

Bible Studies

What does it mean to be free?

Creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. Romans 8:21

Christians talk a lot about freedom and what it means to be free. There is always a danger that we start to use the jargon, without really knowing what it means. The object of this study is to begin to define what Christian freedom is all about.

Free me from the trap that is set for me, for you are my refuge Psalm 31:4
In my anguish I cried to the LORD, and he answered by setting me free. Psalm 118:5

Read John 8v31-36

What did Jesus set as a condition of knowing and being set free by the truth?

This same idea is found in the Psalms:

I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free. Psalm 119:32

I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts. Psalm 119:45

This immediately gives us a view of freedom that is contrary to our normal ideas. Freedom is found in “continuing in Jesus teachings”. I.e. obeying His command. We think of freedom as doing whatever we want. But the Bible here says that freedom is found in relationship and obedience, not disobedience.

The same is true in New Zealand, if you break the law it does not bring freedom, it brings jail instead. Romans 13:3

Most of the messes we get ourselves into come from disobeying Christ’s command. This disobedience brings bondage.

What does it mean to 'know the truth?'

Perhaps it can mean several things;

It’s main meaning has to be that knowing Jesus is the only way to find freedom.

It also means that unless we acknowledge the truth about ourselves, we can never be free. This is a foundation block of any of the 12 step programs. It is also fundamental to salvation. There is no way you can be saved, until you admit you are a sinner.

To me this verse implies that “knowing the truth” is not an intellectual exercise but a practical one. You only know the truth, when you continue in Jesus teaching. I.e. you must do, to know.

Did those who heard Jesus words acknowledge the truth about themselves? V33

What was Jesus promising to set them free from? v34

What does verse 35 imply?

God is not looking for slaves, He is looking for sons.

Being set free means we were once bound

Jesus came to, free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness. Isaiah 42:7

Set me free from my prison, that I may praise your name. Then the righteous will gather about me because of your goodness to me. Psalms 142:7

O LORD, truly I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant; you have freed me from my chains. Psalms 116:16

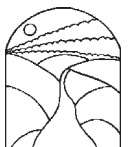
What does the Psalmist say 'My prison', 'My chains?'

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What has Christ set us free from?

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| Sin | Rom 6:18 | |
| The end result of sin (condemnation, death and Hell) | | |
| Fear past future death etc | | |
| Worry | | |
| The law - A structured way of approaching God. | | |
| Satan's power | | |
| The past | | |
| Thess | Luke 13:12 | |

For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace. Romans 6:14

What does it mean to be free from the law?

Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:20-21, Romans 6:15.

What has Christ set you free from?

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What are the limits of our freedom?

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| Galatians 5:13 |
| 1 Corinthians 8:9 |
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Another way of saying this, is to ask, what hasn't God set us free from?

Has God set us free from our responsibilities?

Galatians 5:13 implies that we are not only free from, we are free to:

What are we free to do?

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| Behold | Rom 6:22 | |
| Serve God | 1 Pet 2:16 | |
| Approach God - have a relationship with Him | Eph 3:12 | |
| | | |

How do you get free?

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. John 8:36

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 2 Cor 3:17

Does just being a Christian automatically make you free?

Live as free men, 1 Peter 2:16

How do you live as free men?

Bible Studies

What does it mean to be mature?

Jesus warned in the parable of the sower that some of the seed would fail to reach maturity. It was choked by the weeds, life's worries, riches and pleasures, and consequently they do not mature.

It must be the aim of all believers to be mature in Christ.

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 1 Corinthians 13:11

Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. 1 Corinthians 14:20

Read James 1v2-4

What marks Maturity

Perseverance wisdom being complete not lacking anything

What marks immaturity?

Doubting being tossed about by the wind (spiritual unstable)

Read Ephesians 4v11-16

What marks Maturity

Unity knowledge service finding part.

What marks immaturity?

Tossed by waves of teaching & craftiness of men

Read Hebrews 5v11-14

What marks Maturity

Knowing Good and evil, being acquainted with righteousness

What marks immaturity?

Needing to be taught.

Twice the metaphor of a wave of the sea, or a boat driven by the waves, has been used to describe an immature believer.

In what way is an immature Christian like a wave of the sea?

Instability, unreliability and changability seem to be the ideas the Bible is trying to portray.

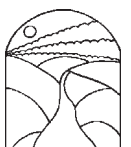
but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do *exploits*. Daniel 11:32:

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How do you recognise a Mature Christian?

I'm not sure it is really for us to judge, but when you need advise, or someone to trust, or just to talk, then it would be handy to pick the right person.

- By the size of their Bible
- How Spiritual they sound
- How well they listen
- How well they know the Bible
- Their life style
- How long they have been a Christian

What do you think it means to be mature?

| Mature | Imature |
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- When you offend him a mature person will?**
- When Criticised the mature Christian will?**
- When the mature believer makes a mistake, he will?**
- When he faces a big disappointment?**
- When the mature believer see what others don't, he will?**
- When tragedy strikes?**

- A mature Christian will always know God's will for their life
- A mature Christian will Never be tempted
- A mature Christian will be slow to speak
- A mature Christian will never make a mistake
- A mature Christian will be quick tempered
- A mature Christian will know what God requires of them
- A mature Christian will think he knows what God requires
- A mature Christian will need recognition
- A mature Christian will avoid extremes
- A mature Christian will be certain on all spiritual matters

Bible Studies

What does it mean to be spiritual?

There are some funny ideas out there about what it means to be spiritual. They use a special language, they have visions and great revelations of God, they always seem to have just heard from God and ooze holiness. They usually intimidate the rest of us into thinking we are second rate Christians. **Will anyone tell me what does it really mean to be spiritual?**

Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? 1 Corinthians 3:1 & 3

What is the opposite of being Spiritual?

**Is someone who is spiritual by nature not able to do practical things?
Is Worldly minded and practically minded the same.**

What do you think of the phrase, “so heavenly minded they are no earthly use”?

**Do you think it is up to us to judge who is Spiritual?
Whose spirituality should be our concern?**

Spiritual Gifts

One of the words used in Corinthians for the Gifts of the Spirit literally translated is “spirituals” eg 1 Cor 12:1 Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. (Lit Now about spirituals, brothers...)

Did exercising the Gifts of the Spirit prove that a person is spiritual?

Cf 1 Corinthians 1v7 & 1 Corinthians 3v1

Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’ Matthew 7:22-23

Hypocrisy

To the people of Jesus day the Pharisees seemed spiritual. They knew all the right moves and strange as it might seem to us, by and large, the people respected them. Jesus was not impressed by their spirituality he said it was all to do with externals. They were much too worried about how they looked in public and not nearly worried enough how God saw them. Matthew 6v2,5,16

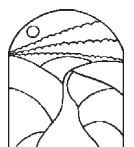
“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men’s bones and everything unclean”. Matthew 23:27

What is a hypocrite?

A hypocrite is a person who proclaims one thing publicly but does something quite different privately? The Enemy has his own definition of Hypocrisy. He will tell you it is hypocritical to go to Church if you have not lived up to the Christian ideal his week, this is kind of like saying it is hypocritical to eat if you are hungry.

Can you be Spiritual and a hypocrite?

Does spirituality have anything to do with how you look?



There was a time when the height of spirituality was to become a hermit - Just you and God alone in some desert. **Is this Spirituality?**

There was a time when Mystics were considered spiritual people Is there any place for Mysticism in today's church.

What do you think mark a Spiritual person?

| Spiritual | Unspiritual |
|-----------|-------------|
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Is being Spiritual the same as being mature?

Is it more spiritual to spend an hour in prayer, or an hour helping someone in need?

I want to suggest some things which demonstrate that a person is spiritual.

The Fruit of the Spirit is the Hall Mark of Spirituality. There can be no confussing the issue If you show the fruit of the Spirit in your life, you have a claim on the word spiritual. If there is precious little fruit of the Spirit in you, then however much you prophesy, however long you pray, however good you are at talking the talk, you have no claim on the Word Spiritual.

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Seeing things from a Spiritual perspective

This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2:14 (or teaching spiritual truths to spiritual people)

Seeing things from a spiritual perspective really means seeing things from God's perspective. By definition being spiritual means being aware to spiritual things.

When you look at other people how do you see them?

When you look at a problem how do you see it?

When you have to make a decision what do you take into account?

Being Spiritual means being Holy

To be spiritual means to have a close relationship with God. To be on speaking terms. Having open fellowship with God.

Bible Studies

Body, Soul & Spirit

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:23

The Bible teaches that we are a tripartite being, we are made up of three parts. Our visible part we call a body, our invisible side we can divide, as the above verse does, into soul and Spirit .

Our Tripartite nature reflects God's triune nature.



It is our spirit that enables us to look beyond the Physical, into spiritual realms it is our spirit that enables us to relate to God who is Himself Spirit. John 4:24

It is our soul that enables us to interact with other people. To have relationships.

Our Body enables us to interact with the physical world around us.

It is important for us to recognize the components of which we are made up. Each part of us has need.

What are our Bodies needs?

Food water

air

warmth

rest

What are our Souls needs?

To love & be loved

relationship

security

stimulation

What are our Spirits needs?

A relationship with God

Worship something greater

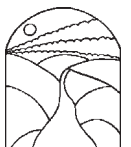
Self actualization (fulfillment)

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**What will happen if our bodies do not get what they need?
What will happen if our souls/spirits do not get what they need?**

Each part of our being is separate but they are also very closely inter-linked. This even causes some to deny that there is any difference between Soul and Spirit. Some people would even say that since our Soul/Spirit is a product of our brain, body is all we are.

Does a belief in the soul of man deny that our emotions, etc. are connected to chemicals in our brains?


**What evidence is there in the world around of peoples Spiritual Needs?
Is God the only place our spiritual needs can be met?**

What is the Body without the Spirit? James 2:26
Are the Soul and the Spirit the same thing? Hebrews 4v12

This indicates that they are separate but it also implies that they are very close. More over the Bible itself does not always differentiate between spirit and soul, sometimes it uses either of these words interchangeably, to mean the immaterial part of our being. Often it uses words like Heart, innermost being, or mind.

It is often said that as individuals we neglect our spirits and that churches tend to neglect the soul needs of their people.

Is this true? If so what can be done to correct the imbalances?

Our bodies are our earth vehicles. As long as I live in the tent of this body  2 Peter 1:13. Even in eternity we retain a body, for at the resurrection we receive a heavenly, or spiritual body. We will never be 'pure' spirits. In fact to be out of the body is to be naked. 2 Corinthians 5v1-4



We are a spirit.

We have a soul.

We live in a body.

**To what extent do our bodies effect our souls and spirits?
Can the effect go the other way?**

Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well. 3 John 1:2

Is it only your body that can be sick?

My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word. Psalm 119:28

The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Psalm 34:18

According to 1 Thes 5v23 what parts of our being is God interested in?

**Can you keep your mind pure without keeping your Body pure?
Can you keep your body pure without keeping your mind pure?**

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Philippinas 4:19
Such a high priest meets our need— Hebrews 7:26

What needs does Christ meet in us?

What do we need to do to maintain health in our souls and spirits?

Bible Studies

Spirit, Soul and Body

Spirit

"...the LORD, the God of the spirits of all mankind," Numbers 27:16

In Genesis it is recorded that man became a living spirit. Genesis 2v7

The word spirit in Greek is *Pneuma*, It's first meaning appears to have been breath. It is the word used for the wind and the word used for the Spirit of God.

The Spirit is the centre and source of human life. The soul possesses and uses this life expressing it through the body. Pearlman.

The spirit is a persons life force.

His highest nature

It is his conscience

His moral Judgement

His Intuition

It is the Spirit that enables him to commune with God.

But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:17

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? 1 Corinthians 2:11

Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Mark 2:8

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Romans 8:16

When we became a Christian the greatest change was in our spirit. God's Holy Spirit gives birth to our spirits. John 3v6. Our spirit becomes alive. Romans 8v10. We became new creations. 2 Cor 5:17.

What does it mean to be alive in spirit?

What effect does this have on our conscience?

Is this effect permanent?

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Psalm 51:10

I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Ezekiel 11:19

Only He who breathed into man's body the breath of life can breath into mans soul a new spiritual life. Pearlman.

The spirit cannot live by itself, it needs constant renewal by God's Spirit.

Soul

The Hebrew word for soul, *Nefesh*, is often used to mean people eg Exodus 1v5

Seventy souls means seventy people. In other places it is translated life. Genesis 9v5

The Greek word of Soul is *Psyche*. The soul is the part of us that thinks but is also the part of us the reaches out to other people. It comprises two parts which we could summarize as mind and emotions, the Bible frequently refers to the heart and soul, perhaps this identifies the same destinations.

Mind

Intellect

Reason

Thoughts

Understanding

Instincts

Emotions

Desires

Moods

Feelings

Appetites

Will

Affections

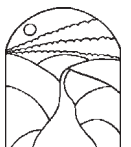
It is said that a soul is what you get when you combine a spirit with a body!

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Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. Isaiah 55:3

The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. Psalm 19:7

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. 1 Peter 2:11

In what way do sinful desires war against our souls?

It is our souls that most of us have the greatest problems with. After all I have never met a Christian who did not have in his spirit to do the right thing.

The soul is the Information centre, it stores and manages information, but it is the spirit that interprets what the soul stores.

Body

We all know what the body is and does. The Body also includes our carnal, or fleshly appetites. But again the Greek can help us understand it's role. The Greek is *Soma*; which is normally translated Body, but is also translated slave or corpse.

Each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, 1 Thesalonians 4:4
No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. 1 Corinthians 9:27

What does Paul mean by this?

Paul is not suggesting that we should get into flagellation or masochism. Beating ourselves is not going to make us holy or spiritual. What he is saying is that he will not be ruled, governed or controlled by his body, he will control it. After all as Jesus pointed out, the flesh is notoriously weak. Mark 14:38.

“Food for the stomach and the stomach for food”—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 1 Corinthians 6:13

I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. Romans 6:19

Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Romans 6:12

What does it mean to make your body your slave?

Our bodies do what we train them to do. This is true of addictions and habits.

Which part of us sins?

Which part of us gets saved?

Which part of us dies?

Which part of us worships God?

Yes folks these were trick questions. Each of these acts is a function of the whole being; Spirit, Soul and Body. There are sins that pertain to parts of our being. But it's all of us that sins.

This is the important part



The Spirit

Is KING. (Under the submission of the Holy Spirit.)

The Soul

Is SERVANT

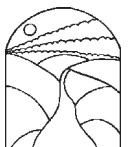
The Body

Is SLAVE

Most of us have our order the wrong way around. It is our body and our soul that rules our spirits.

Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city. Proverbs 16:32

How do we make our spirit the governing part in our lives?



Bible Studies

Women must be silent in Church.

Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

This is one of those problem verses in Scripture. If it is read literally it would effectively bar women from taking part in our services and limit them to the role of spectators.



In what context does Paul write this Command?

It is with regard to order in the church and more specifically regarding the use of Spiritual Gifts. Paul is not talking about preaching or teaching, although in other places he does.



The reason that we cannot take this verse on its surface value is found in 1 Corinthians 11v5.

What's the problem?

Forget the bit about head covering, in 11v5, Paul is saying women may do exactly what he says they must not do in 14v34.

Is it conceivable that Paul would so blatantly contradict himself within so few chapters?

This being the case, the one thing that is clear, is that Paul did not intend to stop women from praying, prophesying or taking part in the church service. After all 'Women should remain silent in the churches', would also mean they could not sing.

Are there any clues in the verse / passage that may help us?

Yes there are. We do not know exactly what the problem was, but it is clear that something the women were doing was creating a problem of disorder. Paul would not have called for women to be 'submissive' if a lack of submission was not part of the problem. More over this problem was bad enough to be described by Paul as 'disgraceful'.



A Question of Language.

The 'inquire' bit suggests the talking was peripheral to the service not a part of it. In classical Greek the word used here for speak meant to *chatter*. But in the rest of the chapter it is used to mean *inspired speech*, ie tongues or prophecy. (16 times)

Who else is told to keep quiet and why? v28

Read verse 30

'The first speaker should stop', uses exactly the same Greek word, (sigao) as is used in verse 34 for remain silent.

Does this parallel help to clarify what kind of a problem there was?

The women are to be submissive. But again this is not the only time this word (*hypotasso*) is used. Paul also says that, 'The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. v32. Subject to control is also the word *hypotasso*.

What does submission mean?

This parallel suggests to me that Paul is dealing with the same kind of a problem.



Six Possibilities

In the end we are left with six possible interpretations of these verse, they are as follows mark in the boxes which you think are most likely.

1 **Paul** really did not let women speak in Church, in which case 1 Cor 11v5 would be the passage we should seek to interpret differently.

2 **Paul** did not write these words, they were a note added by a scribe in the margin, which were later incorporated into the text by accident. They are omitted in some early manuscripts.

3 **This** verse relates only to judging prophecy, therefore all Paul is saying is that Women may not judge prophetic utterances. re verse 29

4 **Paul** is referring to the habit the Corinthian women had got into of carrying on conversations with each other during Church. It is likely that the church meeting place was similar to a synagogue. The women were segregated at the back. We know that in the synagogues they did have a bad habit of nattering while the men performed the worship. In a synagogue, women took no active part, the very fact that in the church they could pray and prophecy was revolutionary.

5 **Alternatively** there could have been a 'passion for discussion', Barrett, which was out of place in a public meeting. Especially if the discussion was causing disagreement between husband and wife. Those offending are told the place for such discussion is in the home.

6 **Paul** is trying to sort out a local problem of specific women who were disrupting the services. Bearing in mind the parallelism, it is possible that the group of prophets who were creating disorder, comprised these women. If so Paul is not talking about all women everywhere, but only those who are bringing disorder to the Church.

The 4 or 6 seem to be the most probable. 5 is possible, 3 is just possible, 1 and 2 are very unlikely.

How should we apply these verses to the church today?
What conclusion should we come to can women speak in Church today?

Paul, then says, that what he is teaching is part of the common practice of the Church. If this is so, then this verse has to be weighed against any NT passages that mention women role in the Church.

Some Cultural issues

Two other cultural issues must be taken into account here. Throughout the ancient world women were largely uneducated. This passage deals with how women should learn, not whether qualified women, should teach. When Jesus allowed Mary to sit at his feet (=learn), while he taught he did what Jews of the day would consider a sin. There are many Greek texts that called on women to be silent in public. These are just some examples of how revolutionary the NT was in its attitude to women. Secondly Corinth was famous for its immorality. Paul is famous for his teaching on not offending the weak. Women's activity in Church would have caused this kind of offense. (This could be part of the explanation of 11v5). Paul is concerned that any participation of the women that was over the top could cause offense and bring the church into disrepute.

How should we apply these considerations to the church today?

Bible Studies

Women must wear hats



Read 1 Corinthians 11v2-16

This is an offensive passage to many women, it makes Paul sound like a prude and a chauvinist all in one. It inspires two responses; Either we take it at face value and insist that women wear hats in church. When I was growing up all women wore hats in church. Ironically according to the passage the head covering gave women the freedom to participate vocally. Yet the churches that insisted on hats, were the same ones that discouraged women from speaking! The response of most of us was to ignore this passage, because it said something that we could see no reason for, yet we could not refute. So we just pretended it did not exist.

Are women really one step further from God than men? I would suggest that this is one of the most misinterpreted passages in all of Paul's writings. I hope today to show you an interpretation you had never seen before.



What is a head?

Stupid question.

Is the way Paul uses the word 'head', in the next two verses the same?

Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. 1 Corinthians 11:3

Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved. 1 Corinthians 11:4-5

Obviously the second time, he meant a physical head, what we all have on our shoulders. But the first usage is as a metaphor.



What does head mean when we use it as a metaphor?

No, you are completely wrong, that's what the English word means when we use it as a metaphor, the Greek does not mean boss or chief at all, it means; origin or source, (eg. The head of a river,) starting point, crown, completion or consummation.

What is the Bible saying when it says that Man is the head of women?

What does it mean when it says Christ is the head of the Church?

Col 1v18, Eph 1v22,4v15

This fits the context of both passages better, and fits in much better with the Bible teaching of both the relationship within the trinity and the creation of man and women.

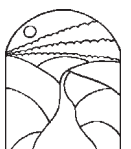
What Paul is saying is that man was created first and it was to fulfil his inadequacy that women were created.

For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 1 Corinthians 11:8-9



Paul even feels he needs to qualify this for he says;

In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. 1 Cor 11:11-12 This was radical teaching, it has taken up to this century to catch up with it. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. Gal 3:28 When cultural issues and the problems of the church in the first Century are accepted, I believe this is the fundamental NT teaching on the relative positions of men and women. In Christ the old destinations of sex, social status and race are no longer valid.



When it talks about a man or women dishonouring their head **does it mean their physical head or spiritual head?**

Incidentally the words used for man/women are the same words the Greek uses for husband/wife, so it's usage is not always clear.



Women is man's glory

Paul's argument here is hard to understand. It appears he is passing comment on Genesis 2. *Insofar as man is the result of God's creative work (Gen v26;2v7) and has his existence out of Christ (11v3) who is the image and glory of God. "he is the image and Glory of God" (11v7). And insofar as the woman has her existence out of the man (Gen 2:21-23; 1 Corinthians 11v3), she "is the glory of man" (11v7) Brauch.*

To me this seems to be Paul's way of saying that inappropriate dress is going to distract from worship and bring about 'impropriety in worship'. We should do nothing that detracts from God's glory.

What activities in Church might do this?



Cultural issues

What kind of head covering is Paul talking about? Recently it has been suggested that it is hair he is talking about. But this does not make sense of his argument from hair. v6. One thing is certain, he is not talking about the kind of hats we wear today. We know from records of the day that in public, both Jewish and Gentile women wore veils, We also know that during 1st century this was a practice that was beginning to wean. This veil covered the head hair and shoulders, it is unclear if it covered the face.

In Christ were women in church free from this kind of legalism?

I would say a resounding yes. But Outsiders coming in and the 'weaker brethren' inside the Church would have found this highly offensive. Remember Corinth was the Bangkok of the ancient world, famous for it's immorality. Anything in the Church that hinted of immorality was especially sensitive.

Bearing this in mind what would Paul have told the women?

1 Corinthians 8:9&13

Paul says, this is in accordance with the very nature of things, is it?

There is, to my knowledge, nothing in human genetics that makes wearing veils natural. Paul is speaking from a cultural point of view, within his culture this was the universal norm.



**If this was the reason women had to wear veils is it binding to us today?
Are there situations where it would be right for a women to wear a hat?
Is there an equivalent to this in our modern day church?**



The Theological argument.

The other reason Paul gives for women to wear a veil is theological

For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a [sign of] authority on her head. 1 Corinthians 11:10

(brackets indicate words not present in the Greek but added to explain the Greek)

Some have suggested that this is because of the fallen angels, ie. to protect a women from spiritual attack, it is not clear how a veil would do this.

Most likely it is so as not to offend the holy angles which are present in the worship of God.

What is the sign? many interpret it as a sign of her submission to her husband. I believe the sign of authority her new found freedom in Christ to minister the way she is now doing. If so the veil was not a restriction imposed upon her, but a mark of her freedom.



Since the question of a women's freedom is no longer an issue and since we are unlikely to mistake an unveiled women for a prostitute. I can see no scriptural reason for continuing this practice.

Bible Studies

Women must not teach.



Read 1 Timothy 2v9-15

Paul's Epistles are *occasional*, that means he did not simply sit down and as he had some spare time on his hands, decide to write to someone. He wrote for specific reasons. Usually to address something that was going wrong in the church. Often we only have clues as to what the problem was, we have the answers, but not the questions. It is very important that we try to understand what problem Paul was trying to address. If we don't, we will misunderstand the point he wants to make.

As we have already seen, there is a reason that women are told to be quiet in Church and it is because of a problem. We have to apply it to ourselves in light of this problem, where we have a similar problem, we may apply Paul's solution. But to teach from this verse that all women everywhere, must never speak in Church. Is to teach what the **Bible does not say**.

I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. 1 Timothy 2:12

Were women silent in Church?

| | Name | Title |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Acts 21v8-9 | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Romans 16v1-2 | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Acts 16v14-15 | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Philippians 4v3 | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Acts 18:26, Rom 16:3 | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Romans 16:7 | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |

Unless, of course, we assume that when Philip's daughters prophesied, they did so only to themselves and that Priscilla & Junia, were men with women's names. We have to conclude that women were very active in the early church.



Where did Timothy learn his Bible knowledge? 2 Timothy 1v5, 3:15 **Do women have a teaching role in Church?** Titus 2v3-4

Take a quick look through the book of Timothy.

What kind of problems were there in the Church in Ephesus?

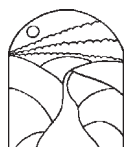
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| 1 Timothy 4v1-3 | 1 Timothy 7v1 |
| 1 Timothy 5v11-13 | 1 Timothy 6v3-6 |

If we assume that the things Paul writes about indicate the problems, then there were two major areas of concern. Wrong family relationships and heresy, not just false teaching, but weird and wonderful stuff. Overlapping both of these is Paul's concern about widows. Not something we would expect Paul to concern himself with unless it represented a major part of the problem. Some of these widows were;

Getting into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to. 1 Timothy 5:13

Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan. 1 Timothy 5:15

Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; 1 Timothy 4:7



It is quite likely that it is because of a group of women (widows), that Paul gives his hard command, for they have been teaching what is contrary to good doctrine. Paul goes on to point out that in the Garden of Eden, it was the women who was deceived and the man who disobeyed. Perhaps by saying this he is hinting that there are women in Ephesus who are deceived as well as pointing out that it was Adam who was responsible before God.

On the basis of this data, at least two reconstructions of the situation in Timothy's congregation at Ephesus are possible: (1) It is possible that women in the church at Ephesus were the primary advocates and promoters of the heretical teachings which were upsetting accepted patterns of congregational and home life. (2) A second possibility is that the women in the church had been particularly influenced by the heretical teachers. Such a situation in the Ephesian church is addressed in 2 Timothy 3:6-9 where women, the special targets of those "who oppose the truth," (3:8) become "unable to acknowledge the truth" (3:7). Brauch, The hard sayings of Paul

It is possible that many women became so excited about their new freedom in Christ, that they took their participation to extremes that were damaging to the Church.

But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety. 1 Timothy 2:15

This passage which sounds so frightening, becomes very simple when you discover that the Greek 'Childbearing' is in the singular and is a definite article. Ie. Saved through the childbirth, *Earle*. Paul is referring to Genesis 3 again. As a result of the curse, women becomes subservient to man (3v16). But the curse is to be broken by the women's offspring (3v15).

What Paul is effectively saying is that through faith in Christ the curse is broken and women are lifted to an equal status before God.

Does this passage say a women must be Quiet and Submissive? v11

Does this passage say a women may not preach in Church?

Again this passage is about how women learn. The submission Paul call for is to the Elders of the Church as the teachers and custodians of good doctrine. It is not a submission to obey their will, but acknowledging their sound teaching. Cf Heb 13:17

The word teach, seems to refer to the establishing and judging of doctrine, not passing it on to others. If so Paul is not saying that women may not 'teach' in Church, only that they may not be the final word on doctrinal matters.

'She must be silent' *en hesychia* is exactly the same phrase that is translated 'in quietness' in verse 11



Does have 'authority over a man,' v12, mean men should not obey their female boss at work?

No. Paul is talking about countering wrong teaching, not about the supposed innate superiority of men over women.



We have learnt that this verse was given in response to wrong teaching by a group of women and to their rejection of the authority in biblical matters of the eldership. Understanding this we discover as a Church, when we have women 'teacher' we are not going against this verse.



I do believe that this verse teaches that it is wrong for a women to be the final (earthly) authority within a church.

How much freedom should women have to minister?

Bible Studies

The Shrewd Manager

Most of Jesus Parables are fairly clear to us. Even parables like the 10 Virgins, although we may never conclusively work out it's details it's meaning is abundantly clear. This parable is one that even gives preachers headaches. What is Jesus saying?

Read Luke 16v1-9

What's the story?

What was the managers problem?

What solution did he come to?

The manager was dishonest! But Jesus uses him as an example for us! Compare verse 8 in the KJV and the NIV. **Who Commended him?**

The word is Kyrios, Lord. The Question is, where does the parable end and the explanation start? Is the Kyrios of verse 8 the master (also Kyrios) of verse 3. Or is it the Lord Jesus, the way Luke normally uses it?

It looks like the manager was not guilty of incompetence but of embezzlement. He was a dishonest manager not an incapable one. The act for which he is commended may not have been dishonest. Two explanations have been given.

- 1 He made up the amount of the cancelled debt from his own pocket. This requires us to add something to the parable before we can understand it.
- 2 Usury was the issue. The OT outlaws the practice of charging interest, but we know it still happened. The amount cancelled could have been the interest that either the Master or the Manager had illegally charged. The reason the debts were in commodities, not cash, may have been to hide the interest.

If the master had charged the interest, there was nothing he could do or say. He had been caught at his crooked deal. He commended the manager, because he recognised someone as shrewd as himself.

Perhaps the masters acquisition of his wealth was just as illegal as the managers own fraud.

If it was the master that had charged the interest, then he was only making up for what he had done wrong, and at the same time turning it to his advantage. The master could commend him because he was at last doing the right thing.

What do you think Jesus is actually commending him for?

It seems to me Jesus is commending the way he used his money to ensure his future, his perspicacity, his forward thinking. Jesus then says that this is too often lacking among believers. Elsewhere he calls us to be, 'Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. Matthew 10:16.

Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. 1 Corinthians 14:20

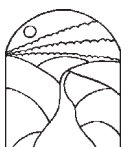
I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Luke 16:9

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What does Jesus want us to do?

More specifically what does he want us to do with our money?

What is our eternal dwelling?

How will using money now effect our future?

Whose friendship will you 'buy' by giving to the poor? Prov 19:17

Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Luke 12:33-34

Is it clear what Jesus wanted to achieve when he told this parable?

What will happen when you "loose your job" here?

What is our "calling to account"?

What must you do to prepare?

Is this parable only about money?

So now you understand the parable, who the "master" was is not important, nor the debts involved, what matters is how Jesus wants us to act. He is not commending dishonesty, but his is recommending wise use of money. Jesus is not yet satisfied that he has got the point across, so he gives three more bits of teaching to hammer the nail home.

Read Luke 16v10-12

This also helps to make it clear that the manager is not being commended for his bad management.

What do you think "true riches" is?

What do you think the "someone else's property" is?

To me this sounds very similar to the conclusion of the parable of talents (Matthew 25). ie. How you act now in light of your future Hope.

Luke 16:13

"No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." Luke 16:13

The word *Mammon* could be translated finance, rather than money. It is the same word translated earlier as 'worldly wealth'.

If the debt canceled was the illegal interest could the manager have manager have kept it for himself?

The Last teaching Jesus gives is the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus, Luke 16v19-31. We do not normally associate this with Jesus teaching about money. Instead we take what it says about the afterlife and it's comments about repentance. But think about it, **what connection does this have with the shrewd manager?**

This is the story of someone who did **exactly the wrong thing with his money**. The rich man, during his life, had no compassion for the beggar at his gate. He was untrustworthy with worldly wealth, he served Money not God, and he certainly did not store up treasure in heaven.

Bible Studies

What would you say?

So you get into conversation with an acquaintance about your faith, things are going quite well when suddenly they drop one of *those questions*.

This is an unrealistic exercise. Some of these questions may come up in conversation, but we are deluding ourselves if we think we can come up with trite answers that will convince someone.

Often it is how we answer that is more important than what we say.

More important than both is God working by His Holy Spirit in the background.

Often the question is irrelevant, but the reason it was asked is all important.

The goal of this study is to make you think about how to answer, not just what to say. It is to keep these kind of problems from intimidate you.

If this study is successful, it will help you look behind the question to the person and their needs and why they are asking it in the first place..



What would you say?

The Bible contradicts itself.

What makes you Christians think you know the answer?

There are so many Churches they all believe different things and the all hate each other.

There are many ways to God? Aren't all religions equally valid?

How do you know your ideas of God are any more valid than mine?

God won't send anyone to hell.

The afterlife, I'll worry about it when I get there.

How can you believe the Bible when it talks about angels & elves.

I've read the Bible. It didn't do anything for me.

You Christians are all the same, always forcing your religion down other peoples throats.

Christianity is all about keeping rules?

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Why should I become a Christian?

You Christians are just hypocrites.

I'll give my life to God when I'm older.

The Church is not relevant any more.

I used to go to church but I got the cold shoulder so I quit.

You don't have to go to church to be a Christian.

It's too hard being a Christian.

So what changes will I have to make if I become a Christian.

What can God do for me?

The Gospel is just for white people.

How can you seriously believe in God in the 21st Century?

How do I know God is real?

What about all the scandals of clergyman on the take or abusing children?

How do I know you are not a cult?

I'm Good enough.

I prayed to God once and he didn't answer.

God can't forgive me you don't know what I've done.

All religion has ever done is create war and strife, we're better off without it.

Are you a Jehovah Witness or something?

All you need is love man.

What do I have to do to become a Christian?

Christianity is just a crutch for a weak mind.

Bible Studies

First Love

Ephesus was a very important city, it's population was around 250,000 people. The Gospel was preached in Ephesus by the Apostle Paul, Priscilla and Aquila. Acts 18:19. Latter Timothy ministered there. John the writer of Revelation made Ephesus his home. Today the ruins of Ephesus have been excavated, they are both extensive and impressive.

Read Revelation 2v1

What are the seven Golden lampstands? Revelation 1v20

What does it mean when Jesus says he walks among the lampstands?

The imagery is borrowed from the tabernacle in which stood a seven branch lampstand. It also makes an appearance in Zec 4v3. The Lampstand generally symbolizes the presence of God, specifically the Holy Spirit. In Mat 5v15 is symbolizes Christian witness in a dark world. So in a sense is it not only the Church, but Christ shining in the Church.

The Ephesian report card.

For each of these churches Jesus gives a current status report, the good things and the bad.

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| You work hard | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| You persevere (twice) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| You cannot tolerate wicked men, | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| You test those who claim to be apostles but are not. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| You endure hardships for my name, | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| You have not grown weary. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Was this a good Church or a bad Church?

Every virtue carries within itself the seeds of its own destruction. Mounce.

How could these virtues become vices?

Why was Jesus not satisfied with the Church?

Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Revelation 2:4

The clear tone of the passage is that the lose of their first love had rendered futile all the good work and perseverance of the Church. This lose outshadowed all the positive actions of the Church and if unchecked would lead to it's demise.

Is it possible to give every impression of being good, yet still not please God?

"A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." Galatians 5:9

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 1 Sam 16:7

Is it better not to do good than to do good for wrong motives?

I would say a clear no, the illustration given in Philippians 1v15-18 is clear. Obviously it is best to do good works from a good motive. (by love, Phil 1v17) for this we will receive a reward.

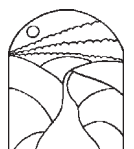
Refusing to forgive someone because you would only be doing it from a sense of obligation. Or refraining from giving because you would only be doing so to procure God's blessing. Are, when it is all boiled down, just excuses for disobeying God.

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What is the First love?

What do you think it could mean to loose your first love?

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What it's not (but is true anyway)

We all have a first calling on our lives, it may be to Sunday School, to our children or to intercession etc. It is the key thing that God has called us to do. Sometimes we forget this and neglect what God has made our priority.

What would be the consequences of this?

What is your primary calling?

How seriously are you taking it?

Neglecting God's primary call is a serious thing, but it is hard to see why it should have such dire consequences. It must go deeper than this. The fact that it effects our whole Christian life suggests it is something fundamental, something to do with motives.

Secondly. Many Christians, (not all) experience an euphoria when they first get saved, along with it goes an enthusiasm and zeal. But this is not the 'first love' Revelation speaks of. As in a human relationship, romantic love inevitably weans with time, it must be replaced by a more stable kind of love. So with Christ. While we should always *keep our spiritual zeal serving God*, and while there will be spiritual highs in our lives, we must keep pressing on. We cannot live on how we feel.

What should our first euphoria be replaced with?

What happens if it's not?

What it is

What is the greatest command?

What is the second greatest?

Our first love is our love for Christ.

It is our relationship with Jesus.

It is the place God takes in our lives

It is our 'connection with the Head,' Colossians 2:19

The trouble with the Ephesians was they were doing things out of duty not devotion. In consequence even the good things they did, failed to bear right fruit.

What are the dangers of doing things out of duty?

What happens when service takes the place of the one we serve?

What should you do if you are working from duty not devotion?

What are the two things Revelation tells us to do?

Why do we need to repent?

What are the things we did at first?'

What does remove your lampstand mean?

Why is loosing your first love so serious?

What two things should your work for God be motivated by?

Where are you at.

Do you love Jesus more or less?

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Are you more dedicated to his serve now?

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How much of what you do is from duty, how much devotion?

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Bible Studies

Encouragement

Who needs to be encouraged?

Does everyone need the same amount of encouragement?

Is it possible to need too much encouragement?

Everyone needs encouragement at times. There is a danger that those who always seem to be getting along fine, miss out because no one perceives their need. Others become so reliant on encouragement that should just once someone forget to say how well they did, they fall to pieces.

Why might someone need that much encouragement?

What should you do in such a case?

What encourages you?

(I suggest we go round in a circle and give examples)

1

But your assistant, Joshua son of Nun, will enter it. Encourage him, because he will lead Israel to inherit it. Deuteronomy 1:38

What kind of Encouragement might Moses have needed to give Joshua?

2

Now go out and encourage your men. I swear by the LORD that if you don't go out, not a man will be left with you by nightfall. This will be worse for you than all the calamities that have come upon you from your youth till now." 2 Samuel 19:7

How did David need to encouragement the men and why?

What's the difference between these two kinds of encouragement?

What kind of Encouragement shouldn't you do? 2 Chronicles 22:3

How do you encourage to do wrong?

Because you disheartened the righteous with your lies, when I had brought them no grief, and because you encouraged the wicked not to turn from their evil ways and so save their lives, Ezekiel 13:22

You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, Psalm 10:17

learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. Isaiah 1:17

Encouragement comes from:

Acts 9:31

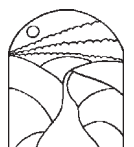
Acts 11:23,

Romans 1:12

Romans 12:8

Romans 15:4

Romans 15:5



Hebrews 10:25

1 Cor 14:3

Phil 2:1

1 Thes 4:18

2 Timothy 4:2

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. 1 Thess 5:11

I would say the above fall into three categories.

How would you categorize them?

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What can you do to encourage yourself?

What will happen if people don't get encouraged?

What happened in the following verse?

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. Hebrews 3:13

Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage. Exodus 6:9

Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. Ezra 4:4

But now trouble comes to you, and you are discouraged; it strikes you, and you are dismayed. Job 4:5

What discourages you?

What might stop us from being encouraged, even when sources of encouragement assail us?

Are people encouraged/discouraged by the same things?

What implication does this have?

A word to fathers

Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Col 3:21

How can you discourage your Children?

Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9

What should the goal of encouragement be?

What is it in the following verses?

Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. Titus 2:6

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope. encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

When you encourage someone are you allowed to lie?

What part should sincerity play in encouragement?

What part should empathy play?

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

Bible Studies

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Because you disheartened the righteous with your lies, when I had brought them no grief, and because you encouraged the wicked not to turn from their evil ways and so save their lives, Ezekiel 13:22

You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, Psalm 10:17

learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. Isaiah 1:17

Encouragement comes from:

Acts 9:31

encouraged by the Holy Spirit,

Acts 11:23,

he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true

Romans 1:12

mutually encouraged by each other's faith.

Romans 12:8

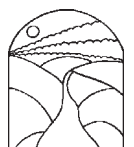
if it is encouraging, let him encourage; Gift

Romans 15:4

encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Romans 15:5

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement



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| Hebrews 10:25 | Let us not give up meeting together but let us encourage one another— |
| 1 Cor 14:3 | prophecies - strengthening, encouragement and comfort. |
| Phil 2:1 | If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, |
| 1 Thes 4:18 | Therefore encourage each other with these words. |
| 2 Timothy 4:2 | Preach the Word; correct, rebuke and encourage |

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. 1 Thess 5:11

I would say the above fall into three categories.

How would you categorize them?

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|---------|---------|------|
| Others, | Divine, | Self |
|---------|---------|------|

What can you do to encourage yourself?

What will happen if people don't get encouraged?

What happened in the following verse?

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. Hebrews 3:13

Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and cruel bondage. Exodus 6:9

Then the peoples around them set out to discourage the people of Judah and make them afraid to go on building. Ezra 4:4

But now trouble comes to you, and you are discouraged; it strikes you, and you are dismayed. Job 4:5

What discourages you?

What might stop us from being encouraged, even when sources of encouragement assail us?

Are people encouraged/discouraged by the same things?

What implication does this have?

A word to fathers

Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Col 3:21

How can you discourage your Children?

Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9

What should the goal of encouragement be?

What is it in the following verses?

Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. Titus 2:6

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope. encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

When you encourage someone are you allowed to lie?

What part should sincerity play in encouragement?

What part should empathy play?

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

Bible Studies

Stiff-necked

“I have seen these people,” the LORD said to Moses, “and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them.” Exodus 32:9-10
 And the LORD said “I have seen this people, and they are a stiff-necked people indeed! Deu 9:13

“You warned them to return to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands. They sinned against your ordinances, by which a man will live if he obeys them. Stubbornly they turned their backs on you, became stiff-necked and refused to listen. Nehemiah 9:29

One of God’s long time complaints against the Children of Israel was that they were stiff necked. Frequently God gives this a primary reason for His impending judgement against them. Now we know that the things that befell Israel serve us as examples, occasionally of what we should do, more often what we should not. The danger then is that we too could be stiff necked and thus incur God’s wrath.



What do you think it means to be stiff-necked?

One way to find out what the Bible means by a phrase is to look at the places where it occurs. Other adjectives around the phrase help us understand it’s meaning. As you go through try to give some examples of the kind of behaviour involved.

Deuteronomy 31v27

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2 Kings 17:14

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2 Chronicles 30:8

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2 Chronicles 36:13

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Nehemiah 9:16-17

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Jeremiah 17:23

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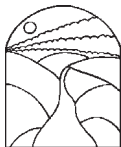
A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy.
 Proverbs 29:1

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What are the effects of a stiff-neck likely to be?

There are many things we could associate with being stiff-necked; hard hearted, rebellious, stubborn, arrogant, inattentive, pridefull or untrusting. For me the idea which sums it up is **UNRESPONSIVE**.

There are many reasons that people fail to receive the manifold blessings that God so liberally promises. Sometimes it is sin, unforgiveness or disobedience. But sometimes it is simply that we are unresponsive to God.

When God speaks we ignore, when God requests we decline, when God orders we disobey. We are always slow when it comes to spiritual things.

Jesus told a story of two sons.



Read Matthew 21:28.

What were the two responses?

What other two responses are possible?

Most of us are those who say we won't, and then, having thought it over, still don't. We should be those who say yes and put our hearts, souls and strength straight into it.



Luke 9:61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but...."

"You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Acts 7:51

Our unresponsiveness is in fact resisting the Holy Spirit.

In what areas might we be unresponsive to God?

I will suggest just a few. In worship. When an appeal is made. When God gives a prayer burden.

Why are we so often slow to respond to God?



How much of our behaviour towards God is negative?

Your troops will be willing on your day of battle. Psalm 110:3

"When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves—praise the LORD! Judges 5:2

What I find most frustrating is those who are least responsive to God are often the most demanding of his blessings and the most disillusioned when He fails to come to the party.



What is the Cure for unresponsiveness?

Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. Deu 10:16

What is a circumcised heart?

The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live. Deuteronomy 30:6

Do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were; submit to the LORD. Come to the sanctuary, which he has consecrated forever. Serve the LORD your God, so that his fierce anger will turn away from you. 2 Chronicles 30:8

The cure for a hard heart is a broken heart. A heart that genuinely love God and wants to do his will. A volunteers heart. A soft heart. We must be quick to obey. Quick to respond.

God will change our unresponsive hearts, we get to choose whether it is done the easy way of the hard way.

Bible Studies

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Deuteronomy 31v27

Rebellious

Not trusting

2 Kings 17:14

Would not listen

Did not trust

2 Chronicles 30:8

Submit to the LORD.

Come to the sanctuary,

Serve the LORD your God,

2 Chronicles 36:13

hardened his heart and

Would not turn to the LORD

Nehemiah 9:16-17

arrogant

did not obey your commands.

Refused to listen and

failed to remember the miracles

rebelled

Jeremiah 17:23

did not listen or

pay attention;

would respond to discipline.

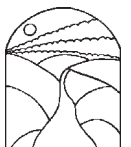
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Bible Studies

Beginnings and Endings

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

Read Ephesians 3v7-13

This verse tells us that God has an eternal purpose. By this we mean that God has a final purpose, a goal to be fulfilled an outcome to all that He has done.

But what is this Goal?

God's eternal purpose is:

- The Cross of Jesus Christ.**
- My salvation.**
- The salvation of mankind.**
- The revelation of Christ's bride.**

The last answer is the best all the others are means to this end. It is important that we understand that God's goal goes beyond my salvation. My salvation through the cross, are a means to an end, not an end in itself. Had man never fallen he would not have needed to be saved, therefore salvation by itself is not God eternal purpose.

From God's perspective, we are created for His pleasure and to bring Him glory
Romans 11:36, 1 Corintians 10:31

Did God know man would sin?

The first 3 chapters of Genesis record a time before sin entered the world, before there was a need for salvation. The end of Revelation records a time when sin has been dealt with and God's victory is complete. Therefore examining the similarities give us a very good idea of what God wants, his goal, His eternal purpose.

If you read the first three chapters of Genesis and the last three of Revelation you will find a remarkable series of parallels.

Do the Attached work sheet.

Do you think this Parallel is significant, if so what does it show.

To my mind it show that God will finish what He started, creation-recreation. Nothing that has happened with sin and evil in the intervening millennia has changed a thing.

Which of the above show us God's eternal purpose?

If you were to pick one it would have to be the Marriage of the Lamb. The union of a redeemed people with Jesus Christ. The whole idea of God calling a people to himself.

Read Ephesians 5v25-32

Is this a literal wedding or is it a metaphor?

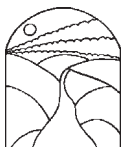
What kind of things does it mean when it talks of our marriage to the Lamb?

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Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

“Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.

Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.”

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Revelation 19:6-8

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:14

When Paul talks of his heavenward calling, where is the goal?

Paul recognised that his goal was not Conversion, baptism in the Holy spirit or even serving God, his goal was a prize waiting in heaven.

Along the way

The defeat of Satan

Rev 20:10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The question is why wait so long. If God is all powerful and Satan is not, why doesn't God destroy him now and save us all a lot of strife.

Is the battle between God and Satan based on power?

Then what is it based on?

It is clear that it is not a power battle, (Omnipotent wins every time), it has to be a battle of ideology. It looks like Satan is accusing God of being wrong in some are.

Probably over man. God is using us to prove that He is right.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, Ephesians 3:10

If man, the only creature God made with the capacity to love does not love God genuinely and of a free will, then God's purpose in creation has failed. Ralph Smith.

So when living in this world and suffering all the grief's inherent within it. Despite the fact that we go through many trials and do not always see God hand. When we chose to follow him, just because of who he is and the salvation he has provided for us, we prove before Satan and all the heavenly forces that God was right.

Dealing with sin

God did not create sin, He did create the possibility of it.

Why do you think He did this?

It has been suggested that this kind of a world is the only kind where sin can be dealt with, faith be proved genuine and love be seen in all it's glory.

The marriage of the Lamb

Genesis 2:11-12 The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. 12 (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin and onyx are also there.)

The aromatic resin is bdellium. The identification of stones in the Bible is fraught with problems. Older Translations of the Bible translate this as Pearl, (see NIV footnote) this is the way the Rabbies historically translated it.

Onyx is representative of all of the precious stones found on the breast plate of the high priest.

What in Revelation is made of these things? Rev 21v19-21

In tern what does this represent? Rev 21v2 & 9

The City is the bride of Christ - Us. It is made of the things that were buried down the river out of Eden. Our lives become what God wants us to be when these things come to the surface. But they are dug out of the mud of this world. It is the very greifs and trials we face are the things that will make us fit to be the bride.

Bible Studies

Beginnings and Endings

Work sheet

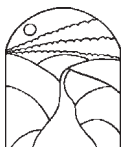
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|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Genesis 2v4 | Heaven O Earth | Revelation 21v1 |
| | New Heaven O Earth | |
| Genesis 3v23 | Paradise Lost | Revelation 21v3 |
| | Paradise Regained | |
| Genesis 3v1 | Satan Enters | Revelation 20v10 |
| | Satan Cast Out Forever | |
| Genesis 3v17 | Earth Cursed | Revelation 22v3 |
| | No More Curse | |
| Genesis 2v9 | Tree of Life | Revelation 22v2 |
| | Tree of Life | |
| Genesis 2v8 | A Garden | Revelation 21v2 |
| | A City | |
| Genesis 2v23 | Adam O Eve | Rev 21v3, 22v14 |
| | A Redeemed People | |
| Genesis 2v9 | River of Life | Revelation 22v19 |
| | River of Life | |
| Genesis 3v5 | God Walking in Midst | Revelation 21v3 |
| | God Dwelling in Midst | |
| Genesis 2v21-25 | Earthly Marriage (Man-Woman) | Revelation 21v2 |
| | Heavenly Marriage (Lamb-Bride) | |
| Genesis 2v11, 12 | Gold, Onyx Stone, Bdellium | Rev 21v18-21 |
| | Gold, Precious Stone, Pearl | |
| Genesis 3v16 | Pain, Sorrow & Death | Revelation 21v4 |
| | No More Pain, Mourning or Death | |
| Genesis 1 | Time Ushered In | Revelation 21 |
| | Eternity Ushered In | |
| Genesis 1v2 | The Spirit Brooding | Revelation 22v17 |
| | The Spirit & the Bride Say "Come" | |

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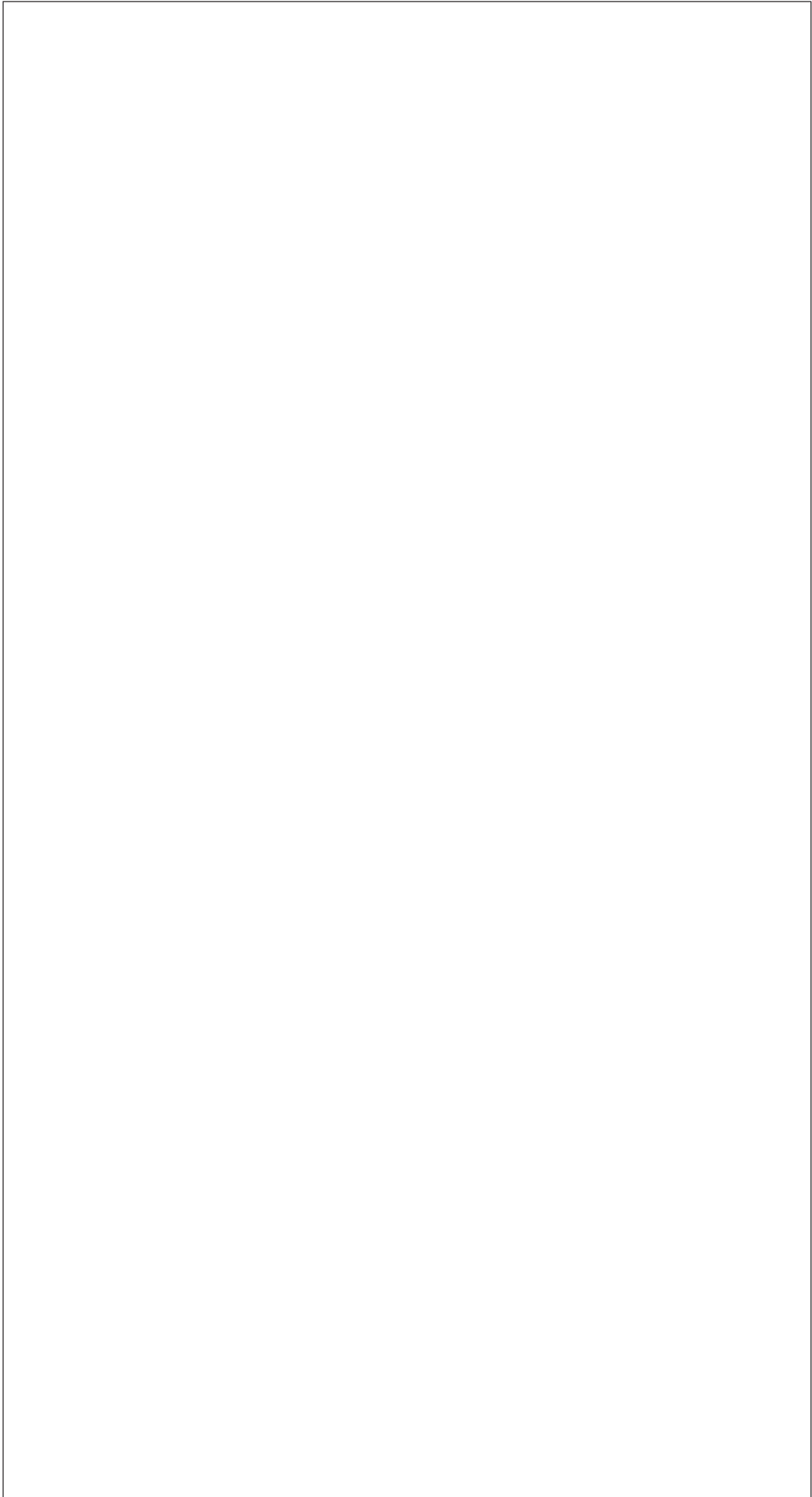
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Bible Studies

Understanding Revelation I

The book of Revelation is one of the hardest books of the Bible to understand. The Goal of this study is not to provide a commentary on Revelations (something that is definitely beyond my abilities) but to help you to understand the way the book is written.

Who wrote Revelation? Rev 1v1
How did he receive the material? Rev 1v1, 10, 4v1, 5v1, 21v15
Did the Author understand there was a clear message in the book? Rev 1v1

The first thing we must understand is that, although we are the Holy Spirit's target readership, we are not John's target. He wrote for the Church of His day. So to understand the message it help to understand the circumstances of those who first read it.

The early Church and the Roman Authorities had a honeymoon period during which the Roman authorities actually protected the Church. Acts 18v12-17. When the persecution came it was venomous, just being a Christian was punishable by death, (at one stage being accused of being a Christian was enough). The Persecution came in waves Claudius (41-54) Nero (54-68), Domitian (81-96) and Trajan (98-117). Most people think Revelation was written at the end of Domitians reign, just before the turn of the century. The church was facing the kind of persecution that threatened it's very existance.

Why then did John write Revelation?

APOCALYPTICS.

You do not have to be a genius to realise that Revelation is written in a style that is unlike anything else in scripture. You cannot compare Revelation with the Epistles or the Gospels or even the OT prophets.

What books in the Bible are closest (in style) to revelation?

Ezekiel, Daniel & Zechariah all have similar styles. They are more the for runners of Apocalypics than Apocalypses themselves.

Although Revelation is quite different from the rest of the NT it is part of a style of writing which flourished in the Jewish world between 200BC & 100AD called apocalypses. Other examples are Enoch, the Assumption of Moses and the Apocalypse of Abraham.

The word Apocalypse comes from the Greek, it is found in Rev 1v1 and it means Revelation. It has come to be used of all the writings that are similar to the Revelation of John.

The nature of Apocalyptic writing.

Apocalypses are a kind of dramatisation of the Prophets. they were written during times of oppression and persecution. Times when it was tempting to look at the great promises of prophets, compare them with the world around you and give up hope. The apocalypses were written to help people see that God was working through His plan and although things may be tough now God is in control and will triumph.

Why do you think the Saints in John's day needed this Book?

Two major themes of Apocalypics are;
Final Judgement of the wicked
Final Salvation for the Righteous

How does this compare with Revelation?

They portray a struggle between good and evil on a cosmic scale. Action occurs in heaven and on earth. And the scene switches between the two. This shows how the spiritual and the physical inter link..

Is this true of Revelation?

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Is this link between spiritual and physical genuine?

Apocalypses use strange symbolism. All scripture contains symbolism but they are always taken from real life. EG light and salt, Half baked cakes Hosea 7v8. The Symbolism of apocalypses come from the realms of fantasy, A beast with 10 heads, frogs coming out of the mouth of a dragon.

The writers never intended us to take these things literally but rather to interpret there meaning. This of course is were things get complicated!

When we read the Bible it is our understanding that you take it's plain simple message as it's main message. You do not seek to find secret truths behind every verse. In the past the Church has got itself into all kinds of trouble by teaching hidden meanings. Apocalyptic writings is full of hidden meanings. It is written to be cryptic and enigmatic.

Is this true of revelation?

This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666. Rev 13:18

The problem with this is that Christian feel free to find any meaning they like in it. Instead what they should do is try to unravel the meaning John was trying to explain.

Why do you think that Revelation is written in such a cryptic style?

One of the devices that apocalyptic literature uses is to describe events that have already happened in the same way as it depicts future events. The Author is not standing on a mountain with the future laid out before him. He is looking both ways future and past, he is part of a process that has already started.

We always assume that Revelation depicts future events.

But is it possible that John 'looks both ways' too?

Read Revelation 12v1-9

Most people consider this to be an account centring on the Birth of Christ. The women is not Mary, but Faithful Israel. From verse 5 it is clear the Child is the Messiah Psalm 2v9. But it is also clear that John is not describing, Jesus physical birth in Bethlehem, but rather Jesus birth as part of God's overall plan of salvation. If this is the correct way to interpret this passage, then it gives us a key for understanding John's language, for we know the story John is telling.

Most people assume that the Book of Revelation is Chronological, ie it starts at the beginning and finishes at the end. If we have interpreted Rev 12 correctly then Revelation is only loosely chronological. It has whole chunks that are out of order. Or it may indeed be written to a different kind of order.

Apocalypses love to use symbolic numbers.

What symbolic numbers are used in Revelation?

Apocalypses love to view history as different aeons .

This kind of literature was always pseudonymous. That means the true author was anonymous but he claimed the author to be some great figure of the past

How does Revelation stand regarding authorship?

Apocalypses did not claim to be prophecy. Revelation does. Rev 22v7

This is where Revelation parts company from it genre. A knowledge of how this kind of literature worked is essential to understand the 'rules' of apocalypses. But then we must remember that while the rest are of a very dubious nature, Revelation is true. It is itself prophecy not just a reworking of prophecy found in the other books. It is God inspired.

A word of warning. Although it is true to say that Revelation is part of a larger body of Apocalyptic writing, having read several other examples of the genera it is my opinion that the similarities are over stated.

Bible Studies

Understanding Revelation II

As we have seen Revelation uses lots of strange symbols, it is written in a very dramatic style. The kind of language it uses is strange to us. The symbols John uses can be very intimidating.

It is tempting to see Revelation as a giant cryptic puzzle which we must somehow unravel. It is my opinion that the message of Revelation is not in the detail but bigger picture.

Does that mean the detail is unimportant?

What it does mean, is that people who get caught up in the detail miss the meaning. They get carried away with fanciful ideas because every detail has to have a significant meaning and they have to understand that meaning now.

Eg. In the 1950 much evangelical interpretation of Revelation centred around the events of WWII. Today WWII hardly gets a mention. Instead we find significance in the events of the gulf war. Speculation is no way to treat the sacred scriptures.

John's Symbolism

Lets try an example ***Read Rev 17v3-6***

What do you thin the Beast is?

What is the women?

What are the seven heads?

In this case the answers are given to us (the beast v8, the heads and the women v9-10.)

So who was the Women?

Any reference to 7 hill was obviously to Rome

What do you think the point John is trying to make is?

Some people are desperate to interpret everything literally. If it says it was a women then it must be a physical woman. Quite how she sits on seven hills is not clear!

Often Symbolism which would have been obvious to people in John's day is obscure to us.

Read Rev 13v1

Why does the beast come out of the sea?

For us this is meaningless. But the people of John's day would have had no trouble at all. The sea represent great upheaval. What John is saying is that the antichrist is born out of a time of political uncertainty. If you are expecting the Antichrist to arrive by submarine you have missed the point of what the Holy Spirit is saying.

This is not always the case. Revelation tells us John was shown the future. If John were witness to; for example the tomahawk cruse missiles the Americans love so much, how could he have described them?

This is often used to explain language such as is found in Revelation 9

John's language is also rich in it's poetry.

Revelation 5v4 does not say 'I say Jesus Christ standing in very centre of heaven, able to save, all sufficient, filled with the Spirits power". Instead John writes about the Lion of Judah and a slain lamb, the throne, living creatures and elders and the sevenfold Spirit of God. The picture painted and the truth illustrated are all the more compelling for the poetry used.

It is not always easy to tell what is symbolic and what is poetic.

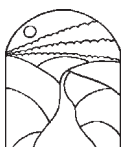
Most of the imagery of Revelation is found elsewhere in scripture. It is a good idea to

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compare these passages. However we should not automatically assume that it carries the same meaning in both place.

Compare

| | | |
|--------------------|---|-----------------|
| Revelation 4v7 | - | Ezekiel 1v10-11 |
| Revelation 4v8 | - | Isaiah 6v2-3 |
| Revelation 11v4 | - | Zechariah 4v2-4 |
| Revelation 17v3&12 | - | Daniel 7v7&24 |

Structure

One thing that Bible scholars always look for when trying to understand a book is it's internal structure. Eg Acts is structured around the geographical spread of the gospel and the two figures of Peter and Paul who dominate the first and second halves of the book.

What clues to structure are there in the book of Revelation?

| | | | |
|----------------|------------|-------------------------|------------|
| Seven letters | 1v9-3v22 | Seven plagues/bowls | 15v5-16v21 |
| Seven seals | 4v1-8v1 | Seven words | 17v1-19v10 |
| Seven Trumpets | 8v2-11v18 | Seven Visions | 19v11-21v8 |
| Seven Visions | 11v19-15v4 | Seven final revelations | 21v9-22v19 |

What does seven stand for in scripture?

One Method of interpreting Revelation divides it into seven accounts of the grace age story. The Seals, Trumpets and the Plagues are all God's Judgement on unrepentant mankind. The Question is do they happen in sequence or do they run concurrently? Ie. are they different judgements or are they three ways of describing the same Judgement?

Read Rev 6v12-14 & 16v17-21

Can you see different features of the three outpourings of wrath?

Each is a judgement on a different area. But at the same time the book builds progressively, leading to a natural climax

Another good illustration is 'Babylon the great whore', which is destroyed several times and its destruction is prophesied after the event!

Revelation 14v8, 16v19, 17v5, 18v2, 18v10, 18v21

For that matter what is Babylon? Is it a literal city in Iraq which we hear Saddam Hussein is rebuilding to his own glory? Is it, as the early church used it, a Cipher for Rome. Or does it speak of a humanistic, materialistic, Godless society?

One of the choices you have to make when you try to understand revelation is how important, how significant is the detail? Do I try to work out what everything means or do I take the overall picture of the book as its true message.

For example; do I try to identify what the seven plagues might literally be or do I understand the whole to mean God is going to judge sin.

What is the basic message of the book of Revelation?

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Warning of persecution | Link between spiritual & physical |
| warning of judgement | Heaven Rules |
| stay away from the world | Satan is defeated |
| God is working out his plan | don't panic |
| God wins in the end | God hasn't gone on holiday |
| Everything gets wrapped up nicely. | |
| We have a hope and a future. | |

What do you take away from the Book of Revelation?

Bible Studies

Revelation outline

I. PROLOGUE (1:1-20)

1. Superscription (1:1-3)
2. Salutation and Doxology (1:4-8)
3. Inaugural Vision and Commission to Write (1:9-20)

II. LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES (2:1-3:22)

1. Ephesus (2:1-7)
2. Smyrna (2:8-11)
3. Pergamum (2:12-17)
4. Thyatira (2:18-29)
5. Sardis (3:1-6)
6. Philadelphia (3:7-13)
7. Laodicea (3:14-22)

III. ADORATION IN THE COURT OF HEAVEN (4:1-5:14)

1. Worship of God as Creator (4:1-11)
2. Worship of the Lamb Who Alone Is Worthy to Open the Scroll (5:1-14)

IV. THE SEVEN SEALS (6:1-8:1)

1. First Four Seals: The Four Horsemen (6:1-8)
2. Fifth Seal: Cry of the Martyrs (6:9-11)
3. Sixth Seal: The Great Earthquake (6:12-17)

INTERLUDE: VISIONS OF SECURITY AND SALVATION (7:1-17)

- A. Sealing of God's Servants (7:1-8)
- B. Bliss of the Redeemed in Heaven (7:9-17)

V. THE SEVEN TRUMPETS (8:2-11:19)

1. Preparation (8:2-5)
2. First Four Trumpets (8:6-12)
3. Eagle's Warning (8:13)
- Fifth Trumpet (First Woe): Demonic Locusts (9:1-12)
- Sixth Trumpet (Second Woe): Fiendish Cavalry (9:13-21)

INTERLUDE: VISIONS OF THE PROPHETIC ROLE (10:1-11:14)

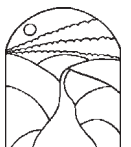
- A. The Mighty Angel and the Little Scroll (10:1-11)
- B. Measuring the Temple (11:1-2)
- C. The Two Witnesses (11:3-14)
6. Seventh Trumpet (11:15-19)

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VI. CONFLICT BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE POWERS OF EVIL

1. The Woman, Dragon, and Male Child (12:1-6)
2. War in Heaven (12:7-12)
3. War on Earth (12:13-17)
4. The Beast from the Sea (13:1-10)
5. The Beast from the Earth (13:11-18)
6. The Redeemed and the Lamb on Mt. Zion (14:1-5)

INTERLUDE: VISIONS OF FINAL JUDGMENT (14:6-20)

- Impending Judgment Announced (14:6-13)
- Harvest of the Earth (14:14-16)
- Vintage of the Earth (14:17-20)

THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES (15:1-16:21)

1. Preparation for the Bowl-Plagues (15:1-8)
2. Plagues Poured Out (16:1-21)

THE FALL OF BABYLON (17:1-19:5)

1. The Harlot and the Scarlet Beast (17:1-6)
2. Interpretation of the Harlot's Destruction (17:7-18)
3. Babylon Declared Desolate (18:1-8)
4. Lament of Kings, Merchants, and Seamen (18:9-20)
5. Babylon Destroyed (18:21-24)
6. Hymn of Vindication (19:1-5)

THE FINAL VICTORY (19:6-20:15)

1. Marriage of the Lamb Announced (19:6-10)
2. Warrior-Messiah Appears (19:11-16)
3. Antichrist and Allies Destroyed (19:17-21)
4. Satan Bound (20:1-3)
5. Millennial Reign (20:4-6)

X. THE NEW HEAVEN AND THE NEW EARTH (21:1-22:5)

1. The New Creation (21:1-8)
2. The New Jerusalem (21:9-22:5)

XI. EPILOGUE (22:6-21)

Taken from: The book of Revelation by Robert H. Mounce

Bible Studies

Adam's sons

Where did Adam and Eve's Children find their husbands and wives?

But first an irrelevant question.

For what purpose do we have the Bible?

When you sit and think about it the primary goals of the Bible are clear. God gave it to us so that we would **a)** know about him and **b)** know the way of salvation. The Bible is about how to know God and get saved, to this we could add how to live in God's will.

The Bible is not a history book although it contains (accurate) history it is not a science book though it contains (accurate) science. It is not a book on social science though it contains moral teaching.

Eg. There are many American evangelicals whose belief in democracy is part of their religion. They dearly want the Bible to teach that democracy is God ordained. The Bible doesn't because it is irrelevant to the Bible's mission.

Similarly people have found in the Bible proof that the world is flat and that it is round. Proof that earth is the centre of the universe and proof that it isn't. While the Bible does contain information about the universe (always in layman's language, eg stars that sing and a universe of immense size). Its purpose is not to explain the universe but to lead us to salvation.

People who read the Bible as a scientific text are missing the point.

Does this mean you can't read the Bible as a scientific text?

Why have I said this? No book including the Bible can contain everything. It only includes what is pertinent to its purpose.

Can you think of any examples of things the Bible does not tell us?

Most pastors would dearly love the Bible to say much more than it does about Heaven and Hell. Some people, fuelled by this frustration, have created amazing elaborations on what the Bible does say.

Do not expect the Bible to tell you everything

Do expect it to tell you what you need to know.

When you read the Bible read it for the reason it was written.

Back to Adam

What do we know?

The Bible always treats Adam and Eve as real people.

The Bible also treats Adam and Eve as symbols of mankind.

Read Genesis 4v13-17

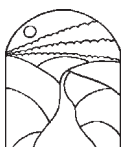
Does the Bible say there were other people on earth?

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Does the Bible say where they came from?

Where could they have come from?

What becomes clear is the extreme brevity of the account of creation and early man. When you consider that the earth has been created, mankind's origin has been explained, sin has entered the world, man has separated himself from God and we have had a whole family drama, yet the Bible has used just 1500 words (in Hebrew) to describe all this. We realise there is no way the Bible is giving us all we want to know. What is astonishing is the detail that it does include, the accuracy and logic of this detail. Every Culture has it's 'Creation Myth', Genesis is the only account that makes sense from a scientific and logical perspective.

It is my **opinion** that Adam and Eve were in the Garden much longer than the 30 years that would be sufficient to fit the events into.

The Bible does not clearly tell us where Cain got his wife! It is not something we need to know.

But lets try to answer the question anyway.

When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth. After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters.
Genesis 5:3-4

**Read *Genesis 3v20*
 *Acts 17v26***

What is the implication of these verses?

The problem is that it does not appear that Adam & Eve had more sons until after Abel's death. The very name Seth, implies a replacement for Abel. So we still don't know where these people came from.

We are left with two possibilities.

1

Other children were born to Adam and Eve prior to Abels death. Cain married his sister. Something that was latter banned in the law. Abraham married his half sister, so we know this was something that did happen. Genesis 20v12. The assumption is the problems with deformities that tend to occur were not present because the DNA were not corrupted.

It has been calculated that with the longevity of the early humans the population would have reached 2,000,000 within 6 or 7 generations.

Did you know DNA researchers agree that all people today and all DNA variation come from a very small number of original people?

2

That God created more people other than Adam and Eve as some have taken Genesis 1v27 to imply. The Bible still teaches that all life came from Adam and Eve because they are the first of the humans and the titular heads of the race. We have to be careful that we do not read more into the Scriptures than they contain.

Of these two the case for the former seems more convincing.

Bible Studies

How to receive a prophecy.

It is great that God still speaks to people today. It is great that sometimes He speaks through other people using the gift of prophecy. It is a pity it so frequently creates grief for the pastor!

Wrong prophecy or misinterpreted prophecy has been the cause much damage and poses a real danger to the church. **So when a Prophecy is given:**

1 Make sure you listen carefully.

- Make sure you do not hear what you want to hear instead of what is actually said.
- Make sure you hear the bad bits and the conditions as well as the blessing bits.
- It is a very good idea to make a note of the prophecy.
- If you are not sure about something that has been said ask.

What happens if God speaks and you are not paying attention?

What attitude does it show before God if we are not listening?

Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. 1 Thessalonians 5v19-20

- Watch out that you don't get carried away with a romantic notion just because it appeals to you.
- Realise that the first interpretation is not always the true application. You must seek God to understand what the prophecy means.

The First thing to ask is, Is this for me?

A prophecy may be given in a worship service. It may have a general application, something that applies to the Church as a whole. Or it may have an application that is specific to an individual.

Does it have to be only one individual or could it be several?

How are you going to Know if it is for you?

- Does your spirit witness to what was said?
What I mean by this is did something inside you jump (or drop)?
did you suddenly feel convicted?
Are you desperately trying to find reasons why it can't be for you?
All of these things suggest that you should pay attention.

Should you try to force every word that is given to be for you?

2 Test what has been said.

Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5v21-22

- Does it agree with Scripture
- Is it in line with your life direction.
- Is the person reliable?

Would you accept a prophecy from a total stranger?

Just because a person is reliable should you automatically accept the word?

How you judge these kind of prophecies.

God is telling you to leave your wife/husband.

You need to be witnessing about your faith.

It's time to deal with sin in your life.

You need to move house.

You need to persevere in the hard situation your in.

3 Look for conformation

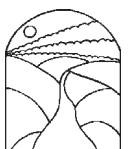
- How does this word fit in with other things that have been spoken to you?

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- Compare other prophecies and see if there is a common theme.
“Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” 2 Corinthians 13:1

What does this verse mean?

- Ask your Pastor or someone who is mature in spiritual things for their opinion. Find out what they think.
- 8 Do not ask everyone you can think of until someone says what you want to hear!

4 Think very carefully about the implications.

Often we acknowledge that a word is for us but then we stop. We are happy with ourselves and feel really good that we correctly discerned prophecy. But we have in reality only just started. Something will need to change because of the prophecy. At least you may have to change the way you view yourself or God. What Good is a prophecy telling you that God loves you if in your mind you continue to think of God as distant and uncaring?

Very often there will be practical things that have to change in your life.

- What conditions were there in the prophecy?
- What must you do to fulfil them?

Key Question: what has got to change in my life as a result of this prophecy?

6 Claim your promise

If the word spoken is for you then accept it. Pray for it's fulfilment. Watch for it's fulfilment. Don't doubt, live in faith. Take it into your life.

7 Remember.

Prophecies is very rarely given for today only. Most of the them will have ongoing effects for years. You must hold on to them. Write them down somewhere accessible.

8 Be very careful of directive prophecy

Directive prophecy is when some one comes to you and says “God says you need to quit your Job and live by faith” or “God says stop taking your medicine because God will heal you”. People mean well but the results can be disastrous.

- Directive prophecy is very dangerous.
- The general rule is reject it.
- The exception is when it confirms something God has already said.

On very rare occasions directive prophecy will come first and be confirmed latter. God knows you. Unless there is an overwhelming reason, He will speak directly to you. Never act until it is confirmed. Even then err on the side of caution. Do not act unless you are absolutely sure. Get wise counsel.

Should we do everything that others tell us is from the Lord?

The classic story Read 1 kings 13v1-3, 7-9, 14-24

Acting on the Prophecy.

Sometimes all you have to do is start doing what you were told. If God said be more bold, then you need to start being more bold, not waiting for God to pour out a Spirit of Boldness upon you.

- Ask God what the next step is for you to take.
- Other things require us to be patient to wait for God to bring them about. Abraham was a good example. God gave him a promise. His wife figured out the best way to do it. Abraham did what he was told. His wife got angry and Ishmael the counterfeit got born.

If God gives you a promise will it irrevocably be fulfilled?

I believe that God is calling you to be a pastor

What do you do now?

Bible Studies

John 3v16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

This has got to be the best known verse in the Bible.

Why do you think that is?

It is said familiarity breeds contempt. Is it possible that because we know this verse so well we miss it's beauty and significance?

Imagine you are going to preach on this verse.

What is the context this verse is written in?

Have you read the passage?

Who was Jesus talking to?

What was the subject of their conversation?

What was the biggest thing that stopped this man being born again?

Why did Jesus say these words at this time?

There are four direct things this verse tells us, they are:

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What is the dividing line between perishing and having eternal life?

How do verses 17 and 18 relate to verse 16?

How much of verses 17 and 18 echoes verse 16?

What was God's Goal in sending his son into the world?

What preconception about religion is He keen to avoid?

What do you think is the most important thing about this verse?

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Will you need to define what it means to believe?

What other verses do you know that speak about

Being saved through believing?

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Not intending to condemn the world?

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God loving the world?

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Why did Jesus say these words at this time?

There are four direct things this verse tells us, they are:

God loves the world

God sent his Son

Salvation is through believing

We can have eternal life

What is the dividing line between perishing and having eternal life?

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What preconception about religion is He keen to avoid?

What do you think is the most important thing about this verse?

Will you need to define what it means to believe?

What other verses do you know that speak about

Being saved through believing?

Rom 10:10; Rom 4:24;

Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8

Not intending to condemn the world?

2 Pet 3:9; 1 Tim 2:4

God loving the world?

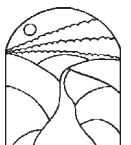
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Bible Studies

Philippians

We are going to do a verse by verse study of Philippians. The object of this study is not just to understand what Paul writes but also to help us to read the Bible better.

The opening of the letter contains the elements you expect of an Epistle, (from, to grace, prayer).

What three groups does Paul identify in Philippi? v1
Who were each of these groups?

How did the Gospel come to Philippi? Acts 16v11-40
Was it a long visit or a short one?
How did they leave?

Most people believe this letter was written from Rome at the end of Paul's time in prison. If so Paul is writing 12 to 15 years after he briefly visited them.



Philippians 1v3-9

What does v3-4 tell us about Paul's prayer life?

Paul's letters are occasional, He had reasons for writing them, he eludes to three reasons in this next paragraph.



What gave Paul Joy?

What was the Philippians 'partnership in the Gospel'? 4v15

Why was Paul writing? 4v18

What partnership in the Gospel are we involved in?

being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6



What does this verse mean?

What is the Good Work began?

What is the completion?

How does this apply to us?

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy— Jude 1:24

Why was Paul writing?

How does Paul's prayer in v9-11 fit with verse 6?

What does he pray for

Why do we need these things?

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The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. Isa 32:17



Philippians 1v 7-8

Where was Paul when he wrote Philippians?



Why did he write to them?

How did Paul see his imprisonment? V12

What two results did he see from it?

Paul saw everything that happened to him as an opportunity for the advancement of the Gospel. He really believed what he wrote in Romans;

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. Rom 8:28

He also believed in;

making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Eph 5:16



Philippians 1v15-18

What are the two ways that people preach the Gospel?

What was the difference between the two groups?

Was the problem with their message or their motivation?

Are motives important?

Why did some people want to stir up trouble for Paul? 3v2

What wrong motives do people preach the Gospel today?

Does this stop God using them?

What does this passage teach us about accepting other churches?



Philippians 1v19-26

What is Paul discussing in this section?

What two outcomes does he foresee?

How can he be so philosophical about the idea of death?

What did happen?

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Philippians 1:21

What does it mean?

What would the result of his continued ministry be?

What would the result of his death be?



Philippians 1v27-30

What does Paul mean “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel”?

What three things does he identify with this?

This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.

Philippians 1:28

Perhaps there is an echo here of Christ’s words; “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:35, or maybe it was the courage they showed in the face of persecution.

What did the sign mean to believers and unbelievers? 2 Cor 2:16

How does Paul see suffering? Rom 8:17-18, Phil 3:10, 1 Pet 2:21

To what does Paul’s own reference to suffering refer? 1 Thes 2:2

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(Missions, God, Church)

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Love

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discernment

pure and blameless

Fruit of Righteousness

Why do we need these things?

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What would the result of his death be?



Philippians 1v27-30

What does Paul mean “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel”?

What three things does he identify with this?

Stand firm in one spirit

Contending as one man for the faith of the Gospel

Without fear despite those who oppose

This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. Philippians 1:28

Perhaps there is an echo here of Christ’s words; “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:35, or maybe it was the courage they showed in the face of persecution.

What did the sign mean to believers and unbelievers? 2 Cor 2:16

How does Paul see suffering? Rom 8:17-18, Phil 3:10, 1 Pet 2:21

To what does Paul’s own reference to suffering refer? 1 Thes 2:2

Bible Studies

Philippians IIa



Read Philippians 2v1-11

Paul's Greek is not generally held to be an outstanding example of the language, Shakespeare he was not. But from time to time he can turn a phrase that strikes the heart. This is one such passage.

What does Paul invoke?

What are these things?

The Greek word translated 'if' does not imply that there is any doubt about these things. I could be translated 'since'.

What point is Paul making?

What he is saying is if being a Christian has had any effect in your life, if it hasn't been in vain then....

What does Paul call for?

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When we read a passage like this we always ask why did Paul write this, or what was the reason Paul needed to write this? We can only assume these were things that were contested in Philippi.

Do you think these two sets of four connect together in any way?

At the very least Paul is saying *if these are the things you have received from God should they not effect the way you treat each other?*

The NIV fails to translate the First Greek word of this chapter, it is 'Therefore'.

What connection does therefore imply between chapter 1 and 2?

It is clear that Paul is saying what he's saying because of what he has just said.

So what is it in chapter 1 that prompts him to make this appeal?

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Philippians 2:3-4

Judging from these verses what is the problem among the Philippians?

Paraphrase what Paul is saying.



How should Christians behave?

Based on these verses

How do you need to change?

How does the Church need to change?

Is it wrong to look to your own interests?

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Philippians 2v5

Paul is about to tell us what Christ's attitude was. He has already given us some fairly broad hints

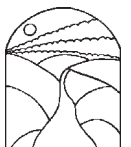
Why does Paul say our attitude not our actions?

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It has long been suggested that this next section was not written by Paul but was in fact part of an early church hymn/poem/creed. This is possible but there is no hard evidence, nor is there any reason Paul could not have written it.

1 Timothy 3v16 could be another example of this.

If so what does it tell us of the early church?

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

What does this verse tell us about Jesus?



but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

What does this verse tell us about Jesus?

Made himself nothing translated literally is emptied himself

Of what did Jesus empty himself?

What did he not empty himself of?

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

What does this verse tell us about Jesus?

Why does it say ‘even death on a cross?’

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, *10* that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, *11* and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.



Is Christ’s exaltation past or future? What occasioned it?

Are verses 10-11 past present or future?

A clear fulfilment of this is found in Revelation chapter 5v13

What do heaven, earth and under the earth represent?

What is the final outcome of Jesus exaltation?

These verses describe three periods of Christ’s existence what are they?

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What marks each period?

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich. 2 Corinthians 8:9

These Verses describe two states of existence what are they?

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This is sometimes called the hypostatic union. That during his time on earth Christ existed both as man and God without compromising or diluting either (he was wholly God and wholly man). Or dividing the two, (Scripture does not assign Jesus miracles to his deity and his normal life to His humanity). All that it is to be God Jesus is, All it was to be human Jesus was. This is a mystery.

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, Colossians 1:19

As is so often the case, while we study a passage like this to understand what it can tell us about Christ, such theology was incidental to Paul’s purpose. (he did not write this to explain who Jesus is, that is just a by-product.)

What is the point Paul wants to make?

What does this tell us of the road to glory? For Christ and us.

Was Jesus aware of this?

Matthew 20:28; Matthew 23:11-12

If Christ emptied himself to serve what do I need to empty myself of?

Bible Studies

Philippians 1a



Read Philippians 2v1-11

Paul's Greek is not generally held to be an outstanding example of the language, Shakespeare he was not. But from time to time he can turn a phrase that strikes the heart. This is one such passage.

What does Paul invoke?

encouragement from being united with Christ,

comfort from his love,

fellowship with the Spirit,

if any tenderness and compassion,

What are these things?

The Greek word translated 'if' does not imply that there is any doubt about these things. I could be translated 'since'.

What point is Paul making?

What he is saying is if being a Christian has had any effect in your life, if it hasn't been in vain then....

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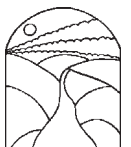
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Bible Studies

Philippians IIb

It is hardly surprising that following such an emotive and powerful passage as 2v5-11 Paul should wish to push home his point. If this is how Christ acted, if this is who Christ is then this is what we should do...



Read Philippians 2v12-18

This passage suffers from two problems, firstly an obvious but persistent misinterpretation, and secondly that it is usually divorced from its context.

Should we act differently according to who is around?

Who is Paul calling the Philippians to obey?

Has there been any other reference to obedience in Philippians?

Paul certainly expected the Churches to obey not only what he taught them face to face but also what he wrote to them. *2 Thessalonians 3:14*. It seems to have been his practice to appeal rather than order. *Philemon v8-9*.

Should we obey our leaders? Hebrews 13v7

It seems more likely that Paul is calling us to be obedient the same way Christ was obedient, not only in action but in attitude. Paul likes to use phrases like; obeying the teaching, Romans 6:17, obeying the truth, Galatians 5:7, obeying the gospel, 2 Thessalonians 1:8. He very clearly proclaimed that the Gospel he preached did not originate with him.

What things might he have been calling the Philippians to obedience in?

continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, *Philippians 2:12*

Is Paul suggesting that salvation is obtained by working? *Ephesians 2v8-9*

When is salvation?

Eph 2:5, 2 Tim 1:9

1 Cor 1:18, 2 Cor 2:15

Rom 13:11, Heb 9:28, 1 Pet 1:5

Salvation has three aspects, yet it is a whole, each aspect applies to us, we have been saved, we are being saved and when we meet Christ we are going to be saved.



Do you see a conflict in this?

Which aspect of Salvation is Paul talking about in Philippians 2v12?

So what does he mean by work out your salvation?

I think he means mature in your faith. - Let this salvation permeate though your whole being. - Let the effect of salvation be seen in you. - Act in accordance with your salvation.

Which is the best meaning: work for, work at, out work?

Does fear and trembling suggest that we should be scared that we might loose such a great Gift?

We can if we deliberately turn our backs on God, but that is not the point Paul is making, rather that the awesome example of Christ and the cost of our salvation should motivate our behaviour.

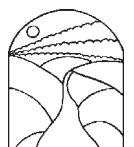
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That God will enable us to work out our salvation.

That in our action God will achieve His purpose.

We do not have to do anything because God will do it all.



This verse is a great comfort to me. It assures me that God will be working through and despite my feeble efforts. Someone pointed out you can only out work when God works in.

Do everything without complaining or arguing, Philippians 2:14

Read Exodus 16v7-9; Numbers 11v1 (1 Cor 10v10, James 5v9, Jude v16)

Again Jesus is the example - he went to the cross without a single complaint.

Were the Philippians grumbling against God or each other?

What is the Result of Grumbling going to be? Against God Against each other?

What is the point of the shine like stars metaphor? 2v15

Stars can be translated "light bearers" or "Light givers", this we can only be when we hold out for the word of truth. There is no place for compromise.

The grammar of verse 17 is difficult in the English.

To what does Paul liken himself and why?

This he seems to feel is a natural requirement of those who preach the gospel. If he is suffering it is because of the Philippians faith, ie it is because of the gospel.

Why should the Philippians be glad and rejoice? 2v18



Timothy

Why is Paul Going to send Timothy to Philippi? Two reasons v19 & v23

Is there a third reason?

What does this passage tell us about Timothy?

I hope in the Lord v19&24 is more than Paul's usually habit of tying everything he does into Jesus. This is the only place he uses it in a travelogue. It implies that he is uncertain of the out come of his imprisonment but that he knows that the outcome will be Christ's will. Yet not knowing God's will he still goes on to give plans for the future.

What does this tell us about the way Paul took his guidance? cf Acts 16v6-10

Paul knew God's general will for him, Acts 9v15, he did not wait to know if a specific step was exactly what God wanted, he did trust God to direct him.

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Epaphroditus

Epaphroditus was probably the man who had brought the gift from Philippi to Paul. It seems that the Philippians had intended he stay with Paul permanently (the word send '**back**' is not in the Greek). However Paul thinks it is best that he return, he is probably carrying this letter.

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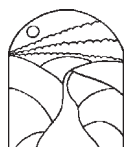
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Is there a third reason?

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Stands out - takes a genuine interest

He looks to the interest's of Christ not himself CF 2v4

He has proven himself trust worthy

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Perhaps Epaphroditus is unsure what kind of a reception he will receive, will they think he has failed or let them down?

How does Paul describe him?

My brother, Fellow worker, Fellow soldier, almost died for the work of Christ risked his life. (exposed himself to danger)

How are they to receive him?

Welcome - Great Joy - Honour

Why does he need to go back?

Ill, longs for the Philippians, I think Paul feels he is in the wrong place - thats why he is anxious.

Does this passage tell us anything about how we should treat missionaries?

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Bible Studies

Philippians IIIa



Read Philippians 3v1-4a

When Paul says 'it is no trouble for me to write the same thing again', or 'I do not hesitate to write the same thing'. It is unclear whether he is referring to Rejoicing or what comes next.

In what way could rejoicing be a safeguard?

Paul uses some strong language in these next verses. To grasp the warning he is giving we must understand a little of one of the first century churches biggest problems.



Read Acts 15v1-3

There were a group of people called the Judaizers. They believed that if gentiles wanted to believe in a Jewish Messiah and be included in a Salvation extended to the Jews, they should first become Jewish. This would mean they had to convert to Judaism, be circumcised and keep the law, if they wanted to be saved. Paul taught that salvation came by faith in Jesus to all, irrespective of nationality; it could not be obtained by keeping the law, because no one Jew or gentile could obey the law perfectly.

These Judaizers regularly visited the Churches Paul had planted to 'correct' his teaching. This brought great confusion to the new converts, first they are told all they have to do is believe, then along come these very persuasive people appearing to have the authority of the Jerusalem church behind them telling them they must be circumcised and obey many obscure laws.

In Acts 15 the leaders of the church meet to discuss this issue. Paul's position, (the one we still hold today) was vindicated. This did not stop the Judaizers.

This problem is seen most clearly in the Epistle to the Galatians. This Book was written to counter a visit by the Judaizers.

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!
Galatians 1:6-8 Galatians 3v1-5 & Galatians 5v1-12

Paul felt passionately about this. The very basis of the Gospel was being threatened.



What was the warning Paul was giving to the Philippians?

Why was it so important?

Do people still try to add conditions to the Gospel?

Circumcision could mean three things;

It symbolised of doing away with the old nature. (Similar to Baptism) thus Paul often talks of circumcision of the heart.

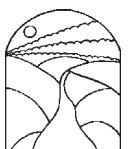
It was the sign of the Covenant with Abraham. To be Circumcised was to be part of the Jewish people.

It was used as a summary for keeping the law as a way of being saved. Ie to be circumcised was to keep the law.

Which of these do you think Paul had a problem with?

Did Paul think Circumcision was wrong? Acts 16:3

When Paul says we are the circumcision which meaning is he thinking of?



When he says we worship by the Spirit, he clearly has Jesus words in **John 4v24** in mind.

Is Paul's context similar to that of Jesus?

What does Glory in Christ Jesus mean?

I think 'Glory in Christ Jesus' means rely exclusively in him for salvation.

What does put confidence in the flesh mean?

Paul goes on to explain that if anyone stands to be saved other than by faith in Jesus it is him.

What does Paul have going for him? V4-6

As for Legalistic righteousness faultless.

Does this mean that Paul never sinned?

What does it mean?

I think Paul is saying that he had kept the law as much as possible, No one could find fault in him or claim to have kept the law better than him. He was the best there was.

Besides there is a big difference between outward and inward compliance.



How does Paul rate all of his inherent advantages?

Instead what is his greatest privilege?

What are Paul's Goals?

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What does Paul mean by 'Gain Christ' and 'Be found in Christ'?

I think Paul means to be relying on Christ.

What is the difference between a righteousness by faith and one by the law? Romans 3:20-21, 4v3-6

In fact Righteousness by faith is the only true righteousness. Gal 2:21, 3:21, Eph 4:24

What does he mean by the power of his resurrection?

Romans 6:4, Colossians 3:1, Ephesians 2:5-6

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Romans 8:11

Perhaps Paul means the effects of the Resurrection, not only that it vindicated Jesus identity and work but also as he says in Romans 4v25. He was raised to life for our Justification.

Why on earth does he want to fellowship in Christ sufferings?

Suffering was an accepted part of the Christian walk in Paul's day. 2 Timothy 3:12.

Paul was not a masochist, he did not want to suffer, nor did he see his sufferings as being redemptive. But he knew that remaining true to his convictions was inevitably going to bring suffering. This he did not shrink back from but embraced.

What does he mean to become like him in his death?

1 Corinthians 15:31, Romans 6:4-8, Colossians 2:20.



What Resurrection does he mean?

Is he doubting that he will in fact be resurrected?

No, Paul is not doubting this, rather he is expressing his amazement that God should extend to the likes of us, unworthy as we are, such a gift as eternal life.

Bible Studies

Philippians IIIa



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In Acts 15 the leaders of the church meet to discuss this issue. Paul's position, (the one we still hold today) was vindicated. This did not stop the Judaizers.

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I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—⁷which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!
Galatians 1:6-8 Galatians 3v1-5 & Galatians 5v1-12

Paul felt passionately about this. The very basis of the Gospel was being threatened.



What was the warning Paul was giving to the Philippians?

Why was it so important?

Do people still try to add conditions to the Gospel?

Circumcision could mean three things;

It symbolised of doing away with the old nature. (Similar to Baptism) thus Paul often talks of circumcision of the heart.

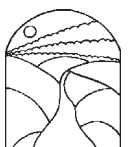
It was the sign of the Covenant with Abraham. To be Circumcised was to be part of the Jewish people.

It was used as a summary for keeping the law as a way of being saved. Ie to be circumcised was to keep the law.

Which of these do you think Paul had a problem with?

Did Paul think Circumcision was wrong? Acts 16:3

When Paul says we are the circumcision which meaning is he thinking of?



When he says we worship by the Spirit, he clearly has Jesus words in **John 4v24** in mind.

Is Paul's context similar to that of Jesus?

What does Glory in Christ Jesus mean?

I think 'Glory in Christ Jesus' means rely exclusively in him for salvation.

What does put confidence in the flesh mean?

Paul goes on to explain that if anyone stands to be saved other than by faith in Jesus it is him.

What does Paul have going for him? V4-6

As for Legalistic righteousness faultless.

Does this mean that Paul never sinned?

What does it mean?

I think Paul is saying that he had kept the law as much as possible, No one could find fault in him or claim to have kept the law better than him. He was the best there was.

Besides there is a big difference between outward and inward compliance.



**How does Paul rate all of his inherent advantages?
Instead what is his greatest privilege?**

What are Paul's Goals?

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Gain Christ | Be found in Christ |
| To have a righteousness by faith | To Know Christ |
| power of his resurrection | fellowship of his suffering |
| Become like him in his death | attain to the resurrection |

What does Paul mean by 'Gain Christ' and 'Be found in Christ'?

I think Paul means to be relying on Christ.

What is the difference between a righteousness by faith and one by the law? Romans 3:20-21, 4v3-6

In fact Righteousness by faith is the only true righteousness. Gal 2:21, 3:21, Eph 4:24

What does he mean by the power of his resurrection?

Romans 6:4, Colossians 3:1, Ephesians 2:5-6

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you. Romans 8:11

Perhaps Paul means the effects of the Resurrection, not only that it vindicated Jesus identity and work but also as he says in Romans 4v25. He was raised to life for our Justification.

Why on earth does he want to fellowship in Christ sufferings?

Suffering was an accepted part of the Christian walk in Paul's day. 2 Timothy 3:12.

Paul was not a masochist, he did not want to suffer, nor did he see his sufferings as being redemptive. But he knew that remaining true to his convictions was inevitably going to bring suffering. This he did not shrink back from but embraced.

What does he mean to become like him in his death?

1 Corinthians 15:31, Romans 6:4-8, Colossians 2:20.



What Resurrection does he mean?

Is he doubting that he will in fact be resurrected?

No, Paul is not doubting this, rather he is expressing his amazement that God should extend to the likes of us, unworthy as we are, such a gift as eternal life.

Bible Studies

Philippians IIIb



Read Philippians 3:12-16

What has Paul not yet obtained?

It is significant to note that Paul writes this as a mature believer. He has been saved c25 years. Philippians is one of his later epistles.



What does he mean when he says 'Christ took hold of me'?

Read Acts 26:12-18

What did Christ take hold of Paul for?

How did Paul respond? 3v12

Christ has taken hold of us too, we must respond, we must press on to take hold of our God given callings and duties.

What sort of things might these be?

This was not a one-time thing; Paul having already achieved all that could be expected of him, is still intent to press on. This must be our attitude, we cannot become complacent.

Verses like this give us an insight into Paul's character. When he was saved he went all out for Jesus. Serving Jesus became his passion, his obsession, it filled every part of his life. There was no compromise, no quitting, no slowing down, he just had to get on with his calling. You get the impression that he was unable to understand anyone who took their faith less seriously. One might almost call him a fanatic!

What about you?

Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, Philippians 3:13

What is behind?

Past, achievements, failures, sins, mistakes, bitterness, unfor-

givenness, hurts, habits, pride, temper, doubts, fears,

disappointments, jealousy-envy, weight of your work for

Christ, disobedience, holding out, faithlessness, law Judaism,

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Why do we need to leave these things behind?

What is ahead?

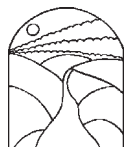
New Work, growth Jesus, perfection, spirituality, sanctifica-

tion, pain suffering

What is Paul's goal and prize?

His reward in heaven, completion of his work,

the fathers 'well done', achieving God's will.



All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. Philippians 3:15

***Is Paul calling on people to have the same theology as him or the same attitude?
What attitude should we have?***

Paul is not going to harangue those who do not share his commitment and motivation, they are in God's hands. However in verse 17 he does call on people to follow his example.

Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Philippians 3:16

What do you think this verse means?

Most of us have a level of knowledge and maturity in the Lord. It is our habit to live below this level. I.e. we know it is wrong to grumble but we still do. Or, we have seen miraculous answers to prayer but that does not stop us doubting next time we face a challenge.



Read Philippians 3v17- 4v1

What does Paul say here to indicate that there is a distinctive Christian lifestyle?

There is a tendency among Pastor to expect every Christian to live just like them. If they think going to a football match is wrong, then so should everyone else.

Do you think this is the kind of pattern Paul has in mind?

I expect it did contain a fair number of do's and don'ts, young believers especially need clear guidelines until they 'discern what is best'. But I think Paul's pattern had more to do with, love and humility, holiness and reaching out.

Verses 18 to 20 describe two different, contradictory lifestyles. The first is a materialistic, humanistic view.

How does Paul describe them?

Enemies of the Cross

Destined for destruction

Their God is their stomach

Their glory is their shame

Their minds are on earthly things

What do these things mean?

How does this contrast with the Christian view?

Who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, Philippians 3:21a

Ephesians 1v22

Colossians 1v17

1 Corinthians 15:25

Will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Philippians 3:21b

1 Corinthians 15v42-44

Colossians 3v4

1 John 3v2

Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends! Philippians 4:1

How should we stand firm?

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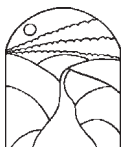
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Bible Studies

Philippians IV



Read Philippians 4v2-5

It has been speculated that Euodia and Syntyche were among the first converts in Philippi. Since they are described as having contended at Paul's side for the gospel, we assume these women were active in the church, if not part of the leadership.

Shock horror they've had a row! It is disconcerting to discover that the problems that are so prevalent in the church today, were found in the NT church as well.

What are Paul's two solutions to this problem?

Even mature believers can fall out.

What effects are likely when two believers fall out?

In all churches of all time people have disagreed on a whole range of things, some of these are doctrinal issues of such importance that to compromise is to deny faith.

Most of the time the issues argued over are of little importance, they might be to do **with priorities or even personalities.**

Do we have to agree about everything?

In such disagreements what is important?

What is the Book of Life? Exodus 32:33, Revelation 3:5, 20:15

Rejoice! is one of the themes of this book, it was also a theme in Paul's life.

What should we rejoice about?

Why should we rejoice?

What does Paul mean by:

Let your gentleness be evident to all mean?

The Lord is near?

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7



What is Paul's solution to anxiety?

When does the peace of God guard your heart and mind?

Is there a difference between prayer and petition?

Why should requests be offered with thanksgiving?

Verses like these hold no secrets and present to no difficulty in understanding. The problem is putting them into practice.

How should you put a verse like this into practice?

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:8-9

What sort of things is Paul talking about?

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You can look at this verse negatively.

**What sort of things does Paul not want us to think about? V19b, Rom 13:14
Why?**

This was presumably one of the things Paul taught them.

Paul is calling us to direct our thinking towards things that are positive, away from the negative. I do not believe Paul was advocating positive thinking as such. Ignoring the negative is not a Biblical trait. Paul is calling for a 'Cognitive therapy'. If we dwell on the negative it is likely to lead us to unbelief and unhappiness. Conversely if we dwell on the positive, specifically God and his promises it will build faith.

There is also a timely reminder that the Christian faith needs to be put into practice. It is not a question of knowledge, but action. As Jesus said it is not those who hear the word who are blessed but those who do it.



Read Philippians 4v10-23

This section, which closes the epistle is Paul's thank you note for the gift the Philippians had sent him. It also contains two of the Bible's great promises.

I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Philippians 4:13

Did Paul need the Philippians gift?

To what does Paul intend this verse to apply?

How did Paul's attitude change according to his physical provision?

What is the secret of being content?

What should our attitude be when in want?

What would stop Paul from doing God's will?

What does this verse say to those proclaim "I Can't...?"

Can you do everything in your own strength?

Do you believe this Verse?

It is very easy to equate want, with being out of God's will, and abundance, with God's blessing upon us. But this is too simplistic a theology. Paul did not seem to feel that the trials he faced were God's opposition to him, just part of serving God. His own well-being really didn't seem to matter too much to Paul. The danger is that prosperity too often brings with it greed and spiritual stagnation.



What does Paul mean by 'giving and receiving'?

How does Paul describe the Philippians gift? v18b

What does this tell us about giving?

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19

In what context does Paul write this?

What kind of needs is he referring to? (what are our needs?)

By what is God's generosity measured?

How does God meet our needs?

Who evaluates what are needs are?

Do you believe this verse?

The word and (or but) at the start of this verse, suggests that the Philippians gift to Paul was at their own impoverishment.

What things did Jesus tell us about giving to others?

Matthew 6v2, Matthew 25v40, Luke 6v38, Mark 9v42

In both of these verses Paul is not just making ideal promises. These verses were Paul's own experience in serving God.

To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Philippians 4:20

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Agree in the Lord

He pleads on his yoke fellow to intercede

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Bible Studies

What is Pride?

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” 1 Peter 5v5, James 4v6, Proverbs 3v34

Most of us are aware of the above verse. We do not like to think that we may suffer from pride or put ourselves in opposition to God. But pride is one of those sins that hides itself deep within us only to emerge at the most unexpected times and unexpected places.

We normally associate pride as a sin of the rich, powerful and famous.

Is it exclusively their domain?

How would you define pride?

Read Proverbs 11v2, 13v10, 16v18, 29v23, 18v12

The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished. Proverbs 16:5

Some Examples:



Uzziah Read 2 Chronicles 26v16-19

How did Uzziah's pride manifest itself?

What was Uzziah's Problem?

To associate King Uzziah's pride with his entrance to the temple is to miss the point. It was the crowning act of a process. Uzziah started his reign at the age of 16 reliant on God. As the years passed, he became more powerful and no longer needed God's help so obviously. He started to rely on his own abilities and his attitude towards God changed. It was this that led to such a reckless act and such dramatic punishment.

Can you see how this kind of process could lead a Christian into pride?



Hezekiah Read 2 Chronicles 32v24-26

How does the Bible describe Hezekiah's pride?

The full account of this incident is given in 2 Kings 20 and Isaiah 38. The sign was that King Hezekiah would be healed. At this time Hezekiah clearly humbled himself. But the sign also proclaimed that he would live a further 15 years, during these years Hezekiah hardened his heart to the Lord. His pride made him unresponsive to God.

Based on this why do you think God hates pride so much?



Nebuchadnezzar Read Daniel 4v28-32

What was Nebuchadnezzar's failing.

It has often been said the main problem with Nebuchadnezzar's speech was the frequent use of the word 'My'. Babylon was a great city and Nebuchadnezzar was a great king. He failed to see God in his success, and God, even though he was a pagan king, punished him with insanity, until he should recognise God's sovereignty.

Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just. And those who walk in pride he is able to humble. Daniel 4:37

Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. Proverbs 3:7

Strong self sufficiency is one factor that makes it so hard for the rich to enter the kingdom.

In his pride the wicked does not seek him; in all his thoughts there is no room for God. Psalms 10:4

What should our response be when we are successful? Isaiah 26:12

The Bible says, "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord." 2 Cor 10:17. We must be careful that when God gives us the privilege of doing something for Him, we don't try in any way to take the credit ourselves. Isaiah 42:8



Naaman Read 2 kings 5v9-14

Naaman had leprosy and went to Elijah to be healed.

What stopped Naaman from obeying Elijah's command?

Could it really be that Naaman would rather be sick than do something beneath him?

Could it be that Elijah deliberately chose something he knew would offend Naaman?

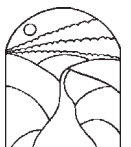
You might say it offended Naaman's pride.

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**What might God call you to do that offends your pride?
How would you respond?**

An example of this is Salvation, God chose a method of Salvation that requires us to rely exclusively on Him and not ourselves. It is humbling to kneel at the Cross.

Uzziah's pride led him to become unfaithful. Hezekiah's pride led him to become ungrateful.
Nebuchadnezzar's pride led him to ignore God. Naaman's pride nearly stopped him receiving from God.

What did pride do in these passages?

Obediah v3

Deuteronomy 8v14

Four Types of Pride.

1 Pride is > Thinking yourself better than other people.

This is the pride that makes self out to be the greatest.

This is the pride that says this person or job is beneath me.

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Romans 12:16

This pride might show itself by always looking for faults in others.

2 Pride is > Thinking yourself Self-sufficient.

It says; I don't need God, I can make it by myself. I did it my way!

It refuses to humbly obey God. It says I know better than other / God.

Is refusing to accept help that you need from someone else a kind of pride?

3 Pride is > Exalting Self

Claiming the Glory for what I achieved through my skill & ability.

It takes for granted the things that God freely gives.

It forgets that all we have is from Him anyway, Yes even our abilities.

What did Paul say about this? 1 Corinthians 4v7

4 Pride is > Wanting to look good in front of other people.

Wanting them to praise us and acknowledge us. Wanting them to see how good we are. Or alternatively not wanting to look inferior!

Does it matter what others think of us?

What was Jesus attitude to this? Matthew 6v2-4

Pride is; arrogance, conceit, self-sufficiency, self centredness, self exaltation.

Pride is also what we use to protect ourselves, even in a lowly position. Someone in need, it might not take a gift, because it offends them, "I've still got my pride."

What would James say about this? James 1v9-10

What is the opposite of pride?

The humble are those who recognise their insufficiency, are conscious of their created status and absolute dependence upon Almighty God, and are willing to receive from Him and Him alone all that is necessary for their salvation. Tasker

Is pride always wrong?

Paul took pride in his Churches, 2 Cor 7v4, I am intensely proud of this Church. Clearly there are some things we should be proud of, Our kids, Our parents. Prov 17:6

When does this pride become a sin?

Is self abasement the same as humility?

Is it wrong to acknowledge when you have done well?

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Romans 12:3

Most of us should take this verse as a rebuke, not because we think too highly of ourselves, but because we think too lowly of ourselves.

Pride is one of those things that effectively stops God from moving in our lives. That is why God hates it!

Our Response: Be on the watch for pride in your life.
Repent of proud attitudes.

Bible Studies

Why do we meet on Sunday?

Read Exodus 20v8-11

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Exodus 20:8

This is the 4th of the 10 commandments. It is also the one with the longest explanation. Deut 5v12

“There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the LORD. Leviticus 23:3

What Day is the Sabbath day?

What Four things does God command regarding the Sabbath?

Remember / observe

Keep holy

Do no work

Leviticus 23:3

sacred assembly.

What reason did God give for setting it apart?

How does this reason effect us today?

The word Sabbath comes from the Hebrew word for rest.

The Sabbath day had another more significant meaning.

What was it? Exodus 31v14-17

The Sabbath was the sign of the covenant God made with the people at Sinai.

Circumcision was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant and water baptism seems to be the New Covenant sign. To fail to keep the Sabbath was cut yourself off from God's covenant. This was why violating the Sabbath was so serious.

What happened to the man who gathered wood of the Sabbath? Num15v32-36

How does this reason effect us today?

Many people suppose that the Sabbath day is Sunday. When issues like Sunday trading arise we usually use OT passages such as the above ones to promote our case. In fact the Seventh day is Saturday. Sunday is in reality the First day of the week. So why do we meet on Sunday?

References to Sunday in the New Testament?

What happened on these days?

Matthew 28v1

1 Corinthians 16v2

Acts 20v7

Revelation 1v10

Do any of these passages suggest that the early church met on Sundays?

Obviously they did, but none of these passages identify it as the day of worship. The communion service (breaking of bread) often seems to have been on a Sundays.

The church that modelled it's worship closely on the synagogue generally it met on Saturdays. All the early documentation strongly suggests that Saturday, in keeping with the Old Testament, was the major day of worship for Christians.

Does the New Testament instruct us to worship on Sunday?

Does it prohibit worship on a Sunday?

NB it was only in the first century that Rome adopted the seven day week.

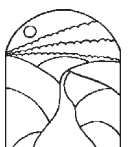
Sunday is so named because it was the day the sun was worshipped. Saturn was worshiped on Saturday. The Romans held Sunday to be the most important day.

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When Did it Change?

The change seems to have occurred as late as 135 AD. This is the date of the second Jewish revolt under Bar Kokva. The emperor Hadrian laid siege Jerusalem, when he had taken the city he barred Jews and Jewish-Christians from the city, he also instigated strong laws against the Jew, notably banning circumcision and worship on Saturdays. The Church was included in this ban. It was the Romans who forced Christians to meet on a Sunday.

Could they have continued to meet on a Saturday?

Why didn't they?

At the time the Church wanted to disassociate itself from the Jewish synagogue, a wave of anti-Semitism swept through the Church. The Church seems to have adopted Sunday worship enthusiastically, taking steps to discourage Sabbath worship e.g. making Saturday a fast day. It is regrettable that the Church eradicated so much of its Jewish heritage only to adopt a pagan one in its place.

This desire to cast off Judaism predated Hadrian. The earliest reference to Sunday as a worship day is found in **Ignatius** to the Magnesians :9 (c115AD) "No longer observing Sabbaths but fashioning their lives after the Lord's day." He identifies the Lord's day with the day Jesus rose from the grave. The context here shows the reason clearly to be separation from Judaism.

Epistle of **Barnabas** 18:8 (c135). Expounds the day=1000 years view of the Lord's return and then says. "I will make the beginning of the eighth day which is the beginning of another world, wherefore also we keep the eighth day for rejoicing in the which also Jesus rose from the dead."

Both Barnabas and Justin (1 Apology 67) give the resurrection as only the second reason for worshipping on Sunday. Justin's first reason was "because it is the first day on which God, transforming the darkness and prime matter, created the world".

It was finally the Emperor Constantine (321 AD, the first Christian Roman Emperor) who declared Sunday the only day of worship.

Does it matter?

I think you will agree that the reasons for change were less than wholesome. The question is does it matter? Should we like the Seventh Day Adventist, change back?

The reason the Sabbath was so holy was that it was a sign of the Sinai Covenant. To not keep Sabbath was to break the Covenant. But we live under a New Covenant and keeping Sabbath is not the sign of our covenant. Therefore it does not have the same burning significance for us.

Romans 14v5-6, Colossians 2v16, Galatians 4v10

There are a variety of ways these verses can be interpreted. (The JW's use them to ban birthday celebrations.) It is clear that observing the Sabbath is not mandatory. But on the other hand neither is it wrong or heretical.

Is worshipping on Sunday better than worshipping on Saturday?

Under what conditions might you worship on a Saturday?

Is one day more spiritual, or acceptable to God than another?

Many Messianic Jewish Groups meet on Saturday. I believe it would be wrong for them to do otherwise.

Another View

There is another way of looking at this whole debate. It is pointed out that since God does not get tired, physical rest cannot have been the major reason he rested on the Sabbath. Hebrews 4, explains that the Sabbath is a type of Salvation by grace through faith and not by works. To enter into the Sabbath rest is to accept Jesus work on the Cross, rather than your own efforts at salvation.

In this view to keep Sabbath takes on a whole new meaning, totally divorced from how either Saturday or Sunday are treated.

What then does it mean to Keep Sabbath?

Two things that are wrong.

One of the problems that is associated with Sabbath keepers is a tendency to legalism. It can be part of an attempt to "keep the law". This is wrong we cannot keep the law, we live under grace.

The second thing that is wrong is to treat Sunday as a replacement Sabbath, to make out it is Christian Sabbath and insist on its observance.

This is not a big issue it should not be made into one.

Bible Studies

Nephilim



Read Genesis 6v1-4

This is surely one of the most puzzling passages in the Old Testament. It is our task to try to make sense of it.

The context

When we seek to understand the Bible, understanding context is very important. Why is this written here? We may not know who the “sons of God” are or who the Nephilim are, but we can understand the point the writer of Genesis is making.

Read the first section of Genesis 6. What is the writer describing?

The answer is simple. He is about to record the events of the flood and is setting the scene for God’s Judgement by explaining why it was necessary. He speaks of God’s sorrow over mankind and how mankind was (and is) evil. These verses are essentially explaining; *that a new stage has been reached in the progress of evil, with God’s bounds overstepped in yet another realm.* Kinder. What ever explanation we find has to take this into account.



Who are the Nephilim?

Whoever the Nephilim were it is clear that they were whiped out by the flood. Some Bibles translate this as Giants, (LXX) but that can be misleading. They are described as heroes and men of renown or reputation (lit ‘men of name’). This same word is used in Numbers 13v33

Read Numbers 13v33

The word *Anak* is the Hebrew for Giant. It seems to mean large in stature and or, ability. It is not possible that the “Giants” of Canaan were literal descendants of the Nephilim of Genesis 6. The Giants the Bible describes (like Goliath) are a only a little taller that the Guinness book of records tallest man.

Who were the sons of God?

The Scripture uses the term Sons of God to describe two different groups. Each use of the phrase gives a different possible explanations of this passage.



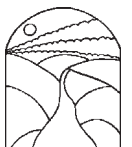
Who are the sons of God? Galatians 3:26

Adam has three sons who are named to us, Cain, Abel and Seth. Abel served God and was murdered. Cain was Godless. It is through the line of Seth that the men of God arise; Enoch and Noah. From Cain’s line we find Lamech, who describes himself as a murder seven times worse than Cain. Gen 4v24. With regard to their faith in God, of the scares information that is given us of Cain and Seth’s descendants, Cain’s were evil and Seth’s were Godly. (Watch out for duplicate names both Cain and Seth had descendants called Enoch and Lamech).

If we take Seth’s line to be those who were of faith, who were ‘sons of God’ in the same way that we are sons of God, then all this passage is saying is that Seth’s line intermingled with Cain’s. I.e. the Godly did not keep themselves pure. This is what Paul later warns us against.

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? 2 Corinthians 6:14-16

In the end it turned out that, of those who followed God, only Noah is left! The Sons of Seth have fallen by the way.



It is interesting to note that the account of the Flood is preceded by an account of lawless marriage. Matthew 24v37-39. In addition this all occurred out of a population explosion. During the year 2000 the 6,000,000,000 inhabitant, of this planet will be born, this figure is twice what it was in 1960.

Can you think of any flaws in this first theory?

Note: God's response to this is my Spirit will not contend with man, not with angels.



Who are the Sons of God? Job 1v6, 2v1, 38v7

The second group described as sons of God are angels. Among the Angels two further divisions are possible Holy Angles, Mat 25:31 and fallen Angles, Jude 1:6. We assume the angles referred to here are fallen angles.

These fallen angles seem to have followed Satan in His rebellion against God. Some people believe that they number a third of the angelic host. These Fallen angels we tend to refer to as demons.

Under this explanation it appears that some of these fallen angles took physical form and produced physical children with ordinary women. It was this mixing of the demonic and human, that forced God to act.

Some have seen this as an attempt at demonic government.

What does Matthew 12:43-44 suggest about demons?

To be a spirit without a body, is what Paul describes as being 'unclothed'. 2 Cor 5:4. In light of the demonic desire for a physical body, it is possible to see Gen 6 as referring to some form of Demon possession.

There are some problems:



Why would Genesis call fallen angels sons of God?

(It must be recognised that Satan is juxtaposed with them in Job.)



A second problem is found in Matthew 22:30. What is it?

This then would require a change in the nature of fallen angels subsequent to Gen 6. Some believe they have found this in the following verses.

2 Peter 2:4

Jude 6

The bondage they experience is the inability to have physical bodies. God prevented such an unnatural event from ever happening again. The strength of this argument is found in Jude v7 where Sodom's sins are described as being similar to the demons. This in turn seems to explain why there is such a thing as demonic possession but not angelic possession.

Can you think of any problems with this explanation?

It seems to me that the sin these angels committed was the initial rebellion against God not fornication with man. It also seems to me that for this theory to work we have to go beyond what is clearly taught in Scripture.

However just because we cannot conclusively explain this does not mean we have to reject the view that the sons of God were fallen angels.



We are left with two explanations both of which are possible. It is clearly hard to chose between the two.

Do we need to?

Bible Studies

Unforgiveness

Forgiveness of sins is central to the Christian faith. It is only because God forgives our sins that we can be accepted into His presence. But the Bible teaches that this forgiveness is reciprocal. We too must forgive those who sin against us.

Read Matthew 18v21-35

What did Jesus mean by seventy seven, (Or 70x7)

Jesus is not saying you don't have to forgive offence number 78, or 491. If you are keeping count it is proof that you are already in trouble!

Who do the people in the parable represent?

What do the two debts represent?

How did he intend us to feel when we heard this parable?

What did Jesus intend us to understand when we heard this parable?

Clearly this parable is intended to outrage us and to make us aware of the connection between God forgiving and us forgiving. The king in the story did not have to forgive the debt, he went beyond what was asked of him. God did not have to forgive our sin. It was His own choice, He could have left us to perish. We do not deserve His forgiveness.

Jesus wanted us to understand that it is an untenable position to delight in God's forgiveness while withholding our forgiveness for those who sin against us.

What does such a view say of our understanding of God and His forgiveness?

I think it shows a basic misunderstanding. It proves we do not really understand the extent of God's forgiveness or it's cost. Like the Pharisee in Luke 7v40+ we think we have been forgiven little. I think it also shows a contempt for God.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. Matthew 6:12

What sort of things are meant by debts?

Obviously debt here means sin.

Do you think there is a reason Jesus used this terminology?

The Parable goes on to explain how the Servant was turned over to the jailer to be tortured, until he pays back his debt. We can of course never make restitution sufficient for our sins. Jesus then makes an earth shattering statement.

"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." Matthew 18:35

What do you think Jesus meant by this?

Before we go any further we must consider another verse.

Read Matthew 6v14-15

What is the major consequence of not forgiving others?

How does this fit in with the parable?

Why does God not forgive us when we won't forgive others?

Jail could mean three things

1 If we do not forgive, invariably we live with bitterness, resentment, vindictiveness and anger in our lives, we miss out on a whole heap of the love joy and peace that Jesus has to offer. To this extent we find ourselves in a prison of our own making.

This is compounded by the fact that if we do not forgive we are not forgiven by God, we are therefore living with the negative consequences of our sins, like guilt.

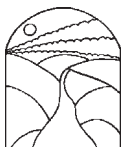
2 Secondly; Unforgiveness is one of those sins, (like not honouring parents) that seems especially to open us up to enemy attack. Unforgiveness can be the root of demonic oppression.

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3 Thirdly; if it is taken to its extremes, when we stubbornly refuse to forgive and are consequently not ourselves forgiven, we come under condemnation. It is possible Jesus had Hell in mind. We must be careful to qualify this. Unforgiveness does not automatically lead to condemnation.

What does forgiving from the heart mean?

What will the evidence be that forgiveness is genuinely from the heart?

Will your attitude change towards someone when you have forgiven them?

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Eph 4:32

Why should we forgive?

We have seen some reasons already,

If we want God to forgive us then we must forgive too.

If we want to be free of bitterness etc.

Not being 'Overcome by Evil'. Romans 12v21

It is not a tenable position for a Christian to bear a grudge.

Who is forgiveness for?

The basic point here is this, we do not forgive for the sake of the person who sinned against us. They may not deserve forgiveness. They may not want our forgiveness, but they are irrelevant to the question.

Forgiveness is for us. We need to forgive much more than they need to be forgiven.

Forgiveness is an issue between us and God, not us and the other person. If we want to be free from prison then we must forgive. It is for our mental and spiritual health.

If you forgive someone, are you letting them off the hook? Romans 12:19

Is it unreasonable of God?

And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." Mark 11:25

Some people feel that it is unreasonable of God to expect us to forgive even those who do not ask for forgiveness and are not repentant. Such a view misses the point because it assumes that forgiveness is for the sake of the other person, not for us. I think this argument is an excuse not to forgive.

Who should take the initiative?

Matthew 5v23-24, Matthew 18:15, Luke 17:4

At first these verses seem contradictory but the answer is simple. Under all circumstances, whether you sin or are sinned against, ***it is you.***

Are there times when things are best left?

When something is not an issue, it is best not to make it one.

Is it possible?

And if I am not able to forgive a person for something that was truly terrible and indefinable, does that mean God will not forgive my sin?

I think the answer to both questions is, no. We are talking here about serious things.

Hurts that are so deep as to almost be without cure. To forgive such things is not humanly possible. Many of the things Jesus told us to do are impossible. Eg.

"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, Luke 6:27

(Can you do this without forgiveness?)

The point is, you are not expected to do this in your own strength. But even with God's help, it is a tall order. Unless God does a dramatic work of grace, I defy anyone to forgive a serious offence from the heart, in one go.

I believe the secret is to forgive to the extent that you can.

It may go through stages like this.

Acknowledging that you are going to have to forgive.

Praying a "Lord I forgive" prayer, as an act of faith and obedience.

Meaning it!

Genuinely forgiving them from your heart.

I believe that all God requires of us is to go as far as we can when we can. He will do the work in us to take us further. It is not uncommon for this to take years. Or to think you have forgiven someone only to find there is still bitterness there. Until we have forgiven from the heart we must keep these things as *live* issues.

Bible Studies

Judging others

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Matthew 7:1-2

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

The Bible says some things about Judgement that seem quite contradictory.

John 9v39

Jesus said, "For judgement I have come into this world"

John 12:47-48

For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it

1 Corinthians 5v3

And I have already passed judgement on the one who did this

Romans 2v1

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgement on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other

Romans 12v3

but rather think of yourself with sober judgement

1 Corinthians 4v3

indeed, I do not even judge myself.

The major reason for this is that the word Judgement can mean a variety of things. It can mean to condemn, or it can mean evaluate or examine. It can also mean to negatively or positively discriminate. Or to discern.



Read John 9v35-41

Who is Jesus talking to and what had just happened to him?

Who were the sighted who will become blind?

What kind of Judgement was Jesus talking about?

Jesus is not talking here about final judgement, nor a formal judgement. His comments came after the man had declared his belief. Faith in Jesus is the fulcrum. It determines your future and dictates the path of your life. It is a case of "whoever does not believe stands condemned already". John 3v18. Jesus Christ divides the world into two groups, this is the judgement he is referring to.

Judgement here means to Differentiate

Why did the Pharisees Guilt remain?



No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. 1 Corinthians 11:19

What does this verse mean?

Is this verse establishing to classes of Christian?

Can we judge other on the basis of this verse?

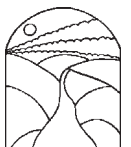
Some of us do better than others in our Christian walk. But we all need Christ and however good we may think we are we are never good enough we all stand under grace.

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Read John 12v44-50

Here the meaning of Judgement is quite different.

What word in verse 48 suggests the kind of judgement implied here?

What do you think Jesus is saying in this passage?

It seems to me that he is referring to final judgement, and is saying that the time for it has not yet come. There is still time to repent, but that Judgement will come.

What is the basis for Judgement?

This verse may be seen to contradict John 5:22. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, In this verse it is the Father who judges but, even so it is by the fathers authority moreover the basis of Jesus argument is that he and the father are inseparable.

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Matthew 7:1

Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right? Luke 12:57

What are the kinds of Judgements the above passages speak of?

What are the differences between them?

Why should we not judge others?



Read John 8:15-16

What kind of Judgement do you think Jesus is referring to?

Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment." John 7:24

James describes three kinds of Judging they are:

James 2:2-4

James 4:11-12

James 5:9

Why shouldn't we judge on external appearances?

Does this include judgement based on race, age, sex etc?

Racial discrimination was a big factor for the early church, it was something they had to overcome. They thought Christianity was only for Jews, when God poured out his Spirit on Gentiles they were astonished!

If you think in your heart that you because you are a New Zealander are better, more significant, or more intelligent than someone say from Africa, Is that a form of discrimination.

The story is told of a white South African pastor who went to visit a black pastor from the same town, he went because he wanted the unity of Christians to overcome the deep divisions of apartheid. He went to proclaim there equality. The black pastor would not have a bar of it. "We cannot be equal" he said "because in your heart you think you are better than me." He was right!

Discrimination can hide! Just because we think we are doing Ok does not mean we are.

Is it wrong for us to condemn another believer if he sins?

"I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world." John 8:26



In what areas do we frequently Judge others?

Bible Studies

God's Judgement and Ours



Read Romans 2v1-4

This passage explains some of the problems associated with judging others



What are they?

What is God's judgement based on?

What is ours based on?

Paul expands on this later in the book of Romans.

Read Romans 14v1-4 & 10-13

What matters should we not pass judgement on?

Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. Romans 14:4

What does this mean?

In what way does judging someone else create a stumbling block? v13

James 2v4 says that we have become guilty of being Judges with evil motives, GN Amp (NIV, KJV thoughts). Most of us think we are good judges of situations and of character. It comes as a hard, but valuable lesson to discover we are nowhere near as good at judging as we think we are. We must recognise our weaknesses in this area. Very often when we judge we make bad mistakes and cause great harm.

How good a judge was Eli of Hanna? 1 Samuel 1v12-15



What do you think it is that makes us such bad judges?

What do you think it is that makes God such a good judge?

Our judgement is based on partial knowledge and external appearances. God knows everything and judges the heart. Frequently we judge by our own standard, what we think is acceptable. Our judgement is therefore anything but impartial, to often it comes from the hurt of our own heart, or even our own guilty consciences. Our judgement often lacks the grace and patience God exhibits. God's judgement always includes his desire that all men should be saved. Sometimes we go to the other extreme and are so keen to be accepting of people that we lower God's standard of holiness.

Does this mean we must not act when we see another person sinning? Gal 6v1

Is there a difference between judging what is sin and being judgmental?

What should our attitude be to those who fall?



Read 1 Corinthians 5v1-3

The problem that Paul is facing here is not that a man did something blatantly immoral, Leviticus 18v8, but rather the Churches response to it.

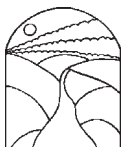
What was their response?

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Why on earth would they have responded like this?

The best guess is that they saw this as an expression of their freedom in Christ. There were various teachings circulation at the time (some even being blamed on Paul, Romans 3v8) that claimed higher knowledge that said this kind of sin was OK for the mature. Paul disagrees.

Do you think Paul is contradiction his own teaching about not judging?

The Greek here has been translated "I have already reached my decision" *Barratt*. His solution was temporary excommunication.



**What issues do you think Paul had to face in making his decision?
In what capacity does Paul make this decision?
How does this compare with our judgement of our fellow Christian?**

It must be admitted that when we judge, we judge by gossip. Paul's judgement here was official, public and to protect the Church. It cannot be compared with us despising someone who has acted in a way that we cannot countenance.

Paul goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 6, that it is wrong to take legal dispute among Christians before a civil authority. He called on the church to judge such matters. But he is not talking about condemning people but judging the case. Again it is a formal thing.

On one occasion, Jesus was eating in the home of a Pharisee, when a women, evidently a prostitute, came in and anointed Jesus feet. The Pharisee immediately judged her in his heart. Jesus rebuked him for it. Luke 7v36-50.



**Would you have acted differently?
How often are we guilty of judging others?**



**Is it for us to say who is saved and who is not?
Is it for me to say who is spiritual?**

Have you ever noticed that when we sin there is usually an explanation, and some form of mitigating circumstances? When others sin we do not afford them the same privileges we give ourselves. "Sin is sin, they should have known better, there is no excuse for..."

Why do you think this is?

Sometimes we need to condemn others to justify ourselves.

Bible Studies

Judging yourself

Then there is the issue of judging yourself.

But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. 1 Corinthians 11:31



In what context is this written?

What is the objective of Judging yourself? v31&32

Is Paul saying we should condemn ourselves?

What kind of judging should we exercise?

Paul here is saying we must identify and deal with the sin in our lives. He is not saying that we should in some way exercise self punishment. Such a practice will only open the door to the enemy.



Read Romans 12v3

What kind of judgement is this, is it the same as that in the last verse?

What is Paul saying we should do?

What is the danger of thinking too highly of yourself?

What is the danger of thinking too lowly of yourself?

How can we be realistic about our abilities?



Read 1 Corinthians 4v1-5

The Church in Corinth had got into the habit of comparing the apostles, how well they preached, how successful they were, how spiritual they were.

This had led to divisions within the church. He is not going to defend himself against such foolishness. He is Christ's servant. He is not going to be forced to be anything else but what God has made him. He answers to Christ alone.

Is there a danger in that attitude?

Do you think we pressure our leader to be what they are not?

Was Paul concerned what others thought of him?

Should we be?

We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise 2 Cor 10:12. Gal 6:4 Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else,

Why should we not compare ourselves with others?

When you compare things you must compare like with like. We do not judge oranges by the standard for apples. We are all individuals, we all have different talents and God has called us to achieve different things. It is therefore fool hardy to judge yourself by someone else.

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?" Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." John 21:20-22



What will happen if you compare yourself with The Apostle Paul?

What will happen if you compare your pastor with Yonggi Cho

In what way did Paul not judge himself?

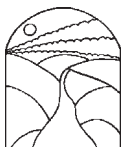
Paul is saying that even self evaluation is unreliable. Just because he may think he has done all that is required of him, just because he has no 'guilty secrets', does not mean there is nothing that God can find fault with.

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Why is a clear conscience not proof of innocence?

1 Corinthians 8:7,
1 Timothy 4:2,
Titus 1:15,
1 John 3v20

It has been said a good conscience is the invention of the devil.

What do you think this means?

Is it true? 1 Tim 1:5,19

I agree with Paul, it is necessary for us to judge ourselves soberly but there are also areas in my ministry and life that I do not judge because experience has shown that I do not judge right. Very often when I think I have done well I find there is little fruit from my labours. At other times I think I have blown it and miraculously fruit abounds. So I stopped making judgements about myself because the judgements that I made handicapped my Christian walk instead of helping it.



Read 1 Corinthians 2v15

This is the last verse we will look at. It is a verse that has suffered serious abuse. This verse has been interpreted “*I am spiritual therefore everything I do is outside your evaluation, but because I am spiritual it is my right judge you*”

Do you think this is what it means?

The Bible teaches that spiritual things and gifts are subject to judgement. 1 Corinthians 14v32, 2 Thessalonians 5v21. It is not enough to say, “God told me to do this so you cannot disagree with it”. Such an attitude has been used as a cover for all kind of schemes from the harebrained to the evil.

The word Judge here is best translated as; investigate, or examine.

The contrast that Paul is making in this passage is not between spiritual believers and unspiritual ones, nor between those who have experienced the Baptism in the Spirit and those who have not. His contrast is between believers and unbelievers, Believers have the Spirit, Romans 8v9. He is saying that you cannot expect none believers to understand things that are spiritual. To understand the fullness of Christianity you must be Christian. You cannot expect a blind person to enjoy a beautiful view.

It is only in Christ that we have the spiritual and moral standards to understand the world. ‘*A man judges aright and with assurance, according to whether he is born again, and according to the measure of grace bestowed on him – and no more*’ Calvin.

Where does Spiritual wisdom come from? v13

Paul is also saying that as a Christian we must now appraise all things by spiritual sight not just human standards.

What does this mean?

Do you think he is also making a contrast between the old and new natures? Out off which nature do our judgmental attitudes emanate?

At the same time we are not judged by the worlds standards, to quote Carman. “My friends think I’m crazy but I’m just radically saved.”



Does this mean we are above the law?

Neither is Paul saying that we are above reproach. He is just continuing with his teaching that Christians are to be judged by their master not by each other.

Bible Studies

God's Judgement and Ours

Youth Version

Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Matthew 7:1

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

Why should we not judge others?



Read John 8:15-16

What kind of Judgement do you think Jesus is referring to?

Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment." John 7:24

James describes three kinds of Judging they are:

James 2:2-4

James 4:11-12

James 5:9

Why shouldn't we judge on external appearances?

Does this include judgement based on race, age, sex etc?

Racial discrimination was a big factor for the early church, it was something they had to overcome. They thought Christianity was only for Jews, when God poured out his Spirit on Gentiles they were astonished!

If you think in your heart that you because you are a New Zealander are better, more significant, or more intelligent than someone say from Africa, Is that a form of discrimination?



Read Romans 2v1-4

This passage explains some of the problems associated with judging others

What are they?

What is God's judgement based on?

What is ours based on?

Paul expands on this later in the book of Romans.



Read Romans 14v1-4 & 10-13

What matters should we not pass judgement on?

Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. Romans 14:4

What does this mean?

In what way does judging someone else create a stumbling block? v13

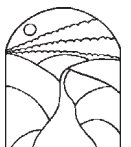
James 2v4 says that we have become guilty of being Judges with evil motives, GN Amp (NIV, KJV thoughts). Most of us think we are good judges of situations and of character. It comes as a hard, but valuable lesson to discover we are nowhere near as good at judging as we think we are. We must recognise our weaknesses in this area. Very often when we judge we make bad mistakes and cause great harm.

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**What do you think it is that makes us such bad judges?
What do you think it is that makes God such a good judge?**

Our judgement is based on partial knowledge and external appearances. God knows everything and judges the heart. Frequently we judge by our own standard, what we think is acceptable. Our judgement is therefore anything but impartial, to often it comes from the hurt of our own heart, or even our own guilty consciences. Our judgement often lacks the grace and patience God exhibits. God's judgement always includes his desire that all me should be saved. Sometimes we go to the other extreme and are so keen to be accepting of people that we lower God's standard of holiness.

**Does this mean we must not act when we see another person sinning? Gal 6v1
Is there a difference between judging what is sin and being judgmental?
What should our attitude be to those who fall?**



Read 1 Corinthians 5v1-3

The problem that Paul is facing here is not that a man did something blatantly immoral, Leviticus 18v8, but rather the Churches response to it.

**What was their response?
Why on earth would they have responded like this?**

The best guess is that they saw this as an expression of their freedom in Christ. There were various teachings circulation at the time (some even being blamed on Paul, Romans 3v8) that claimed higher knowledge that said this kind of sin was OK for the mature. Paul disagrees.

Do you think Paul is contradiction his own teaching about not judging?

The Greek here has been translated "I have already reached my decision" *Barratt*. His solution was temporary excommunication.

**What issues do you think Paul had to face in making his decision?
In what capacity does Paul make this decision?
How does this compare with our judgement of our fellow Christian?**

It must be admitted that when we judge, we judge by gossip. Paul's judgement here was official, public and to protect the Church. It cannot be compared with us despising someone who has acted in a way that we cannot countenance.

Paul goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 6, that it is wrong to take legal dispute among Christians before a civil authority. He called on the church to judge such matters. But he is not talking about condemning people but judging the case. Again it is a formal thing.

On one occasion, Jesus was eating in the home of a Pharisee, when a women, evidently a prostitute, came in and anointed Jesus feet. The Pharisee immediately judged her in his heart. Jesus rebuked him for it. Luke 7v36-50.



**Would you have acted differently?
How often are we guilty of judging others?
Is it for us to say who is saved and who is not?
Is it for me to say who is spiritual?**

Have you ever noticed that when we sin there is usually an explanation, and some form of mitigating circumstances? When others sin we do not afford them the same privileges we give ourselves. "Sin is sin, they should have known better, there is no excuse for..."
Why do you think this is?

Sometimes we need to condemn others to justify ourselves.

Bible Studies

Prosperity or Poverty

There is a brand of teaching that is found among Pentecostal preachers that is known as prosperity teaching. It states that as Christians we should always be prosperous. If we are in need in any area of our life it is for one of three reasons:

We have failed to appreciate prosperity doctrine.

We have little faith.

We are in disobedience

Sometimes this teaching is called the "name it claim it" teaching, you tell God what you want and He has to provide it for you. Christians, they will say, are sons and daughters of God and accordingly as 'kings kids', should have the best.

Some of the verses that are used to support this teaching are straight bad interpretations, eg 3 John 2, 2 Cor 4v13, or the Blessings of Abraham, Gal 3v9&14, (which refers to salvation by faith, not physical blessings).

However this is not to say prosperity has no scriptural basis.

Psalm 23v1

Deuteronomy 8v17-18

Psalm 34v10

Romans 8v32

Psalm 84v11

James 4v2b-3

Psalm 112v1-3

Abraham is our father in the faith, consider what is written about him.

Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold. Genesis 13:2

Abraham was now old and well advanced in years, and the LORD had blessed him in every way.

Genesis 24:1

It is very clear that God wants to bless His people with every spiritual blessing. Eph 1v3.

Do you think God want to bless us physically too?

I sincerely believe He does. My testimony supports this, so does that of countless others. God is an abundant God, God is not a God who gives poverty. However I do not subscribe to the prosperity doctrine for several reasons that will become clear.

There are also some verses that talk about poverty.

2 Corinthians 6:10

James 2v5-6

Philippians 4v12

Habakkuk 3v17-18

Psalm 40v17, 86v1

I find it very hard not to equate those who preach prosperity with the Super-Apostles of which Paul was so critical. 2 Corinthians 12v11

Prosperity or Poverty, which is spiritual?

Believe it or not there is such a thing as poverty teaching. You can see how verses like James 2v5-6 could lead some this way. Did Jesus not say, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied."

Luke 6:20. If you want to be rich toward God you must become poor. Luke 18:22

To be poor then is to be spiritual. Prosperity teaching declare that it can only be the rich who are spiritual, successful Christians. Poor Christians either have no faith or are sinners.

Do you think either of these statements is true?

I think it is far far to simplistic to equate wealth with spirituality

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Central to this debate over the years has been the question “what about Jesus was He rich or poor?” The prosperity freaks will tell you, He wore an expensive robe, John 19:23. He had people that supported His ministry, Luke 8:3. He operated a large organisation, Luke 10:1, that had a man dedicated to look after the money, John 13:29.

Poverty freaks will tell you he had nothing. Mat 8:20. He became poor, 2 Corinthians 8:9. It is clear from scripture that Jesus did not have large quantities of worldly goods, His robe was standard wear and the money bag was for the poor. At the same time He did not live in poverty, but simplicity, His needs were met. Perhaps in understanding this we find the key to this whole conflict.

Read Matthew 17v24-27

What does this tell us about Jesus financial position?

God met the needs of Jesus ministry as and when they arose. He will do the same for us. This was how Jesus lived, he had a simple lifestyle, he did not accumulate wealth. He trusted God for all that he needed. Such teaching is found in Matthew 6v25-34. We should do the same.

The Problems with Prosperity teaching.

The biggest problem with the prosperity doctrine is that it has a nasty habit of taking the centre place. Some even call it the ‘Gospel of Prosperity’. Well the Gospel is not about God blessing us. It is about being saved from sin and hell, and about giving your life to serve God.

Does God have to give gifts to His people?

Does God owe you anything?

“Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?” Romans 11:35

It tends to distract from the business in hand, to make people overly concerned with their own welfare. It can even feed our greed. It can also cause Christians to think down on the poor and create all kind of confusion and disillusion when God does not do what we have been told He always will.

Which is more important, what I can do for God or what he can do for me?

It is an erroneous thing mistake our heavenly father for Santa Claus.

Secondly this teaching tends to put man in charge not God. It is up to us to decide what God should give us, this we then demand as if it is our right.

Those how teach prosperity would condemn these attitude as much as I do, but it is hard to deny that prosperity teaching generates them.

It reduces God to a means to an end. God becomes the means whereby the end of prosperity is attained. He becomes the source from which prosperity flows, rather than the sovereign to whom prosperity in this life is sacrificed. Faith becomes a technique or key that unlocks guaranteed wealth. Belief in Jesus Christ is irrelevant.

Prosperity teaching is focussed on the things of this world. Material possessions are seen as a sign of God’s approval and the means of God’s blessing. The demand of Jesus to leave this world behind and take up the cross is blunted if not silenced.



Which do you think God is more interested in your physical wellbeing or your spiritual wellbeing?



Should the need arise which do you think He will sacrifice for the sake of the other?

Bible Studies

Prosperity continued

Do you serve God because he will bless you or because you love him?



If He withdrew his hand of blessing from you would it change your love or service for Him?

This of course is the starting argument of Job's long and harrowing experience. "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied. "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land. But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." Job 1:9-11

This was not true of Job, he still loved God even when everything was taken away. If it is true of you be very careful, because it is not an attitude that God is going to let you get away with.

Do you think it is wrong for a Christian to be rich?

Do you think it is wrong for a Christian to be poor?

It is not wrong for a Christian to be rich,

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| It is wrong for a Christian | to be a hoarder, | Luke 12v21 |
| | to be greedy, | 1 Corinthians 6v10 |
| | to be self sufficient | Revelation 3v17 |
| | to be self indulgent | James 5v5 |

If we have wealth we should recognise that everything comes from God, Deut 8v18, James 1v17. We should be generous, we should use our wealth for the Kingdom. We should not be embarrassed about the good things God has given us. Neither should we be proud, superior or arrogant, looking down on others. Romans 12:16

Whether it is wrong for a Christian to be poor is harder to say. It depends very much on the circumstances. Some are called to leave everything for the sake of the kingdom. Job experienced both riches and poverty. (as did King David and Paul). Was his poverty wrong? Was it his failure? Are there times when we will for various reasons experience poverty, as the Churches in Jerusalem, Macedonian & Smyrna did? Gal 2:10, 2 Cor 8:2, Rev 2:9. Can God use times of need to teach us, to strengthen us, even to break us?

Read Deuteronomy 8v2-3

Who was it who made the Children of Israel hungry and why?

Having said all this I do not believe that it is God's will that we should continually be in want. Prosperity teaching does contain truth, but it is not the whole truth! It serves as a very handy counter weight to the small minded, low expectation, faithless heresy that many of us call Christianity.

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19
The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing. Psalms 34:10

Are the words Need and Good significant in the above passages?

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

Does God promise to supply our wants? Psalm 37v4-5

Did He ever promise to give you all your wants?

Many of our want and many of our perceived needs are plan and simply not God's will. I have asked God for many things which in hind sight I am very glad He didn't give me?

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***Can you make God give you something against His will?
If you could would it bless you?***

Hezekiah's fifteen years are an interesting case Isaiah 38, 2 Chr 32v24-26 it was in these years that Hezekiah's kingship went seriously wrong.

What is the difference between our wants and needs?

Which attitude is better;

I am going to live in abundance

I am going to trust God to supply my needs

Here are some verses to consider.

As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them? Ecclesiastes 5:11

Do not trust in extortion or take pride in stolen goods; though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them. Psalms 62:10

But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 1 Timothy 6:8-10

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

Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth. Proverbs 10:4

For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." 2 Thessalonians 3:10

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrews 13:5

Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God. Proverbs 30:8-9

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Matthew 16:24

Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay." Luke 3:14

Give us today our daily bread. Matthew 6:11

"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money. Matthew 6:24

Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Luke 12:33-34

"This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Luke 12:21-24

Conclusion

I believe in a kind of prosperity, but not one that is about compiling goods or having to have the best. I do believe in a prosperity that looks towards God for our supply as we need it.

Bible Studies

Faith & Presumption

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6

Faith is believing in things that we cannot see, things like Heaven, forgiveness of sins, God. We can find evidence of them, but we cannot see them.

Faith is believing that when we pray God hears us.

Faith is believing in God's promises, and benevolence (i.e. That He will look after us).

Faith is believing what God said.

Faith is acting on what we believe.

What else do you think faith is? Faith is.....

Obviously faith is an essential part of being a Christian. A prerequisite to salvation is believing that there is a God, that He cares about us, that He wants us to be saved, etc.

He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you. Luke 17:6

This verse is often taken to mean that faith must grow, Faith does grow. It grows as we ask God for more faith, Luke 17:5, it grows as we hear things that encourage faith, Rom 10:17, but mostly it grows as it is used.

Faith breeds Faith

This verse does not say anything about faith growing, (Mat 13v31 is the Kingdom of God growing not faith). It does say that small faith has big results.

Faith is powerful

This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. 1 John 5:4

Faith in God, is the key to so many things in the Kingdom of God.

Eph 2v8,3v12&17, Phil 3v9 1 Thes 1v3, Gal 3v14,22&26, Rom 5:2

If we don't have faith there is very little we do have.

"The righteous will live by faith." Galatians 3:11

We live by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, Galatians 2:20

What does living by faith mean?

Praying in faith, serving in faith, loving in faith, acting in faith, speaking in faith.

It means our belief and knowledge of God being seen in the way we live.

The goals we set, the choices we make, the things we do.

Define some things that you think are acts of faith.

If faith is so important you can be sure that the enemy is going to try to pervert it.

Presumption is a perversion of faith.

Presumption

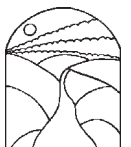
Presumption: overstepping the proper bounds, to take for granted; to take liberties; forwardness or arrogance. Acting without the proper permission or authority. Acting on what we assume rather than on something we know.

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An example of this is found in Numbers 13-14.

The Children of Israel arrive on the border of the promised land. Spies are sent into the land. A report is brought back. God commands them to go up and take the land.

Had they done this, despite the bad report would it have been faith?

What did they do?

God rebukes them for their rebellion and unbelief and tells them they will stay in the wilderness and not enter the Promised land. The people relent.

What happened next? Read Numbers 14v39-45

Was this an act of faith?

Faith is based on knowledge of God's will. It is not blind, it is sighted. Presumption is based on our own ideas or on God's command taken out of context.

In what way did the Children of Israel take God's command out of context?

God had told them to go up, but when refused the opportunity was missed. We cannot do what we want or think best, we must obey.

Read Matthew 4v5-7

This is a great example of presumption, the question is why didn't Jesus jump? After all the scriptural promise from Psalm 91v11-12 was valid, true and relevant. He had a word of God, what else did He need? Not to act would only show that He did not believe the Scriptures. Seeing Jesus fly down into the crowded temple would surely cause people to praise God and follow in Jesus.

So why didn't He do it?

Firstly I imagine the source of the suggestion was reason all by itself. But secondly it was wrong, it would have been presumption, not faith. Like the previous example, it was taking the promise out of context, even though it fitted the occasion!

Presumption is based on a verse, faith is based on the Scriptures and the timing of God.

What's the difference? What's the danger?

Does God have to honour our presumption?

Can you think of an example of something that would be presumption?

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Matthew 4:7

What did Jesus mean?

The quotation comes from Deut 6:16 which in turn refers to Exodus 17v2-7, where the Israelites tested God by demanding water. They tried to force God do what he had done at Marah, ***Exodus 15v22-26.***

Read Exodus 17v2-7

Do you think God intended to leave them without water?

What did they do wrong?

There is usually an aspect of demanding in presumption, (i.e. God has to do this...) There is no such demand in faith. It is wrong to try to force, bribe or manipulate God.

Faith is based on God's word. Presumption goes beyond God's word. Presumption is about what I want, not what God wants.

Faith is not just a matter of believing something strongly or of having a conviction.

Lots of people believe lots of very strange things, believing something is not the same as having faith. Faith is believing something, because God has said it. Everything else is presumption.

And everything that does not come from faith is sin. Romans 14:23

Is it presumptuous to expect God to heal?

It would definitely be presumptuous refuse medical treatment.

Is it presumptuous to expect God to take care of us?

Do you think the fear of presumption should stop us from exercising faith?

Bible Studies

Are all sins the same?

Traditional we have been told that all sins are equal before God. But is it really true to say that a person who lies is just as bad as a mass murderer?



What do you think?

Until recently I would have answered 'yes'. That is what I had always been taught, even though it seemed obvious that mass murder was worst! Then I noticed an interesting verse.

Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." John 19:11



Who is Jesus talking too? Who is the one guilty of greater sin?

Notice, Jesus talks in the singular. He is not condemning the whole Jewish people, many of whom supported Jesus, almost all of whom had no idea what was happening. The 'one' is surely the High Priest.

Is Jesus stating that some sins are greater than others?

Yes he is. This is also born out by the law which prescribed different punishments for different sins. The law differentiates between manslaughter and murder, Exodus 21v12-14. Restitution and sacrifice could be made for some sins, but for other death was decreed

So why has it been taught that all sin is equal?



For a very good reason. It is not that all sins are the same, some are obviously much worse than others. It is that the effects of all sins, large or small are the same.

God's standard is perfection. A lie, short of perfect or a murder, short of perfection, both miss the mark. To miss God's standard by an inch is just as much a failure as to miss by a mile. Both sins receive the same punishment from God. The danger is that people will excuse their small sins as not mattering before God.

Sin is breaking God's Law.

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. 1 John 3:4

The soul who sins is the one who will die. Ezekiel 18:20

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

We earn death through sin. God does not give it to us.

We are given eternal life because of God's grace. You cannot earn it.

The danger in all this is that we will make a judgement about which sins are acceptable and which ones are not.

Do you think it is safe to make such a judgement?

Why?

I think this could get very dangerous. The whole thing will become very subjective. I think we are going to excuse a whole heap of things in us, that God says are unacceptable. I think we will excuse our actions and condemn other peoples. It can only get used as a cover for sin.

Does God Just condemn big sins?

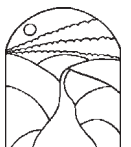
If you arrive at judgement day have only committed one little sin, will you be treated any differently from a mass murderer?

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Do you think our idea of which sins are more serious will always be the same as God's?

Very often the Bible gives an account of God punishing something that we would find trivial. The frequency with which people use God's name as a swear word is an example of this.



Is worry a serious sin?

Why?

Is unbelief a serious sin?

Why?

Are sins of commission (things we do wrong) worst than sins of omission (things we fail to do [James 4:17])?

Can a sin be more serious for one person than for another?

Can a sin be more serious under one set of circumstances than another?

Are there any sins that are not serious?

It is clear that we do not have the resources to evaluate levels of sin.

The important point here is that the eternal punishment is the same no matter what the sin is. All sin is serious!

We could develop a '*might as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb*' attitude. Since we have committed a sin once, we are already guilty, so we might as well keep on doing it, it makes no difference.

Do you think this attitude is right?

Why?

Sin is not just breaking the Law, it is offending God personally. It does matter. Each sin stands by itself. Moreover this is a '*what can I get away with attitude*', an excuse. Perhaps we concentrate too much on not sinning instead of on being righteous.

Jesus addresses another area in the Sermon on the Mount, the sins of the mind and the sins of the body. Jesus came to a strange conclusion.



Read Matthew 5v21-22 & 27-28

It comes as a shock to discover we are all murderers and adulterers. But is lust really as bad as adultery?

What points do you think Jesus is making?

Why are mind sins so serious?



Read Matthew 11v20-24

Capernaum could not claim anything near the vices of Sodom. It was a respectable little town not a world centre of immorality.

Where the sins of Capernaum worst than Sodom?

What was it about Capernaum that meant it would be judged more severely?

Clearly it was not the sins of Capernaum that would incur God's wrath, but their failure to repent, despite their advanced knowledge. It had more to do with their attitude of heart, than their bodily sins. Romans 2v12-16.



Read James 2:10-11

What point is James making?

What implications does it have for us?

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Galatians 3:10

This was a widely held belief in Jesus day, that to break one part of the law was to be guilty of breaking it all.

What does this say about the idea that some people are better than others?

Bible Studies

Many Roads

One of the perennial questions that is asked of Christians is; “Surely there are many religions through out the world, all worship God, surely they are just different ways of seeing the one and same being. “

This is often followed by “How do I know your ideas are true? And everyone else’s are false? If they sincerely believe...”

Often this question is just a smoke screen.

Often this question is someone else’s.

I do not believe that these questions are effective ways of witnessing, they tend to divert people from the real issues. I would rather get on to them, but for the sake of those for whom this is a genuine stumbling block, this study is presented.

Some Questions

If all religions are the same why did God object to Baal worship?

If you can come to God in a variety of ways why did Jesus have to die?

If all religions are the same, why are their concepts of God, Salvation and eternal life so different, not to say contradictory?

If all ways lead to God why do none of the major religions scriptures contain this teaching?

If all faiths are equally valid why did Jesus tell us to evangelise the world?

If all faiths are ways to God why does Paul say the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. 1 Cor 10:20

Some verses

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” Acts 4:12

Some People say that Jesus is the only way to God for people who come from western nations, who are nominally Christian. Others have other ways, they say. On the day of Pentecost there were no nominal Christians. Those among whom the faith grew all had ‘religions of their own’. When Jesus said no man comes to the father but by me, he was surrounded by Jews. If any religion has a valid way to come to God apart from through Jesus, it is Judaism. Yet it was to these very people that Jesus said it.

Some Baggage

If we believe that all religions are equally valid we have to adopt a humanistic agnostic view of faith.

What is Humanism?

What is agnosticism?

For example: Christianity teaches that if you are saved you go to heaven if you are not you go to hell. Islamic teaching states that unless you die in a *Jihad* you go to hell until you have atoned for your sins at which point you are accepted into heaven. (Christianity say you can't do this). Hinduism believes in reincarnation that your *Karma* in this life leads to a higher or lower status in your next life. You continue until the cycle is broken and you become good enough to reach *Nivanah*.

These three views are fundamental parts of each faith, not just window-dressing. But they are contradictory. All three cannot be right.

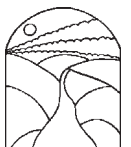
This is true of most of the fundamentals of the worlds great religions. The Old Testament has, as one of it’s most profound themes, God’s abhorrence of Idols. Idols are central to Hinduism. How then can both be expressions of the one true God?

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To believe they are requires another belief. That God is essentially unknowable (agnosticism) and that all religion is just a frail human attempt to define what we cannot know. Groping in the dark for the light.

The Bible claims to be God revealing himself to man, that we might know Him and believe in Him and be saved. If we adopt the above belief, then we deny that such knowledge of God exists. We are left to make our own choice of what bits of what religion we will declare are true. Such a mishmash of ideas is, highly subjective, usually contradictory and does no more than reflect our own preferences. In effect we invent a God we like.

Can you create your own religion?

Religion is inevitable

There are some global facts. God Exists. Man needs God. It is inevitable that all societies (and all individuals) develop religion. We need to answer the difficult questions that surround us. Why am I here? What is my purpose? Why is there evil in the world? Why do I have a desire to do good but invariably do evil? The world has proved that it cannot live without religion. But this does not make all the answers that people put forward right, true or good. There must be a true answer. And it must be the same answer for all mankind.

All Religions contain truth.

Just because a faith is not true does it mean it is entirely wrong?

If God does exist and as Romans 1 teaches we would expect to find elements of the One true God in all religions. So for example Jesus said Do to others as you would have them do to you. Luke 6:31, this is also Confucius' Golden rule. This same idea is found in almost all religions. Just because a religion contains things that are true and things that are good, does not make it a true way to come to God.

It is also people who adhere to other faiths often sincerely believe them to be true.

Does sincerity guarantee the truth of what we believe?

Hitler sincerely believed he was right to kill Jews.

Did Paul's sincerity within Judaism save him? **Phil 3v4-7, 1 Tim 1:13**

A word of Hope

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. Acts 10:34-35

How did God "accept" Cornelius?

It was not by declaring that his current faith was good enough but by sending someone to tell him the gospel. Where people seek God he will reveal himself to them.

Read Romans 1v18-20

This again confirms that to those who earnestly seek God he will be found by them. There is enough evidence around them for people to call out to God. The Bible teaches that God Judges according to the knowledge people have received. Rom 2v12-14. Abraham was saved by faith, so are we. It is God who judges such faith not us. At the same time Paul said "how can the call upon one of whom they have not heard?"

The Future.

It is becoming increasingly politically incorrect to claim one faith to be exclusively true. The day will come, according to Revelation, when a single world religion will be enforced. Rev13v12-15.

It is said that the only major hurdle to bring all faiths together is Jesus Christ.

Why do you think this is?

The idea that all faiths are equally valid and all paths to God is a very friendly doctrine. It is a nice idea, but it is not Scriptural. It is held because we do not like to consider the alternative, that without Christ they will die in their sins. John8v24. We cannot say we hold to the Bible as the authority of Faith and hold this view. To do so is to say we know better than the Bible. In which case where do we draw the line? If we refuse the Bible as the authority of faith then we have no certainty in anything we believe.

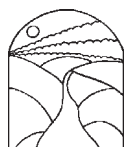
How should we treat people of other faiths?

Where does this leave us with the Great Commission?

Bible Studies

Fasting Work Sheet

STREAMS IN THE DESERT



Fasting is a biblical practice, but there is also much confusion that surrounds the subject. If God knows our needs and prayer is as powerful as people say where is the need to fast?

We will start by considering some key verses. The question we need to ask as we read these verse is: Why?? did they fast?

Old Testament

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------|------------|----------|-----------|-------------|----------|----------|------|--------------|
| Mourning | Repentance | Humbling | Dire Need | Preparation | Guidance | Petition | Help | Spirituality |
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Leviticus 16v29

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Who fasted?

Why?

What did they want to achieve?

1 Samuel 7v6

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Who fasted?

Why did they fast

What did they want to achieve?

2 Samuel 1v12

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Who fasted?

Why did they fast

What did they want to achieve?

2 Samuel 12v16

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Who fasted?

Why did they fast

What did they want to achieve? v22

Was he successful?

1 Kings 21v27

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Who fasted?

Why did they fast

What did they want to achieve? v29

Was he successful?

2 Chronicles 20v3

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Who fasted?

Why did they fast

What did they want to achieve?

Was he successful? v14

Ezra 8v21-23

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Who fasted?

Why did they fast

What did they want to achieve?

| | Mourning | Repentance | Humbling | Dire Need | Preparation | Guidance | Petition | Help | Spirituality |
|--|----------|------------|----------|-----------|-------------|----------|----------|------|--------------|
| Nehemiah 1v3-4 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Who fasted? | | | | | | | | | |
| Why did they fast | | | | | | | | | |
| What did they want to achieve? | | | | | | | | | |
| Easter 4v3&16 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Who fasted? | | | | | | | | | |
| Why did they fast | | | | | | | | | |
| What did they want to achieve? | | | | | | | | | |
| Daniel 9v2-3 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Who fasted? | | | | | | | | | |
| Why did they fast | | | | | | | | | |
| What did they want to achieve? | | | | | | | | | |
| Jonah 3v5 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Who fasted? | | | | | | | | | |
| Why did they fast | | | | | | | | | |
| What did they want to achieve? | | | | | | | | | |
| New Testament | | | | | | | | | |
| Matthew 4v2 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Who fasted? | | | | | | | | | |
| Why did they fast | | | | | | | | | |
| Luke 2v37 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Who fasted? | | | | | | | | | |
| Why did they fast | | | | | | | | | |
| Acts 13v2-3 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| How man times did they fast? | | | | | | | | | |
| Who fasted? | | | | | | | | | |
| Why did they fast | | | | | | | | | |
| What did they want to achieve? | | | | | | | | | |
| What happened? | | | | | | | | | |
| Why did they fast before ordaining Barnabas & Paul? | | | | | | | | | |
| Acts 14v23 | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| Who fasted? | | | | | | | | | |
| Why did they fast | | | | | | | | | |
| Several of the these passages linked repentance and fasting . | | | | | | | | | |
| Do we need to fast for our sins to be forgiven? | | | | | | | | | |
| Do you think there is still a link between repentance and fasting? | | | | | | | | | |
| The above verses are taken from the Old and New Testaments. | | | | | | | | | |
| Do you think there is a shift of emphasis between the Testaments? | | | | | | | | | |
| Of the four NT verses that refer to fasting it was only the last one where a specific reason was given for the fasting and even here it was quite broad. | | | | | | | | | |
| What do you think the emphasis of fasting in the NT is? | | | | | | | | | |
| Sensitivity, closeness to God preparation for service seem to be the key ideas | | | | | | | | | |

Bible Studies

Fasting

Read Matthew 6v16-18

Did Jesus expect his disciples to fast?

How did he expect us to fast?

What was wrong with fasting in such a way that everyone knows?

This is part of a threefold teaching, “When you give to the needy,” v2, “When you pray,” v5, “when you fast,” v16. Jesus clearly expects us to do all three. **When** you fast, not **if** you fast. Jesus assumes that such things would be natural to us.

In each of the three teachings Jesus emphasises that these things are not for public show. He is not suggesting that we practice deceit or become paranoid that no one should know we are fasting, only that we do not do it for public recognition, but only to and for God. Each passage ends and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. This means that praying, giving to the poor and fasting all have rewards attached to them. What reward do you think there is for fasting.

Read Luke 5v33-35

Jesus disciple and we have to assume Jesus himself were accused of not fasting. The Pharisees made it their practice to fast twice a week. (They fasted from evening to evening, effectively they only missed breakfast and lunch.)

If Jesus followed his own teaching would they have known if he was fasting?

Jesus answer seems a bit evasive, as if he did not want to say “well actually I do fast”

Jesus however did say that when the bridegroom went away his Disciples would fast.

When did the bridegroom go away?

How does Jesus statement effect us?

Fasting is still something that is expected of us.

Elements of fasting



Fasting humbles. If you look back at last weeks study you will realise that fasting was often associated with humbling yourself.

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble...” Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. James 4:6&10 cf 1 Peter 5v5-6

How is fasting Humbling?

Why do we need to humble ourselves before God?

This aspect of fasting is often linked in the OT with penitence and repentance.

Do we need to fast so that our sins will be forgiven?

No we don't Jesus has done it all for us, But a penitent, broken heart is still something God desires. Psalm 51:17



Fasting is sacrificial It does us no harm from time to time to sacrifice something for God, it reminds us of our loyalties, and the good things God has freely given us. It is a way of giving to God, honouring and worshipping Him.



Fasting Subdues the flesh

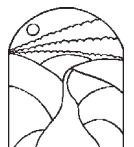
I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. 1 Corinthians 9:27

It is often said that the body is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master.

Fasting has a long connection with triumph over sin and also with deliverance.

For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. Galatians 5:17 Fasting helps to remove the two main things that stand in the way of the Holy Spirit's work in us. Our sinful nature and our stubborn self will. With these out of the way it is easier to hear from God, to pray and to bring our lives into line with God's will.

Why then is fasting beneficial for us?



It is for this reason that fasting is associated with seeking guidance from God. Fasting helps to get us out of the way, so that we can hear God's voice better.



Fasting Concentrates the mind Fasting has a major impact on your life. If you want to spend time seeking God, fasting will concentrate the mind. It can prepare us for spiritual things. There is a record that the early church insisted that people fast the day of their baptism.



Fasting twists God's arm OK I lied. Of course it does no such thing, you cannot twist God's arm however much you fast, nor are you likely to impress Him with your spirituality. **Fasting changes man, it does not change God.**

In what way does fasting change us?

There are occasions in Scripture when fasting did not obtain what was sort. Eg 2 Samuel 12.

What is more Isaiah 58 strongly criticises the way the people of his day fasted. They abstained from food but they kept on doing all the things God hated, so their fasting was a waste of time.

'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?' 'Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Isaiah 58:3 When we fast we must change. Isaiah goes on to say that true fasting has to do with justice and compassion, with obedience to God. Obeying is still better than sacrificing.

Do you always need a reason to fast?

If nothing else, fasting shows an earnestness before God.

Fasting and Prayer

This is one of the abiding connections in scripture. One of the reasons to fast, is so that we can spend special time in prayer. And so that we can hear from God better how to pray. It has been said that fasting intensifies prayer. To an extent this is true.

Derek Prince presented the following diagram.

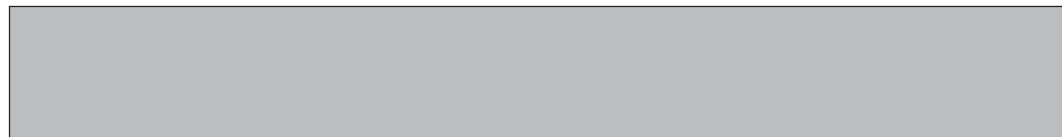


The dark area are the things within God's will, that can be obtained by prayer. The light area are the things that can be obtained by prayer, with fasting. Some things cannot be obtained without fasting. The whole triangle is God's whole will for us. Outside the triangle is outside God's will, the things that fall into this area cannot be obtained, even through fasting.

If fasting had no benefits, in prayer, or in our spiritual lives, why did the early church practice it?

He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer." Mark 9:29. Many early MSS say "by prayer and fasting."

Under what circumstances might you need to fast?



What do you think is the best way to fast?

Well the Bible just does not say. You can fast regularly or at times of need. You can do a total fast, or just fast from food. You can miss a meal or go 40 days. Fasting occasionally is generally considered to be beneficial to the body, but there are many dangers for those with medical conditions or those doing long fasts, find a book that explains some practicalities of fasting. Right fasting has more to do with an attitude of heart than it does with the way it is carried out.

Bible Studies

Loneliness

What is loneliness?

What causes loneliness?

How do you feel when you are lonely?

There are many ways you could define loneliness. Not having people about, or being on your own, are not enough. It also includes the feeling that people do not really care about you. Or that you are not valued.

Loneliness is endemic to our society. Sociologists point out that in modern industrial societies, (like ours) are very good at what they call "Secondary relationships". A secondary relationship is the kind of relationship you have with your hairdresser, (doctor, co-worker, neighbour). You chat, you exchange pleasantries, you even talk as if you care about one another, but the truth is you are getting your hair cut. There is no intimacy or real compassion, it is a pretend intimacy.

Our society is very bad at producing primary relationships. A primary relationship is where there is an enduring friendship. Family is the primary source of these relationships. (Communication is deep and extensive) In a primary relationship the interest is in the whole person, (in a secondary relationship it is only part of the person eg. their skills as a hair dresser / need for a hair cut).



Loneliness comes because of a lack of Primary relationships.

When we are alone we tend to become depressed, lethargic and lack motivation, we tend to see and expect the worst. We give in to hopelessness and boredom. Humans are social beings. If we are exposed to long periods of isolation, (eg explorers/astronauts) we tend to go a little mad. Even God said of man. *It is not good for him to be alone.* Gen 2:18



Loneliness comes as a result of our lifestyle. To change it we must change our lifestyle.

Did anyone in the Bible ever feel lonely?

The answer is a resounding yes. For many reasons, good and bad, many of the Bible character went through periods of loneliness. David, running from King Saul, hiding alone in the desert. He wrote these words

My eyes are ever on the LORD, for only he will release my feet from the snare. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Psalms 25:15-16

He also wrote Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me. Psalms 27:10
Jeremiah said; I sat alone because your hand was on me. Jer 15:17

I think Jesus must have been desperately lonely at times even though there was always a crowd around him. No one understood, no one shared his burdens, no body was on his wavelength. In the end even his disciples left him alone.



When we are alone all our fears and doubts seem to get magnified.

What does Hebrews 13v5 say?

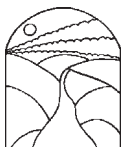
If this is true, are we ever alone?

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Someone coined the phrase “lonely but never alone”.

The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. Psalm 9:9

God is the loneliness breaker. But of course, God doesn't count. It's human friends we want. Yes I accept that but God only 'doesn't count' if we discount Him. The truth is that a relationship with him is all we need.

Jacob was a real rat bag, he cheated his brother and then his father and ended up running from his home for fear of his life. For the first time he was alone.

What happened next? Genesis 28v10-16

Jacob met God. If you are lonely the first solution is to start developing a relationship with God. Do this through constant prayer. Talk to God, read His word. You will find that God is especially close to the lonely. You have the opportunity to establish a relationship with God that will see you through the rest of your life. It is money in the bank.

Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. John 16:32

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. John 14:18

When you are lonely you think that you are the only one. The truth is that everyone goes through loneliness at some time in their life.

When you are lonely you think it will always be the same. The truth is it will pass.

Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. Psalm 30:5

It is very important when we try to combat loneliness, that we see things as they really are and not according to how we feel. We may feel no one cares but is it true? We may feel we will always be alone but what proof do we have?

The fear of loneliness is often worse than the reality. The fear of loneliness can cause us to stay in relationships that are bad for us. Loneliness itself can make us do things that are stupid, badly thought out or plain wrong before God.

Can you think of any examples?

God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; Psalm 68:6

The word translated families is not the usual word for families. It is the word we get, 'Kibbutz' from. It means 'group', it is a good word to describe a church.

Churches are very good at providing Primary relationships. However this does not happen automatically.

Can I expect others to do something about my loneliness?

No, most people will not even give it a thought. Loneliness is a private affair. You are the one who must make the initiative.

A man *that hath* friends must show himself friendly: Prov 18:24 KJV

If you want to have friends you have to be friendly. You have to take the risk and start making friends.

Will every friendship you try to make work out?

Do you need someone with you all the time?

What can you do to create friendships?

Friendships can't be forced they have to develop with time.

Seldom set foot in your neighbour's house—too much of you, and he will hate you. Prov 25:17

What does this verse mean and how does it apply to friendship?

What can you do to prevent loneliness?

What kind of lifestyle change is needed to combat loneliness?

What do you think the Church needs to do to combat loneliness?

Bible Studies

Seek ye first

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

This is one of the well known verses of the Gospels.

What is the context in which it is written?

This part of the Bible is called the 'Sermon on the Mount'. It is one complete teaching that Jesus gave while on a hillside near the sea of Galilee, it covers 3 chapters (5-7). It contains an ethical basis for how Christians should live.

In this section Jesus is warning us not to worry.

What is the opposite of worry?

I guess you would have to say trusting, I don't think you would say seeking. So why does Jesus say the antidote for worry, is to seek God's kingdom?

What kind of things does Jesus say we should not be worried about?

These are material needs, in fact the basic human needs, clothes, food, health. Jesus says we are not to run after these things.

What is a pagan? v32

Jesus is saying that our lives do not need to be centred around our needs or our possessions.

Consider the following verses.

Luke 12:15

Matthew 6:20

Mark 4:19

If a man's life is not the total of his possessions, what is it?

How do you store treasure in heaven?

What effect does a desire of material things have on faith?

Jesus is telling us that a desire for God's kingdom must come before our own needs.

What is the Kingdom of God?

That is probably an unfair question, many people have come up with many different answers. So we will go with a simple one, God's kingdom is where God is ruling, or, where people are submitting to God's rule.

Are you part of God's kingdom?

Is the Church part of God's kingdom?

Is an unbeliever part of God's kingdom?

The kingdom of God is not visible, Jesus said. "Nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:21, In the future it will be a physical kingdom.

If we are to seek first God's kingdom, that implies that there are other 'kingdoms' that would like to take priority in our lives. Kingdom is not a word we often use. Lets say that a kingdom is where ever someone exercises authority. Or, where there are expectations and responsibilities put upon us.

What other kingdoms can you think of?

The most obvious is the **Kingdom of Darkness**, Satan's rule. Col 1:13

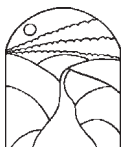
But it is not the only one, next in significance is the **Kingdom of Self**. Us, our rule, our desires, ambitions and opinions. We rule our own lives.

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In addition, there is our country, Romans 13:1, even our job. Then there are the responsibilities we have to our children, partner, family and friends. When you start to look at it this way, it is almost like we are surrounded by different people and groups, all of them are pulling at us, demanding our time, loyalty and obedience. Sometimes they pull in one direction, but most of the time they seem to pull different ways and we get stretched in the middle.

Did Jesus say seek only His kingdom?

It is not a question of exclusive obedience to God's kingdom. But that His kingdom comes first. We have responsibilities to our country, employer and family. The Bible tells us that we must fulfil these obligations.

The real area of conflict is between the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Darkness and the Kingdom of Self.

If God want's you to do one thing and you want to do another, which comes first? If your boss says "I want you to work every Sunday", what do you do?

How often do these Kingdoms conflict?

Can you think of some examples?

Where does all this leave our selfishness?

If our Christianity consists of only ever doing what we want, when we want, then in reality it counts for very little.

The verse says not only to seek His kingdom but also his righteousness,

What does righteousness have to do with obeying God?

There are two aspects of salvation; Jesus as our Saviour, and, Jesus as our Lord.

Which one does 'Seeking first his Kingdom' pertain to?

Which one does 'Seeking His righteousness' pertain to?

So the conclusion is, that we must put God first in our lives.

This sounds like a big ask, ***but God's will is always for our best.***

What is the promise that goes along with this command? v32b

I think there are two other things that you can find in the verse.

1 ***Firstly***, Seek is an active word. I think Jesus is telling us that we need to develop our spiritual life. To know more about God and to weld ourselves deeper into His kingdom.

How do you do this?

But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.
Jude 1:20

How does this fit in with seeking God's righteousness?

We are not told to seek our own righteousness (by works) we are told to seek His righteousness, ie the righteousness that comes by faith. Rom 4:13, Phil 3:9

2 ***Secondly***, I think He is calling us to the expansion of His kingdom. To be active in reaching out to the world around us. And to do things that help to build the Church.

Paul writes a damning assessment of Christians of his day, saying;
For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. Phil 2:21

What does this verse mean?

Do you think it is true of us?

What can we do to look out for the interests of Christ?

Bible Studies

Joel and the Locust

Almost nothing is known about Joel. We do not even know for sure when he prophesied. His ministry was in the Southern Kingdom (Judah). The most likely dates are during the reign of Joash, 2 Chron 24, (835-796BC) or the reign of Uzziah, 2 Chron 26, (792-740BC). Both were good kings, both provided stability and prosperity.



Read Joel 1v1-12

What has just happened?

There is no doubt that Joel is describing an actual event. Locust are normally no problem, they look like a grasshopper and are up to 10cm long, they are solitary creatures who do little damage. But under certain conditions, (warm and moist) a 'large hatch' can occur. The locust change physically and in their behaviour. They swarm and migrate. Where ever they land they eat everything, even the bark from the trees. They leave a waste land behind them. As the insects die they bring disease. Plagues follow the locust.

In 1889 a swarm was observed which it is estimated covered 3000 KM².

Swarms have been seen 2000KM off the coast of Africa.

There are up to 120,000,000 insects per square mile.

Even today unless a swarm is controlled as in hatches, there is nothing that can be done. Locust swarms are still deadly across Africa and have occasionally threatened Europe.

What effect would such a plague have had on Judah?



Why were the drunkards wailing? v5

Why were the sacrifices stopped? v9



What did the priests do? v9b

What did the farmers do? v11

At a time like this people looked to prophets like Joel to explain why this was happening and what they should do.

What does Joel say they should do? v13-14

It is hard to overestimate the dire situation Judah was in. It must have seemed as if the world had come to an end. It must have been very hard for them to see any future for themselves.

When catastrophe strikes how should we respond?

What ways do we often respond?

We should humble ourselves before God, seek Him and trust Him. Instead too often we get angry and bitter with God, doubt and even backslide, "this is too much for me".

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 Saviour. Habakkuk 3:17-18

Joel's explanation of the problem has two parts, he examines the current problem, but then he looks at as a metaphor for future events.

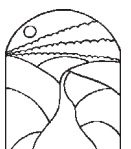
Wake up, you drunkards, and weep! Wail, all you drinkers of wine; wail because of the new wine, for it has been snatched from your lips. Joel 1:5

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This seems like a strange verse. The Prophets follow a fairly predictable pattern.

“*This is what you have done wrong, this is what God is going to do about it, unless you repent.*” Joel strongly advocates the need to repent, 2v13, but he never specifies what they have done. It seems strange to pick on the drunkards. Maybe it means more than you would think. Remember the two most likely times that Joel wrote, were under good kings, but both of them have something in common.

What is it? 2 Chron 24v18-19 & 2 Chron 26v16

I think the problem was that the people got too complacent, times were good, what did they need Jehovah for? Moses warned against just such a situation.

Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. Deuteronomy 8:12-14

When we seek to understand books like we have to be very careful it is easy to make fundamental mistakes. Chapter 2 continues with the description of this invading army of Locust.

Who sent them, whose army are they? 1v15, 2v11

It comes hard to learn that the locust were not Satan’s army, they were God’s Judgment on His complacent, self satisfied, faithless people.

Woe to them *that are* at ease in Zion, Amos 6:1 KJV (NIV. Complacent in Zion)

What does this verse mean?

How does it apply to us?

Watch out for the Locusts. 1 Peter 4v17.



The second way that Joel looks at this locust invasion, heralds the future.

What is the phrase common to the last verse we looked up? 1v15, 2v11

Joel likens the locust plague to the Day of the Lord. (Joel uses the ‘Day of the Lord’ more frequently than any other author, 5 times in 3 chapters. He uses what was happening then to describe what was yet to happen and to warn the people.

We will study this more next week.



Read Joel 2v1-11

The description is again of a locust swarm but this time it is clear that the army is real. (It comes from the north 2v20, locust come from the south). The synopsis is similar to that of Habakkuk. When Habakkuk complained that God was doing nothing about the sins of Judah, God says he will send the Babylonians to invade.

They are a feared and dreaded people; they are a law to themselves and promote their own honour.

Their horses are swifter than leopards, fiercer than wolves at dusk. Their cavalry gallops headlong; their horsemen come from afar. They fly like a vulture swooping to devour; they all come bent on violence.

Their hordes advance like a desert wind and gather prisoners like sand. Habakkuk 1:7-9

Historically it could be the same army. Although in light of the rest of the book these are also future events.



The call to repent Read Joel 2v12-17

What does it mean, ‘return to me with all your heart’? v12

What does ‘rend your hearts’ mean? v13

What is the effect of repentance? v13b

What are the implications of God being slow to anger?

Verse 16 describes who must repent, it includes those who were normally exempt from ceremonial observances.

Bible Studies

Joel and the Restoration.

Read Joel 2v18-26

In the previous part of the chapter the people of Judah have repented before the Lord for their compliancy.

How does the Lord respond?

Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. Joel 2:13

Do you think God holds grudges?

It is an amazing truth that God forgives freely and totally. Once He forgives, He forgets, it is never mentioned again.

When we forgive, often, when it suites us, we strategically remind the person of their failings, it gives us control over them.

Do you think this is true forgiveness?

What would you say are the important things about God's forgiveness and the way He forgives?

I love to tell the story of the prodigal son, just as the people are relaxing in a well known and comforting parable, I change the script. Instead of responding the way God did in the story, I respond the way we would. "Too right you've sinned against me. Things are going to be different... your going to repay... and if you ever pull a stunt like this again..." It is so hard for us to accept that God's forgiveness is for real.

What things are mentioned in this passages that result from God's forgiveness?

Are these blessing spiritual or physical?

Blessing, joy, release from fear, restoration, praise, deliverance etc.

There are two verses in this passage that are well known;

1

Be glad, O people of Zion, rejoice in the LORD your God, for he has given you the autumn rains in righteousness. He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before. Joel 2:23

The NIV has a footnote commenting that 'rains in righteousness' could be teacher for righteousness. (Teacher is the more common meaning, but the context implies rain.)

Who do you think this refers to?

How did he teach us righteousness?

The Summer in Israel is totally dry, no rain falls whatsoever. At the feast of tabernacles (Sept/Oct), the Jews start to pray for rain. It rains throughout the winter, but the rainfall is concentrated in two periods; Oct/Nov, the autumn rains and March/April, the spring rains.

The KJV calls these the former & latter rains. These rains were vitally important for the crops. In Jewish culture rain is a blessing. They really were, *showers of blessing*. Ezekiel 34:26

Then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. Deuteronomy 11:14

Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field. Zechariah 10:1

Why do you think we are told to ask for rain?

What do you think Joel & Zechariah meant by rain is in this verse?

Firstly they obviously meant rain, the kind that makes you wet.

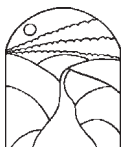
What other kinds of rain do you think we should ask for?

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Read Joel 2v28-32

This is the heart of the book, this is Joel's latter rain. Throughout the OT, God poured out His Spirit on individuals, temporarily and for specific reasons. But in the Last days, He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh. (More of this next week). Just as the latter rains are much heavier than the former, so this outpouring would be much greater.

So Ask of rain in the time of the latter rain.

2

I will repay you for the years the locusts have eaten—the great locust and the young locust, the other locusts and the locust swarm—my great army that I sent among you.
Joel 2:25

The contrast here is with Joel 1v4

What the locust swarm has left the great locusts have eaten; what the great locusts have left the young locusts have eaten; what the young locusts have left other locusts have eaten. Joel 1:4

It is not possible to identify the different types of locust referred to, nor is the meaning of the passage tied up in differentiating the breed of locust or their habits. The totality of the destruction is what Joel wants to emphasize. Cf. Jer 15v3, Ezek 14:21.

What is God promising here?

How could this promise apply to us?

Can you think of any biblical accounts that illustrate this?

Perhaps Job is the best example, but what about Joseph or the women of the scriptures who were barren, but became fruitful.

It is very easy to look back and over lost years with despair. But such things are not lost on God. He will find a way to restore the years. This is a great retroactive promise. As for you, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will free your prisoners from the waterless pit. Return to your fortress, O prisoners of hope; even now I announce that I will restore twice as much to you. Zechariah 9:11-12

How do the following verses apply to this promise?

Romans 8:28

Psalms 92:14

Psalms 126:5

2 Corinthians 4:17

God is a God of restoration, God is a God of the second chance. God is the God who always has a plan for our future. The locust will not destroy it.

Sometimes we fail so badly that we cannot believe there is a future for us. That God can take us, restore us and use us again. We have just gone too far.

Can you think of any Bible characters who seriously failed but whom God subsequently forgave and restored and used?

A better question is can you think of any who didn't! The leader of the whole Christian Church for the first 10 years, actually denied that he had ever met Jesus. And he did it in Jesus' greatest hour of need. This puts our failures into perspective.

If you were Jesus what would you have said to Peter?

Does this mean we can avoid the consequences of our sin?

No I don't believe it always does, sometimes the effects of the things we do live on with us. But it does mean there is always a way back to God's blessing and His will. There always a way to God's forgiveness, there is always a future.

Therefore this is what the LORD says: "If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; Jeremiah 15:19

Restore us, O God; make your face shine upon us, that we may be saved. Psalm 80:3

Bible Studies

Joel & the day of the Lord.

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand—Joel 2:1

As we have already commented Joel speaks much of the day of the Lord. So what is the day of the Lord? For that matter when is the day of the Lord? What will it be like and what should we expect?

There are only rare references to the ‘day of the Lord’ in the prophets, (16) but phrases like ‘in that day’ occur frequently.

The day of the Lord is an eschatological term, it is connected with the events of the end of the age. We know from the NT that it is the wonderful day of Jesus second coming. 2 Pet 3:10 In it’s broadest use it means any day when God steps into human history in a significant way. God’s Judgement on Judah, executed by the Locust was a “day of the Lord”.

How does Amos describe the day of the Lord? Amos 5:18

See, the day of the LORD is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. Isaiah 13:9

There is a tension here in these verses. People were longing for the day of the Lord, but Amos warns that it will be a terrible day.

How can the day of the Lord be both wonderful and terrible at the same time?

The same day brings Judgement for the wicked and deliverance for the righteous.

Read Joel 2v28-32

When was this passage fulfilled ?

Read Acts 2v16

To what was Peter referring?

Read Acts 2v1-12

Peter says that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost was in fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. To be more precise it was the start of the fulfillment, for Peter himself goes on to note: The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call. Acts 2:39 It’s fulfillment continues to this day.

Who was filled with the Holy Spirit in the OT?

| | | |
|--------------------|-----|-----|
| Exodus 31v3 | Who | Why |
| Numbers 27:18 | Who | Why |
| Judges 6:34 | Who | Why |
| 1 Samuel 10:6 | Who | Why |
| 2 Chronicles 24:20 | Who | Why |
| Ezekiel 2:2 | Who | Why |

According to Joel who would be filled with the Spirit in the NT?

What is the contrast between the Two?

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit was given to select individuals, Kings, Prophets, Priests. Important people. In the New, the Spirit is given to everyone, even servants! In the Old, the Spirit was given for specific jobs and often only for a limited time. In the New, the Spirit is given to empower our whole Christian walk, what is more the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is intended to be a life long growing experience.

It is unlikely that Joel is distinguishing between gifts, old men dream, young have visions. He is describing diversity of those filled and the breadth of the experience. As we noted last week the OT experience of the Holy Spirit is the autumn rain Joel referred to and the NT out pouring is the spring rain.



What do you think v30-31 refer to? Mark 13v24-26

Prophecy often puts things together that are in fact separated by time, but connected in other ways. These cataclysmic event mark the end of what the Spirit's outpouring began. This period, sometimes call the 'time of mercy' is characterised by verse 32 And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; Joel 2:32

What does this mean?

Now is the time when God offers free salvation to all.

What ends this period?

Joel is a book of restoration. As we have seen the former and latter rains, refer to outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments. But there also seems to be a parallel in the Church.

If you look at the history of Christianity, you find that the first 3 centuries were very dynamic. The Church spread like wildfire and was strongly spiritual. From then on large parts of the Church began to stagnate, the Church still continued to spread through Europe, but it had become institutionalised and obsessed temporal power. By the end of the 16th century the Church was in a fairly sorry state and had been for many centuries. Then God started His work of renewal. Someone put it like this:

17th Century saw the restoration of Salvation by faith (Luther)
18th Century saw the restoration of Missions (Carrey)
19th Century saw the restoration of Holiness Doctrine
20th Century saw the restoration of the Fullness of the Spirit.

There is a sense that the latter rain is again falling. We live in a great period of restoration.

Into the Future

‘In those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, Joel 3:1

Chapter 3 goes further into the future. The above verse has found fulfillment in the recreation of Israel within living memory. Joel goes on to state that God will Judge the nations that have oppressed His people Israel.

I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” Genesis 12:3

(Verse 9 on probably describes the much heralded battle of Armageddon.)

Just as God judged Judah for her sins so he will judge the World.

There will be a day of the Lord with a destruction like that of the Locust. We call this the time of tribulation. It is the time of the Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets and Seven Bowls of which Revelation (6,8 &16) speaks. God is doing again to the earth what He did to Judah through the locust.

These passages in Revelation are reminiscent of Joel 2v1-11

What is His Goal in doing this? Rev 9v20-21

This is mankind's last chance to repent before the return of Christ. Can you see the symmetry in Joel? What happened in a local way at the start of the book, becomes global and eschatological at the end of the book.

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. Joel 3:14

**What do you think Joel means by the Valley of Decision?
Are People in the Valley of Decision apathetic?**

I think this verse spells out loud and clear our end time commission. As the end draws closer and these prophecies quicken in their fulfillment. People need to make a choice, they need to chose God. We need to help them make that choice.

Bible Studies

Ephesians 2:8-10

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. *10* For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:8-10

Read Ephesians 2v1-10

Whenever we try to understand a verse we have to understand the context it is written in.

Verse 1-3 describe:

Verse 4-6 describe:

Verse 7 describes:

Verse 8-10 describe:

Why do you think verse is so important?

I think it is important because it is another verse like John 3v16 that explains how we are saved.

The first verse talks about being saved, saved means rescued or delivered.

What are we saved from?

Romans 5:9, 1 Peter 1:18, Matthew 23:33, Colossians 1v13, 1 John 2:2

What is Grace?

There are many ways to define grace, the most common is ‘God’s unmerited favour’. Someone else put it **God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense**. I think of it as God doing what I don’t deserve and He doesn’t have to do.

What was the result of God’s grace in this passage?

How did God extend His grace to us?

Why are we undeserving of His salvation?

Another way to look at this is, what did I ever do that God should care for me?

Read Titus 3v5

2 Thessalonians 2:13

Romans 3:28 (justified means made right with God)

What could we have done to make ourselves worthy of His salvation?

The disconcerting answer is nothing. We do not have anything to barter with God for our salvation. Even our righteousness is like filthy rags. Isa 64v6. Some things are so precious, they can only be given, never bought. We can do nothing for the salvation of our souls, other than respond in faith to God’s free gift.

It is unclear whether it is faith that is, not of yourselves it is the gift of God, or salvation as a whole both are true.

What is the Faith Paul is talking about here?

Faith in this context is believing that when we accept His offer of salvation, He will do what He has promised, accept us, wash away our sins, give us eternal life.

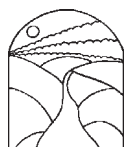
Faith here is saying, yes to God, responding to Him.

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Who did what?

Took the initiative

God

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Man

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Provided the way to be saved

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Responded in faith

Y

Y

Gave the faith

Y

Y

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

What does 'not by works' mean?

The main thing he means by works is keeping the law, but he also means good deed. Anything we think brings us credit with God.

What examples can you think of?

What does we are his workmanship mean?

It can mean three things:

Psalm 139v13

2 Corinthians 5:17

Philippians 2v13

This passage declares that we cannot be made right with God by doing good works. But this does not mean that we don't do them.

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10

We are to do the good works that God has already prepared for us.

What kind of things are they?

You could say there are three groups; physical good deeds (like helping the poor), spiritual deeds (like witnessing) and internal good deeds (like not sinning)

Read James 2v14-24

Some people seem to think that there is a contradiction here between Paul, who says we are Justified by faith and James who says we are Justified by works. James certainly seems to assume that we already know, as Paul taught, that we are saved by faith. Nor does he teach we are saved by what we do. James argument is that faith which cannot be seen, is no faith at all. He is concerned with the reality of faith.

Ie. You become a Christian, but there is no change in your lifestyle, not even a small, tentative, attempt to get your life in line with God's standards.

James would say to you "well you say you believe in God, but you don't believe in Him enough to obey Him. Surely if you really had faith in God you would want to obey Him."

They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. Titus 1:16.

If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 1 John 1:6

It is like a Christian version of 'the Emperors new clothes', we parade down the street, claiming to be wearing these amazing robes. James is the little boy who says, "If I can't see your faith in your actions then it's not there."

We do Good deeds because we are saved, not to get saved. Deeds prove faith, faith motivates deeds.

Do you think Paul would have disagreed?

Does this mean that if we sin or fail we are no longer Christians?

What does it mean?

Bible Studies

Can you?



Can you know God unless He reveals Himself to you?

Luke 10:22

How has God revealed himself ?

Acts 1v20; John 14v7; 2 Timothy 3v16

How should we respond to this revelation?



Can a person save themselves?

How? Why?

Isaiah 44:20, Isaiah 47:14,
but Ezekiel 18:27, Acts 2:40

If a man sins against another man, God may mediate for him;
but if a man sins against the LORD,
who will intercede for him?" 1 Samuel 2:25

If there were another way, would Jesus have come to die?



Can a person ever live up to God's standard?

Job 4v17-19, Job 9v2-3

Job 25v4?

What is God's standard?

Should we try?



What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave ? Selah Psalm 89:48

John 11:25-26, John 8v52



Can a man be of benefit to God? Can even a wise man benefit him? Job 22:2

(Does God need us?)

(Does God want our help?)

Psalm 50:12, Psalm 8:4,
Romans 11v35, Psalm 147:11



What is man that you make so much of him, that you give him so much attention, that you examine him every morning and test him every moment? Job 7:17

(Why does God love us?)

Zechariah 2:8, Deuteronomy 7:7.

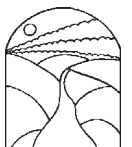
What does it mean that God tests us?

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Can you fathom the mysteries of God? Can you probe the limits of the Almighty? Job 11:7

Isaiah 55:8, Romans 11v34



What can a man give in exchange for his soul?

Matthew 16:26



Is anything too hard for the Lord? Genesis 18v14
(What Can't God do?)



Can a person live without sinning?

Proverbs 20v9, 1 John 1:8, Romans 3:23



What can separate us from the love of God? Romans 8v35
Can sin?
Can we separate ourselves?



How can I repay the Lord for all his goodness to me?

Psalms 116v12



A man's steps are directed by the LORD. How then can anyone understand his own way?

Proverbs 20:24

Jeremiah 17:9



Who can stand in the presence of the LORD, this holy God?

1 Samuel 6:20,

Psalms 15:1,

Psalms 24:3,

Hebrews 10:22



What must I do to inherit eternal life? Mark 10v17

Luke 10v25, Luke 18v18



"Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" Luke 13v23

Revelation 7v9



"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Acts 16v30

Romans 10v9

Bible Studies

A Jealous God?

Read James 4v1-6



Desire

Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. James 1:14-15 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 2 Peter 1:4 According to James desire is the root of sin.

In James 4v2 what does desire result in?

The Bible records two incidents where desire did result in murder.

1 Kings 21 Naboth's Vineyard

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At the outset did either intend to murder anyone?

How then did it end in death?

What sort of desires is James talking about?

What is the goal of the desires James describes? v3

Why do they lead to sin?

What things should we ask God for?

They say that what you think about, you will eventually do. If you want to control sin, you have to take action at the desire stage.

If evil desires lead to evil actions do you think godly desires will lead to acts of righteousness? Proverbs 11v23



Friendship

All of this is just a springboard for the point James wants to make. It looks like his readers have been desiring the wrong things. It seems that friendship with the world has been their goal.

You adulterous people (lit. *you adulteress*). The language James uses is deliberate. Adultery is a term frequently used by the OT prophets to describe Israel's unfaithfulness. *Jeremiah 13:27*

What comparison is James making?

Look at the following Passages

John 15:18-19

John 17:14

1 John 2v15-17

What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on . . . those who use the things of the world, [should live] as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away. 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

When John says that we must not love the world which of the following do you think He means?

- Do not love the nature that God has created.
- Do not enjoy life.
- Do not set your heart on the material things of this world.
- Don't get caught up in the world's way of doing things.

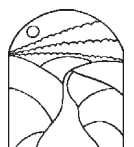
What does John mean by World?

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He doesn't mean the planet we live on, God made it for us and intended it to be a place of enjoyment for us. He means the world's way of doing things. The wrong actions, wrong attitudes, wrong desires and wrong beliefs of the people that we live among.

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. 1 Peter 2:11

How are we aliens and strangers?

What is likely to happen to us if we 'love the world?'

James says that to love the world is to hate God. This is strong language. Perhaps it needs to be tempered by comparing Luke 14v26 (literal) with Matthew 10v37 (meaning).

Why can't you love the world and God both together?

The bottom line is they are opposites and in opposition. Jesus makes the same point when He says you cannot serve two masters, Matthew 6v24. Before we were saved, we were enemies of God, Romans 5:10, we do not want to return to that position.

The believer who is the world's friend, is guilty of spiritual adultery.

Can anything that leads you away from God be good for you?

You must keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1:27

It is an ongoing tension to be in the world but not of the world. We must find the balance.

What are the two extremes?



Jealousy

Now we get to the heart of what James is saying Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? James 4:5

This verse is hard to translate, the NIV gives two alternative translations. 'That the Spirit he caused to live in us longs jealously'. Or 'God jealously longs for the spirit that he made to live in us.' This last one is probably the best translation.

The Spirit He put in us is the Holy Spirit, specifically His work in Salvation and making us into a new creation.

James is not quoting a single verse but he probably has Exodus 34v14, or Deuteronomy 4v24, in mind:

Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. Exodus 34:14 (Exodus 20:5)

For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. Deuteronomy 4:24 Deu 5v9

Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. Josh 24:19

Most of the passages that describe God as jealous, are written in the context of Idolatry.

In what way is God a jealous God?

What is He jealous for?

Does God have the right to be jealous for our lives?

What response does our unfaithfulness elicit in God?

To answer this last question is to understand what *jealous* means. God is jealous for our time, our love our obedience. *A husband or wife who felt no jealousy at the intrusion of a lover or adulterer into their home would surely be lacking in moral perception.* Tasker TNTC
God is faithful to us, He expects us to be faithful to Him.

Are man's jealousy and God's jealousy the same?

What makes them different?

Human jealousy tends to be possessive, but God does not force Himself on us, rather He has give us freedom to respond to Him, or reject Him. Human Jealousy leads to harm and ill will, God jealousy to abounding grace.4v6.

If nothing else this verse tells us that God feels passionately about you. You matter, your actions matter. ***What effect does this have on you?***

Bible Studies

A Jealous God?

Read James 4v1-6



Desire

Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. James 1:14-15
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Kill

covet

quarrel

fight

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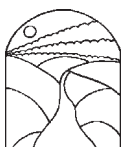
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Bible Studies

Psalm 73

Read Psalm 73

Asaph (one of David's choir masters, 2 Chr 5:12) is going to deal with some controversial issues in this Psalm. In case we are tempted to doubt his faith, he starts by affirming his trust in God.

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. Psalm 73v1

What is the subject of this Psalm?

If you had to give it a title what would it be?

Bear in mind that the psalms are to do with worship, (some are prayers).

Now what would you say the subject of this Psalm is?

So then, this Psalm is about the wicked and how God could possibly permit them prosper. But more than that, it is about the psalmist personal struggle with envy and injustice and how he overcame them.



Asaph

Read Psalm 73v2-3

What effect did observing the wicked have on Asaph?

What did almost slip from?

What sin did he commit?

What is likely to happen to you if you envy others wealth?

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrew 13:5

But godliness with contentment is great gain. 1 Timothy 6:6



The Wicked Read Psalm 73v4-12

According to the psalmist what are the wicked like?

They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. Psalms 73:5

What is the inconsistency in this verse?

Do you think Asaph had a realistic view of the wicked?

Asaph only saw what he wanted to see. Free from the burdens common to man? The burdens common to man are just that! We all have them.

Each heart knows its own bitterness, and no one else can share its joy. Proverbs 14:10

Asaph's grass really was greener on the other side of the fence.

We have a habit of seeing only the problems in our own lives and the blessings in everyone else's.

What is the result of this?

What is the solution to this? 1 Thes 5:18

Count your blessings. Do not dwell on your grief.

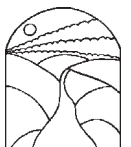
Asaph had a view of life that the righteous would be blessed and the wicked would come to grief. In his own life he could see the opposite. It was this that led to his crisis of faith.

Was his view of life realistic?

Jeremiah experienced this same difficulty:

You are always righteous, O LORD, when I bring a case before you. Yet I would speak with you about your justice: Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all the faithless live at ease? You have planted them, and they have taken root; they grow and bear fruit. You are always on their lips but far from their hearts. Jeremiah 12:1-2

There are many passages that talk about God's blessing for the righteous and His judgement on the wicked. But there are also many that point out that this is not always the case. Asaph's understanding of prosperity was way too simple. He let something to be a problem to his faith, which the Bible accepts as normal.



Do we ever do this?

An example would be suffering, or natural disasters. If the Bible predicts these things; how can they then be used as objections to the Bible. 1 Peter 3:17, Matthew 24:7.

Your Father in heaven... causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Matthew 5:45

What does this verse mean?

Do you think God's ability to bless the wicked is a fault in God?

If only you would slay the wicked, O God! Psalm 139:19

Why doesn't He? 2 Peter 3v9



Back to Asaph Read Psalm 73v13-16

What did Asaph hope to achieve by keeping himself pure?

Was this the right reason?

What is the right reason?

We need to remember that Asaph is writing this in hind sight, he had already understood the solution before he started to write the Psalm.

If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed your children. Psalms 73:15

What does this mean?

When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me Psalms 73:16

Of what concern is it to you if the wicked do prosper?

If you get hung up on this, what effect will it have on you?

Asaph is aware that he has got himself into an unproductive train of thought. If he indulges it, instead of just getting on with walk of faith, he is going to fall. He will let himself down and those relying on him. His faith and his doubt will effect others, not just himself.



The penny drops Read Psalm 73v16-28

When did things change for him? v17

He got distracted by the reality of God! He enters into God's presence and suddenly this problem, which had seemed so big, becomes totally unimportant.

What will the future be for the wicked? v18-20

In the end they will be destroyed, but the imagery is all future, now they are on slippery ground, if they do not repent, judgement day will see them cast down.

Verse 21-22 It is not until realises this, that he sees the depth of the effect it had on him. It had robbed him of his reason and made him bitter. It had stopped him from seeing things as they are and from communion with God.

What was Asaph's basic problem?

You could answer this a lot of ways, but I would say *he was looking in the wrong place*. He needed to look to God, instead he looked at the wicked.

What does Asaph decide is important? v23-28

Compared with this what is all the prosperity of the wicked?

Who has the better deal, the wicked or the righteous?

What does Asaph have, that the wicked do not?

All this obviously applies to us, so often we set our hearts on the wrong things and we look in the wrong places, we get discouraged and it brings us down spiritually.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, Hebrews 12:2

Can you really say I desire nothing besides you?

What do you have as a Christian that is important?

The solution; forget the wicked and all the lust for the worlds goals, wealth, fame, power. Make God your refuge.

Read Psalm 37

Bible Studies

Who am I?

Who am I? is a question everyone has to ask. It takes on a whole new perspective when it is answered in the light of the scriptures.

Am I an accident? Am I the result of chance? Am I unimportant? Am I a sinner? The Bible has something to say on all these issues.

The goal of this study is not self examination, necessary though that be. In John, Jesus described himself with a series of 'I am' statements, He used them to describe Himself and His mission. What about us? What 'I am' statement should we use?



I am a sheep John 10:27

I am not sure that this is a very complimentary assessment of us.

What are sheep good at?

What are sheep bad at?

When Jesus calls us sheep what point is He trying to make?

If we are sheep, who is Jesus?

What does it take to fill this role well?

What should sheep avoid?

What are the rewards of being a sheep?

What are the dangers in avoiding the role?

Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Psalm 100:3 Sheep need a shepherd.



I am a Child John 1:12

Read Matthew 18v2-5

What place do children occupy in society?

In what way does Jesus want us to be like children?

In what ways does He not want us to be like children?

1 Corinthians 14:20, Matthew 10:16, Hebrews 5:12. 1 Corinthians 13:11

I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." Mark 10:15
My heart is not proud, O LORD, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me. Psalm 131:1-2

If we are children who is God?

If we are God's children how will we behave?

What are the dangers for those who reject this role?



I am a servant John 12:26, Romans 1v1

Almost all of the NT writers describe themselves as servants, It is a widely used term in the Bible.

How did Jesus describe himself? Matthew 20:28, Philippians 2:7

What position does a servant take?

What does it mean to be a servant?

If I am a servant, who is God?

Who am I to serve?

What do I achieve by being a servant? Matthew 23:11

So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'" Luke 17:10

What does this mean?

Read John 13:14-17

Live as free men, ... live as servants of God. 1 Peter 2v16

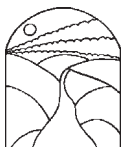
In what way are you a servant?

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I am a Friend Luke 5:20

Read John 15:14-15

What is the difference between being a friend & being a servant?

Does this verse mean we do not have to serve God?

If we are friends, who is Jesus?

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. James 4:4

What obligations do friends have?

What point does Jesus want to make by calling us friends?



I am a Son or daughter. 1 John 5:2

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, Galatians 3:26

"I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 2 Corinthians 6:18

What is the difference between being a child and a son/daughter?

I think the point of this is to emphasize our relationship with God, we are part of his family.

What does it mean to be a son/daughter?

Where does discipline come into this? Hebrews 12:5-11

What expectations are there on sons & daughters?



I am an Heir Galatians 4:7

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. Rom 8:17

Two phrases that occur in scripture are heirs of the promises and heirs of righteousness. ***What do you think they mean?***

What does it mean to be an heir of God?

What part of this is current and what part future?

Having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:7

The parable of the prodigal son talks about two heirs.

How did they use their inheritance?

"My son," the father said, "you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. Luke 15:31

Esau is also a warning to us of how not to be an heir. ***What did he do?***



I am a Disciple Matthew 28:19

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. John 8:31

What is a disciple?

What do disciples do?

What attitudes do they show?

If we are disciples, who is Jesus?

What is the difference between a Christian and a Disciple?

What happens if we do not get to grips with being a disciple?



I am a Soldier 1 Corinthians 9:7

Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. 2 Tim 2:3-4

What makes you a good soldier?

What are the traits of a bad soldier?

If I am a soldier who is Christ?

If I am a soldier who or what am I fighting?

What is the difference between being a sheep & being a soldier?



What other things are used in the New Testament to describe who we are?

Bible Studies

Christmas Prophecy

One of the amazing things about Jesus life was the way it fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah, the One who was to come. As we approach Christmas we are going to look at some of these prophecies. Many of them are familiar to us, we read them every year. But what do they tell us about Jesus?

Genesis 3v14-15

In what context is the prophecy recorded?

Who said it and who were they talking to?

What does this tell us about Jesus origins? Galatians 4:4

What does it tell us about his work? 1 John 3:8

What do you think Adam expected of the Messiah?

Read Romans 5v15-17 (The trespass=Adam the gift=Jesus.)

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 1 Cor 15:22

The context is Adam's sin and the fall of mankind. God is speaking straight to the enemy. Jesus is the Woman's seed, i.e. he is born of women, he is human, his task is to destroy Satan's work.

The point of this prophecy is that what Adam lost, Jesus was to restore.

In what ways was Jesus like Adam?

They were both 'heads' mankind, their actions effected us all. Other than that it is the points of contrast that are the interesting ones.

This passage concentrates on Jesus as:

Deuteronomy 18v15-19

Who is talking?

What kind of ministry will this promised one engage in?

How does he describe this prophet?

Where does the Prophet come from?

In what ways was Jesus like Moses? Heb 3:2 John 1:17

When God spoke to the people from Mt. Sinai, the people did not want to hear what God had to say. v17b. Moses acted as an intermediary. Nor did they latter want to obey the words that Moses passed on.

What do you think Moses strong injunction to listen to the Prophet implied?

At this passage tells us that the words Jesus spoke, like the words Moses spoke came from God. V19, John 14:24. They had an authority of the same kind as the Law given at Mt Sinai. Moses warning against refusing to hear God's voice directly, suggests to us that Jesus was doing more than speaking God's words, He was God speaking.

What will happen to those how refuse to listen? V19

This passage concentrates on Jesus as:

Micah 5v1-5a

How did people in Jesus day understand this verse? Mat 2v5-6, John 7v42

Who else was born in Bethlehem? 1 Sam 17v12

Why is this significant? 2 Sam 7:12-13

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Having said this where does the Messiah come from? v2b

What will he do?

When were his origins?

Jesus might have been born in Bethlehem, but He came from God. He existed before He was born! Ancient times is, \1wu ymwy Literally eternal days.

There never was a time when Jesus did not exist. The point of this passage is that He became flesh, ie became human. John 1v14.

What was the effect of Messiah's ministry? v3

This is really strange, the result of Messiah coming was not national acceptance and restoration, but rather the abandonment of the nation. This happened in AD70 with the destruction of Jerusalem. But it is only for a time. Until 'she who is in labour gives birth' then it will result in Israel's restoration. Romans 11v25-26.

This passage presents a problem that is common in the prophets, they saw what would happen, but they did not see a time frame. Like a mountain range viewed from a distance, they only saw the peaks, not the valleys of time between them. Therefore, part of this passage is fulfilled, part is being fulfilled and part is yet to come.

Which bits are which?

This passage concentrates on Jesus as:

Isaiah 7v14

What are the significant things this verse tells us about Jesus?

Mat 1v18-2v1 & Luke 1v26-35, record the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin.

Why do you think the virgin birth was necessary?

It emphasises Jesus sinlessness, (not tainted by Adams sin) and His divine origin.

Emmanuel means God with us or God among us. It implies, God on our level. God becoming one of us. A different Hebrew word is used for a superior among inferiors.

Was Jesus ever called Emmanuel?

In what way do you think the name was appropriate to Jesus?

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? John 14:8-9

This passage concentrates of Jesus as:

Isaiah 9v1-7

Again this is another prophecy that mixes the now and the not yet.

What would the Messiah bring? Mat 4v12-17, John 1v4,5,9.

To whom would Jesus be a light? v1b, Luke 2:32.

How was this fulfilled?

he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:6

To whom is the Child born?

What do you think is important about the 4 names?

The names are significant because again they make it clear just who Jesus is.

Spiritual peace is ours now, but the physical peace and the physical reign of Jesus must await his second coming.

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They were both 'heads' mankind, their actions effected us all. Other than that it is the points of contrast that are the interesting ones.

This passage concentrates on Jesus as:

Restorer

Deuteronomy 18v15-19

Who is talking?

What kind of ministry will this promised one engage in?

How does he describe this prophet?

Where does the Prophet come from?

In what ways was Jesus like Moses? Heb 3:2 John 1:17

When God spoke to the people from Mt. Sinai, the people did not want to hear what God had to say. v17b. Moses acted as an intermediary. Nor did they latter want to obey the words that Moses passed on.

What do you think Moses strong injunction to listen to the Prophet implied?

At this passage tells us that the words Jesus spoke, like the words Moses spoke came from God. V19, John 14:24. They had an authority of the same kind as the Law given at Mt Sinai. Moses warning against refusing to hear God's voice directly, suggests to us that Jesus was doing more than speaking God's words, He was God speaking.

What will happen to those how refuse to listen? V19

This passage concentrates on Jesus as:

Prophet Divine Voice

Micah 5v1-5a

How did people in Jesus day understand this verse? Mat 2v5-6, John 7v42

Who else was born in Bethlehem? 1 Sam 17v12

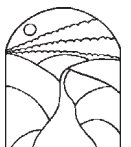
Why is this significant? 2 Sam 7:12-13

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Having said this where does the Messiah come from? v2b

What will he do?

When were his origins?

Jesus might have been born in Bethlehem, but He came from God. He existed before He was born! Ancient times is, \1wu ymwy Literally eternal days.

There never was a time when Jesus did not exist. The point of this passage is that He became flesh, ie became human. John 1v14.

What was the effect of Messiah's ministry? v3

This is really strange, the result of Messiah coming was not national acceptance and restoration, but rather the abandonment of the nation. This happened in AD70 with the destruction of Jerusalem. But it is only for a time. Until 'she who is in labour gives birth' then it will result in Israel's restoration. Romans 11v25-26.

This passage presents a problem that is common in the prophets, they saw what would happen, but they did not see a time frame. Like a mountain range viewed from a distance, they only saw the peaks, not the valleys of time between them. Therefore, part of this passage is fulfilled, part is being fulfilled and part is yet to come.

Which bits are which?

This passage concentrates on Jesus as:

Son of David, divine

Isaiah 7v14

What are the significant things this verse tells us about Jesus?

Mat 1v18-2v1 & Luke 1v26-35, record the fact that Jesus was born of a virgin.

Why do you think the virgin birth was necessary?

It emphasises Jesus sinlessness, (not tainted by Adams sin) and His divine origin.

Emmanuel means God with us or God among us. It implies, God on our level. God becoming one of us. A different Hebrew word is used for a superior among inferiors.

Was Jesus ever called Emmanuel?

In what way do you think the name was appropriate to Jesus?

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?" John 14:8-9

This passage concentrates of Jesus as:

God with us

Isaiah 9v1-7

Again this is another prophecy that mixes the now and the not yet.

What would the Messiah bring? Mat 4v12-17, John 1v4,5,9.

To whom would Jesus be a light? v1b, Luke 2:32.

How was this fulfilled?

he says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Isaiah 49:6

To whom is the Child born?

What do you think is important about the 4 names?

The names are significant because again they make it clear just who Jesus is.

Spiritual peace is ours now, but the physical peace and the physical reign of Jesus must await his second coming.

This passage concentrates of Jesus as:

For us , a light