking for?

Again it covers a whole host of things. Responsiveness to God, Righteousness, Works of service, Fruit of the Spirit etc.

Was the fertiliser insufficient?

Was the Care the tree received not enough?

Whose fault was it the tree bore no fruit?

Then why was it that the tree bore no fruit?

Someone coined the phrase “high maintenance, low productivity Christians” Always needing God to feed them but never bearing any fruit.

How does Hebrews 5v12 compare with this?

What does this parable tell us about Jesus attitude toward such Christians?

Firstly He is patient, His goal is that we do bear fruit, even if it is only by next year.

Psalm 103:14

Hebrews 5:2

In the end He will deal to the tree.

The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. Matthew 3:10

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. John 15:1-2

How quickly do you give up on others when they fail to meet your standards?

How will God deal with the fruitless trees?

Will Christ cut out the dead wood irretrievably? Never. He will take them through experiences, even trials to bring them back to repentance.

“All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.” Romans 10:21, If this parable speaks of the hardness of Jerusalem with its religious leaders, then its counterpart is found in Romans 11v16-23. Here Paul explains that God can and will regraft branches that were broken off through unbelief

For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Romans 11:21

The empty seats in Churches are full of people who believe that God has given up on them. Jesus is not inclined to give up on people, the problem is generally that people give up on themselves and then use the idea that Jesus has given up on them as an excuse.

A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. Mat 12:20

What does this verse mean?

How does it apply to us?

Where our hearts are repentant, where we respond to Jesus, He will always restore us. There is no sin that is bigger than His mercy. There is no hardness of heart that cannot be broken by the call of His voice.

What should our response be to the message of this Parable?

Bible Studies

Deuteronomy 18



Read Deuteronomy 18v9-13

This is the clearest of many passages that outlaw occult practices.

Verse 10, Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, refers to the practice of offering infants to Molech.

As best we know a bronze furnace was shaped to represent the god Molech, children of about 2 years of age were tossed down a shoot into the incandescent stomach of the idol. The practice was accompanied by drums to hide the screams of the Child.

The Hebrew for: '*do not imitate*' means '*do not learn to do*' .

God is saying "*do not learn from the people you live among*".

How does this apply to us?



There are eight prohibitions

divination
sorcery,
interprets omens,
engages in witchcraft,
casts spells,
medium,
spiritist,
consults the dead.

Read this list in several versions to get an idea of the scope of meaning.

We recognise that despite the passage of 3500 years since this command was given all of these eight practices are still common in our enlightened society.

Why do you think this is?

Divination is normally done with rods or a pendulum the spirits are asked to questions and then expected to influence the pendulum or rods to show the answer. The Hebrew word is used of a broad range of occult practices.

The word translated **Sorcery**, has the idea soothsaying, telling the future by physical signs, this would include astrology.

Interpreting omens could include palm reading or reading tea leaves. Today consulting the dead we generally call a seance.

As far as I know no one ever read auras in Biblical days.

Do you think this list would include such things?

What word is used (twice) **to describe God's view of such things?** v9 & 12
What effect does practising these things have on God? 2 Kings 21v6

"Do not allow a sorceress to live." Exodus 22:18

"Do not practice divination or sorcery." Leviticus 19:26

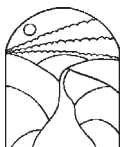
"A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death. You are to stone them; their blood will be on their own heads." Leviticus 20:27

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These are Old Testament passages what does the New Testament have to say?

Acts 19v19

Galatians 5v20

Revelation 22v15

**Why do you think such things are detestable to God?
What attitude should a Christian hold towards them?**



Read 1 Corinthians 10v19-22

How does this passage tie in with what we have said?

Many of those who engage in occult practices are simply tricksters and charlatans out to make money from the gullible. But behind others is true power that comes not from God, but from the enemy. Clearly we cannot use both God's power and the enemies. In fact we want to stay away from anything that uses the enemies power. You cannot walk in both the darkness and the light.

Occult activity brings a person into direct contact with the demonic, such contact can have serious spiritual, physical, moral and psychological effects.

Participating in occult practices can give the enemy a hold over our lives. Where a Christian has engaged in such things, even if it was before they believed, they should repent of them. They should also have prayer to prevent the enemy for using such things as an opening to oppress them.

What possible reason could a Christian have for dabbling in occult practices?

Why do you think Ouija boards and the like are so popular?



If someone told you to get your palm read at a school fundraiser and you knew Romeo the gypsy was the headmaster dressed up, would you do it?



What would you say about a medium who claims to be a Christian and that it is God who enables him/her to consort spirits?

When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? Isaiah 8:19



Read Ezekiel 13:18-20

**What kind of charms do you think this passage is talking about?
In what way do they ensnare?**

What possible reason could there be for a Christian wearing a lucky charm?
In light of Hebrews 13v5-6 I can't think of any.

**What practices do you think we should avoid?
How much occult practice is safe for a Christian?
How much occult practice is safe for an unbeliever?**

The answer to this question is simple, none. If there are times, when through God's grace, no harm is done so be it, but any involvement with the occult is playing with fire.

The LORD protects the simplehearted; when I was in great need, he saved me. Psalm 116:6

Bible Studies

Fruit of the Spirit

Part 1

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23



Love,

1 John 4v7-8
1 Cor 13v4-7
John 13:34-35

The Greek word used here is Agape, the strongest word for love.

How do you express love?

To whom should we express love?

God, enemies, believers, ourselves, the short answer is everyone.

What does the Bible say we should hate? Romans 12:9, Proverbs 13:5

Why is love considered the most important of the commands?

Matthew 23v37-40
Galatians 5v14.
Romans 13:10,
Colossians 3v14,
1 Peter 4v8

It is often said that the opposite of love is not hatred but indifference.

Do you think that is true?

If it is true then maybe our short comings in this fruit are seen in the things to which we are indifferent.

What is Sacrificial love?

What is unconditional love?

Make Love your aim 1 Corinthians 14:1 RSV

Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. 1 Thessalonians 4:9

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. 1 Thessalonians 3:12

Examples of Love; Prodigal son's father, Calvary. **Does your love measure up?**



Joy,

Define Joy:

What is the opposite of Joy?

Does our joy depend on circumstances? James 1:2 2 Cor 7v4

Where does Joy come from? 1 Thessalonians 1v6

What enabled Christ to endure the cross? Hebrews 12v2

What is the Joy set before us?

What happens if we loose our joy?

Joy comes from a fresh relationship with Jesus.

Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. John 16:22

Romans 15v13
1 Peter 1v8



Peace,

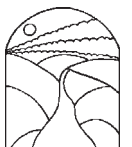
Colossians 3:15
John 16:33

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Why can we have peace in Christ?

What is the connection between Peace and trust?

What is the opposite of Peace?

What effect will someone at peace have on those around them?

What effect will someone who is not at peace have on those around them?

Isaiah 32:17

Matthew 5:9

James 3:18

God has called us to live in peace. 1 Corinthians 7:15;

Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Romans 14:19
seek peace and pursue it. Psalms 34:14

Great peace have they who love your law, and nothing can make them stumble. Psalms 119:165
be at peace with each other.” Mark 9:50



Patience, Longsuffering KJV

What is patience?

The Greek can be translated tolerant or long-suffering. *It is the quality of putting up with other people, even when patience is sorely tried.* Cole There are different kinds of patience; patience to cope with problems now, patience to wait for something, etc.

I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Ephesians 4:1-2

Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; Psalms 37:7

be patient with everyone. 1 Thessalonians 5:14

Who should we be patient for? Three answers

Why do you think it is hardest to be patient with those closest to us?

How is God patient with us?

If God is patient, how can we be impatient?

Why do we have to be patient with God?

What do we need to be patient with God for?

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Romans 12:12

God's patience enables Him to take a long term view on things. 2 Peter 3:9. If we take this view we will get on with planting knowing that eventually it will bear fruit.

What happens if you are only interested in things that bring quick results?

Let God finish the process, don't help the chick out of the egg.

James 5:7-8



Kindness, Gentleness KJV

A kind man benefits himself, but a cruel man brings trouble on himself. Proverbs 11:17

Blessed is he who is kind to the needy. Proverbs 14:21

He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward him for what he has done.

Proverbs 19:17

He who pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity and honour. Proverbs 21:21

Kindness can mean generosity, it can also mean gentleness, fairness or moderation.

How do you show kindness?

Ephesians 4:32

Colossians 3:12

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, Titus 3:4-5

Bible Studies

Fruit of the Spirit

Part 2

6

Goodness,

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. Galatians 6:10

Goodness is doing good.

It has the idea of the development of character that is truly good, upright, dependable and yet still generous and good to others. Horton

How great is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you, which you bestow in the sight of men on those who take refuge in you. Psalm 31:19

Trust in the LORD and do good; Psalm 37:3

How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me? Psalm 116:12

The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, Luke 6:45

Romans 12:9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.

Ephesians 6:8 because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.

Why is Goodness important?

How do you show it?

7

Faithfulness, Faith *KJV*

This is the same word that is translated faith in the gifts of the Spirit, it is the only word that occurs in both lists.

The word means to be reliable and trusted. In 1 Cor 12 (Gifts of the Spirit,) it is passive we trust in God. In Gal 5v22 (Fruit of the Spirit,) it is active we prove ourselves trustworthy.

But be sure to fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you. 1 Samuel 12:24

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’ Matthew 25:21

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. Revelation 2:10

What should we be faithful to?

What is the opposite of faithfulness?

What are the rewards for faithfulness?

To the faithful you show yourself faithful, Psalms 18:25

Love the LORD, all his saints! The LORD preserves the faithful, but the proud he pays back in full. Psalms 31:23

God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful. 1 Corinthians 1:9

8

Gentleness Meekness *KJV*

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Prov 15:1

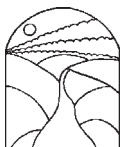
By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you—I, Paul, who am “timid” when face to face with you, but “bold” when away! 2 Corinthians 10:1

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Gentleness means; *seemly, fitting, equitable fair, moderate, forbearing not insisting on the letter of the law; it expresses that consideration that looks "humanely and reasonably at the facts of the case"*. Vine. It is close in meaning to kindness. Some one translated it "Sweet reasonableness".

It looks for the best in people.

It is the quite word that turns away wrath. Proverbs 15:1

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Eph 4:2

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Philippians 4:5

I think that Gentleness is one of the traits that must be associated with Authority. In any are that you are 'in charge' you must show gentleness.

Does gentleness mean weakness?

Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. 1 Peter 3:4

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. 1 Timothy 6:11

1 Peter 3:15



Self-control. Temperance KJV

Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control. Prov 25:28

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Romans 6:12

1 Corinthians 9:25-27 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

Self Control is the word used of an athlete in training. It is the fruit that enables us to master desires, impulses, passions and appetites, Horton. Self Control enables us to discipline ourselves.

What is Self Control used for?

How is self Control developed?

Would you say self controlled and God controlled are the same thing?

Self Control has a negative side, it helps us resist temptation and the control the kinds of sins we commit before we even realise what we are doing. (Eg. anger & the tongue). It also has a positive side the discipline required to do the things Jesus calls us to do. (Eg. Prayer times, works of service).

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. 2 Timothy 1:7

Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. Titus 2:6

Why do young men need to be self controlled?

Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. 14 As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. 1 Peter 1:13-14

A notable exception in this list is humility.

Which fruit do you think it comes under?



What does it mean?

The fruit of the Spirit is the Hallmark of Christian maturity.

The Fruit of the Spirit is true Spirituality.

The Fruit of the Spirit is the image of Jesus.

Bible Studies

The Return of Christ

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. John 14:3
“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.” Acts 1:11
So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. Hebrews 9:28

The return of Christ will be:

Personal

Acts 1v11
1 Thessalonians 4v16

Some people claim “the ‘messiah spirit’ rests on...” and then name some leader, they claim Christ has returned in that person.

What would you say? *Matthew 24v4-5*

Visible

Revelation 1v7
Matthew 24v30

What about those who claim Christ has secretly returned? *Mat 24v26-27*

Sudden

Matthew 24v44
1 Thessalonians 5v2-4

Why should we not be caught by surprise?

Glorious

Luke 9v22-26
Matthew 24v30-31

Why then does Amos say: Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light. Amos 5:18, Cf. Joel 2v2?

Imminent

Mark 13v34-35
Revelation 1v3

There are different views and understandings of the Lord's Return. If you believe the Church will be raptured before the tribulation, then there are no more events to take place before the return of Christ. If you believe that the Church will be raptured after the Tribulation, then we understand that the Man of lawlessness must come first. *2 Thessalonians 2v3*

Some people claim that Christ's return is Spiritual not literal. That Christ returns at death for each person, or that Christ comes when someone first believes in Him.

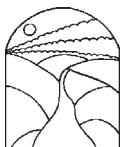
Is Christ's return Spiritual or literal?

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While lots of the references to the Lord's return in the Prophets and in Revelation can be spiritualised to give them different meanings. The Writers of the Epistles clearly taught that Christ would physically return.

***Is it true to say that death is our own personal second coming?
Is so what does this say about the imminence of Christ's return?***

In Luke 21v8 Jesus warned us against those who say "the time is near"
What does this warning mean and why did Christ give it?

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Matthew 24:36

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. Mathew 24:42

What would you say to people who spend so much time trying to work out the Date of Christ's return, or indeed claim to know it?

Some of the NT writers seemed to have expected Christ's return within their lifetime.
1 John 2v18, 1 Thes 4v15.

Does the 2000 years that we have waited rule out Christ's return?

Other passages teach a long wait, 2 Peter 2v3-4, 2 Thes 2v2. Most telling are the Lord's own words in the parables He told to illustrate His teaching on the second coming.

But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a **long time**,'
Matthew 24:48

The bridegroom was a **long time** in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. Mat 25:5

"After a **long time** the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. Mat 25:19

Prophecies of Jesus first coming given to David, Moses, Abraham, & Adam, date back up to and over 2000 years. When we examine the scope of prophecy and God's plan of salvation as revealed over the last 6000 years, the time that has elapsed is very much in keeping with what we might expect.

How should we act in light of Christ's soon return?

1 Thessalonians 5v6

Matthew 25v13

Matthew 24v44

Matthew 24v45-46

2 Peter 3v12

1 Thessalonians 4v17-18

Philippians 3v18-19

1 John 3v2-3

Luke 21v34

James 5v7

What does thinking about Christ's return make you think?

Bible Studies

Signs of the times

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"
Matthew 24:3

What will be the Signs of the Lord's return? This is a question many have tried to answer, some have come up with very fanciful and elaborate answer, others with information so general as to be of little help. We want to read the scriptures and see what they actually say.

Read 2 Timothy 3v1-5

This passage refers to what people will be like.

How does this contrast with the Old Testament structure of society?

How does this contrast with the Christian, Fruit of the Spirit life?

What does a having a form of godliness but denying its power, Mean?

First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4 They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 2 Peter 3:3-7

They said to you, "In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires."
Jude 1:18

Read Isaiah 24v3-13

What kind of a World does this passage describe?

What does the earth is defiled by it's people, mean?

What does it's people must bear their guilt, mean?

Verse 6b is very reminiscent of the tribulations of Revelation.

Read 1 Timothy 4v1

How will this effect the Church?

Do you think this verse could imply an increase in occult practice?

2 Thessalonians 2:-3 speaks of a rebellion that occurs and finds it expression in the Man of lawlessness. (not the rebellion and the man of lawlessness are not the same thing, Paul puts 'and' between them.)

What kind of a rebellion might this be?

At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, Matthew 24:10&12

Read 2 Timothy 4:3-4

Will an increase in heresy and false teaching mark the end times?

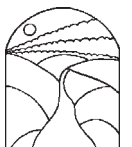
Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. 1 John 2:18

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Read Daniel 12:4

But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge.” This passage is interpreted to mean that Knowledge and travel will explode in the end times.

Turn to Matthew 24

Matthew 24v5	
Matthew 24v6	
Matthew 24v7	
Luke 21v11	
Matthew 24v9	
Matthew 24v10&12	
Matthew 24v14	
Matthew 24v15	
Matthew 24v21	
Matthew 24v23-24	
Matthew 24v38-39	
Luke 21v25	

Are wars and rumours of wars a sign of the end? Mark 13v7

Romans 11v25-26, Luke 21:24. Israel

For me the clearest indication of the return of Christ is the reestablishment of the state of Israel in accordance with Biblical prophecy.

Isaiah 43v4-6, Jeremiah 31v8, 50v19, Ezekiel 11v17,37v12, Hosea 3v5, Zechariah 10v9, Amos 9v14-15.

In accordance with Ezekiel 37 we have only seen the first part of God’s restoration. The order is consistent in prophecy, first they come back to their land, then they encounter a spiritual renewal.

Natural branches are regrafted into the olive root.

How do you think the two verse quoted in the heading compare to each other?

What does it mean for the times of the Gentiles to end?

Bible Studies

When Christ Returns

There are various theories to explain the order of the end times. Below the four most common views are explained. The object of this study is to give you a framework that will enable you to understand and interpret the major passages of Scripture that explain Christ's return. We start looking at these next week.

Definition of Terms

Christ. This is period covers the life of Christ, that is His first coming. It ended with His ascension to heaven. Acts 1v9-10.

Church Age. This is the period from the Day of Pentecost until the Lord's Second Coming. We call it the Age of Grace, the time of mercy or the Day of Salvation.

Trib. Short for the Great Tribulation, A time of unrivalled persecution and upheaval. There have always been times when the Church has gone through tribulation, John 16v33. The great Tribulation will not necessarily be worst, but it will be much more wide spread, covering the whole earth and the believers of every nation. The Antichrist is active during this period

Matthew 24v21

Revelation 7v14

Millennium This is a period of 1000 years during which Christ will reign on earth. Only one place in the Bible identifies this period but many verses seem to point to it.

Revelation 20v4

Eternal State This is the entrance of eternity. When the plan of salvation is finally wrapped up and we live with God forever.

1 Corinthians 15v24&28

2 Peter 3v13

Post Millennial



The Post-Millennialist believes that Christ will return, physical and personally, at end of the Millennial age. He looks for an age in which the gospel will so permeate society that Peace and Righteousness will flourish. He expects a wide spread conversion of mankind as part of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. He does not necessarily believe that the millennium will be a literal 1000 year. As the growth of the kingdom is gradual it would be hard to date it's start. The current age blends into the millennial age. At the end of the millennium, Satan engineers a rebellion, which Christ's destroys at His coming. There will then be a general resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. The Millennial age then blends into the Eternal State with it's new heavens and new earth.

This theory is not widely held today, though in the past it has been the most popular viewpoint.

Post-Millennialism has a strong thrust toward evangelism and social reform, because of it's emphasis on the present aspect of God's kingdom. It help to contrast the pessimism that dogs the subject of the Lord's return.

Does modern society shows no sign of the improvement?

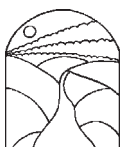
What do you think would make this view popular?

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A-Millennialism



A-Millennialism is the simplest of all the theories of Christ's return. It teaches that the Millennium of Rev 20 is figurative not literal. Different A-Millennialist interpret it to mean different things, most hold that it stands for the time in which we live.

The A-Millennialist believes that the end of the age will see a period of great tribulation of undetermined length, (7 years being figurative of the tribulations quality). This will be followed by the literal return of Christ. The Resurrection of the dead, both good and evil, and final Judgement. This will usher in the eternal State. Prophecies commonly attributed to the millennium have either already been fulfilled in a spiritual manner, or await a new heaven and a new earth.

Historic Pre-Millennialism.



It holds that the Church will go through the Great Tribulation, at the end of which Christ will return. The Righteous including the OT saints, and the Jews who have faith in Jesus, will be raised, and judged for reward. A Millennium of righteousness will follow ending in Satan's rebellion. Jesus will crush this rebellion and will judge both Satan and the now resurrected unsaved dead. The Eternal state will follow.

Pre-Tribulation, Pre-Millennialism.



This is the most highly developed and detailed system. It believes that the Church will be raptured 'secretly' at the *Parousia*. Seven years of tribulation follow during which the antichrist will rise to prominence and a wide spread revival will occur, led predominantly by Jewish evangelists, preaching the 'Gospel of the Kingdom,' a physical Rule of Christ. At the end of this, Christ will return in Glory (*Apokalupsis*,) and the dead of the tribulation will be raised.

A millennium will follow with the state of Israel as chief among the nations. It will end in Satan's rebellion and Judgement and the resurrection of the wicked unto Judgement. Pre-Trib, differentiates strongly between, the OT saints, the Church, and saved Israel. Between two second comings and as many as five different Judgements. It also stresses that Christ's return is immanent, It could be today. A variation of this theory see the Church raptured half way through the tribulation.

The **Assemblies of God** hold to the **Pre-Millennial** position, as a general rule the Pre-Trib version is popular in the States, and the Historic version more widespread in the English influenced Countries.

Which of these view you hold will be determined by how you interpret scripture. If you hold that Scripture should be interpreted for it's spiritual meaning you will naturally become an A-Millennialist.

If you hold that Scripture should be interpreted as literally as possible you will become a Pre-Tribulation, Pre-Millennialism.

I believe that we should not use a predetermined approach that either spiritualises or Literalises, we should consider each verse on it's content and context.

Does it matter what view you hold?

What causes all the heat that this subject generates? 2 Timothy 2v23-24

What should our attitude be to those who hold a different view?

Bible Studies

The end of the age

Jesus taught several parables about the end times. If we want to understand the second coming it seems sensible to me to start with Jesus own teaching.

The Parable of the Tares

Matthew 13v24-30

The weed that Jesus suggests here is very hard to tell apart from wheat until the head appears.

Matthew 13v36-43

What is the field?

It should be stressed that the field is the world not the church. For this would change the whole meaning of the parable. It would then be saying 'do not try to purify the church.'

Should we root out all evil from the church?

What are the; good seed? bad seed? enemy? harvest?

What is this parable teaching us about the end times?

What does it teach about the destinies of the good & evil? (Dan 12v3; Zep 1:3)

What about the angels?

What does it suggest regarding a time frame?

How does it describe the end?

The Parable of the Net

Matthew 13v47-52

The Greek identifies the net as a dragnet. Ie a net drawn between two boats. The bad fish, does not mean they were rotten, but that they were not for eating, not Kosher, or too small.

What does this parable tell us of the end times?

What does 'When it was full', imply?

In a sense the parable of the mustard seed also has a bearing on the end times. For the gospel may have started with on individual, but by the time the lord returns it will have filled the whole earth.

The Thief

Matthew 24v42-44 (Luke 12v39-40)

What is the Major point Jesus is making?

What is the house?

What should our response be?

for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 1 Th 5:2 But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. 1 Th 5:4

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. 2 Pet 3:10

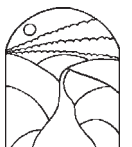
"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." Rev 16:15

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The Parable of the Servant

Matthew 24v45-51; (Luke 12c35-38 & 42-46, Mark 13v32-37)

What did Jesus want His disciples to understand?

This is a natural progression from the previous parable, the owner of the house had only to watch. ***What does the servant have to do?***

Why did the wicked servant act as he did? v48

Is reference made to time in this parable?

They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 2 Pet 3:4

The Parable of the 10 Virgins

Matthew 25v1-13

There are hundreds of different ways to interpret this parable, none of them seem to fit the context perfectly.

Who do you think the wise and foolish virgins are?

What is the message of this parable?

Are you ready for the short haul or the long haul?

The Parable of the Talents

Matthew 25v14-30

What aspect of the Lord's return is this speaking about?

Does this passage speak to believers or unbelievers?

What are the talents?

What did Jesus leave us with?

What kind of Judgement will we receive?

A curse on him who is lax in doing the Lord's work! Jer 48:10

The Sheep and the Goats

Matthew 25v31-46

What aspect of the Lord's return is this speaking about?

Is it significant that Matthew says nations are gathered for Judgement?

Does this passage speak to believers or unbelievers?

Who are "these brothers of mine?"

On what basis are people judged?

What ideas are common to all of these Parables

Sudden return, long delay, need to watch, need to work, separation

What is unique to each of these five parables?

The Thief

The Parable of the Servant

The Parable of the 10 Virgins

The Parable of the Talents

The Sheep and the Goats

Bible Studies

Key Second Coming Passages

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Read Matthew 24v1-31

Why did Jesus teach this?

What is the order of events?

Read 1 Thessalonians 4v13-5v11

What is Paul's purpose in writing the first part of this passage? v13

What is the order of events?

The word 'Caught up' is the Greek *harapagesometha*, in Latin, *raptus*, from which we get the word, *Rapture*.

The word 'meeting' is the Greek *apantesin* It is only used in two other places

Matthew 25v6 meet NIV Acts 28v15-16 meet NIV

In both cases the word means to go out to meet an important person before returning with them, like an official welcoming committee. This is constant with the use of the word in other Greek manuscripts.

What is Paul's purpose in writing Chapter 5 on? v1

Read 2 Thessalonians 1v7-10

What is the order of events?

Read 2 Thessalonians 2v1-12

What is Paul's purpose in writing the first part of this passage? v1

What is the order of events?



Who is the one who holds him back? v6-7

This is a hard one, Paul's first readers clearly knew what he was talking about. We don't. The most common theories are;

- The Holy Spirit in the Church (the removal is the *Secret Rapture*)
- The forces of Law and Order (exemplified in the Roman State)
- God (alternative Translation *For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one [God] who now holds it back will continue to do so till he [antichrist] comes out from the midst*).
- An angelic force or God given order.

Read 2 Peter 3v1-13

Why is Peter writing?

What is the order of events?

Is there any significance in verse 8, a day being as 1000 years?

For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. Psa 90:4
The Bible time frame fits very comfortably into 2000 chunks. Adam > Abraham > Christ > Now. Some believe the Millennium is the Seventh day, the Sabbath, the day of rest. While this is quite attractive we must be careful, it may be true, **but the Bible does not say it**.
Did you notice the contrast between Noah's flood and Christ fire?

Do you think it will be a completely new heaven and earth of a renewed heaven and earth? (The Greek can mean either.)

We are living in the period of the Lord's mercy the time of His patience.

Read 1 Corinthians 15v50-58

What is the order of events?

What is Paul's point in writing this? v50 & v58

Read Luke 17v22-37

Three explanations They are:

What is Jesus trying to warn us of when he speaks of Lot's wife?

Bible Studies

Joseph - The Immature Years

¹⁶ He called down famine on the land and destroyed all their supplies of food;
¹⁷ and he sent a man before them— Joseph, sold as a slave.
¹⁸ They bruised his feet with shackles, his neck was put in irons,
¹⁹ till what he foretold came to pass, till the word of the LORD proved him true.
²⁰ The king sent and released him, the ruler of peoples set him free.
²¹ He made him master of his household, ruler over all he possessed,
²² to instruct his princes as he pleased and teach his elders wisdom.
²³ Then Israel entered Egypt; Jacob lived as an alien in the land of Ham.
²⁴ The LORD made his people very fruitful; he made them too numerous for their foes,
²⁵ whose hearts he turned to hate his people, to conspire against his servants.
Psalms 105:16-25

Read Genesis 37 v 1-10

In Hebrew culture sibling order was very important. It was the oldest son who owned the inheritance. Other received only on the good will of their father. It was always the oldest son who took precedence and would head the family. The first-born belonged to God and had to be redeemed with silver.

Where was Joseph in the sibling order?

Benjamin was the last of the brothers but he was quite a bit younger than Joseph, effectively Joseph was the youngest.

What would his place be in the family?

Can you think of any other occasions when God chose the youngest?

Why do you think God chose the youngest? 1 Corinthians 1v27-29

Verse 2 immediately separates Joseph from his brothers.

Why did he bring a bad report about them?

It appears that Joseph was cut from different cloth than his brothers. A lot of what we know about them does not put them in a very good light.

Why was Joseph loved by his father?

Why does Jesus love us ?

We all know of Joseph's 'Coat of many colours' but the Hebrew does not describe the stripped jacket most of us assume. The NIV translates it *richly ornamented robe*. This is a good translation. To die a coat may colours would indeed have been an expensive exercise. The important thing is that it was a token of his fathers love and set him apart from his brothers.

Why did his brothers hate him? v11

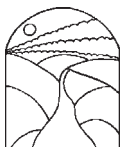
It is obvious that Joseph's brother thought he was a swell head.

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Joseph had two dreams, the first of 3 sets of dreams that run through the story.

What is the significance of there being two dreams? Genesis 41:32

What was the meaning of the two dreams?

God has promised him a great promise. **What should Joseph do?**

- Demand from his family the position God had given him
- Reject the dream because it was impossible
- Trust God and let Him do it.
- Make plans to force the dream to happen.
- Just forget the whole thing because God would do it all.

Was Joseph wrong in sharing his dreams with his brothers ?

Helpful hint Romans 12:9-15

How would you have reacted if you had been one of his brothers?

It is a hard lesson for us to learn that not everything that God tells us is for public disclosure. Much damage has been done because of this. It is hard to say, Joseph should not have done it, but it certainly looks that way!

Joseph did tell his brothers, they hated him for it, but God used this unhappy situation and turned it for good. Romans 8v28

What evidence is there in this passage of Joseph's immaturity?

What are some of the immature things we as Christians should overcome?

If someone was jealous of you how would you handle it?

We usually react negatively, but a positive approach, reaching out to the person. Complementing them on the things they do well, finding reasons to praise them, works a lot better. Maybe they are jealous because they feel inferior. Jealous people can be quite dangerous (as the story points out). Best to disarm the jealousy.

Read 37v12-36

What was the brothers motive in wanting to kill him? v19

What was Reuban's motive in trying to save him? v21-22

Why did the brothers change their minds about killing him? v26-27

Why was Reuban frantic when he found the boy missing?v29-30

What was Jacob's response? v34-36

How do you think Joseph felt

Towards his Brothers?

Towards God?

Does the promise of God mean that everything will go straight?

God had a call on Joseph's life, Joseph obviously had a different set of standard to his brothers. This put him in a difficult position.

John 15v18-19

1 John 3v13

2 Timothy 3:12

Why do you think this is?

Could Joseph have avoided this grief?

Can you avoid grief?

If Joseph had avoided the pit what else would have avoided?

Why did it have to be this way?

Bible Studies

Joseph - Potihar's house & Prison

Things started well for Joseph, God made him a promise that he would be the head of his family. Unfortunately instead of being recognised as the boss, his brothers hate him so much that they fake his death and sell him as a slave to some traders heading for Egypt.

Would you say God's plan had gone awry? Genesis 15v13-14

In Potiphar's house

Read Genesis 39v1-6

In Egypt things are looking up for Joseph he has been sold into a rich family and is doing very well for himself.

Who was Potiphar?

Why did Joseph prosper?

Why did Potiphar prosper?

Potiphar recognised Joseph's potential and began to trust him. We are not entirely sure what position Potiphar held, other than it was a high one. Obviously he was a man who knew talent when he saw it and was not afraid to delegate.

What areas did Potiphar entrust to Joseph?

Perhaps we can see signs of maturity in Joseph. Joseph no longer tries to talk himself to the top, instead he trusts God and works himself to the top.

Our ideas of slavery are dominated by the African slavery of last century. Slaves in the ancient world could have a much higher degree of freedom and could rise to be quite influential, even wealth.

Read Genesis 39v6b-20

Once again it seems just as Joseph can begin to see the fulfilment of God's promise the bottom falls out of his world.

What did Joseph do wrong?

Did Joseph's innocence protect him?

What enabled Joseph to withstand the temptation of his boss's wife?

Did you notice that not only did Joseph refuse Potiphar's wife's advances he also avoided her v10. ***Why do you think that was?***

How can you resist temptation?

What is the difference between sin and temptation?

What does Joseph mean when he talks about a sin against God?

The scripture makes it clear that sin is primarily against God.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, Psalm 51:4

The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.' Luke 15:21

What was Joseph's motivation?

- I must do what is right because it is the Law.
- I will get into trouble if I am found out.
- My master trusts me I should not betray that trust.
- I must do what is right before God.
- If I do right God will bless me.

It seems to me that Joseph was more concerned with being right before God than anything else.

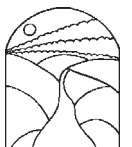
Why do you do what is right?

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In Prison

Again, Joseph is at the wrong end of a crime that calls out to God for justice. All the more so since he had been so careful. It seems to me there is at least some chance that Potiphar, knew or suspected the truth, but even so Joseph would have to go to jail to save face. This was a truly unjust situation.

Read Genesis 39v20-23

Both in the success of Potiphar's house and the failure of the Jail, the Scripture tells us that the Lord was with Joseph and prospered him, 39v2; 23. (Hebrew same word for prosper/succeed = *jy1xm matzleach*) God was not there in the good times and gone in the bad, He was there the whole way through.

Do you think God uses bad times?

Do you think we grow more when times are hard?

I want you to imagine for a moment that you are sitting in an Egyptian prison cell, being punished for what you did not do. How would you react?

How would you feel?

What would you do?

How did Joseph react?

The passage does not tell us in detail. But there are several things that we can conclude from it.

Joseph kept his faith in God. We know this because God stayed with him.

Joseph made the best of the situation he was in. He did not wallow in self pity.

There is no hint of bitterness about him instead he makes the best of a bad lot.

He does not just mark time waiting to be released so he can get on with being called. He was active where he was. He served God where he was. Consequently we read the LORD was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favour in the eyes of the prison warden. Genesis 39:21

I believe that this time in prison was the key phase in Joseph's life. He stood at a cross-roads. This was make or break for the promises God had given him. How he reacted now would determine his future.

How does this apply to us?

Did you notice in both places people were watching Joseph and what he did?

There is a persistent undercurrent among Christians that says:

If I was _____ then I could serve the Lord.

If I wasn't _____ then I could serve the Lord.

Joseph tells us that we serve the Lord where and as we are.

Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. John 4:35

What did the warden do?

the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did. Genesis 39:23

Joseph even prospered in Prison.

What kind of prisons might we find ourselves in?

How do we prosper in prison?

There are different kinds of prisons. We need to remind ourselves that in Joseph's life the road to the palace ran through the prison. Many of the 'prisons' we find ourselves in are of our own creation, our disobedience, our unforgiveness, the Enemies tricks and deceptions. God wants us free from those. Other 'prisons' are things we cannot avoid. But we can prosper in.

We have escaped like a bird out of the fowler's snare; the snare has been broken, and we have escaped. Psalm 124:7
You get the distinct impression that Joseph was free even in prison.

Bible Studies

Joseph and the Dreams

The roller coaster of Joseph's life and call continues. In prison he has found favour with prison warden. He is still a prisoner but makes him responsible to run the prison. This promotion is more remarkable than the first. Joseph must have been a remarkable man.

Read Genesis 40v1-8

Do all dreams have meanings?

What does Solomon attribute dreams to? Ecclesiastes 5v3

For God does speak—now one way, now another—though man may not perceive it. 15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men as they slumber in their beds, Job 33:14-15

There are many times recorded in Scripture where God spoke through a dream, Jacob and his ladder, Gideon and the loaf of bread, in the New Testament, An Angel spoke to Joseph twice in a dream.

God also specifically says He will speak through dreams;

Numbers 12:6

Acts 2:17

How do you recognise a dream that comes from God?

Why do you think the two prisoners were so disturbed that there was no one to interpret the dream?

It seems to me there are two main possibilities. Either they were very disturbing dreams or they were deeply reliant on their superstitions.

What does Joseph mean do not interpretations belong to God?

Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. Isaiah 46:9-10

When God does speak through a dream or a vision often the meaning is far from clear and we must be careful we do not put our own interpretation on it. The two dreams were similar but the interpretations quite different.

Read Genesis 40v9-23

What did the dreams mean? - notice the symbolic interpretation.

Why was the baker keen to have his dream interpreted? v16

These were prophetic dreams they foretold the future

For what other purpose might God send a dream?

Matthew 2:12	Warning	Joseph about Herod
Acts 16:9	Guidance	Paul to go to Macedonia
Genesis 28:12	Encouragement	Jacob's ladder
Judges 7:13	Confirmation	Gideon loaf of bread
1 Kings 3:5	Communication	Solomon asks for wisdom
Joel 2:28	Inspiration	Holy Spirit

Is there a difference between a dream and a vision?

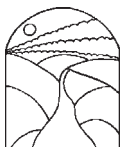
Do you have to be asleep to dream?

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Joseph thought this dream was going to be his deliverance from prison. Often we think we can see how God is going to answer a prayer, we are usually wrong! But Joseph was right that this was no coincidence. God planned to use it in a way Joseph never even dreamt about.

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11

The Bible says we must be faithful in small things if God is to use us in big things.

How did that apply to Joseph?

Read Genesis 41

What were the two dreams?

Did the cup bearer take a risk in speaking out?

Most of us try to cover our faults and mistakes but the cup bearer owned up to his failings. Even though it meant reminding himself and Pharaoh of something best forgotten by all.

What were the dreams and what were the meanings?

The agriculture of the Nile delta was (up until the building of the Aswan dam) reliant on the annual flooding of the great river. The flooding brought life but it was also very destructive, bringing death and disease. (Big contrast here to the promised land which was watered by streams and rain.)

Egypt's two main staples were grain and cattle. The dreams indicate that both will fail. When Pharaoh describes the cows as ugly, a literal translation of the Hebrew is bad or evil. *ur rah*)

What solution did Joseph suggest?

"I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires." Genesis 41:16

What does this say to us?

So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?" Genesis 41:38

What did God's Spirit have to do with it?

Isaiah 11v2

John 14v16-17

John 14v26

John 16v12-15

In what way did Joseph seize the moment?

Should he not have waited until God did it all?

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. Genesis 41:39

What risk did Joseph take?

Did you notice how sudden Joseph's rise to power was?

Was it really all that sudden?

The ground work for this 'sudden act' had taken much time to lay. God had worked inside Joseph and Joseph had co-operated with God. Too often we are not at all concerned with the development of our character and spirituality we just want the position.

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Romans 5v3-5

What will happen if you have the position without the Character?

Bible Studies

Joseph and the famine

From this point on the Bible continues the account of the famine, but this is secondary to the narrative, which turns back to Jacob's family.

Read Genesis 41v41-57

Pharaoh makes Joseph the equivalent of a Prime Minister. The signet ring Pharaoh puts on Joseph's finger was the symbol of Pharaoh's authority. - So Joseph begins his task of gathering food from the abundant harvest.

Joseph given is the Egyptian name Zaphenath-Paneah

Joseph is married Asenath Potiphera's the priest of On Daughter. (Not Potiphar. The Hebrew is quite different).

Joseph has two sons Manessah which sounds like forgotten and Ephraim which sounds like fruitful.

These names are symbolic what do you think they suggest?

How did Joseph handle success?

Often it is when we succeed that we forget God and get ourselves into trouble.

Why is this?

The Hebrew for Joseph's rise to power is similar to that used of Adam when God put him over the earth.

Chapter 42

Read verse 1-2 It was most unusual for Egypt and Canaan to experience famine at the same time (one was watered by the Nile and one by rain fall). The famine must have been severe.

Read verse 3-4 Why did Jacob not send Benjamin?

Did Jacob suspect the truth about Joseph? *About Joseph's fate not a fact had come to light, about the brothers guilt little doubt remained. Under a father's eye their actual crimes might be covered up, but not their character.* Kinder.

Read verse 6-13 Why didn't the brothers recognise Joseph?

The most likely reason, apart from his adoption of Egyptian language and culture was that like most Egyptian officials he wore a ceremonial mask.

Why did Joseph treat them harshly?

Why did Joseph treat them the way he did?

The idea of Canaan invading Egypt was novel to say the least.

Joseph first demands that their brother be brought to Egypt then he agrees to let them go, however Simeon is left as security. Only if Benjamin comes will Joseph believe they are not lying. All but Simeon return home with the corn, but when they stop for the first night they find the silver they had used to purchase the corn is in each sack. They realised a conspiracy was afoot.

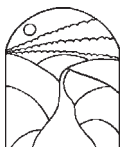
Why did Joseph want to see Benjamin?

Read verse 21-23 The brothers are correct in thinking this has to do with Joseph, but for the wrong reason. All this is reported to Jacob.

"Then the man who is lord over the land said to us, 'This is how I will know whether you are honest men: Leave one of your brothers here with me, and take food for your starving households and go.' Genesis 42:33

Then ten of Joseph's brothers went down to buy grain from Egypt. Genesis 42:3

Against his better judgement Jacob allows Benjamin to go, Ruben vouches for his safety and they return to Egypt.



Chapter 43

Read verse 11-14

This time Joseph invites his brothers to his house and provides a banquet for them. They are terrified believing they are being set up.

Read verse 26-31

When portions were served to them from Joseph's table, Benjamin's portion was five times as much as anyone else's. So they feasted and drank freely with him. Genesis 43:34

Chapter 44

Again the 11 brothers are sent on their way with both lots of silver in the sacks of corn. But Joseph's goblet is placed in Benjamin's sack. Joseph sends men after them and to the brothers horror the cup is found in Benjamin's sack! The brothers are distraught, their worst nightmares are coming true. They return to the city.

Joseph said to them, "What is this you have done? Don't you know that a man like me can find things out by divination?" Genesis 44:15

Is Joseph endorsing divination?

Read verse 16-20

Judah makes a plea for Benjamin's freedom. He tells Joseph all about Jacob and his love for the boy.

"Now then, please let your servant remain here as my lord's slave in place of the boy, and let the boy return with his brothers. How can I go back to my father if the boy is not with me? No! Do not let me see the misery that would come upon my father." Genesis 44:33-34

Joseph has bought his brothers full circle.

Do you see the irony in all this?

Do you think God ever brings us back to our failure again to see if we have learned from them?

Chapter 45

Read verse 1-7

Why did Joseph forgive his brothers?

How else could he have acted?

Did Joseph have the right to bear a grudge against them?

How well would you say Joseph handled all this?

How does all of this apply to us?

Why is it important to forgive

"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." Matthew 18:35

Unforgiveness hurts us, not the object of our unforgiveness.

How did Joseph understand all that had befallen him? v7-8

Jacob and his whole family move to Egypt into the care of Joseph, thus the dreams of Joseph were fulfilled. It was in Egypt that Israel grew to be a nation until the time God bought them out.

The most important verse in this whole narrative is found in chapter 50

But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. Genesis 50:19-20

Even what the enemy means for evil in our lives God can turn to our Good.

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

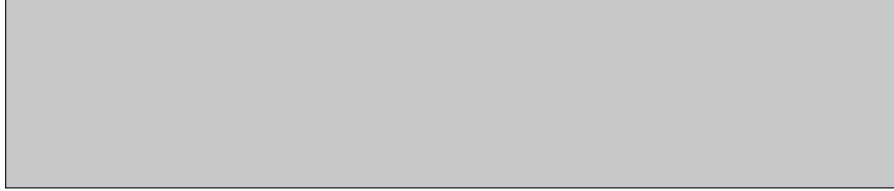
What do you think this means?

Bible Studies

Joseph - An alternative explanation

There is much that we can learn from the account of Joseph.

What would you say are the key things we have learned?



There is more to this story than first appears. Sometimes Scripture is written at different levels. The Old Testament contains pictures of the New. This story is a Type. A type means a story that points to something else.

A good example of this is, for instance Gilbert & Sullivan. Their operettas can be taken as a bit of fun, but behind them Gilbert was portraying what he thought was wrong with society, they were political satire. Books like Animal Farm, go even further giving a whole history in novel form- these are called allegories.

What does the Bible say these things represent?

Eg. the flood 1 Peter 3:20-21
Sinai & Jerusalem Galatians 4:24-26

This kind of interpretation is not always exclusive, there can be different meanings:

Luke 17:26

Jesus told us to look for him in the pages of the Old Testament.

John 5:39-40

Luke 24:27

Martin Luther said "*if you will interpret well and securely, take Christ with you, for he is the man whom everything concerns.*"

An example of this would be, Abraham offering Isaac. Genesis 22

At the same time, we must be very careful when we look for types in the OT. In the history of the Church all kinds of strange teachings were promoted by find types that were simply not there, so today we have some rules.

For example:

- * It is the basic meaning of scripture that is always most important.
- * We only teach them when they are clearly there, we never force them on scripture.
- * We do not base doctrine on types.
- * We only teach them when we can support what they say from other scriptures.
- * Do not force every element of a story to fit the parallel.

Even so we must be very cautious.

Behind the story of Joseph it is possible to see another story. A story of another person rejected by his brothers.

What points of comparison can you see in this story?

Joseph was to be the head of his family, but his brothers could not recognise him. So Jesus the Messiah, the head of the Jewish nation, was largely unrecognised.

He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. John 1:10-11

Many were indignant at his claims:

Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?" John 8:53

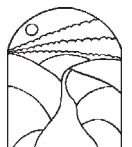
He was hated without cause and rejected by his brothers because of jealousy.

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Waiuku AG
Ray Moxham
www.wag.org.nz
WaiukuAG
@maxnet.co.nz

But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: "They hated me without reason." John 15:25
"Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. Mark 15:9-10

Suffered unjustly in God's purpose.

"He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." 1 Peter 2:22

Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, Galatians 1:3-4

Achieved glory through suffering

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:2

In the account, Joseph made it very clear that all that had befallen him had a purpose

Read Genesis 45:5-11

What was the reason?

You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. NIV, (ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good KJV) Genesis 50:20

How does this apply to Jesus and his death?

You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish." He did not say this on his own, but as high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, John 11:50-51

So far, so good, all this is achieved, but perhaps the most interesting (and controversial) part of the story unfulfilled.

What happened next?

"The days are coming," declares the Sovereign LORD, "when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. Amos 8:11

In the end of the story Joseph's brothers are forced to go to Joseph for food. They do not recognise Joseph because he is in the guise of a gentile.

What need might today's Jewish people have of Jesus?

What is the gentile guise Jesus is wearing? Why might they not recognise Him?

Most Jews today think that Christianity is a gentile religion. They do not realise that, though culturally this may be true, it's founder was the long awaited Jewish Messiah and all it's first leaders were Jewish. They saw themselves as continuing the faith of Abraham and Moses, not establishing a new faith, they saw themselves as the true Judaism, and they were right. In a sense we Gentile believers are the 'other countries' that all went to Joseph to buy grain. Genesis 41:57. We are the "other sheep that are not of this sheep pen," that Jesus said He must gather that "there shall be one flock and one shepherd."

Finally he reveals himself to his brothers and they recognise him, a family reunion follows.

What do you think this might be saying?

"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son. Zechariah 12:10

For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days. Hosea 3:4-5

And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.".

Romans 11:26

Many people have proposed many views of how and when this will be. Suffice to say, God has not finished with His ancient people, He has not abandoned them. Romans 11:1. There will come a day when there will be a wide spread revival among the Jewish people. They will accept Him and He will accept them.

Bible Studies

What about Baptism for the dead?

Every time I ask for suggestions about Bible studies someone (who shall be nameless) says, "what about baptism for the dead?". So here we are. I must confess to a hidden agenda. This study is not really about baptism for the dead, it's about how to understand, and how not to understand, the scriptures.

Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? 1 Corinthians 15:29

What do you think this verse means?
Who today baptise people for the dead?
Why do they do it?

The Mormons baptise people on behalf of their dead relatives, they hope by doing so to give their dead relatives standing before God.

Why don't we baptise for the dead?

Baptism signifies belief. Each person must come to God for themselves. My personal faith cannot even save my own children. Ezekiel 14:20. (Although I trust my example and my prayers will). How then can baptising me, save my dead relative?

In the back of our minds a doubt arises and we start to question. Paul does talk about Baptism for the dead. We don't do it, the Mormons do, maybe they are right, maybe we are missing something by not practising what they practice.

The Mormons are wrong, not just because of the theological argument that says that each person must be born again for themselves, but because they have totally misinterpreted the above scripture.

Jesus replied, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. Mat 22:29 The Pharisees, to whom Jesus was talking, knew the scriptures like the back of their hands. But they misunderstood them, therefore they did not know the scriptures at all.

How should we understand this verse?

First we have got to look at the context.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 15
What is the topic of the Chapter?

Read the verse around v29
What is Paul saying in his reference to Baptism for the dead?
Is Paul teaching about Baptism for the dead?

It becomes very clear that this passage has nothing to do with a doctrine of baptism, it is to do with the resurrection. Paul is using the example of baptism and his own persecution for the Lord as evidence of the reality of a bodily resurrection. This kind of argument is called an *ad hominem* argument, one that appeals to a persons experience or feelings rather than to reason or logic.

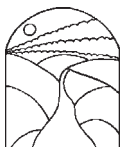
Does Paul's work & persecution, prove there will be a resurrection? v30
No, people have died for all manner of causes true and false. It does prove the sincerity of Paul's belief in the resurrection and his motivation in holding out for the Gospel against great opposition.

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Waiuku AG
Ray Moxham
www.wag.org.nz
WaiukuAG
@maxnet.co.nz

Does Paul endorse the practice of Baptism for the dead?

Does Paul say that we should practice it?

Is there any other verse in Scripture that can support or clarify this verse?

Does Baptising a live person save them?

The next thing we must look at is what practice was Paul referring to.

Paul is not presenting a hypothetical argument there really was such a practice.

Who was doing it?

Why were they doing it?

Who were they doing it to?

What effect did they hope it would have?

We do not even know for sure whether it was a Christian practice, a practice of a heretical group, or even something the pagans did in their religions.

If you cannot find the answers to these questions in the text itself, or in other passages of scripture, then how on earth can you base a practice on it?

Some possible solutions

Three possible explanations of this verse exist;

1

There is no record of baptism for the dead in any of the very early church writings, if there were it would give us a good idea of what Paul was on about. But there is a reference in the work of Chrysostom, Bishop of Constantinople (second part of the fourth century) referring to a well known group of heretics called the Marcionians. He says;

When a catechumen [new believer] among them [the Marcionites] dies, they hide a living man under the dead man's bed, approach the dead man, speak with him, and ask if he wishes to receive baptism; then when he makes no answer the man who is hidden underneath says instead of him that he wishes to be baptised, and so they baptise him instead of the departed.

If as we have noted, Paul does not endorse the practice, but neither does he condemn it. Had it been a totally heretical practice Paul, noted for calling a spade a spade, would surely have condemned it. Some think he did, taking the verse to mean, "*what on earth will they get up to next, if they find there is no resurrection?*" It is more likely it was a practice with which Paul could not agree, but which he saw no need to refute.

2

It has been proposed that either in a plague or an accident a large number of new, as yet unbaptised believers had died. (It is known that there were several plagues at this time in Corinth) It is possible that the corpses themselves, or friends on their behalf, were Baptised. This was to give the idea of closure, in their conversion experience and to help with the grieving process for the rest of the Church (who probably firmly believed they would be alive at the Lord's return). It may also have been done to affirm the church's belief in the resurrection of their dead brothers.

This may be misguided but it would be sincere, I can understand such a practice.

3

Finally it is possible to take the Greek for *Baptism of the Dead* to mean *Baptism because of the dead*. This would be a legitimate but unusual translation. If so, Baptism here would be seen as symbolic of salvation. The idea goes like this: Christian wife, sympathetic, but as yet unbelieving husband. Wife dies, Husband understands Christian teaching about the resurrection and want to ensure that he will be where his wife is. This motivates him to give his life to the Lord. Under such circumstances I would have no problem baptising him 'for the dead'.

All of the above is guess work. The bottom line is we really do not know what Paul was talking about. Each of these three ideas is more credible and more in line with the Bible and Church History, than the Mormon concept of Baptising people on behalf of their long dead unbelieving relatives.

More over it give us a very good illustration of how not to read the Bible.

Bible Studies

John's Gospel

How many parables are recorded in John's Gospel?

The other Gospels are full of Jesus parables but John records none. Instead John uses symbols, words that represent a greater meaning to describe who Jesus was and what His ministry was. Seven of these are recorded in the "I Am" statements.

Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty." John 6:35

I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.

This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." John 6:51. (John 6:41, John 6:48)

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." John 9:5

Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep." John 10:7

I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture." John 10:9

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." John 10:11

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—" John 10:14

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;" John 11:25

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener." John 15:1

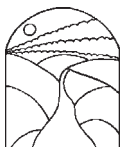
"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." John 15:5

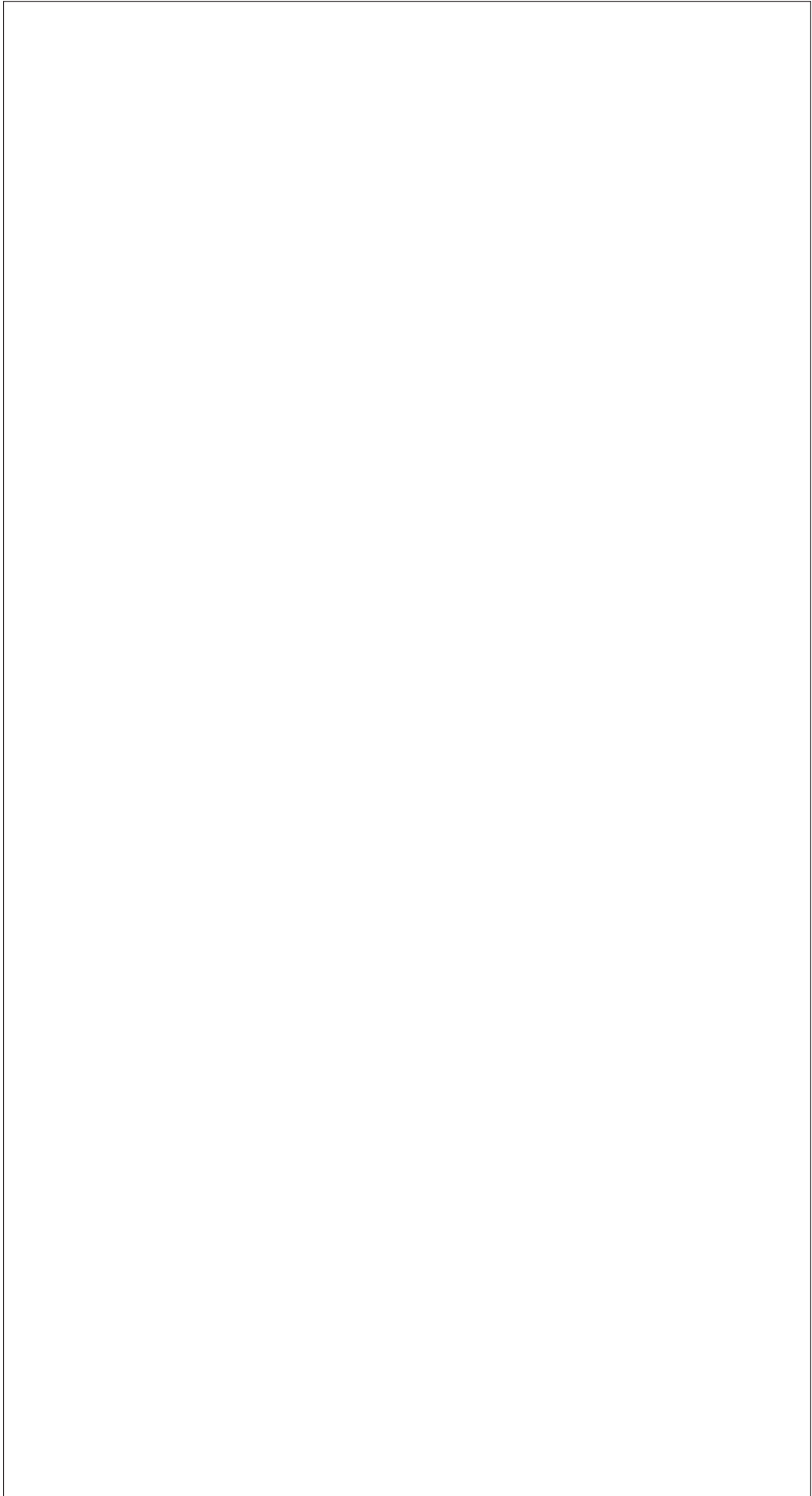
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Bible Studies

Casting the play.

No Christmas is complete without a nativity play. But for the play to be successful it is important to assemble the right cast. "Pastor" says the plays director, "I've just taken a good look at the congregation, looks like we have plenty of sheep and donkeys, but we're a bit short on wise men. Oh and the Sunday School director asked if she could be Herod" Two Thousand years ago God had to cast the parts for the very first nativity play ever to be staged. God's masterpiece production. Just like any other play it was important to find the right cast.



Mary

Read Luke 1v26-38

Mary could well have been as young as 14 or 15, engaged to be married to Joseph, who would have been quite a bit older than her.

What does this passage tell us about what Mary was like?

How do you think it was that she 'found favour' with God?

What was it that made her most suitable for the role she played? v38

What kind of a person was she? 2v19

What kind of things did she have to put up with in her obedience to God?

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14



Joseph

Read Matthew 1v18-24

What kind of a man was Joseph? V19

I like Joseph. We hear very little else of him in the gospel account and many people believe that he died before Jesus started his public ministry at the age of 30. We know he took his faith seriously for he preformed the annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem every year as the law required, *Luke 2v41*. In his day, most people ignored this instruction and only attended the temple every few years.

What conclusion would he have drawn when he discovered Mary was pregnant?

How do you think he felt?

The law prescribed death for the adulteress, by this time it is unlikely that such a sentence would be carried out, but the shame would have be dramatic.

What did Joseph decide to do?

What else could he have done?

Many peoples idea of righteousness would have been to expose the sin, justify himself and see Mary punished for her apparent infidelity. Joseph's idea of righteousness was quite different, it contained a real compassion. A concept of righteousness that Jesus would later champion.

Although Joseph was not Jesus real father, we can see a lot of Joseph in Jesus. God chose Joseph with great care.

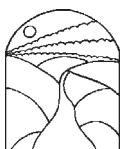
What responsibilities did he have in the Christmas story?

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The walk on parts.



Shepherds

Read Luke 2v8-20

Why do you think God told the Shepherds about Jesus Birth?

Jesus was born in secret, away from public glare. I think God was so excited He just had to tell someone. Such an important event could not go unsung.

Why do you think it was shepherds that God told?

Maybe while the whole world was asleep, shepherds were the only ones around to be told. Maybe it was just that they were ordinary people. But the shepherd, despised most Middle East societies, (shepherds had a bit of a reputation) held a special place in Israel. David, from whose family the Messiah would come, was a shepherd. God described Himself as Israel's Shepherd and Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd. Maybe God was making a point. It is kind of fitting that the Shepherds should visit a king born in a stable.

How do you think the shepherds felt as the story unfolded around them? What as their response? Luke 2v17-18 & 20



The Magi

Read Matthew 2v1-12

The Magi add a sense of mystery and international flavour. They can be positively identified as the same group of people Daniel was put in charge of 500 years earlier in Babylon. Daniel 2v48. They had a reputation as the power brokers of the Persian kingdoms. It is perhaps due to Daniel's enduring influence that they came at all.

What significance did the star hold?

On a practical level God spoke to them in a language they could understand. Much of the common understanding about the Magi is only tradition and is probably wrong, they did not visit the stable, but arrived when Jesus was 1 or 2 years old, 2v11. They tended to travel in large groups there were almost certainly more than three of them.

Is it significant that Gentile heralded Jesus Birth?

What significance did the Gifts have?

What do you think the gifts were used for?

Can you see the contrast between the shepherds and the wise men?

What do you think this contrast means?



Herod

Read Matthew 2v13-18

What was Herod's response to the news about Jesus?

Why did he kill two year olds, not new borns?

Why did he respond like this?

Herod was not the legitimate king of Israel, he was an appointee of the Roman occupying force, more than that he was a foreigner. He feared for his throne. We cannot substantiate the story of the slaughter of the innocent from contemporary histories, but we do know a lot about Herod, a man so paranoid that He murdered half his own family of fear they would rebel against him. What he did in Bethlehem is very much in keeping with his character.

There are far too many Herods about.

The meaning of this passage puts Christmas in perspective.

Move over Satan the rightful king has come. This is for you too, the rightful king of your life has come - move over.